IASBABA'S

MONTHLY MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY '20

INDO-US RELATION - TRUMP VISIT

ECONOMIC SURVEY 2019-2020 HIGHLIGHTS

HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

THE BODO ISSUE
CRIMINALISATION OF POLITICS

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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 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 **57th edition** of IASbaba's Monthly Magazine. This edition covers all important issues that were in news in the month of **FEBRUARY 2020** which can be accessed from **https://iasbaba.com/current-affairs-for-ias-upsc-exams/**

VALUE ADDITIONS FROM IASBABA
- **Must Read and connecting the dots.**
- **Also, we have introduced Prelim and mains focused snippets and Test Your Knowledge (Prelims MCQs based on daily current affairs) 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/**

"Tell my mistakes to me not to others, because these are to be corrected by me, not by them."

CONTENTS

HISTORY/CULTURE/GEOGRAPHY

34th Surajkund International Crafts Mela inaugurated

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-I- Culture

In News

- The mela is held in Faridabad, Haryana and this year partner country is Uzbekistan and Himachal Pradesh is the theme-state
- It is being organized since 1987 to showcase the richness and diversity of handicrafts, handlooms and cultural heritage of India.
- Surajkund (literal meaning is 'Lake of the Sun') is an artificial Kund ('Kund' means "lake" or reservoir) which is said to have been built by the King Surajpal of Tomar dynasty in the 10th century
- Surajkund is located on Southern Delhi Ridge of Aravalli range in Faridabad city of Haryana.

'Healing Christ' statue enters URF book of world records

Part of: GS Prelims –Art & Culture and GS-I- Art & Culture

In news:

- Healing Christ, in Thiruvalla Kerala has entered the Universal Records Forum's (URF) book of world records.

From Prelims Point of view:

Healing Christ:

- The statue was sculpted with an alloy of zinc, copper, and velutheeyam
- Velutheeyam is an alloy of tin and aluminium

Universal Records Forum

- Universal Records Forum encourages every record holder and give them the deserved platform to showcase their talent, stamina, endurance and achievement in front of the world.

Hampi World Heritage site

Part of: GS Prelims Art & Culture and GS-I- Heritage

In news:

- The Supreme Court confirmed the Karnataka government authorities' decision to demolish buildings constructed in Virupapura Gaddi, an oval islet formed by the Tungabhadra and located west of the Hampi World Heritage site.
- The constructions were in violation of the Mysore Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act of 1961.

From Prelims point of view
- Group of Monuments at Hampi is a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- located in east-central Karnataka, India
- It became the pilgrimage cente of the Hindu religion.
- It was the capital of Vijayanagara Empire in the 14th century
- Hampi was a prosperous, wealthy and grand city near the Tungabhadra River,
- Hampi-Vijayanagara was the world's second-largest medieval-era city after Beijing, India's richest at that time,
- Vijayanagara Empire was defeated by a coalition of Muslim sultanates;
- its capital was conquered, pillaged and destroyed by sultanate armies in 1565, after which Hampi remained in ruins
- Described by UNESCO as an "austere, grandiose site"
- Includes "forts, riverside features, royal and sacred complexes, temples, shrines, pillared halls, mandapas, memorial structures, water structures and othersthere is evidence of Ashokan epigraphy, and it is mentioned in the Ra Virupaksha Temple, an active Adi Shankara-linked monastery and various monuments belonging to the old city.

SRC :Hampi https://hampi.in/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/access-map-to-hampi.jpg
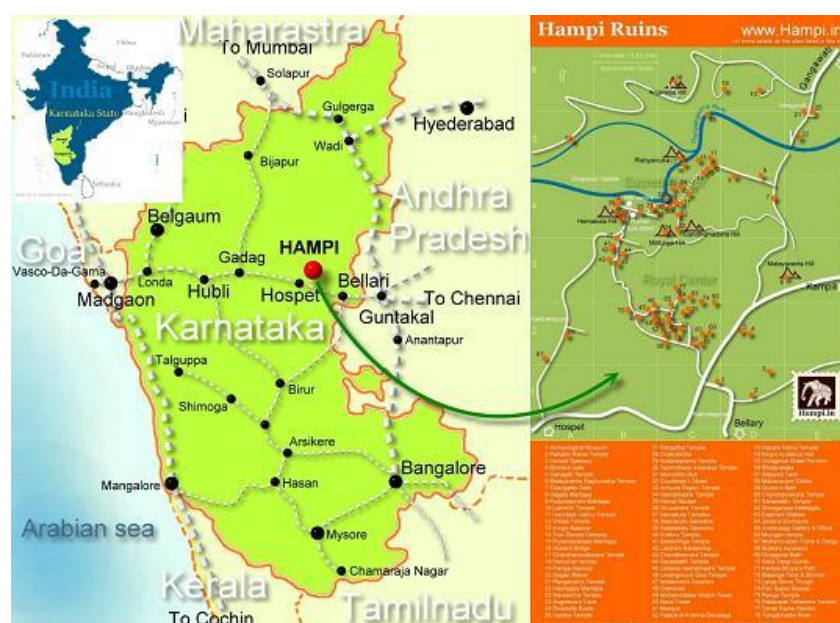
Storm, named 'Ciara'

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Constitution
In news:
- The storm, named 'Ciara' ,referred to as 'Sabine'
- Hit in UK, Ireland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Germany.

- The storm has two names because there isn't yet a pan-European system in place for labelling weather systems.

From Prelims Point of view:
How cyclones are named?
- The tradition started with hurricanes in the Atlantic Ocean, where tropical storms that reach sustained wind speeds of 39 miles per hour were given names.
- (Incidentally, hurricanes, typhoons, cyclones are all the same, just different names for tropical storms in different parts of the world;
- Hurricane in the Atlantic, Typhoon in the Pacific and Cyclone in the Indian Ocean). If the storm's wind speed reaches or crosses 74 mph, it is then classified into a hurricane/cyclone/typhoon.
- Tropical storms are given names and they retain the name if they develop into a cyclone/hurricane/typhoon.

Mana Krishna

Part of: GS Prelims – Geography
In news:
- The Krishna district administration has launched '**Mana Krishna'** (Our Krishna), a massive campaign of cleaning Krishna River canals as part of the Clean Krishna-Godavari Canals mission
- In the Krishna River and Godavari River basins in Andhra Pradesh.
- The site is known for the D-6 block where Reliance Industries discovered the biggest natural gas reserves in India in 2003
- The basin is home to **olive ridley sea turtle**, a vulnerable species

Src: Uttarkhandnews

Src: Rediff

TTD lifts restrictions on sale of big laddus

In news:

- Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has resolved to lift restrictions on the sale of big laddus and make them easily available to devotees at its counters.
- TTD the big laddus (popularly known as Kalyanotsavam laddus) were in great demand and hence were sold at exorbitant rates in the black market. Devotees can now buy the desired number of laddus at ₹200 each.

From Prelims point of view:

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams

- India's richest temple, the Venkateshwara (Tirupati) temple have the patent of its famous 'laddu'
- Geographical Indications Registry which also granted the laddu the status of Geographical Indicator of the Tirupati region.

New claimant for kambala record

Part of: GS Prelims –Art & Culture and GS-I- Culture

In news:

- Claims and counterclaims on the fastest kambala jockey have been surfacing ever since Srinivas Gowda of Moodbidri hit the headlines for covering 142.5 metres in 13.62 seconds

From Prelims Point of View:

Kambala

- Traditional buffalo race in paddy fields filled with slush and mud
- Coastal Karnataka (Udupi and Dakshina Kannada) from November to March.
- Observed as thanksgiving to gods for protecting the animals from diseases
- Sponsored by local Tuluva landlords
- Tuluva people are an ethnic group native to Southern India. They are native speakers of the Tulu language.

Concerns

- Kambala involves acts of cruelty on animals
- It violates the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960.

Two tamers, including student, killed in jallikattu events in Tamil Nadu

Part of: GS Prelims –Culture and GS- I- Festival

From Prelims Point of View:

- Jallikattu is referred to as bull taming event
- Practiced in Tamil Nadu as a part of Pongal
- 'jallikattu' is derived from Tamil words Jalli refers to gold or silver coins ,Kattu means 'tied'.
- Found mentioned in the Sangam literature (2500 years ago).

Controversial:

- Because the sport often results in **major injuries and even deaths of both bulls and humans.**

Law:

- Supreme Court in 2014 banned Jallikattu in response to Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) and People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) petitions citing cruelty to animals.
- The article 51A of the constitution states that citizens should safeguard the wildlife and forests and have compassion for living creatures.

ASI planning barricade around famed stone chariot at Hampi

Part of: GS Prelims –Art & culture and GS-I- Heritage

In news:

- **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** is contemplating installing a wooden barricade around the stone chariot inside Vittala Temple complex at the UNESCO World Heritage site of Hampi in a bid to protect it from vandalism.

From Prelims Point of View

Hampi:

- UNESCO world heritage site.
- Part of the Mauryan Empire 3rd century BC.
- The capital city during the four different dynasties in the Vijayanagar city

- It is located near the Tungabhadra river.
- **Hampi-Vijayanagara** was the world's second-largest medieval-era city after Beijing,
- Described by UNESCO as an "austere, grandiose site" of more than 1,600 surviving remains of the last great Hindu kingdom in South India.

Rakhigarhi

Part of: GS Prelims – Art & Culture and GS-I- Ancient History

In news:

- Finance Minister had announced in Budget speech to fund five on-site museums, including the under-construction museum initiated by the Haryana government at Rakhigarhi
- Rakhigarhi is a 5,000-year-old and biggest Indus Valley Civilization site located in Haryana
- The site is located in the Sarasvati river plain, some 27 km from the seasonal Ghaggar river
- In May 2012, the Global Heritage Fund, declared Rakhigarhi one of the 10 most endangered heritage sites in Asia.
- Other four sites mentioned in Budget speech are Hastinapur in Uttar Pradesh, Shivsagar in Assam, Dholavira in Gujarat and Adichanallur in Tamil Nadu.

Mahadayi Water Row

Part of: GS Prelims- Geography and GS-II- Federalism

In news:

- Centre issues notification on sharing the waters of inter-State Mahadayi among Karnataka, Goa, and Maharashtra
- Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal in its 2018 order allocated 13.42 tmcft of water from the Mahadayi to Karnataka and 24tmcft to Goa while Maharashtra was allocated 1.3tmcft.
- Of the 13.42 tmcft of water allocated for Karnataka, 5.5 tmcft is meant for use within the river basin and for diversion to the Malaprabha reservoir, and around 8 tmcft for power generation.
- The notification also said the demand by Karnataka for diversion of 5.27 tmcft of water of Mahadayi river to the Supa reservoir of the Kali hydropower project for power generation has been rejected.

Prelims Value addition

- Mahadayi or Mhadei or Mandovi, the west-flowing river, originates in Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary (Western Ghats), Belagavi district of Karnataka
- The Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal was set up in 2010. Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra are parties to the tribunal.
- Kalasa Banduri project is undertaken by the Government of Karnataka that involves diversion of Mahadayi river water to the Malaprabha river, so as to improve the drinker water supply in Northern Karnataka.

POLITY/GOVERNANCE

OCI Cardholders

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- Indian Polity

In News

- Union government has told the Delhi High Court that Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders do not enjoy fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution
- The category was introduced by the government in 2005.
- The **Ministry of Home Affairs** defines an OCI as a person who:
    - Was a citizen of India on or after 26th January 1950; or
    - Was eligible to become a citizen of India on 26th January 1950; or
    - Is a child or grandchild of such a person, among other eligibility criteria.
- Also, an applicant is not eligible for the OCI card if he, his parents or grandparents have ever been a citizen of Pakistan or Bangladesh.
- OCI cardholders have been merely granted statutory rights under Citizenship Act,1955
- The Government of India via Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2015 **merged the Person of Indian Origin (PIO) category with OCI category in 2015.**

Benefits to OCI Cardholders

- OCI cardholders can **enter India multiple times**, get a multipurpose lifelong visa to visit India, and are exempt from registering with Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO).
- If an individual is registered as an **OCI for a period of five years**, he/she is **eligible to apply for Indian citizenship**.
- OCI cardholders can open special bank accounts in India, **buy the non-farm property** and exercise ownership rights and can also apply for a PAN card.

Limitations of OCI cardholders

- OCI cardholders **do not get voting rights, cannot hold a government job** and purchase agricultural or farmland.
- They cannot travel to restricted areas without government permission.

Religious practices of various faiths

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Secularism

In news:

- Whether certain essential religious practices of various faiths, including Islam and Zoroastrianism, should be constitutionally protected?

In past: Women devotees of menstruating age were not permitted to worship here, out of respect to the celibate nature of the deity in this temple.

1991 : A Kerala high-court judgement had legalized this Ban , and forbade women from entering the temple

In 2018 : The Constitution bench of the Supreme Court held that any exception placed on women because of biological differences violates the Constitution - that the ban violates the **right to equality under Article 14, and freedom of religion under Article 25**

From Prelims Point of View:

Article 14:

- State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.
- Article 14 of our constitution provides that no one is above the law of the land.
- Rule of the Law derived from Article 14 of the constitution.
- The article 14 aims to establish the "Equality of Status and Opportunity" as embodied in the Preamble of the Constitution.

Article 25:

- No discrimination against anyone on grounds of faith,
- Separation of religion from politics,
- Acceptance of religion as purely and strictly private affairs of individuals having nothing to do with the State.

There are at least six judgments of SC that say while deciding a review, SC cannot refer issues to a larger Bench
FALI NARIMAN, Senior advocate

Sabarimala is a decided case
RAJEEV DHAVAN, Senior advocate

Reference to a larger Bench in a review judgment is not permissible. If reference had to be made, it should have been done in the Sabarimala case before the final judgment on September 28, 2018
SHYAM DIVAN, Senior advocate

You have raised possibly formidable points... We (nine-judge Bench) will hear the objections raised on whether the Supreme Court could have referred to a larger Bench new issues on essential religious practices while deciding the Sabarimala review
S.A. BOBDE, Chief Justice of India

SRC: The Hindu

NCRB study on Missing Women & Children

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Secularism

In news:

- In 2019, the Supreme Court had directed the NCRB to "analyse the data on missing persons [especially on women and children], so that areas prone to persons being trafficked can be identified".

- Report says that the highest number of women and children who go missing in the country are from Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh respectively.

Yet to be found

In 2018, most number of missing children were reported from Madhya Pradesh (10,038), followed by West Bengal (8,205). In the same year, most number of missing women were reported from Maharashtra, followed by West Bengal. The map shows the number of missing children by State:

Madhya Pradesh **10,038**

West Bengal **8,205**

2018
0 — 10,038

STATES WITH THE MOST NUMBER OF MISSING WOMEN:

Maharashtra 33,964
West Bengal 31,299
Madhya Pradesh 29,761
Delhi 13,272
Rajasthan 12,525

SRC: The Hindu

From Prelims Point of View:

National Crime Record Bureau

- HQ in New Delhi, set-up in 1986 under the Ministry of Home Affairs
- To function as a repository of information on crime and criminals so as to assist the investigators in linking crime to the perpetrators.
- It was set up based on the recommendations of the National Police Commission (1977-1981) and the MHA's Task Force (1985).
- NCRB brings out the annual comprehensive statistics of crime across the country ('Crime in India' report).
- The report serves as a crucial tool in understanding the law and order situation across the country.

Bodo Issue

Part of: Indian Polity & Federalism

Context

The signing of Historic **Comprehensive Bodo Settlement Agreement** (third Bodo Accord in three decades) in Jan 2020 between Government of India (Ministry of Home Affairs), Government of Assam and Bodo representatives.

Bodo representatives included: Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), United Boro People Organization (UBPO), National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) factions
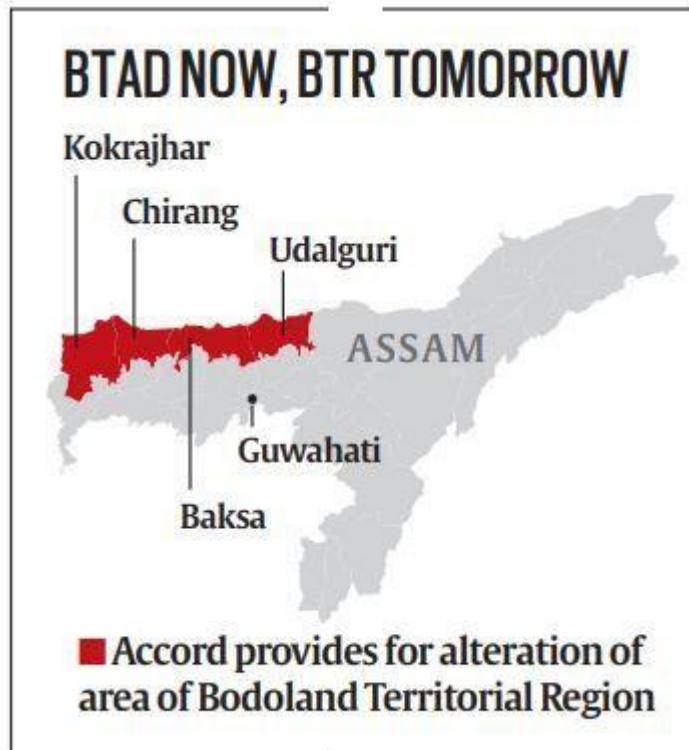
Pic Source: Yahoo news

Bodo:

- The Bodo are a Tibeto-Burmese-speaking ethnic group in Assam.
- Politically active and dominant in the Kokrajhar, Baksa, Udalguri and Chirang districts of the Bodoland autonomous region in the state of Assam.
- The Bodo people speak the Bodo language, a Tibeto-Burman language recognized as one of twenty-two scheduled languages in the Indian Constitution.
- The Bodo people are recognized as a plains tribe in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
- The Bodo people are concentrated within the Assamese districts of Udalguri, Chirang, Baksa, Bajali, Sonitpur, Goalpara, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, and Kokrajhar.
- Bodos are the single largest tribal community in Assam, making up over 5-6 per cent of the state's population. They have controlled large parts of Assam in the past

A timeline of Bodo Conflict

Although the Bodo agitation has a long history that dates back to the pre-Independence era, the movement gained momentum in the late 1980s, when calls were made for the bifurcation the state of Assam.

1929 - Bodo leader Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma submits a memorandum to the Simon Commission asking for reservations in the Legislative assembly, and for a separate political entity for his people. His efforts go in vain

1960s and 1970s - There are calls from Bodos and other tribes for a separate state of 'Udayachal' as immigrants are accused of illegally encroaching on Bodo-inhabited lands

Late 1980s - Calls for a separate state for Bodos - Bodoland - and for Assam to be divided "50-50" are raised. The demand was primarily led through peaceful methods by All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and its leader Upendranath Brahma

Also during this time armed separatist group - The National Democratic Front of Bodoland is founded (1986).

Why the demand for separate Bodoland?

- For centuries, they survived sanskritisation without giving up their original ethnic identity. However, in the 20th century, they had to tackle a series of issues such as illegal immigration, encroachment of their lands, forced assimilation, loss of language and culture.
- The Bodos have thus not only become an ethnic minority in their own ancestral land but have also been struggling for their existence and status as an ethnic community.
- The movement peaked in 1980s primarily due to Assam movement and its culmination with the Assam Accord which addressed the demands of protection and safeguards for the "Assamese people". This lead the Bodos to launch a movement to protect their own identity.

Progress made by government for resolution of Bodo issue

First Accord – Feb 1993

- The Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) is constituted after the Centre, the Assam government and the ABSU sign a tripartite agreement.
- The BAC was given power over 38 subjects, with a 40-member General Council, including 5 members nominated by the state government, while rest of the seats were reserved for ST.
- But, soon a section of Bodo people rejected the accord, and claimed it was "inadequate" to meet the long-cherished political aspirations of the people.
- The Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT), an armed insurgent group, formed in June 1996, launched its armed movement for a separate Bodoland state.

Second Accord- Feb 2003

- After six years of subversive activities, BLT signed a tripartite agreement with the Centre and Assam government.
- The second Bodo accord led to the formation of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, which had more political power than the BAC A large number of the BLT cadres were absorbed in the CRPF.
- The area under the BTC jurisdiction is officially called the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) comprising of 3,082 villages in four districts— Kokrajhar, Chirang, Udalguri and Baska.

- However, ABSU continued with its movement of separate Statehood and different factions of NDFB continued to carry out hit-and-run operations, and disturbed peace.

Third Accord – Jan 2020

The 2020 agreement has the following provisions:

- Renaming: From BTAD to Bodoland Territorial Region.
- A commission (representative of ABSU, BTC & State) under Section 14 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, which will recommend the inclusion or exclusion of tribal population residing in villages adjoining BTAD areas.
- Redrawing Boundaries: Villages dominated by Bodos that were presently outside the BTAD would be included and those with non-Bodo population would be excluded
- Bodoland territorial Council (BTC)- The agreement would lead to more legislative, executive, administrative and financial powers of the BTC including increase in seats from 40 to 60
- Bodos living in the hills would be granted Scheduled Hill Tribe status.
- Bodo language with Devnagri script will become associate official language for entire of Assam and a separate directorate for Bodo medium schools will be set up.
- Development Package of ₹1500 crore by the Centre for the development of Bodo areas
- Bodo-Kachari Welfare Council for focused development of Bodo villages outside BTAD
- The agreement also involved rehabilitation of members of National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB) factions- over 1500 armed cadres will abjure violence and join the mainstream

Implication of the Third Accord

- The agreement is hailed as a permanent solution to a conflict, which has taken over 4,000 human lives.
- Home Minister stated that Assam's territorial integrity is assured with this agreement, as every single Bodo group has come on board.
- Enhanced focus by Union government on tackling the issues of North-East so as to usher development in the region.
- This is reflected in Bru-Reang agreement signed on January 16, 2020 to end the humanitarian crisis in Meghalaya and Tripura, recent surrender of 644 armed cadres in Assam and surrender of 88 armed NLFT cadres in Tripura to bring them to mainstream.

Conclusion

The peace in Bodoland Territorial Region will depend on the evolving relationship between the Bodos, the dominant but not the majority in the BTR and other communities.

It also depends on the final implementation of the accord and the ability of the state to rehabilitate the militants so as to prevent them from taking up anti-social activities.

IASBaba's Value Additions:

- Recently, the central government, the Assam government and the Bodo groups, signed an agreement to redraw and rename the Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD) as the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), in Assam.

From Prelims Point of View:

Bodoland Territorial Area District:

- BTAD is spread over four districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri.
- The BTAD and other areas mentioned under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution have been exempted from the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019.

T.N. MLAs' disqualification

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Constitution

In news:

- The Supreme Court gave Tamil Nadu Speaker a week's time to inform when he will take cognizance of the disqualification petitions filed under the Tenth Schedule (anti-defection law) for voting against the confidence motion moved by Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami in February 2017.

From Prelims Point of view:

Tenth Schedule (anti-defection law)

- The law is necessary because when **a voter decides to cast his/her vote** for a candidate, he/she is considers not only the candidate but also **the party** that the candidate stands for and the **manifesto** the party presented. Hence, when the defection takes place, it's the electorate that is let down, making a mockery of democracy.

- That is why in the year **1985**, amendment to the constitution was effected and **X^th schedule was introduced**.

- The amendment and the schedule are connected to **Article 102** and **Article 191** of the Constitution. Both the articles pertain to disqualification for membership.

- The purpose of this mini-legislation within the constitution is to create a deterrent for any kind of defections and it prescribes disqualification for doing so.

CPCB pulls up 14 coal plants

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II - Polity

In news:

Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has pulled up 14 thermal power plants for not complying with a December 31, 2019 deadline to limit Sulphur dioxide emissions.

From Prelims Point of view:

CPCB:

- CPCB has the power to impose steep fines or shut a unit under the provisions of the Environment Protection Act.

- Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) of India is a statutory organization under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).
- Established in 1974 under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.
- CPCB is also entrusted with the powers and functions under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981

Trust formed

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II - Polity

In news:

- Cabinet had approved construction of a grand Ram temple in Ayodhya
- Setting up an autonomous trust, the **Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra,**
- There would be 15 trustees, out of which one would always be from the Dalit society.

Track to the temple

A look at the key points of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement regarding the construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya

- Mr. Modi announced the formation of a 15-member Trust named 'Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra', to oversee the construction of the temple

- This Trust will be empowered to take independent decisions on the construction of the temple and other related subjects, Mr. Modi said

- He said the government will transfer the whole of the approx 67.703 acres acquired land to the new Trust

- Its members include Jagatguru Shankracharya, Jyothishpeethadheeshwar Swami Vasudevanand Saraswati Ji Maharaj, Jagatguru Madhavacharya Swami Vishwa Prasannatheerth Ji Maharaj, Yugpurush Paramanand Ji Maharaj, Swami Govinddev Giri Ji Maharaj, Vimlendra Mohan Pratap Mishra, Anil Mishra, Kameshwar Chaupal and Mahant Dinendra Das

The trust will comprise **15 members,** including one indiviudal from the Dalit community

- Two prominent practising Hindus will be nominated by the board of trustees. Two Hindu IAS officials below the rank of Joint Secretary to the govt. will be appointed by the Centre and the U.P. govt. Ayodhya District Collector will be the ex-officio trustee

The Trust will be headed by former Attorney General and Supreme Court lawyer **K. Parasaran**

PM pitches for boost to defence exports

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II - Polity

In news:

- India became the world's largest arms importer as it did not utilise its capacities to full potential after Independence.
- India was looking to achieve defence exports worth ₹35,000 crore in the next five years.

From Prelims Point of view:

DefExpo

- The DefExpo is biennial event organized by Ministry of Defence. The 11th edition of the event promises to bring in new technological solutions.
- Defence Ministers from 40 countries are attending the event.

'LIC IPO will certainly happen next year'

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II - Polity

In news:

- The Centre has indicated that it may need to push through an amendment in the LIC Act, 1956 before the stake sale.
- Currently, the government owns 100% of LIC, the country's largest insurer.
- Opposition parties have objected to the divestment plan, while LIC's employee unions have claimed that it would be "against national interest."

Life Insurance Corporation:

- Life Insurance Corporation of India (abbreviated as LIC) is an Indian state-owned insurance group and investment corporation owned by the Government of India.
- The Life Insurance Corporation of India was founded in 1956 when the Parliament of India passed the Life Insurance of India Act that nationalized the insurance industry in India.
- Over 245 insurance companies and provident societies were merged to create the state-owned Life Insurance Corporation of India.
- As of 2019, Life Insurance Corporation of India had total life fund of ₹28.3 trillion.
- The total value of sold policies in the year 2018-19 is ₹21.4 million.
- Life Insurance Corporation of India settled 26 million claims in 2018-19. It has 290 million policy holders.

Fifteenth Finance Commission (15th FC)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II - Polity

Context

15th FC (Chair N.K.Singh) constituted by the President of India under **Article 280 of the Constitution** on November 27, 2017 was given an extension and recently submitted its first report

The commission was required to submit two reports, one for 2020-21 and the second covering the period of five years from 2021-22 to 2025-26

Basis for extension

- First, the **abolition of Statehood to Jammu and Kashmir** required the Commission to make an estimation excluding the Union Territory.

- Second, the **deceleration in growth and low inflation** has substantially slowed down the nominal GDP growth making projections for medium term risky.
- Finally, **poor revenue performance of tax collection** and more particularly Goods and Services Tax combined with the fact that the **compensation agreement to the loss of revenue** to the States was effective only two years of the period of 15FC posed uncertainties

If not for extension, making medium-term projections in the current scenario would have entailed serious risks.

Key Recommendations include:

Devolution of taxes to states: The share of states in the centre's taxes is recommended to be decreased from 42% during the 2015-20 periods to 41% for 2020-21. The 1% decrease is to provide for the newly formed union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh from the resources of the central government.

Criteria for Devolution

Criteria	14th FC 2015-20	15th FC 2020-21
Income Distance	50.0	45.0
Population (1971)	17.5	-
Population (2011)	10.0	15.0
Area	15.0	15.0
Forest Cover	7.5	-
Forest and Ecology (share of dense forest of each state in the aggregate dense forest of all the states)	-	10.0
Demographic Performance (based on Total Fertility rate)	-	12.5
Tax Effort	-	2.5
Total	**100**	**100**

Grants-in-aid

In 2020-21, the following grants will be provided to states:

- **Revenue deficit grants:** In 2020-21, 14 states are estimated to have an aggregate revenue deficit of Rs 74,340 crore post-devolution. The Commission recommended revenue deficit grants for these states (see Table 4 in the annexure).
- **Special grants:** In case of three states, the sum of devolution and revenue deficit grants is estimated to decline in 2020-21 as compared to 2019-20. These states are Karnataka, Mizoram, and Telangana. The Commission has recommended special grants to these states aggregating to Rs 6,764 crore.

- **Sector-specific grants:** The Commission has recommended a grant of Rs 7,375 crore for nutrition in 2020-21.
- **Performance-based grants**: Guidelines for performance-based grants include: (i) implementation of agricultural reforms, (ii) development of aspirational districts and blocks, (iii) power sector reforms, (iv) enhancing trade including exports, (v) incentives for education, and (vi) promotion of domestic and international tourism. The grant amount will be provided in the final report.
- **Grants to local bodies:** The total grants to local bodies for 2020-21 has been fixed at Rs 90,000 crore (4.31% of divisible pool), of which Rs 60,750 crore is recommended for rural local bodies (67.5%) and Rs 29,250 crore for urban local bodies (32.5%).
- The grants will be divided between states based on **population and area in the ratio 90:10**. The grants will be made available to **all three tiers of Panchayat**- village, block, and district.
- **Disaster Risk Management:** For 2020-21, State Disaster Risk Management Funds have been allocated Rs 28,983 crore, out of which the share of the union is Rs 22,184 crore. The National Disaster Risk Management Funds has been allocated Rs 12,390 crore.

Recommendations on fiscal roadmap
- Centre should, in the coming year, rationalise centrally sponsored schemes
- Centre and states should fully reveal the extent of their off-budget borrowings, leading to accumulation of extra-budgetary liabilities
- **Statutory framework for public financial management:** The Commission recommended forming an expert group to draft legislation to provide for a statutory framework for sound public financial management system.
- **Tax capacity:** In 2018-19, the tax revenue of state governments and central government together stood at around 17.5% of GDP. India's tax capacity largely remained unchanged since 1990s. The Commission recommended: (i) broadening the tax base, (ii) streamlining tax rates, (iii) and increasing capacity and expertise of tax administration in all tiers of the government.
- **GST implementation:** The Commission observed that the continuing dependence of states on compensation from the central government (21 states out of 29 states in 2018-19) for making up for the shortfall in revenue is a concern. Hence needed to have relook into the structure of GST.
- **Separate defence and national security fund:** It was mentioned in the terms of reference. However, 15 FC intends to constitute an expert committee to study such a proposal and will come out with its suggestions in second report.

Connecting the dots
- Concerns raised by Southern States with regard to considering 2011 population numbers, has it been addressed?
- FRBM changes recommended by N.K.Singh Committee.

Pro-militant tweets cited in PSA (Public Safety Act) file

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Constitution

In news:

- Former Chief Minister and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti has been booked under Public Safety Act (PSA)

From Prelims Point of View:

- The Public Safety Act (PSA) of Jammu & Kashmir is an administrative detention law
- Act extends to the whole of Jammu & Kashmir.
- Allows detention of any individual for up to two years without a trial or charge.
- Without a warrant, specific charges, and often for an unspecified period of time.
- The detaining authority is not required to reveal any facts "which it considers being against the public interest to disclose".
- Detention order under the PSA is issued either by the Divisional Commissioner or District Magistrate.

"In the case of a person acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of the state",

"Any person is acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order".

- (2012 Amendment) the detention of a person below the age of 18 was strictly prohibited under this Act.
- Produced before the magistrate within 24 hours.
- The Advisory Board is a non-judicial body established to review detention orders and determine whether there is sufficient cause for detention.

Supreme Court on reservations in Job

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Judiciary

In news:

- The Supreme Court has ruled that reservation in the matter of promotions in public posts is not a fundamental right
- A state cannot be compelled to offer the quota if it chooses not to.
- No mandamus can be issued by the court directing state governments to provide reservations

From Prelims Point of View:

Prerogative writs:

- "prerogative writs" meaning the extraordinary writs or orders granted by the Sovereign when ordinary legal remedies are inadequate
- Prerogative writs are habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, certiorari, and quo warranto.
- In India, the Supreme Court can issue prerogative writs under Article 32 of the Constitution, and the High Courts under Article 226.

- The writ can also be issued against inferior courts or other judicial bodies when they have refused to exercise their jurisdiction and perform their duty.

Mandamus:

- Mandamus literally means 'we command'.
- When issued to a person or body, the writ of mandamus demands some activity on their part
- It orders the person or body to perform a public or quasi-public duty, which they have refused to perform, and where no other adequate legal remedy exists to enforce the performance of that duty.
- The writ cannot be issued unless the legal duty is of public nature, and to whose performance the applicant of the writ has a legal right.
- Under Article 361, mandamus cannot be granted against the President or Governor of a State.

Cleaning of drains & septic tanks claims 110 lives in 2019

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Vulnerable section

In news:

- Number of people who died while cleaning sewers and septic tanks in the country increased by almost 62% from 68 in 2018 to 110 in 2019, Social Justice and Empowerment (SJE)
- Ministry manual scavenging is banned under the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013.

Raising a stink
No. of deaths while cleaning sewers and septic tanks in the last five years

Year	Deaths
2015	57
2016	48
2017	93
2018	68
2019	110

*SOURCE: SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY IN THE LOK SABHA ON FEBRUARY 11, 2020

Src: The Hindu

From Prelims point of view

Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013

- The law prohibits the employment of manual scavengers, the manual cleaning of sewers and septic tanks without protective equipment and the construction of insanitary latrines.
- The law also provides rehabilitation of manual scavengers and alternative employment to them within the time bound manner.
- From now onwards, the construction and maintenance of the insanity latrines has become an offence, therefore no one can be employed or engaged as the manual scavenger.

National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK)

- NCSK was constituted as a statutory body under the NCSK ACT, 1993.
- Look into matters concerning the Safai Karamcharis' welfare and makes recommendations to the government.

Received privilege motion against Minister: Speaker

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Parliament

In news:

- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla received the notice of privilege motion

From Prelims Point of view:

Privilege motion:

- Rights and immunities enjoyed by members of Parliament, individually and collectively, so that they can "effectively discharge their functions".
- When any of these rights and immunities are disregarded, the offence is called a breach of privilege and is punishable under law of Parliament
- A notice is moved in the form of a motion by any member of either House against those being held guilty of breach of privilege.
- Speaker/RS chairperson is the first level of scrutiny of a privilege motion.
- The Speaker/Chair can decide on the privilege motion him or herself or refer it to the privileges committee of Parliament.

LOKPAL – Six Year on but still a non-starter

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Parliament

Lokpal (and Lokayuktas at State level) are statutory bodies established under **Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013**

They perform the function of an "ombudsman" and inquire into allegations of corruption against certain public functionaries and for related matters.

Powers of Lokpal

- Jurisdiction of Lokpal **includes Prime Minister**, Ministers, members of Parliament, Groups A, B, C and D officers and officials of Central Government.

- Jurisdiction of the Lokpal included the Prime Minister except on allegations of corruption relating to international relations, security, the public order, atomic energy and space.
- The Lokpal Act mandates that **all public officials should furnish the assets** and liabilities of themselves as well as their respective dependents.
- It has the powers to superintendence over, and to give direction to **CBI.**
- It has been **vested with the powers of a civil court.**
- It is empowered under the law to set up its own **inquiry wing** headed by a Director of Inquiry and its own **prosecution wing** headed by a Director of Prosecution
- Lokpal has **powers of confiscation** of assets, proceeds, receipts and benefits arisen or procured by means of corruption in special circumstances.
- Lokpal has the **power to recommend transfer or suspension of public servant** connected with allegation of corruption.

However, the implementation of the act has been poor due to reason like

Delay in appointment:

- For more than five years since enactment of act in 2013, the chairperson and members of the Lokpal were not appointed.
- The government claimed that since no one could be recognised as the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) after the 2014 general election, the committee responsible for selecting members of the Lokpal could not be constituted.
- The chairperson and members of the Lokpal were appointed only in March 2019 after a orders from the Supreme Court

Actual Composition of the select committee:

- A truncated selection committee, without the LoP, was set up – PM, Speaker, CJI and Eminent jurist (Mukul Rohatgi – former Attorney General of India) – to constitute Lokpal in March 2019
- The four-member selection committee was thus seen as having a preponderance of representatives of the ruling party.
- This raised doubts about the independence of the Lokpal even before it became operational.

Failure to Operationalize Lokpal –

- More than 10 months after constituting Lokpal, the **government has not made rules** prescribing the form for filing complaints to the Lokpal.
- The Central government has also failed to formulate **rules regarding asset disclosure** by public servants
- The **inquiry and prosecution wings** of the anti-corruption ombudsman are yet to be set up.
- The Lokpal has also not appointed the Director of Inquiry or Prosecution
- Regulations which the Lokpal was obligated to make under the law are yet to be made, including those specifying the manner and procedure of conducting preliminary inquiry and investigation.

- **Resignation of its judicial member**, Justice Dilip B. Bhosale, for undisclosed reasons has further dented the image of the institution.
- **Veracity of Statistics on Lokpal Website:** The website of the Lokpal states that it scrutinised 1,065 complaints received till September 30, 2019 and disposed of 1,000.
- Since necessary procedures to operationalise the law are yet to be put in place, the legal veracity of the decisions of the Lokpal could potentially be challenged in a court of law.

Conclusion

- Lokpal was accorded a high stature and given extensive powers including the power to inquire, investigate and prosecute acts of corruption.
- Without the requisite rules, regulations and machinery in place, it is not surprising that the Lokpal has failed to meet expectations.
- The government should take urgent measure to frame the necessary rules & regulations to give real teeth and power to Lokpal.

Supreme Court upholds changes to SC/ST atrocities law

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity

In news:

- Supreme Court upheld a 2018 amendment which barred persons accused of committing atrocities against those belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes from getting anticipatory bail.

Strengthening the law

- The SC, in *Dr. Subhash Kashinath Mahajan vs State of Maharashtra*, held on March 20, 2018: No absolute bar against grant of anticipatory bail under the anti-atrocities law if no prima facie case is made out or if judicial scrutiny reveals the complaint to be prima facie *mala fide*

- Parliament introduces an amendment in 2018. Inserts Section 18A in the original Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989. Section 18A re-affirms the original legislative intention that Section 438 CrPC (pre-arrest bail) is not applicable to accused booked under the atrocities law

- Prathvi Raj Chouhan and other petitioners challenge the amendments as arbitrary

- February 10, 2020 judgment in Prathvi Raj Chouhan case: Justices Arun Mishra and Vineet Saran uphold Section 18A. However, the judges add that the High Courts will have an "inherent power" to grant anticipatory bail in cases in which *prima facie* an offence under the 1989 law is not made out

- Justice S. Ravindra Bhat adds a caveat about the use of this "inherent power" by courts. He says it should be used "only sparingly and in very exceptional cases". Otherwise, miscarriage of justice may result. The intention of Parliament to protect SCs and STs will be defeated

- "It is important to keep oneself reminded that while sometimes (perhaps mostly in urban areas) false accusations are made, those are not necessarily reflective of the prevailing and wide spread social prejudices against members of these oppressed classes": Justice Bhat

Various forms of atrocities against SC/ST

- **Caste clashes:** Tensions caused between upper castes and Dalits due to the perceived upward mobility of Dalits.
- **Cow Vigilantism**: Dalits and Muslims are at the receiving end of this vigilantism.
- **Honour Killing**: extreme form of Moral Policing. (Fear of losing the caste status which brings them several benefits, people often commit this heinous crime when their son or daughter marry someone from outside their caste)

- **Social boycott:** Khap panchayat/caste panchayat ostracizing Dalits them from society.(Law Commission drafted the Prohibition of Unlawful Assembly (Interference with the Freedom of Matrimonial Alliances) Bill, 2011 that sought to declare khap panchayats unlawful).
- **Manual scavenging:** Manual scavenging is linked to a caste system where the so-called low castes were expected to perform this job.

Constitutional provisions against SC/ST atrocities:

Article 17 of the constitution prohibits the practice of untouchability.

Article 46 promotes the educational and economic interests of SCs, STs, and other weaker sections of the society and protects them from social injustice and exploitation.

Article 338 – National Commission for Scheduled Castes

- Investigate and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and other legal safeguards for the SCs and to evaluate their working.
- Inquire into specific complaints with respect to the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the SCs.

338-A – National Commissions for Scheduled Tribes

Review court can refer questions to larger Bench

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity

In news:

- A nine-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court upheld the decision of the five-judge Sabarimala Review Bench
- To refer to a larger Bench questions on the ambit and scope of religious freedom practised by multiple faiths across the country.
- Bench framed seven questions of law which it would decide now.

From prelims point of view:

Setting the agenda

The seven questions that the SC Bench will look into:

- What is the scope and ambit of religious freedom under Article 25 of the Constitution?
- What is the interplay between religious freedom and rights of religious denominations under Article 26?
- Whether religious denominations are subject to fundamental rights?
- What is the definition of 'morality' used in Article 25 and Article 26?
- What is the ambit and scope of judicial review of Article 25?
- What is the meaning of the phrase "sections of Hindus" under Article 25 (2)(b)?
- Whether a person not belonging to a religious group can question the practices and beliefs of that group in a PIL petition?

Article 25:

- The Article 25 states that every individual is "equally entitled to freedom of conscience" and has the right "to profess, practice and propagate religion" of one's choice.
- Practicing religion or the act of propagating it should not, however, affect the "public order, morality and health."
- The Article doesn't put any restriction on the government when it comes to making any law to regulate "economic, financial, political or other secular" activities, which may be associated with religious practice.
- According to Article 25, the gates of Hindu religious institutions should be opened to every section of Hindus.
- Here the term 'Hindus' also includes individuals who profess Sikh, Jain or Buddhist religion. The same holds true for the term 'Hindu religious institutions.

Reservations in Promotions

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity

A two judge Supreme Court judgment stated that
- Individuals do not have fundamental right to claim reservation in promotions.
- States are not legally bound to provide reservations in promotions. If it intends to do so then it has to justify it through quantifiable data about the inadequacy of their representation in public services.
- Courts could not issue a mandamus directing the States to provide reservation in promotion.

It shows that affirmative action programmes allowed in the Constitution flow from "enabling provisions" and are not rights as such.

What was the background of the judgement?
- Uttarakhand High court order directing data collection on the adequacy or inadequacy of representation of SC/ST candidates in the State's services.
- However, Supreme Court struck the order on the grounds that once there is decision not to extend reservation in promotion, then question of such data is not relevant
  Constitutional Provisions with regard to reservations
- **Article 16(4)** – Empowers State to provide reservation for any backward classes of citizens
- **Article 16(4a)** – introduced in 1995 by 77th Constitutional Amendment Act – Empowers State to provide reservation in promotion in favour of SC and ST.

Both the above provisions empower the State from making reservations if, "in the opinion of the State", these groups are "not adequately represented"

Previous Judgements on this matter

In its landmark 1992 decision in Indra Sawhney vs Union of India, the Supreme Court had held that reservations under Article 16(4) could only be provided at the time of entry into government service but not in matters of promotion.

On June 17, 1995, Parliament, acting in its constituent capacity, adopted the 77th Constitutional amendment by which clause (4A) was inserted into Article 16 to enable reservation to be made in promotion for SCs and STs.

The Supreme Court in M. Nagaraj v. Union of India 2006 case while upholding the constitutional validity of Art 16(4A) held that it is an enabling provision i.e. State is not bound to make such reservations in promotions. However, if it seeks to do so then it must collect quantifiable data on three parameters —

1. The backwardness of the class
2. The inadequacy of the representation of that class in public employment;
3. The general efficiency of service would not be affected

In Jarnail Singh vs Lachhmi Narain Gupta case of 2018, the Supreme Court held that reservation in promotions does not require the state to collect quantifiable data on the backwardness of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

The court upheld the argument that once various caste groups were listed as SC/ST, this automatically implied they were backward.

Issues with the present judgement

- Not in the spirit of affirmative action: The government does not have to show any kind of justification in deciding not to implement reservation in promotion.
- This is an opaque form of functioning and appears to be going by the letter of the law, not its spirit of providing affirmative action.
- Also, since a 5-judge bench of the Supreme Court has already upheld reservation in promotions, it is not clear whether a two-judge bench can make an interpretation that is in variance with this
- It means that government is not obligated to come with affirmative action (in promotions) if the social situation that keeps some sections backward persists

Conclusion

- Reservation is no more seen by the Supreme Court as an exception to the equality rule; rather, it is a facet of equality.
- However, earlier judgments gave an impression that reservations were an entitlement for weaker sections of society but that it should be viewed only as an enabling provision.
- States should come up quantifiable data to monitor if reservation policies are indeed benefitting the discriminated section of society and if not then make necessary policies.

Connecting the dots!

- Creamy layer in SC/ST
- Reservation for localities- legislation brought by AP, Maharashtra

Bill to regulate pesticide trade

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity

In news:

- Cabinet approved the Pesticides Management Bill, 2020,
- Bill will regulate the business of pesticides and compensate farmers in case of losses from the use of spurious agro-chemicals.

From Prelims Point of View:

Highlights of the Bill

- Provide compensation when there is farm loss due to use of low-quality pesticides.

- The loss is to be paid using funds collected from the manufacturers.
- The information regarding the pesticides available in the market is to be made available in digital format.
- This will help farmers make the right choice.

Centre clears Major Ports Authority Bill

The Cabinet has given its nod to Major Ports Authority Bill that will replace a 1963 law governing country's 12 major ports.

From Prelims Point of View:

Background:

- At present: ports are governed by a ports law of 1963.
- High logistic costs owing to legacy issues including the Tariff Authority for Major Ports (TAMP)'s archaic regulatory grip.

Overview of the Bill:

- The proposed law is aimed at enhancing the overall efficiencies of the ports.

- Now 'major ports' will get to determine the tariffs for various port-related services as well as the terms for private developers who team up with them.

- Every port will now be governed by a Port Authority which will have powers to fix reference tariffs for various port services.

- Creation of an adjudicatory board at the apex level for review of port authority's decisions.

- It will have the mandate to resolve the disputes between port authorities and the PPP operators.
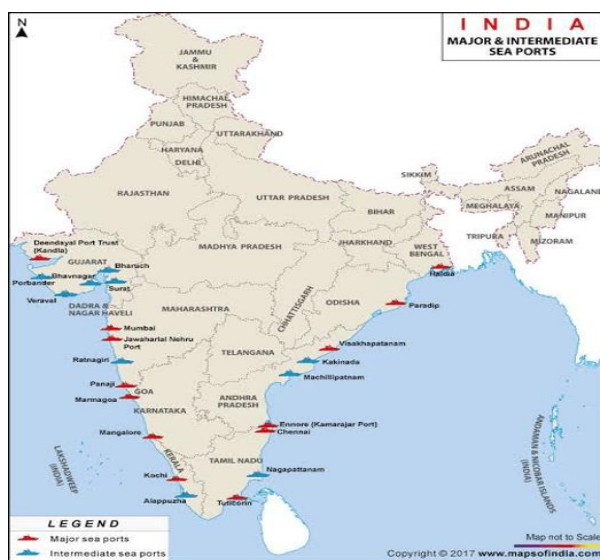
Src: The Hindu

Direct tax Bill to include DRTs

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity

In news:

- Direct Tax Vivad se Vishwas Bill, 2020 to increase its scope to cover litigation pending in various debt recovery tribunals (DRTs).
- The aim of reducing litigation related to direct taxes.
- It was proposed to cover tax disputes pending at the level of commissioner (appeals), Income Tax Appellate Tribunals, high courts and the Supreme Court.

From Prelims Point of View:

Debt Recovery Tribunals:

- Debt Recovery Tribunals were established to facilitate the debt recovery involving banks and other financial institutions with their customers.
- DRTs were set up after the passing of Recovery of Debts due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act (RDBBFI), 1993.
- At present, there are 33 DRTs and 5 DRATs functioning at various parts of the country.
- In 2014, the government has created six new DRTs to speed up loan related dispute settlement.
- Compared to the ordinary court procedures, DRTs were able to handle large number of cases with low delay during the initial phases.
- Though the DRTs have made impact on recovery front, several issues related to their performance in the background of rising volume of NPAs have appeared in later period.

Publish criminal history of candidates, SC orders parties

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity

In news:

- The Supreme Court ordered political parties to publish the entire criminal history of their candidates for the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections
- The information should be detailed and include the nature of the offences, charges framed against him, the court concerned and the case number.
- The information should be published in a local and a national newspaper as well as the parties' social media handles.
- It should mandatorily be published either within 48 hours of the selection of candidates or less than two weeks before the first date for filing of nominations, whichever is earlier.
- SC also ordered political parties to submit compliance reports with the Election Commission of India within 72 hours or risk contempt of court action.
- This is applicable to parties both at the Central and State levels.

Why?

- Unimpeded rise of criminals, often facing heinous charges like rape and murder, encroaching into the country's political and electoral realms.

Src: The Hindu

Criminalisation of Politics

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity

Context

A two Judge Bench of Supreme Court delivered a Judgment on the contempt petitions regarding non-compliance of the directions of a Constitution Bench of SC in **Public Interest Foundation and Ors. v. Union of India, 2018**

The 2018 Judgement had given the following pronouncements

- There is lack of information about rising criminalisation of Politics among the citizenry
- Rapid Criminalisation of Politics cannot be arrested by merely disqualifying tainted legislators but should begin by cleansing Political Parties
- Ordered Political Parties to publish the criminal details of their candidates in their respective websites and print as well as electronic media for public awareness.

Increase in the incidence of criminals in politics

Year	Percentage of MPs with Criminal Cases pending against them
2004	24%
2009	30%
2014	34%
2019	43%

The Court in its present judgement issued the following directions in exercise of its constitutional powers under Articles 129 and 142:

1. It shall be **mandatory for political parties** [at the Central and State election level] to upload on their website detailed information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases, who have been selected as candidates. They also have to mention reasons for such selection over people with clean background
2. The **reasons as to selection of candidates** shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate concerned, and not mere "winnability" at the polls
3. This information shall also be **published in newspaper** (one local & one national) and on the **official social media platforms** of the political party, including Facebook & Twitter.
4. These **details shall be published within 48 hours** of the selection of the candidate or not less than two weeks before the first date for filing of nominations, whichever is earlier.
5. The political party concerned shall then submit a **report of compliance** with these directions with the **Election Commission** within 72 hours of the selection of the said candidate.
6. **Non-compliance** of these directions shall be brought to notice of SC by Election Commission on the grounds of **Contempt of Court**

Merits of the Judgement

- It is in line with a series of judgments aimed at **preserving the purity of the election process**: Asset disclosure, NOTA option, Special courts for quick disposal of cases involving elected representatives
- It increases the **information available for Citizens** which enables him to take informed choice while choosing his representative.
- Helps bring **structural changes in electoral system** which are long-term in nature

Criticism of the Judgement

- **Judicial Overreach:** An election is an issue to be decided between parties, candidates and the voters. The courts should have no say in the matter, except in particular cases where the Representation of the People Act is violated
- **Threatens autonomy of Election System:** By making them enforceable under Article 142 of the Constitution – failure to produce demanded documents risks attracting Contempt of Court – SC threatens to undermine the autonomy of the system of elections and elected legislature.
- **Infringe on ECI:** Candidates are already required to file their details in affidavits with the Election Commission. This order could infringe upon the role of the poll watchdog.
- **Selection of candidates is subjective matter**: The suitability of candidates is a subjective matter, and the justification required by the SC can only be an opinion, and not an objective fact, making the court's order effectively unenforceable.

Conclusion

SC is in danger of overstepping limits and boundaries, rather it should be limiting itself to exerting moral force on political parties. **De-criminalisation of politics cannot be achieved by judicial fiat alone,** rather there has to be changes from within the Political parties.

Connecting the dots!
- Internal Democracy of the Political Parties
- Decline in the institution of Parliament

Slapping Sec. 144 during CAA protests 'illegal': HC

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity
In news:
- The HC said the District Magistrate (DM) had failed to give "reasons" in order invoking Section 144
- It is in contravention to the parameters laid down by the Supreme Court in the cases of **Anuradha Bhasin Vs Union of India and the Ramlila Maidan Incident Vs Union of India.**

From Prelims Point of View
Section 144
- Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) of 1973 authorises the Executive Magistrate of any state or territory to issue an order to prohibit the assembly of four or more people in an area
- Every member of such 'unlawful assembly' can be booked for engaging in rioting.
- Imposed in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger of some event that has the potential to cause trouble or damage to human life or property.
- Generally prohibits public gathering.
- Maximum punishment for such an act is three years.
- No order under Section 144 shall remain in force for more than two months but the state government cans extent the validity for two months and maximum up to six months.
- It can be withdrawn at any point of time if situation becomes normal.

Medical Devices (Amendment) Rules, 2020

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity
Context
The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has notified changes in the Medical Devices Rules, 2017 to regulate medical devices on the same lines as drugs under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940

Need for such rules:
- Faulty hip implants by pharma major Johnson & Johnson – where the company agreed in court to pay Rs 25 lakh each to the 67 people who had had to undergo revision surgeries because the implants were defective.
- Government's lack of regulatory teeth when it came to medical devices.
- Present Penal Provision: Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940- Manufacture or sale of substandard items is punishable with imprisonment of at least 10 years.

- At present, only 23 medical devices have been classified as drugs. In India, most implantable devices are unregulated, including pacemakers, defibrillators, continuous monitoring glucose monitors, etc.
- Inadequate FDI in the sector, as presently, investors shy away from an unpredictable, incomplete and incorrect regulatory environment for medical devices.

Changes in Rules:

- Requirement of online registration of such devices with the Central Licensing Authority through an identified online portal established by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation for this purpose – generation of registration number
- This registration number should be mentioned on the label of medical device.
- Every medical device, either manufactured in India or imported, will have to have quality assurance before they can be sold anywhere in the country.
- The notification calls for a voluntary registration within a period of 18 months from April 2020
- These rules are applicable to devices intended for internal or external use in the diagnosis, treatment, mitigation or prevention of disease or disorder in human beings or animals

Objective of the rules:

- To regulate all medical devices so that they meet certain standards of quality.
- It will also make medical device companies accountable for quality and safety of their products.

What are the items covered under the Medical Device Rules?

- The devices used for diagnosis, monitoring, treatment, assistance for any injury or disability, investigation, replacement or modification or support of the anatomy or of a physiological process will now come within the scope of the definition of 'Drugs'
- A large number of commonly used items like hypodermic syringes and needles, cardiac stents, perfusion sets, catheters, orthopedic implants, bone cements, lenses, sutures, internal prosthetic replacements
- For some items such as sphygmomanometers (used to monitor blood pressure), glucometers (to check blood sugar), thermometers, CT scan and MRI equipment, dialysis and X-ray machines, implants etc, different deadlines for compliance have been set.

Is this a sudden move? - NO

- In April 2019, the Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) had recommended that all medical devices should be notified as "drugs" under the drug regulation law to ensure they maintain safety and quality standards.
- In October 2019, the Health ministry had circulated copies of the then proposed notification for public comments following recommendations of DTAB

Challenges

- Doubts remain about the ability of the Central Drugs and Standards Control Organisation (CDSCO) to effectively regulate both drugs and medical devices.
- Requiring State Cooperation (State DSCOs) in effectively ensuring the compliance of all firms manufacturing medical devices

- Lack of Patient Safety Medical Devices Law in India
- Need to reduce import dependence of medical equipment- India imports between 70 and 90 per cent of its medical devices.
- The changed rules will impact on the small and marginal players, largely Unorganised in the low-value high volume segment of the medical devices industry. Government should come with schemes to support such small firms (like subsidies on loans)
- Concerns are also raised that the rules are very rigid and any non-conformity can be treated as a criminal offence by any drug inspector under the Act at his discretion.

Did You Know?

- Drugs Technical Advisory Board is a statutory body constituted under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.
- The function of DTAB is to advise the Central government and State government on technical matters related to drugs and cosmetics.
- As per industry estimates, the Indian medical devices market will grow to USD 50 billion by 2025
- 100% Foreign Direct Investment is permitted in Medical devices through the automatic route
- Medical Device Parks are planned across India, including Andhra Pradesh MedTech Zone Limited (AMTZ), a park in Sultanpur village (Telangana) and HLL Lifecare Mediparks in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Connecting the dots!

- National List of Essential Medicines
- National Pharmaceutical Authority
- Jan Aashudi Yojana

Same-Sex Marriage: A marriage story for everyone

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity

Context

A petition filed in the Kerala High Court by a male same-sex couple challenges the constitutionality of the Special Marriage Act on the ground that it discriminates against same-sex couples

The petition seeks logical extension of the rights already recognized by the Supreme Court in Navtej Johar Case

About Special Marriage Act

- It was enacted in 1954 which allows and facilitates the registration of inter-religious marriages.
- It thus acts as a legislative tool for social change, an attempt to remove a social barrier to the exercise of individual autonomy.

Navtej Singh Johar vs Union of India Case. 2018

- Supreme Court in this case **decriminalized homosexuality** by striking off parts of **Section 377 of IPC** which were held violative of Fundamental Rights of LGBTQ Community.

- SC upheld the pre-eminence of Constitutional morality in India by observing that equality before law (**Article 14)** cannot be denied by giving precedence to public or religious morality.
- SC while stating **Yogyakarta Principles** upheld the right of same-sex couples to express their **sexual identity.**
- SC also upheld the LGBTQ's right to privacy and non-interference in the conduct of their personal affairs, and the **right to be recognised as full members of society.**

Why it is important to recognise marriages of same-sex couples?

- **Legal Importance:** Marriage carries a range of legal rights and protections, available during the marriage as well as on its dissolution by divorce (the right to seek maintenance) or death (the right to inherit property).
- **Social Importance:** Marriage continues to be the cornerstone of social legitimacy and family in India. Recognition of same-sex marriages will reduce their marginalisation and lead to wider acceptance in society
- **Individual Importance:** Marriage, commitment and family are not abstract legal concepts, but stages of human development, aspiration and give meaning to their personal lives.
- **Political Importance**: Same-sex marriage is recognised in nearly 30 countries across the world. Recognition of same in India will **enrich the Democratic culture in India** whereby every citizen is treated equally irrespective of their sexual orientation

Conclusion

- The petition in Kerala High Court provides a potential first step towards making marriage, as an institution, as a legal concept, more accessible and egalitarian, less arbitrary and exclusionary.

Value Addition

- **Yogyakarta Principles** recognize freedom of sexual orientation and gender identity as part of Human Rights.
- They were outlined in 2006 in **Yogyakarta, Indonesia** by a distinguished group of International **Human Right experts.**
- After the SC judgement in Navtej Singh Case, provisions of **Section 377 remain applicable in cases of non-consensual carnal intercourse** with adults, all acts of carnal intercourse with minors, and acts of bestiality
- **Naz Foundation vs. Govt. of NCT of Delhi (2009) -** Delhi High Court struck off section 377, legalising consensual homosexual activities between adults
- **Suresh Kumar Koushal Case (2013) –** Supreme Court overturned the Delhi High Court Judgement in Naz Foundation case

Connecting the dots!

- Marital rape and rights of women (Social empowerment)
- Reservation for Transgender

Digital ID systems and Algorithmic Governance

Part of: GS Prelims –Governance

Context

For the first time in world, court in the Netherlands stopped a digital identification scheme for reasons of exclusion. This is of significance especially at a time when identity, citizenship and privacy are pertinent questions in India & worldwide

What was the scheme?

- **SyRI (System Risk Indicator)** was developed by The Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs in 2014 to weed out those who are most **likely to commit fraud** and receive government benefits
- Legislation passed by Dutch Parliament allowed government agencies to **share 17 categories of data about welfare recipients** such as taxes, land registries, employment records, and vehicle registrations with a private company.
- The company, called "The Intelligence Agency", used an algorithm to analyse data for four cities and **calculate risk scores.**
- Elevated risk scores were sent to relevant government arms, which stores these on government databases for a maximum of two years. The government, in that time period, could open an investigation on the targeted person.

What were the arguments in court?

- Civil society groups and NGOs launched a legal attack on this case of **algorithmic governance**
- The allegation was that the algorithm would begin associating poverty and immigrant statuses with fraud risk.
- The Dutch government defended the programme in court, saying it prevented abuse and acted as only a starting point for further investigation instead of a final determination.
- The government also **refused to disclose all information about how the system makes its decisions**, stating that it would allow gaming of the system.
- The court found that **opaque algorithmic decision-making** puts citizens at a disadvantage to challenge the resulting risk scores.

Judgement of the Court

- The court ruled that SyRI was violative of principles of transparency and data minimisation laid out in their General Data Protection Regulation.
- While the Hague district court found using new technology to control fraud was acceptable, it held SyRI was too invasive and violative of the privacy guarantees

Significance of the Judgement

- This decision sets a strong **legal precedent for other courts to follow**, especially when Digital ID systems are being rolled out at a fast pace in places like Kenya, Philippines, Nigeria, Mexico, and more
- This is one of the first times a court anywhere has **stopped the use of digital technologies** by welfare authorities **on human rights grounds**

Impact on India

- Similar to the Supreme Court's Aadhaar judgment setting limits on the ID's usage, the Hague Court attempted to balance social interest with personal privacy.

- However, the Aadhaar judgment was not regarding algorithmic decision-making; it was about data collection.
- India's **pending data protection regulation,** being analysed by a Joint Select Committee in Parliament, could learn from the judgement about the need to regulate government's use of digital technologies for welfare activities.

Conclusion

The ruling demonstrates that parliaments ought to look very closely at the ways in which governments use technology in the social security system, to protect the rights of their citizens.

Did you know?

- Due to **General Data Protection Regulation**, European tech initiatives have been stalled, including a **facial recognition system on students** in Sweden and France.
- However, attempts to ban facial recognition in cities such as San Francisco, USA have not had the same success as in Europe due to loopholes in US regulations
- A system somewhat paralleling the Dutch SyRI system was a risk-scoring software being used by US court systems to establish bail times. The US Supreme Court declined to hear a related case in 2017.

Connecting the dots!

- Justice B.N.Srikrishna Committee Report
- Facial recognition used on large scale by China on Uyghurs
- Algorithmic Governance

Karbis against ST status for hill Bodos

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Vulnerable section

In news:

- Assam-based insurgent group of Karbishas demanded that the Bodos in the hill areas not be given the Scheduled Tribe status as it will affect the "identity of the Karbis".
- Recently The Home Ministry, the Assam government and Bodo groups signed the pactto redraw and rename the Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD)

From Prelims Point of View:

Karbis (Mikir)

- One of the major ethnic communities in Northeast India(especially Assam)
- The great artist-scholar Bishnu Prasad Rabha refer to them as the Columbus of Assam

Bar 'shocked' by Collegium decision

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity

In News:

- The Collegium, led by Chief Justice of India recommended the transfer of Justice S. Muralidhar, who is third in the order of seniority in the Delhi High Court, along with two other transfer recommendations of judges.

From Prelims point of view:

Collegium System
- A system under which appointments/elevation of judges/lawyers to Supreme Court and transfers of judges of High Courts and Apex Court are decided by a forum of the Chief Justice of India and the four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court.
- There is no mention of the Collegium either in the original Constitution of India or in successive amendments.
- The recommendations of the Collegium are binding on the Central Government; if the Collegium sends the names of the judges/lawyers to the government for the second time.

Assisted Reproductive Technology Bill proposes national registry of clinics

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity

In news:
- Union Cabinet approved the Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill, 2020

Bill proposes to:
- Monitor medical procedures used to assist people to achieve pregnancy.
- Provides for a national Board which will lay down a code of conduct to be observed by those operating clinics
- Formulate minimum standards for laboratory and diagnostic equipment and practices to be followed by human resources employed by clinics and banks.
- The States and Union Territories will also have to form State Boards and State authorities within three months of the notification of the proposed legislation.

Database: A national registry and registration authority will maintain a database to assist the national Board to perform its functions,

Punishment: Proposes stringent punishment for those who practise sex selection, indulge in sale of human embryos or gametes and those who operate rackets.

Privacy: Ensure confidentiality of intending couples and protect the rights of the child

Regulating ART

Illustration of in vitro fertilisation

- The Bill establishes the National Board, the State Boards, and the National Registry to regulate and supervise Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) clinics. It establishes ART banks to promote ethical practices

- It proposes stringent punishment for those who attempt to control the offspring's sex, sell embryos or gametes

- As of Feb. 20, there are 517 ART clinics under the National Registry of ART clinics and banks in India, according to the ICMR

Source: The Hindu

'Bulk of Jharkhand's deleted ration cards weren't fake'

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Vulnerable section

In news:

The randomized control study found

- 90% of ration cards deemed fake and deleted by the Jharkhand government between 2016 and 2018 actually belonged to existing, valid households.
- Almost 56% of these deleted ration cards were not linked with Aadhaar.
- 18 starvation deaths have been reported in Jharkhand due to lack of access to subsidised food, mostly because beneficiaries' ration cards were not linked to Aadhaar.

Government data

- 5.9% (1.44 lakh) ration cards were deleted out of a total 24.5 lakh cards
- Study found 88%, were found to belong to valid beneficiary families

From Prelims Point of View:

Randomized controlled trial

- A randomized controlled trial is a type of scientific (often medical) experiment that aims to reduce certain sources of bias when testing the effectiveness of new treatments;
- This is accomplished by randomly allocating subjects to two or more groups, treating them differently, and then comparing them with respect to a measured response.
- One group—the experimental group—has the intervention being assessed, while the other—usually called the control group—has an alternative condition, such as a placebo or no intervention.
- The groups are followed under conditions of the trial design to see how effective the experimental intervention was.
- Treatment efficacy is assessed in comparison to the control. There may be more than one treatment group or more than one control group.
- Back in the late 1990s, this was not a well-known concept, let alone a widely practised research method. Moreover, research in economics was still largely theoretical although the shift in a more empirical direction had already started.

Deprived of right

A random sample analysis of ration cards across Jharkhand showed that close to 87.8% cards deleted during a government exercise belonged to traceable houses. Only the remaining 12.2% were 'ghosts' (houses that could not be traced)

TOTAL CARDS
1.5% OF THEM WERE 'GHOSTS'

DELETED CARDS: 213
12.2% OF THEM WERE 'GHOSTS'
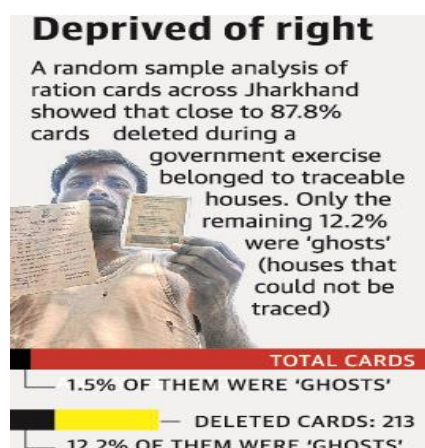
Source: The Hindu

Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill, 2019 – Part I

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity

In news:

The bill was introduction of in Lok Sabha during the winter session of Parliament. The Bill was referred to a joint parliamentary committee, which is currently engaged in a process of public consultation.

The draft law is a comprehensive piece of legislation that seeks to give individuals greater control over how their personal data is collected, stored and used.

The Bill also establishes a Data Protection Authority for the same.

Some of the other features of the bill are:

Applicability: The Bill governs the processing of personal data by: (i) government, (ii) companies incorporated in India, and (iii) foreign companies dealing with personal data of individuals in India.

Obligations of data fiduciary:

- Personal data can be processed only for specific, clear and lawful purpose.
- All data fiduciaries must undertake transparency & accountability measures such as:
  - Implementing security safeguards (such as data encryption and preventing misuse of data), and
  - Instituting grievance redressal mechanisms to address complaints of individuals.
  - Institute mechanisms for age verification and parental consent when processing sensitive personal data of children.

Rights of the individual: This includes Right to

- Obtain confirmation from the fiduciary on whether their personal data has been processed
- Seek correction of inaccurate, incomplete, or out-of-date personal data
- Restrict continuing disclosure of their personal data by a fiduciary

Grounds for processing personal data

- Data Processing only if consent is provided by the individual.
- However, in certain circumstances, personal data can be processed without consent. These include:
  - If required by the State for providing benefits to the individual
  - Legal proceedings
  - To respond to a medical emergency.

Social media intermediaries:

- The Bill defines these to include intermediaries which enable online interaction between users and allow for sharing of information.
- All such intermediaries which have users above a notified threshold, and whose actions can impact electoral democracy or public order, have certain obligations, which include providing a voluntary user verification mechanism for users in India.

Transfer of data outside India:

- Sensitive personal data may be transferred outside India for processing if explicitly consented to by the individual, and subject to certain additional conditions.
- However, such sensitive personal data should continue to be stored in India.
- Certain personal data notified as critical personal data by the government can only be processed in India.

Sharing of non-personal data with government:

- The central government may direct data fiduciaries to provide it with any non-personal data and anonymised personal data (where it is not possible to identify data principal) for better targeting of services**.**

Exemptions: The central government can exempt any of its agencies from the provisions of the Act in interest of security of state, public order, sovereignty and integrity of India and friendly relations with foreign states,

Amendments to other laws: The Bill amends the Information Technology Act, 2000 to delete the provisions related to compensation payable by companies for failure to protect personal data.

Part –II – Will cover the criticism of the bill with focus on data localisation

Connecting the dots

- Justice B.N.Srikrishna Committee report
- EU data regulations

Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill, 2019 – Part II – Issues with Data localisation

The draft law is a comprehensive piece of legislation that seeks to give individuals greater control over how their personal data is collected, stored and used.

Data localisation in draft Bil

- The PDP Bill enables the transfer of personal data outside India, with the sub-category of sensitive personal data having to be mirrored in the country (i.e. **a copy will have to be kept in the country).**
- Data processing/collecting entities will however be barred from transferring **critical personal data** (a category that the government can notify at a subsequent stage) outside the country.

Purpose of localisation

1. **Sovereignty and government functions**; referring to the need to recognise Indian data as a resource to be used to further national interest (economically and strategically), and to enable enforcement of Indian law and state functions.
2. **Economic benefits** of data localisation will accrue to local industry in terms of creating local infrastructure, employment and contributions to the AI ecosystem.
3. **Protection of civil liberties** -the argument is that local hosting of data will enhance its privacy and security by ensuring Indian law applies to the data and users can access local remedies.

Analysis of the provision of Data Localisation

- The earlier version of the bill released by the Justice Srikrishna Committee in 2018 required both personal and sensitive personal data to be mirrored in the country (subject to different conditions) – so as to serve the purposes of data localisation
- The liberalised provision in 2019 bill is however welcomed by business as it **limits the costs** of data transfer business and provides a **degree of flexibility** to them
- The changes in the 2019 draft **reflect a more proportionate approach** to the issue as bill provides a **tiered system for cross-border data transfer** based on the sensitivity/vulnerability of the data
- This seems to be in accord with the Supreme Court's dicta in the **2017 Puttaswamy case**, where the Court had made it clear that an interference in the fundamental right to privacy would only be permissible if inter alia deemed necessary and proportionate

Data Localisation & Protection of User Privacy – Analysis

- Security of data is determined more by the technical measures, skills, cybersecurity protocols, etc. put in place rather than its mere location. Localisation may make it easier for domestic surveillance over citizens.
- The degree of protection afforded to data will depend on the **effectiveness of the applicable data protection regime.**
- Insofar as privacy is concerned, this could be equally protected through less intrusive, suitable and equally effective measures such as requirements for contractual conditions and using adequacy tests for the jurisdiction of transfer. Such conditions are already provided for in the PDP Bill as a set of secondary conditions
- **Further, the extra-territorial application of the PDP Bill** also ensures that the data protection obligations under the law continue to exist even if the data is transferred outside the country.

The bill has also attracted criticism on other grounds such as

- The exceptions created for the state
- The limited checks imposed on state surveillance
- Various deficiencies in the structures and processes of the proposed Data Protection Authority

Way Ahead:

- Reforming surveillance related laws
- Entering into more detailed and up-to-date mutual legal assistance treaties
- Enabling the development of sufficient digital infrastructure
- Creating appropriate data-sharing policies that preserve privacy and other third party rights, while enabling data to be used for socially useful purposes.

Conclusion

It becomes important for the joint parliamentary committee currently examining the Bill to conduct a more in-depth evaluation of the localisation provisions in the law. The joint parliamentary committee ought to, ideally, identify the need, purpose and practicality of putting in place even the (relatively liberal) measures contained in the PDP Bill.

Connecting the dots

- Should users be given the choice to select where the data can be stored – like in a European Union or California (two jurisdictions which have strong data protection laws and advanced technical ecosystems).

(Cauvery Water Management Authority)CWMA drops discussion on Mekedatu dam

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- River disputes

In news:

- Tamil Nadu and Puducherry strongly objected to Karnataka's bid to seek approval for the Mekedatu dam project, at the fifth Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA)

From Prelims Point of View:

Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA)

- Formed by the Centre.
- Under Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956
- To adjudicate upon the water dispute regarding the Inter-State river Cauvery and the river valley thereof among the States of Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Union territory of Puducherry.
- Implement the water-sharing award of the Cauvery Water Dispute Tribunal
- water sharing will be as modified by the Supreme Court

Cauvery River

- The river rises on Brahmagiri Hill of the Western Ghats in southwestern Karnataka state, flows in a south easterly direction through the states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, and descends the Eastern Ghats in a series of great falls.
- Some of its tributaries are Arkavathi, Hemavathi, Lakshmana Theertha, Shimsa, Kabini and Harangi.

Surrogacy Regulation

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity

Context

The Union Cabinet has approved the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2020. The Cabinet incorporated the recommendations of the Rajya Sabha Select Committee before approving the Bill.

Surrogacy means the process of carrying and delivering a child for another person. Thus, a surrogate mother is a woman who bears a child on behalf of another woman, either from her own egg or from the implantation in her womb of a fertilized egg from another woman.

Commercial surrogacy involves an agreement, which includes monetary compensation to the surrogate mother along with medical expenses associated with the pregnancy.

Altruistic surrogacy focuses on providing no monetary compensation to the surrogate mother

Advantages of Surrogacy

- Surrogacy allows infertile couples, single people and members of the LGBT community to become parents when they may not be able to have children otherwise.
- It allows one or both parents to be **biologically related to their child**
- Surrogacy gives hopeful parents the opportunity to **raise a child from birth.**
- Intended parents may face **fewer restrictions** with surrogacy than with **adoption**; those who cannot adopt due to agency restrictions on factors like age can still pursue surrogacy.

Reasons for Increase of Surrogacy in India

- **Low cost:** Surrogacy cost in India is around 1/3rd of that in developed countries like the USA.
- This had made India a favorable destination for foreign couples who look for cost-effective treatment for infertility through Surrogacy in India
- **Availability of women** who could rent their womb at low cost, primarily due to their own poor income levels
- **Grey Area**: Surrogacy was not regulated by a specific legislation which allowed private sector to grow rapidly
- **Availability of Technology** at affordable cost also aided the growth of the sector

Issues with Surrogacy in India

- There had been **many cases of death related to surrogacy** which neither commissioning parents nor the doctors were ready to take responsibility of.
- Sometimes, Indian adoption laws or citizenship laws of some other countries also create problems. For example, Germany gives citizenship by mother; this creates issues in determining the **nationality of child**.
- There were no strong laws for following issues such as **rights of surrogate mother for fair compensation**, maternal health care, right to abort etc.
- Surrogacy leads to **commoditization of the child.** Renting of the womb breaks the bond between a mother and the child, interferes with nature

Recommendation of the Rajya Sabha Select Committee

- **Definition of "infertility"** as the inability to conceive after five years of unprotected intercourse should be deleted**.** It is too long a period for a couple to wait for a child.
- It was recommended that a surrogate mother need **not be a "close relative**
- **Single women (widow or a divorcee) should be allowed** to avail of surrogacy.
- The **insurance cover** for a surrogate mother should be increased to 36 months from 16 months.

Key Features of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2020

- **It bans commercial surrogacy**
- It seeks to **allow ethical altruistic surrogacy** to the intending infertile Indian married couple between the age of 23-50 years for females and 26-55 years for males.
- It provides for the constitution of **surrogacy boards** at the national as well as state levels to ensure effective regulation
- **Only Indian couples** can opt for surrogacy in the country.

- The Bill also **seeks to regulate the functioning of surrogacy clinics.** All surrogacy clinics in the country need to be registered by the appropriate authority in order to undertake surrogacy or its related procedures.
- It also provides that intending couples should not abandon the child born out of surrogacy under any condition. The newborn child shall be entitled to all rights and privileges that are available to a natural child.
- The Bill **seeks to regulate functioning of surrogacy clinics.** All surrogacy clinics in the country need to be registered by the appropriate authority in order to undertake surrogacy or its related procedures.
- It also specifies that **no sex selection** can be done when it comes to surrogacy.

Concerns

- The bill states intending couples should be married Indian couples. There is no mention of Non-Resident Indians working or studying abroad who may want to come back home to have a baby.
- The Bill leaves out a lot of people who might want to have a baby through surrogacy, including unmarried couples, homosexual couples and single men and women.
- Banning of Commercial Surrogacy: The **livelihood of poor women** who are engaged in this sector will get compromised and will further push them into illegal underground activities

Way forward

- Rather than penalising surrogacy, the person providing a womb for surrogacy must be secured with a contract, ensuring proper, insurance and medical checks.
- For surrogacy to happen, we need embryos, and embryos are cultured in various In-Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) laboratories. So regulation of surrogacy must be preceded by law on Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART).
- Surrogacy should be made inclusive for all class of people irrespective of their sexuality
  Connecting the dots!
- Cloning
- Genetic Engineering of Embryos – Designer babies

Census 2021

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- Governance, Federalism

In news:

- Maharashtra and Bihar assembly have passed resolution seeking caste-based census for the enumeration of the OBCs in Census 2021
- As of now, Registrar General & Census Commissioner of India has not accepted the request, based on following reasons:
  - The collection of data of OBCs, SEBCs, other castes etc. will adversely affect integrity of census exercise and therefore the enumeration of OBCs, SEBCs, other castes has not been taken up in 2021 Census

- o No Standardization: In case, a question on OBCs is canvassed, it will return names of thousands of castes, sub-castes as the people use their clan/gotra, sub-caste, caste interchangeably thus making the caste enumeration exercise practically difficult
- o Unlike SC & ST, there is no such constitutional mandate to provide census numbers of OBCs.
- The 2011 caste data, collected as part of the Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC), is yet to be released by the Centre.
- The last caste-based census was conducted by the British in 1931.

Prelims Value addition about Census

- The census provides information on size, distribution and socio-economic, demographic and other characteristics of the country's population.
- The first synchronous census in India was held in 1881. Since then, censuses have been undertaken uninterruptedly once every ten years.
- The Census 2021 will be conducted in 18 languages out of the 22 scheduled languages (under 8th schedule) and English**,** while Census 2011 was in 16 of the 22 scheduled languages declared at that time.
- For the first time in the 140 year history of census in India, data is proposed to be collected through a mobile app by enumerators
- The Census data would be available by the year 2024-25 as the entire process would be conducted digitally and data crunching would be quicker.

SOCIAL ISSUE/WELFARE

7 in 100 Anganwadi beneficiaries in cities

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- welfare schemes
In news:

- For every 100 anganwadi beneficiaries in the country, only seven are in urban areas.

Impact: because of a severe lack of anganwadis in cities, leading to poor coverage of the government's flagship programme in early childhood development.
From Prelims Point of view:

Anganwadi

- Anganwadis or day-care centres are set up under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) by the Women and Child Development Ministry to provide a package of six services.
- The services include supplementary nutrition; pre-school non-formal education; immunisation, nutrition and health education; as well as referral services.
- The aim of the scheme is to reduce infant mortality and child malnutrition.
- Beneficiaries include children in the age group of six months to six years, and pregnant women and lactating mothers.

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS):

- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS**) is an Indian government welfare programme which provides food, preschool education, and primary healthcare to children less than 6 years of age and their mothers. These services are provided from Anganwadi centres established mainly in rural areas and staffed with frontline workers.

Nutrition and Budget's fine print

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- welfare schemes

The Global Hunger Index, reported that India suffers from "serious" hunger, ranked 102 out of 117 countries, and that **just a tenth of children between six to 23 months** are fed a minimum acceptable diet.

Malnutrition - A condition that results from eating a diet in which one or more nutrients are either not enough or are too much.

There are multiple dimensions of malnutrition that include calorific deficiency, protein hunger and micronutrient deficiency.

However, there are gaps in government's policy and budgetary allocation when dealing with nutrition in India, some of these are:

First calorific deficiency

- The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme provides a package of services including supplementary nutrition, nutrition and health education, health check-ups and referral services.

- ICSD tries to tackle calorific deficiency of children, pregnant and lactating mothers and adolescent girls, and key community groups.
- For 2019-20, the allotment was Rs. 27,584.37 crore but revised estimates are Rs. 24,954.50 crore, which points to an underutilisation of resources.
- Another pathway to address hunger is the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, to enhance nutrition of schoolchildren.
- Here too, the issue has been with poor expenditure. The 2019-20 Budget allocation was Rs. 11,000 crore and revised estimates are only Rs. 9,912 crore

Second is protein hunger

- Pulses are a major contributor to address protein hunger.
- However, a scheme for State and Union Territories aims to reach pulses into welfare schemes (Mid-Day Meal, Public Distribution System, ICDS) has revised estimates standing at just Rs. 370 crore against Rs. 800 crore allocation in the 2019-20 Budget.

Third is Micronutrient deficiency

- Horticulture Mission – which can be one of the ways to address micronutrient deficiency – also has poor implementation.
- Revised estimates for 2019-20 stand at Rs. 1,583.50 crore against an allocation of Rs. 2,225 crore.
- As millets have the potential to address micronutrient deficiencies, the momentum given to these cereals through its inclusion in NFSM (National Food Security Mission) needs to be sustained.
- However, the NFSM strains to implement allocation of ₹2,000 crore during 2019-20, as revised expenditures stand at ₹1,776.90 crore.

Fourth is weakness in POSHAN Abhiyan

- Under POSHAN Abhiyaan, the National Nutrition Mission which is a major initiative to address malnutrition, focus of the bulk of the funding has been on technology, whereas, actually, it is convergence that is crucial to address nutrition.
- The Initiative also found on average that only 34% of funds released by the Government of India were spent from FY 2017-18 to FY 2019-20 till November 30, 2019.

Impact of underspending: allocations for subsequent years will also be affected, limiting the possibility of increasing budgets

Following are suggestions to move forward:

- Focus on nutrition-related interventions, beyond digitization.
- Intensify the convergence component of POSHAN Abhiyaan, using the platform to bring all departments in one place to address nutrition
- To form 10,000 farmer producer organizations with an allocation of Rs. 500 crore to nutrition-based activities
- Promotion of youth schemes to be directed to nutrition-agriculture link activities in rural areas
- Give explicit emphasis and fund allocation to agriculture-nutrition linked schemes
- Ensure early disbursement of funds and an optimum utilization of schemes linked to nutrition.

Conclusion

Nutrition goes beyond just food, with economic, health, water sanitation, gender perspectives and social norms contributing to better nutrition.

This is why implementation of multiple schemes can contribute to better nutrition.

Did You Know?

- The link between agriculture and nutrition is important because about three-fifths of rural households are agricultural in India and malnutrition rates, particularly in rural areas are high.
- The Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh (BPKK) which was launched in 2019 by Minister for Women and Child Development and Microsoft is a recent attempt to bridge this gap
- BPKK is a repository of diverse crops across agro-climatic zones in India for better nutritional outcomes

Connecting the dots!

- Malnutrition's impact on GDP and SDG goal 2 of 'Zero Hunger' by 2030.
- Prevalence of Obesity in India- reasons and solutions

Children's Right to Protest and Safeguards for Child Witness

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- welfare schemes

Context

Supreme Court's took suo motu cognisance of children taking part in demonstrations in Shaheen Bagh in Delhi. This is in the background of an infant dying in the cold during protests.

Issues involved in the case which SC has to take note of

- The child should be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly or through a representative (Article 12 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC))
- While many schools encourage children to read newspapers and watch news channels, attending a protest is also a way for children to receive information and ideas
- A protest is also a space where children get to experience and assert citizenship
- It could also be a space for children to celebrate their unity as Indians.
- The case has a direct impact on children's right to participate in or witness a protest as well as on their mothers' right to protest.
- If by saying that women should not be allowed to take their children to protests, we would be effectively rendering impossible women's own mobility and pushing them back into their homes.
- It is generally acceptable for children to participate in an anti-pollution protest in peak winter, but not in the protests at Shaheen Bagh. The court needs to decide the basis on which it is decided that one is a valid exercise of the child's agency and the other is not
- Article 5 of CRC recognises the "evolving capacities" of children. This means that as children acquire enhanced competencies, there is a diminishing need for them to be protected.

Also recently the Bidar sedition case and the process of interrogation of Children by Police has raised concerns about State protection to Children

- Centre of the case is a school play that expressed dissent against PM Modi and the new citizenship law.
- This led to imprisonment of a mother of a student for having contributed to the script of school play and the arrest of the principal for allowing it to be performed in her school.
- Also children were interrogated by uniformed police officers in the absence of any child welfare workers.

These traumatic experiences are not only a violation of the fundamental rights of the child but are severely damaging to their mental health.

Indian Laws dealing with Child Witness

- Under Section 118 of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, there is no minimum age for a witness. Children as young as three years old have deposed before trial courts in cases of sexual abuse.
- Delhi High Court has come up with guidelines for recording evidence of Vulnerable witnesses like Children – process to be age-appropriate & sensitive, provision of facilitator for effective communication between stakeholders etc.
- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 -the police to not be in their uniform while dealing with children; Special Juvenile Police Unit in each district and city to interview children; and Child Welfare Committee in every district to take cognisance of any violations by the authorities in their handling of children
- Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 - investigation a child should not be made to recount the incident multiple times.

Conclusion

- In the silence over violence being perpetrated against children, the country appears to have lost its moral compass.
- In order to ensure that Children have a productive upbringing free of any mental torture imposed due to structural reasons (poverty, insensitivity of bureaucracy)- government should bring in long term reforms.
- This includes enhanced spending on education and health, proper implementation of JJ Act and POSCO Act, societal awareness programmes about significance of Child's mental health and sensitization of personnel involved in Child Welfare programmes.

Connecting the dots!

- Kashmir Unrest and its impact on Children – their upbringing, future livelihood prospects and their rights under UN convention
- Donald Trump administration in the USA implemented its policy to reduce illegal immigration by separating children from their parents at the U.S. border with Mexico - consequences on the mental health of the children.

WOMEN ISSUE

Women Army officers eligible for permanent commission

Part of: GS Prelims –Society and GS-II- Women Empowerment

In News:

Supreme Court:

- Dismissed the Union government's submissions that women are physiologically weaker than men as a "sex stereotype"
- Declared that Short Service Commission (SSC) women officers are eligible for permanent commission and command posts in the Army irrespective of their years of service.
- The court found the remarks in the note not only constitutionally invalid but also discriminatory, affecting the dignity of women officers.
- More details – Refer the Mains Focus section

IASbaba's Value Addition:

Prejudice & Stereotype:

- Prejudice refers to certain attitudes towards an individual or a group of individuals.
- Stereotype refers to allocation of particular roles to an individual or group of individuals.

For example, some have a prejudice towards women that they are weak. This leads to their role allocation in the society and certain jobs have been stereotyped for women-receptionists, teachers, nurse etc.

- Prejudice and stereotypes lead to social inequality and exclusion.

For example, if women are stereotyped as nurses, teachers and receptionists, they stand no chance of becoming an IAS, IPS, and Astronaut, diplomat, scientist and soldier.

Women in Armed Forces

Part of: GS Prelims –Society and GS-II- Women Empowerment

In News:

- The Supreme Court has asked government **to adhere to its own stated policy on granting permanent commission** to women in the Short Service Commission (SSC)
- At present, the women officers are allowed permanent commission (PC) only in two branches of the Indian Army, namely the Judge Advocate General and Army Education Corps.
- The remaining eight branches that will open up for women SSC officers in the army are Corps of Signals, Engineers, Army Aviation, Army Air Defence, Electronics and Mechanical Engineers, Army Service Corps, Army Ordinance Corps and the Intelligence Corps

What is Short Service Commission?

- It is an option of joining the Army and serving as a Commissioned Officer for 10 years
- At the end of 10 years a person has two options - Either to get elected for a Permanent Commission or opt out.
- Those not selected for Permanent Commission have the option of a 4 years extension. They can resign at any time during this period.
- **A Permanent Commission** means a career in the Army till you retire

Women in Army: Background of the case

1992: Induction of Women officers into Army started. Women were commissioned for a period of **five years** in certain chosen streams through Women Special Entry Scheme (WSES)

WSES had a shorter pre-commission training period than their male counterparts who were commissioned under the Short Service Commission (SSC) scheme.

2003: PIL was filed before the Delhi High Court for grant of permanent commission (PC) to women SSC officers in the Army

2006: WSES scheme was replaced with the SSC scheme, which was extended to women officers.

- **Women were commissioned for a period of 10 years, extendable up to 14 years**
- Women were however, restricted to roles in streams specified earlier — which excluded combat arms such as infantry and armoured corps.
- While male SSC officers could **opt for permanent commission at the end of 10 years** of service, this option was **not available to women officers**

Impact of such a system:

- Women were kept out of any **command appointment** (they could only reach up to the level of Colonel)
- Women could not qualify for **government pension**, which starts only after 20 years of service as an officer.

- **2008**: Defence Ministry passed an order saying PC would be granted prospectively to SSC women officers in the Judge Advocate General (JAG) department and the Army Education Corps (AEC) (2 out of 10 streams in PC)

2010: **Delhi High Court Order:** Women officers of the Air Force and Army on SSC who had sought permanent commission but were not granted that status, would be entitled to PC at par with male SSC officers.

This order was subsequently challenged by government in the Supreme Court and also did not implement the High Court order even though it was not stayed by the apex court.

August 15, 2018: Prime Minister Modi announced that permanent commission would be granted to serving women officers of the armed forces. However, it was not implemented on the ground which led the SC to pass the present judgement

Basis of arguments put forth by the government in the Apex Court while arguing against Women's inclusion in Permanent Commission are:

- Women were kept out of command posts on the reasoning that the largely rural rank and file will have problems with women as commanding officers.
- Limitations of judicial review on policy issues
- Occupational hazards
- SSC is merely a support cadre
- Biological arguments: Rationalization on physiological limitations for employment in staff appointments.
- Deployment of women officers was not advisable in conflict zones where there was "minimal facility for habitat and hygiene. (Despite the fact that 30% of the total number of women officers are deputed to conflict areas)

Implications of Supreme Court ruling:

- The court rejected all the above arguments of the government as discriminatory and against **Article 14** of the Constitution
- **Women on a par with male officers: SC** has done away with all discrimination for grant of PC in 10 non-combat wings in the army, bringing women on par with men.
- **Opening of command positions** would necessarily kick-start a flurry on activities within the military. Military secretary's branch will have to begin with reorganising cadre management to accommodate women officers
- It has also **removed the restriction of women officers only being allowed to serve in staff appointment**s, which is the most significant and far-reaching aspect of the judgment.

Conclusion

The bigger shift will have to take place in the culture, norms, and values of the rank and file of the Army, which will be the responsibility of the senior military and political leadership.

Connecting the dots!

- Representation of Women in Parliament/Legislature – Should SC also pass an order mandating 33% of legislature seats to be reserved for Women.
- Possible consequences of the ruling on Societal prejudices on women

HEALTH ISSUE

nCoV outbreak declared a State calamity in Kerala

GS Prelims and GS-II- Health and Sanitation

In news:

- A high-level group of Ministers has been constituted on the directions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to review the management of the outbreak.

From Prelims Point of View:

Novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV:

- Coronavirus is a large family of viruses that are often the source of respiratory infections, including the common cold.
- According to the World Health Organization, during previous outbreaks due to other coronaviruses, human-to-human transmission occurred through droplets or objects making contact, suggesting that the transmission mode of the 2019-nCoV can be identical.
- Symptoms may include fever, cough and shortness of breath.
- Antibiotics do not work against such viral pneumonia and there are no vaccines against them.
- Virus is contagious even during incubation that is even before a patient exhibits any symptoms. This characteristic amplifies transmissibility.
- Filoviruses are a family of non-segmented negative-stranded RNA viruses, with Marburg virus and Ebola virus constituting two different species.

If tap water meets BIS norms, RO systems will be banned

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II – Health

In news:

- Union Environment Ministry has published a draft notification that effectively prohibits users from installing **membrane-based water purification,** (RO), systems in their homes if the water has been sourced from a supply that meets the **Bureau of Indian Standards' (BIS) drinking water norms.**

From Prelims Point of View:

Membrane-based water purification (Osmosis):

- Osmosis is the naturally occurring tendency for two solutions of differing salinities to want to neutralize.
- Reverse Osmosis utilizes pressure to overcome the natural tendency and to force pure water through a semi-permeable membrane while concentrating salts and other dissolved solids on the feed side of the membrane.
- It is commonly used to generate clean drinking water from brackish groundwater.

Bureau of Indian Standards:
- National Standard Body of India for the harmonious development of the activities of standardization, marking and quality certification of goods.
- BIS has been providing traceability and tangibility benefits to the national economy in a number of ways by:

Advantages:
- Providing safe reliable quality goods.
- Minimizing health hazards to consumers.
- Promoting exports and imports substitute.
- Control over proliferation of varieties etc through standardization, certification and testing.

Coronavirus: India temporarily suspends e-visa facility for Chinese and foreigners residing in China

Part of: GS Prelims –Science & tech and GS-II – Health

In news:

India temporarily suspended e-visa facility for Chinese travelers and foreigners residing in China in view of the coronavirus

From Prelims Point of View

e-Visa:
- The India e-Visa is an electronic authorization to travel to India for business, tourism, or medical visits.
- When applying for an e-Visa, it is not necessary to submit your passport or other personal documents to the consulate.
- The e-Visa approval will be issued in advance electronically before your departure to India.
- At the immigration checkpoint the actual visa will be placed inside your passport.

E-VISA APPLICATION PROCESS

1 Apply online
Upload Photo and Passport Page

2 Pay eVisa fee online
Using Credit / Debit card / Payment Wallet

3 Receive ETA Online
Electronic Travel Authorization/ETA Will be sent to your e-mail

4 Fly To India
Print ETA and present at Immigration Check Post where eVisa will be stamped on passport.

Coronavirus: Study on bats and bat hunters in Nagaland

Part of: GS Prelims – Science & Tech and GS-II – Health

In news:

- The government has ordered an inquiry into a study conducted in Nagaland by researchers from the U.S., China and India on bats and humans carrying antibodies to deadly viruses like Ebola.

Steeped in secrecy

Researchers from the U.S., China and India conducted the study on bats and humans carrying antibodies to deadly viruses like Ebola

- The study found the presence of filovirus-reactive antibodies in human and bat populations in northeast India
- Bats often carry Ebola, rabies, marburg and the SARS coronavirus
- The study suggested that bats in South Asia act as a reservoir host of a diverse range of filoviruses
- For the study done in 2017, 85 individuals participating in an annual bat harvest at Mimi, Nagaland, were picked

From Prelims Point of View:

- **Filoviruses** are a family of non-segmented negative-stranded RNA viruses, with Marburg virus and Ebola virus constituting two different species.

Serum Institute hopes to offer COVID-19 vaccine

Part of: GS Prelims – Science & Tech and GS-II – Health

- Serum Institute of India, Pune, may begin the human trials for a vaccine for COVID-19

From Prelims point of view:

- World Health Organisation (WHO) has named the new coronavirus disease as 'Covid-19'.
- Taken from the words "corona", "virus" and "disease", with 2019
- The latest strain has been designated 'Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)

Source : WHO

Coronavirus samples from Karnataka test positive for H1N1

Part of: GS Prelims –Science & Tech and GS-II – Health

In news:

- Suspected **coronavirus (nCoV)** cases that tested negative for the virus have tested positive for H1N1

- Although the novel coronavirus is related **to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)**, the only difference is that the efficiency of person to person transmission is high in the novel coronavirus

From Prelims Point of View:

Coronaviruses

- Common in various species of animals, such as cattle, camels, bats, and cats.
- Cause diseases ranging from cold to SARS.
- Coronaviruses can infect humans, which can then spread from person to person.
- Coronaviruses cause respiratory infections in humans which are generally mild, but sometimes, can be fatal.

- Physically large as far as viruses go (26 – 32 kilobases), having a surface of spike projections (which resembles a crown and hence the name 'corona').
- Like the influenza virus, the coronavirus spreads through both direct and indirect contact.
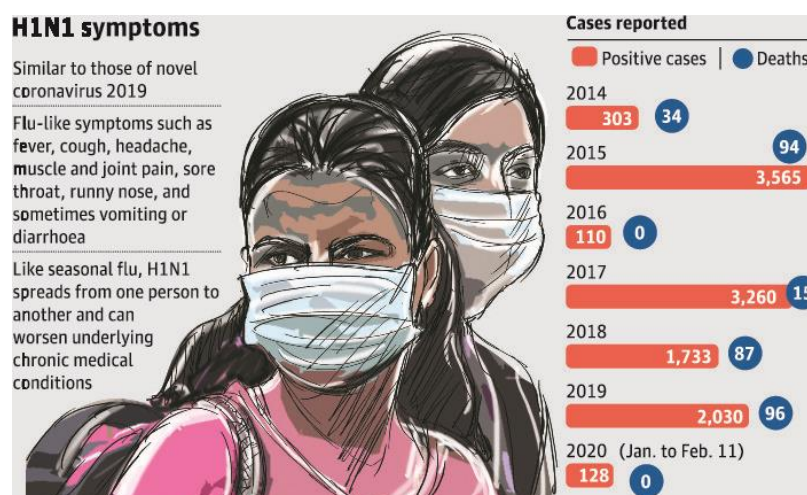
Uniform Code of Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- Health sector

In news:

- Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), which comes under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, has yet again "requested companies to abide by UCPMP" Uniform Code of Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices

From Prelims Point of view:

Uniform Code of Pharmaceuticals Marketing Practices, ("UCPMP Code")

- voluntary code issued by the Department Of Pharmaceuticals relating to marketing practices for Indian Pharmaceutical Companies and as well medical devices industry.

Abortion – Amendments to Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act -Mixed bag

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- Health sector

Context

Union Cabinet's approval of the amended MTP Bill 2020 which included changes demanded by women's groups and courts, including the Supreme Court.

Background

- Under the 1971 MTP Act, a pregnancy can be terminated until 20 weeks after conception if it will harm the mother, if the pregnancy was the result of rape, if the child will be born with serious physical or mental defects, or in case of contraceptive failure.

- If the pregnancy has gone over 20 weeks, then women has to seek legal course to terminate the pregnancy. The slow judicial process is thus pushing her to depend on illegal service providers for termination of unwanted pregnancies
- According to the ministry of health and family welfare, abortion deaths constitute 8% of all maternal deaths per year in India

The Bill seeks to extend the termination of pregnancy period from 20 months to 24 months, making it easier for women to safely and legally terminate an unwanted pregnancy.

The proposed amendments will definitely reduce the burden on the judiciary. The Court cases are broadly of two types. Let us critically analyses both these types

Type 1 -Pregnancies that extend beyond 20 weeks of gestation as a result of rape, incest or of minor women.

- The new Act rightly addresses these by extending prescribed period abortion to 24 weeks.
- However, such cases form a minuscule proportion of the total number.
- For such cases, even the 24-week cap can be done away with, provided the abortions can be safely done.

Type 2- Pregnancies that become unwanted after congenital foetal anomalies are found upon testing

- With advancement in prenatal foetal screening/diagnostic technologies –like Ultrasonography- more such cases are being filed in courts
- The extension to 24 weeks seems to give cover to these cases for abortion services, thus opening up the possibility for any congenital anomaly to be used as grounds for abortion.
- These foetal anomalies would involve some which are compatible with life and some which are incompatible with life.
- What constitutes an anomaly and whether it is life compatible or not depending on medical advancement and what is considered as socially desirable
- This raises concerns that raising children with disability can become "socially undesirable"

Conclusion

- With congenital anomalies as a ground for abortion, the eugenic mindset of having socially desirable children could push more women into risky late abortions.
- The approach of medical boards advising courts in cases of late abortions under this Act will be critical to balancing women's right to choose with risk to the woman and the motives for abortion.

Other Salient feature of the bill is:

1. Requirement of opinion of one registered medical practitioner (RMP*)* for termination of pregnancy up to 20 weeks of gestation – Earlier two RMP
2. Requirement of opinion of two RMPs for termination of pregnancy of 20 to 24 week
3. Raising the upper gestation limit from 20 to 24 weeks for special categories of women, including include rape survivors, victims of incest, differently-abled women and minors
4. Name and other particulars of a woman whose pregnancy has been terminated shall not be revealed, except to a person authorised in any law
5. Extend the contraceptive-failure clause for termination to include "any woman or her partner" from the present provision for "only married woman or her husband".

Connecting the dots!

- Reproductive rights of a women vs Rights (if any) of an unborn child

Govt. notifies medical devices as drugs

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- Health sector

In news:

- Health Ministry notified medical devices used on humans as drugs under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act
- Mandatory registration of such devices
- The notification will make companies accountable for quality
- Small manufacturers making low-risk equipment would find it tough to comply with the new rules.

From Prelims Point of View

The Drugs and Cosmetics Act

- The Drugs and Cosmetics Act the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- Amendments are related to the Conditions for License / Approval
- The proper name of the drug or fixed dose combination drug shall be printed or written in a conspicuous manner
- The name of the Drug shall be at least two font size larger than the brand name or the trade name
- The brand name or the trade name, if any, shall be written below or after the proper name on the label of the innermost container of the drug or every other covering in which the container is packed
- The first high-speed patrol boat being built for Vietnam under the $100-million Line of Credit (LoC) will be delivered

Background:

- In 2016, India had extended another $500 million defence LoC to Vietnam and discussions are under way to identify the equipment.
- India has also extended a defence LoC to Bangladesh and part of that is also for naval vessels.

IASBaba's Value Addition:

- **Line of Credit** is a 'soft loan' provided on concessional interest rates to developing countries,
- LOCs helps to promote exports of Indian goods and services,
- The projects under LOCs are spread over different sectors (Agriculture, Infrastructure, Telecom, Railway, Transmission/Power, Renewable Energy etc.).
- The **Indian Development Assistance Scheme (IDEAS)** (2015) includes provisions to provide better terms of credit, which will be attractive to many developing countries, who are now seeking alternative means of finance.

Powering the health-care engine with innovation

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- Health sector

Context

It's been 18 months since the launch of Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), or the national health protection scheme.

About Ayushman Bharat

- Ayushman Bharat adopts **a continuum of care approach**, comprising of two inter-related components, which are:
    1. Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs).
    2. Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY).
- It aims to bring quality healthcare to around **50 crore** poor and vulnerable Indians (based on the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) data)
- PM-JAY is **world's largest health insurance** fully financed by government which will provide free c**overage of up to Rs 5 lakh per family per year** at any government or even empaneled private hospitals all over India for secondary and tertiary medical care facilities.
- **Centrally sponsored scheme** with contribution from both Centre and State
- **Cashless access** to health care services for the beneficiary at the point of service.
- **Wellness Centres**: The 1.5 lakh sub-centres that are converted into wellness centres will cater to majority of services such as detection and treatment of cardiovascular diseases, screening for common cancers, mental health, care of the elderly, eye care, etc.

Performance of the Scheme

- The scheme is currently being implemented in **32 of 36 States and Union Territories.** (Delhi, Odisha, Telangana and West Bengal have opted out of the scheme saying that their own state schemes provides better coverage than PM-JAY)
- The scheme has resulted in **saving of over ₹12,000 crore** to the beneficiary families in one year of its operations.
- It has provided 84 lakh free treatments to poor and vulnerable patients for secondary and tertiary ailments at **22,000 empanelled hospitals,** countrywide.
- Under PM-JAY, there is **one free treatment every three seconds** and two beneficiaries verified every second.

Shortage in Supply

- At present, there is **one government bed for every 1,844 patients** and one doctor for every 11,082 patients.
- In the coming years, considering 3% hospitalisation of PM-JAY-covered beneficiaries, the scheme is likely to provide treatment to **1.5 crore patients annually.**
- This means **augmentation of physical and human infrastructure capacity** i.e. there is a need more than 150,000 additional beds, especially in Tier-2 and -3 cities.

Role of Innovation in Indian Health System

- A strong, yet under-tapped lever for accelerating health system efficiency and bridging these supply gaps, especially in short to medium term, **is mainstreaming innovation in the Indian health system**
- It is estimated that there are more than 4,000 health-care technology start-ups in India that can help leapfrog infrastructure, human resources, cost-effectiveness and efficiency challenges.
- Some of these innovation which holds promising future are:
    - Artificial Intelligence platforms that aid in rapid radiology diagnoses in low resource settings
    - Tele-ICU platforms to bridge the gap in high-skilled critical care personnel
    - Centralised drone delivery of blood, medicines and vaccines to reach remote locations cost-effectively and reliably

Challenges in mainstreaming health-care innovations:

1. Non-uniform regulatory and validation standards.

- As a result, hospitals often rely on foreign regulatory certifications such as FDA and CE, especially for riskier devices and instruments.
- In addition, it is difficult for a start-up to understand the minimum necessary validation requirements in order to qualify for procurement by hospitals

2. Operational liquidity crunch

- Due to a long gestation period, health-care start-ups spend long periods of time in the early development of their product, especially where potential clinical risks are concerned.
- The process of testing the idea and working prototype, receiving certifications, performing clinical and commercial validations, and raising funds, in a low-trust and unstructured environment makes the gestational period unusually long thereby limiting the operational liquidity of the start-up.

3. Lack of incentives and adequate frameworks to grade and adopt innovations.

- Health-care providers and clinicians, given limited bandwidth, often lack the incentives, operational capacity, and frameworks necessary to consider and adopt innovations.
- This leads to limited traction for start-ups promoting innovative solutions**.**

4. Procurement challenges

- Start-ups also face procurement challenges in both public and private procurement. They lack the financial capacity to deal with lengthy tenders and the roundabout process of price discovery.
- Private procurement is complicated by the presence of a fragmented customer base and limited systematic channels for distribution.

Way Forward

- Need to focus on identifying promising market-ready health-care innovations that are ready to be tested and deployed at scale.
- Need to facilitate standardized operational validation studies that are required for market adoption.
- **Ease out the start-up procurement process** such that these solutions can be adopted across board

Conclusion

- India has the unique opportunity to develop a robust ecosystem where hospitals actively engage with health-care start-ups by providing access to testbeds, communicating their needs effectively and adopting promising innovations.
- Start-ups can be effective collaborators for the most pressing health-care delivery challenges faced by hospitals, as opposed to being mere suppliers of technology or services.

Connecting the dots!

- Insurance model vs Public Health care provision model
- Linkages of Health care with other developmental parameters – Education, Sanitation, governance, civic participation, social empowerment etc.

Karnataka and 9 other states accounts for 65% of TB cases

Part of: GS Prelims –Science & Tech and GS-II- Health

In news:

- Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal are States where TB cases are high.
- The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare take measures in these States to eliminate TB by 2025 ahead of the Sustainable Development Goals target year of 2030.

IASbaba's Value addition:

Tuberculosis:

World Health Organization (WHO) has recently released 2019 Global Tuberculosis (TB) Report.

- TB remains the top infectious killer in the world claiming over 4,000 lives a day.
- Eight countries that accounted for two thirds of the global total include India (27%), China (9%) and Indonesia (8%).
- India (27%), China (9%) and Indonesia (8%) are in WHO's list of 30 high TB burden countries that accounted for 87% of the world's cases in 2018.

WHO End TB Strategy:

- Aims to end the global TB epidemic, with targets to reduce TB deaths by 95% cut new cases by 90% between 2015 and 2035, sets interim milestones for 2020, 2025, and 2030.

India:

- The Government has set a target of **Zero-Tuberculosis deaths by the year 2025**.

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched the **National Strategic Plan for TB Elimination in 2017.**

National Strategic Plan (NSP) for TB Elimination:
- **VISION**: TB-Free India with zero deaths, disease and poverty due to tuberculosis.
- **GOAL**: To achieve a rapid decline in the burden of TB, morbidity and mortality while working towards the elimination of TB in India by 2025.
- **PILLARS** : Detect – Treat – Prevent – Build [DTPB]

Tuberculosis:
- Tuberculosis is a contagious airborne disease, which can be acquired from close contact with an infected person.
- Mycobacterium Tuberculosis

Five Supreme Court judges infected with swine flu

Part of: GS Prelims –Science & Tech and GS-II- Health
From Prelims Point of View:
Swine Flu
- Human respiratory infection caused by an influenza strain that started in pigs.
- First recognised in the **1919**
- Swine flu is caused by the H1N1 virus strain, which started in pigs.
Symptoms
- Fever, cough, sore throat, chills, weakness and body aches.
Spreads
- Airborne respiratory droplets (coughs or sneezes).
- Skin-to-skin contact (handshakes or hugs)
- Saliva (kissing or shared drinks).
- Touching a contaminated surface (blanket or doorknob)
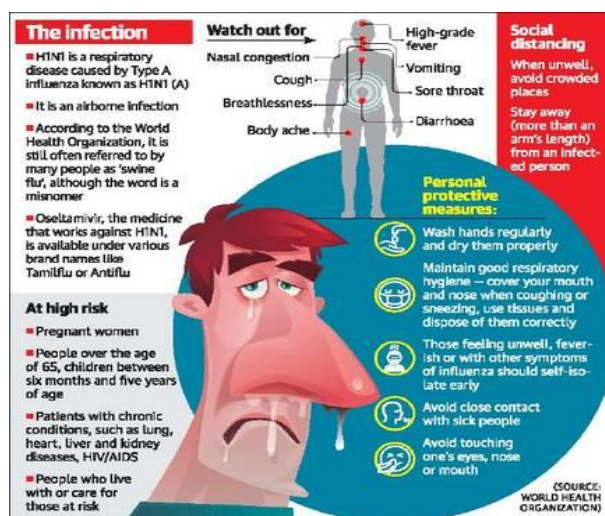
H1N1: MNC tells staff to work from home

Part of: GS Prelims –Science & Tech and GS-II- Health

In news:

- Multinational company in Bengaluru has given a "work from home" guidance to its employees after two of them tested positive for **influenza 'A' H1N1**

From Prelims Point of View:

Swine Flu

- Human respiratory infection caused by an influenza strain that started in pigs.
- First recognised in the 1919
- Swine flu is caused by the H1N1 virus strain, which started in pigs.

Symptoms

- Fever, cough, sore throat, chills, weakness and body aches.

Spreads

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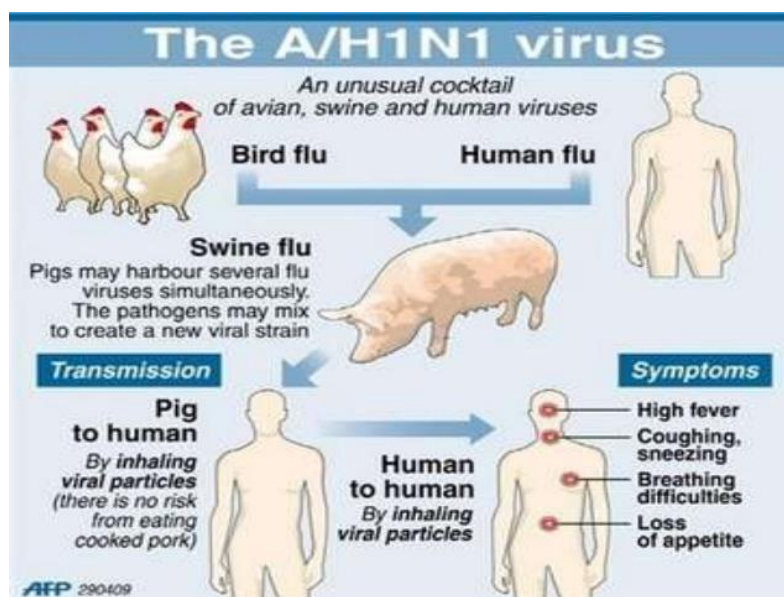
SRC: The Hindu

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

Implementation of Skill India at odds with political economy

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Government Policies

In news:

Study by the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) and the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) has revealed

- The implementation of the Skill India policy has not sufficiently anchored the reality of India's political economy
- The preponderance of informal service work — even in the organized sector — makes the future of the skilled service worker almost as bleak as that of the unskilled worker.

From Prelims point of view

Skill India Mission

- Skill India Mission is an initiative of the Government of India, launched by the Prime Minister on the 16th of July 2015 with an aim to train over 40 crore people in India in different skills by 2022.
- It includes various initiatives of the government like
  - National Skill Development Mission,
  - National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2015,
  - Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)
  - Skill Loan scheme

Swachh Bharat Mission second phase

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Government Policies

In news:

- The Centre will begin implementing the second phase of its Swachh Bharat mission in rural areas
- Focusing on solid and liquid waste management and the sustainability of the abolition of open defecation.
- Budget for 2020-21 had allocated ₹9,994 crore for the first year of the mission's Phase-II.
- Scheme will be implemented by the States, with a fund sharing pattern of 60:40 between the Centre and the States.
- In the north-eastern and Himalayan states, the Central share will be 90%.

From Prelims point of view:

Swachh Bharat Mission

- The Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) entered its fifth and final year of implementation.
- Aim to achieve Swachh Bharat by 2019, as a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th Birth Anniversary.

- SBM is a demand-centric model.
- It focuses on behaviour change to generate demand for sanitation services by the rural population which is then followed by supply.

Progress

- Rural sanitation coverage from 39% in October 2014 to 95% in 2018.
- 8.7 crore household toilets have been constructed
- 93.4% of the households in rural India who have access to a toilet use it.

UIDAI seeks proof of citizenship

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Government Policy

In news:

- Resident of Hyderabad was reportedly asked to prove his Indian citizenship by the Unique Identification Authority of India move to the High Court
- **UIDAI** in a release has said that Aadhaar has got nothing to do with citizenship.
- People had obtained Aadhaar on false pretences because they were found to be illegal immigrants. Such Aadhaar numbers are liable to cancellation.

IASBABA's Value Addition:

- Recently the Parliament has passed the Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019 which allows voluntary use of Aadhaar as proof of identity.

From Prelims Point of View:

Unique Identification Authority of India

- statutory authority established under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (Aadhaar Act 2016)
- Initially set up by the Government of India under the aegis of the Planning Commission
- UIDAI is mandated to assign a 12-digit unique identification (UID) number (Aadhaar) to all the residents of India.

Swachh Bharat Mission and Jal Jeevan Mission

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Government Policy

Context

India participated in ministerial round table discussion on "Scaling Up Sanitation in Africa" held at Addis Ababa

One of the biggest hurdles African ministers faced in replicating the SBM model in their countries was that they were not able to convince their finance ministries to invest heavily in sanitation like India has done since 2014.

Some of the reasons which have led to success of SBM in India are:

- **Political will** especially from the very top. Prime Minister of India provided leadership to the movement and made SBM one of the government's flagship programme.

- **Large investment** on sanitation through public financing: the central and state governments have invested in excess of one lakh crore on sanitation over 2014-19 period
- **Civil Society movement**: Media and NGOs realized the socio-economic significance of sanitation. These groups owned up the scheme and made it into social movement which led to behavioral changes at ground level.
- **Community Ownership:** The scheme relied upon the community owning up the scheme (through rankings of cities, declaration of ODF villages) instead of government bureaucracy led scheme. This led to sustenance of progress made during initial period. 95% of people with access to toilets in rural India used them regularly,

Returns on these investments in sanitation (through SBM):

- UNICEF estimated that investments in sanitation in India are yielding a 400 per cent return
- Each rural household in an open-defecation-free village saving Rs 50,000 on account of avoided medical costs and time savings.
- The Toilet Board Coalition has estimated that the sanitation infrastructure and services market in India will be worth over $60 billion by 2021 –creating many jobs even in the rural parts of the country.
- A study by UNICEF has estimated that SBM resulted in creating over 75 lakh full time equivalent jobs over the past five years, giving the rural economy a major boost.

On October 2, 2019, PM Modi commemorated the ODF declaration by all states and stated that the focus in future has to be on sustaining the success and moving towards ODF++ strategy

The next Critical service area which government considers as key pillar for broader rural development is Water. As a result, Government announced Jal Jeevan Mission on August 15th 2019.

- The goal of JJM is to ensure piped water supply for all households of India by 2024 with commitment of Rs 3.6 lakh crore of central and state funds for the scheme.
- In the Union budget for 2020-2021, the government has already allocated Rs 11,500 crore for JJM, with an additional Rs 12,000 crore being made available through extra budgetary resources
- In addition, a huge impetus to the rural water supply and sanitation sector is the earmarking of 50% of the Rs 60,750 crore grant for rural local bodies provided under the 15th Finance Commission for drinking water and sanitation.
- This ensures that the scheme is driven by local bodies and are sufficiently financed by the government to make it a success

Conclusion

- Investment in sanitation and water is actually a facilitator for broader economic, health and social gains as indicated in UNICEF studies.
- Government should replicate the model of sanitation, which has led to its success, in the area of water also to bring inclusive development in the country.

Connecting the dots

- NITI Aayog's Composite Water Management Index
- Ministry of Jal Shakti (merging of two ministries and reasons)

Do you know?

- ODF protocol - Not a single person is found defecating in the open.
- ODF+ protocol- Not just open defecation but also no public urination. Additionally, all community & public toilets need to be functional and well-maintained.
- ODF++ protocol adds the condition that faecal sludge/septage and sewage is safely managed and treated, with no discharging and/or dumping of untreated faecal sludge/septage and sewage in drains, water bodies or open areas.

UKIERI-UGC Higher Education Leadership Development Programme for Administrators

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- Government Schemes

In news:

- **Objective:** To train the senior and middle level academic administrators in Indian Universities to enable them to bring about systemic changes with renewed approaches, capacity, tools and skill in Universities in India.
- **Implemented by:** Joint initiative of UGC and British Council in India under the auspices of UK India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI)
- UKIERI was started in April, 2006 with the aim of enhancing educational linkages between India and the UK.
- UKIERI Phase 3 (2016-2021) aims to promote institutional and individual excellence in educational practices, research, and employability.
- UGC came into existence on 28th December, 1953 and became a statutory body by an Act of Parliament in 1956, for the coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in university education.
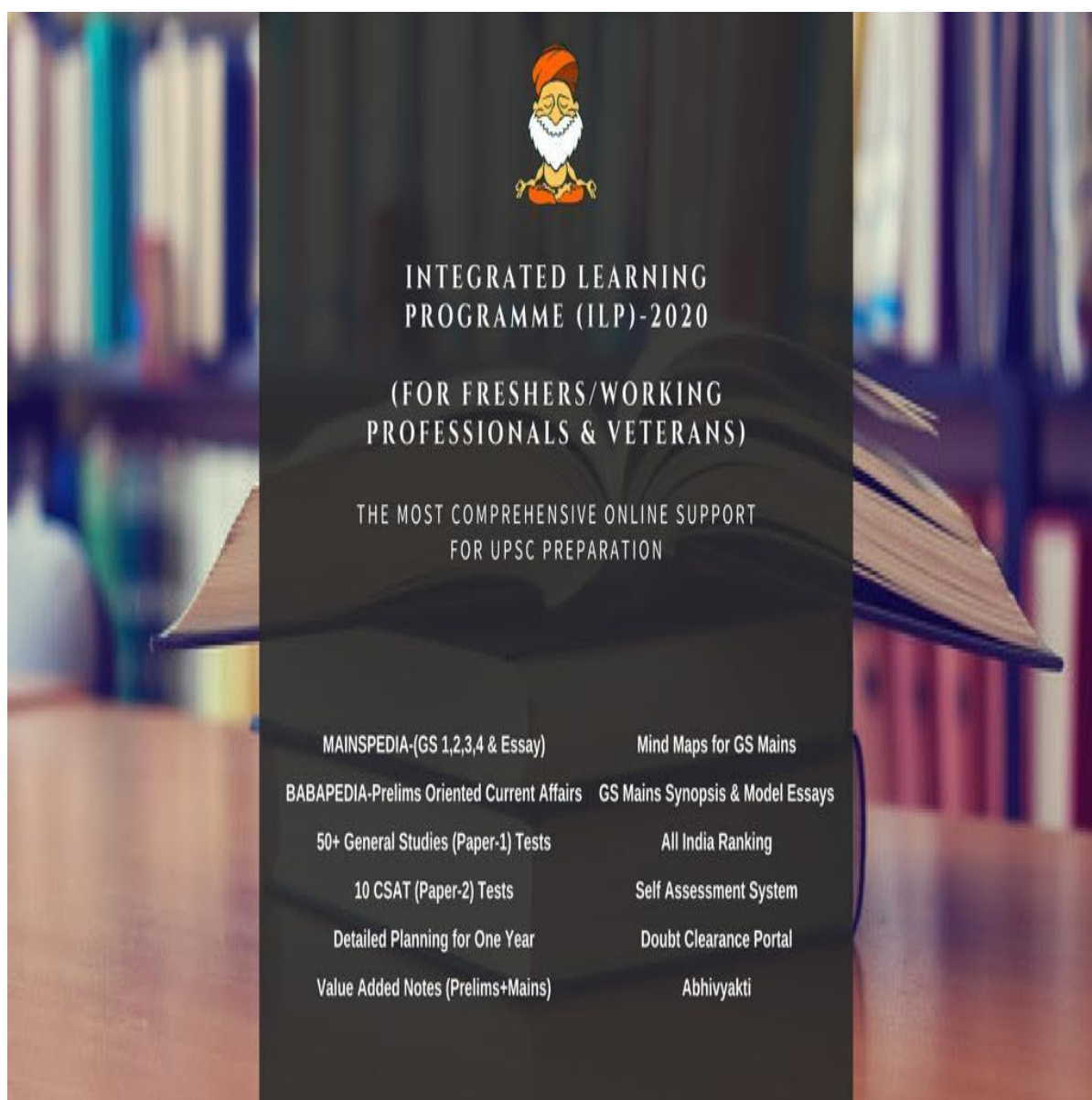
National Technical Textiles Mission

Part of: GS Prelims- Government Schemes and GS-II- Governance; GS-III-Economy

In news:

- Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved to set up a National Technical Textiles Mission with a total outlay of Rs 1480 Crore with a view to position the country as a global leader in technical textiles
- A Mission Directorate will be operational in the Ministry of Textiles.
- The Mission aims at increasing the size of the technical textiles in the domestic market to $40 billion which would require an average growth of at least 10 % per annum.
- Technical textiles are textiles materials and products manufactured primarily for technical performance and functional properties rather than aesthetic characteristics.

- Technical Textiles products are divided into 12 broad categories (Agrotech, Buildtech, Clothtech, Geotech, Hometech, Indutech, Mobiltech, Meditech, Protech, Sportstech, Oekotech, Packtech) depending upon their application areas.
- It will be implemented for four years starting from 2020-2021 and will have four components namely
  1. Research, development and innovation with an outlay of ₹1,000 crores
  2. Promotion and development of the market for technical textiles.
  3. Export promotion
  4. Promoting technical education at higher engineering and technology levels related to technical textiles.

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INTERNATIONAL

Huduma Namba – Kenya's UID

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-I- International Affairs

In News

- New digital identification system (NIIMS) has been launched by **Kenyan government** whereby each citizen will be assigned a Unique Identification Number (UID) or the "Huduma Namba" (as it is referred to in Swahili)
- **National Integrated Identity Management System (NIIMS)** is envisaged as a national population register which will be the single source of information about Kenyan citizens and foreigners resident in the country.
- Data collected for the purposes of the Huduma Namba includes place of birth, parentage, marital status, education background, employment status and biometrics including fingerprints and a photograph.
- Kenya has maintained that registering in NIIMS will be necessary to have access to all public services such as healthcare, housing, voting rights, driving license and passport making it difficult and some cases impossible to opt-out of the system

Brexit

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-I- International Affairs

In News

- **Britain has officially left the European Union (EU)** and has become the first country to leave the 28-member bloc.
- However, nothing will change immediately because of the 11-month transition period (till Dec 31, 2020) negotiated as part of an EU-UK exit deal, 2019
- During the transition, the UK will be officially out of the EU and not be represented on EU bodies but would still have the same obligations as an EU member. That includes remaining in the EU customs union and the single market, contributing to the EU's budget and following EU law.

Beijing Declaration - 25 years of adoption

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-I- Society

In News

- T**he Beijing Declaration** was a resolution adopted by the UN at the end of the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.
- The resolution adopted to promulgate a set of principles concerning the equality of men and women.
- It was a critical turning point in the **world's focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women.**

Masood Azhar & family missing, Pak. tells financial watchdog FATF

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- International organization

In news:

- Pakistan has informed the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) that Masood Azhar, founder of terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), and his family are "missing".
- Listed as a designated terrorist by the United Nations Security Council 1267 Committee
- The FATF is now reviewing Pakistan's case to see if it fulfils the global standards criteria to combat terror-financing.
- The FATF is chaired by China.
- JeM had claimed responsibility for the Pulwama terror attack on February 14 last year when 40 CRPF personnel were killed in a car bombing.

Timeline:

Bloody campaign

Pakistan has said JeM chief Masood Azhar and his family are missing. A look at his reign of terror:

1979-1989: Azhar was chosen as the head of Harkat ul-Ansar's department of motivation

Early 1990s: Azhar became the general secretary of Harkat ul-Ansar and visited many international locations to raise funds

- Was part of Harkat ul-Mujahideen or Harkat ul-Ansar, when arrested in India in 1994

- In 1994, Omar Shaikh kidnapped four Europeans from Delhi

to release Azhar. He was arrested

- In July 1995, HuM aka HuA kidnapped 5 Europeans in Kashmir and killed them by Dec. 1995 to seek the release Azhar and Shaikh

- JeM was formed in 1999 after the release of Azhar on Dec. 31, 1999, after IC-814 was hijacked on Dec. 24, 1999

Jan. 1, 2016: Orchestrated the Pathankot attack

August 17, 2016: Militants killed two soldiers and a policeman in Baramulla

On September 18, 2016: 18 soldiers were killed in Uri

On Feb. 14, 2019: JeM carried out a suicide attack in Pulwama and killed 40 CRPF personnel

- **May 1, 2019:** Designated as a global terrorist by a UN committee

Src: the hindu

From Prelims Point of View:

FATF (Financial Action Task Force)

- Established in 1989 by a Group of Seven (G-7) Summit in Paris
- To examine and develop measures to combat money laundering.
- Recently in 2012 it expanded its mandate to incorporate efforts to combat terrorist financing,
- Secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris.

United Nations Security Council resolution 1267

- Adopted unanimously on1999
- the Council designated Osama bin Laden and associates as terrorists
- Established a sanctions regime to cover individuals and entities associated with Al-Qaida, Osama bin Laden and/or the Taliban wherever located

Pakistan to remain FATF's 'Grey List'

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- International relations

In news:

- The International Co-operation Review Group (ICRG) of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommended that Pakistan be retained on the 'Grey List'.
- Pakistan was placed on the grey list by the FATF last year for failing to curb anti-terror financing
- To complete the 27-point action plan it has been given by June 2020 or face being put on the 'black list'
- **FATF** placed **Iran** on its blacklist after it failed to comply with international anti-terrorism financing norms, a move that will deepen the country's isolation from financial markets.

From Prelims Point of View:

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

- Inter-governmental body established in 1989 on the initiative of the G7.
- Secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris.
- Generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas
- to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures
- Combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.

FATF summary report states that Pakistan must work on eight specific areas:

- Identifying and investigating "terror-financing activities
- Freezing the funds of all designated terrorists
- "effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions" against all terror entities

From Prelims Point of View:

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

- Inter-governmental body
- Established in 1989 during the G7 Summit
- Secretariat is located at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) headquarters in Paris.
- Works to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures

- Combats money laundering, terrorist financing ,related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.

Grey list: A country is put on the grey list when it fails to curb terrorism financing and money laundering

Blacklist: Putting a country on the blacklist means shutting all doors to international finance for that country.

No reprieve
Pakistan has been retained on the 'grey list' of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) for four more months

- Pakistan was given a September 2019 deadline to shut down access to funding of UN Security Council-designated terror groups and prosecute their leadership

- In November 2019, after Pakistan was judged to have complied with only four points, the FATF extended the

deadline to February

- Pakistan is among 12 countries on the 'grey list' or 'other monitored jurisdictions' that are being reviewed for actions to stop terror financing and money laundering

- A 'black list' refers to countries for whom there has been a "call to action" or strict banking and international finance sanctions

Source: The Hindu

Regional integration pegged to SAARC revival

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- International relations
In news:
Sri Lanka's former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said:

- Postponement of the Kathmandu SAARC Summit in 2017 due to heightened tensions between India and Pakistan had brought the regional grouping "to a standstill".
- Successful regional integration both economic and security depends on SAARC becoming fully functional at the highest levels
- BIMSTEC is not a substitute for SAARC
- Proposed an 'Economic Integration Road Map (EIRM)' : a "sub-region", consisting of the five southern States of India, Sri Lanka (Population of 300 million people and a combined GDP of over $500 billion)

From Prelims Point of View:
South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

- Established with the signing of the SAARC Charter Dhaka
- Headquarters and Secretariat Kathmandu, Nepal.

Framework of the SAARC:

- Respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and mutual benefit.

SAARC comprises of eight member States

- o Afghanistan
- o Bangladesh
- o Bhutan
- o India
- o Maldives
- o Nepal
- o Pakistan
- o Sri Lanka

Observers to SAARC, are: (i) Australia; (ii) China; (iii) the European Union; (iv) Iran; (v) Japan; (vi) the Republic of Korea; (vii) Mauritius; (viii) Myanmar; and (ix) the United States of America.

BIMSTEC

- Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional multilateral organisation.

Members:

- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- India
- Nepal
- Sri Lanka
- Myanmar
- Thailand

Features

- Connects South and Southeast Asia
- Connects ecologies of the Great Himalayas and the Bay of Bengal.

Aims

- To create an enabling environment for rapid economic development
- Accelerate social progress , Promote collaboration on matters of common interest in the region.
- Sub-regional organization came into being in 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration
- Creating an enabling environment for the rapid economic development of the sub-region.
- Encouraging the spirit of equality and partnership.

- Promoting active collaboration and mutual assistance in the areas of common interests of the member countries
- Accelerating support for each other in the fields of education, science, and technology, etc.

33 Turkish soldiers killed in Syria strikes

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- International Affairs

In news:

- **Syrian Civil War**: Syrian government forces, backed by Russian air power, have launched an assault to capture the northwest Syria, the last remaining territory held by Syrian rebels backed by Turkey
- As a result, UN Security Council called an emergency meeting to avert open conflict between Russia and NATO member Turkey

Prelims Value Addition

- North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a military alliance established by the Washington Treaty of April 4, 1949, by US, Canada, and several Western European nations to provide collective security against then USSR
- A key provision of the treaty, the so-called Article 5, states that if one member of the alliance is attacked then it is to be considered an attack on all members.
- NATO effectively put Western Europe under the "nuclear umbrella" of the US.
- As of 2019, there are 29 member states, with Montenegro becoming the latest member to join the alliance in 2017

∧ Alphabetical list of NATO member countries

Albania	Belgium	Bulgaria	Canada	Croatia	Czech
2009	1949	2004	1949	2009	**Republic**
					1999

Denmark	Estonia	France	Germany	Greece	Hungary
1949	2004	1949	1955	1952	1999

Iceland	Italy	Latvia	Lithuania	Luxembourg	Montenegro
1949	1949	2004	2004	1949	2017

Netherlands	Norway	Poland	Portugal	Romania	Slovakia
1949	1949	1999	1949	2004	2004

Slovenia	Spain	Turkey	United	United	
2004	1982	1952	**Kingdom**	**States**	
			1949	1949	

INDIA AND THE WORLD

International Maritime Organization (IMO) & India

Context

IMO mandates that merchant ships should not burn fuel with Sulphur content more than 0.5% beginning January 1, 2020. India's negligible presence and interventions in IMO have been affecting its interests.

About International Maritime Organization

- It was established by **UN convention in Geneva on 17 March 1948** and met for the first time in January 1959.
- IMO is responsible for measures to improve the safety and security of international shipping and to prevent pollution from ships**.**
- It is also involved in legal matters, including liability and compensation issues and the facilitation of international maritime traffic
- It currently has 174 Member States. India joined in 1959.

Role of IMO

- The IMO is **not** responsible for enforcing its policies. There is **no enforcement mechanism** to implement the policies of the IMO.
- The IMO, like any other UN agency, is primarily a secretariat, which facilitates decision-making processes on all maritime matters through meetings of member states.
- The binding instruments are brought in through the conventions — to which member states sign on to for compliance

The Third IMO GHG Study 2014 estimated that international shipping emitted 796 million tonnes of CO2 in 2012, accounting for about 2.2% of the total global anthropogenic CO2 emissions for that year,

Also, IMO states that emissions from international shipping could grow between 50% and 250% by 2050 mainly due to the growth of the world maritime trade.

IMO regulations to reduce sulphur oxides (SO$_x$) emissions from ships first came into force in 2005, under the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL Convention). Since then, the limits on sulphur oxides have been progressively tightened.

Significance of latest decision by IMO

- **Previous Sulphur Limit was 3.5%,** which was applicable to most parts of the world.
- If global shipping were a country, it would be the sixth largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions, therefore cleaner fuel will help reduce SOx emissions which reduces pollution.
- The new regulations will have major health and environmental benefits for the world, particularly for populations living close to ports and coasts.

Impact of new rules by IMO limiting Sulphur content

- **Redesigning refineries** including those in India so as to produce cleaner fuel- this entails **capital investment** and thus increased cost of fuel
- Increased freight costs due to increased cost of fuel which will have a cascading effect on retail prices of goods.
- **Structural changes to Ships**: Very-low-sulphur fuel would be incompatible with the engines and other vessel equipment. There have been instances of ships having been stranded after fine particles separated out from the fuel, damaging equipment and clogging up devices.

Dominance of Developed Countries in IMO
- To ensure that their maritime interests are protected, the European countries move their proposals in unison and voting or support are given en bloc.
- The European Union has a documented procedure on how to influence the IMO
- Prominent maritime nations have their permanent representatives at London (HQ) and are supported by a large contingent of domain experts from their maritime administration, seafarers and industry associations during the meeting
- These countries ensure that they have representation in every sub-committee, working group and even correspondence groups so that they are aware of the developments.

Inadequate Participation by India in IMO
- India's permanent representative post in the IMO has remained vacant for the last 25 years.
- Representation at meetings is often through a skeletal delegation.
- The number of submissions made by India in the recent past has been few and not in proportion to India's stakes in global shipping.
- There have also been obstacles in pushing issues which are of importance to India. A classic case was the promulgation of "High Risk Areas" by IMO in Arabian sea which led to increased insurance costs for shipping industry
- There was also great difficulty in introducing the indigenously designed **NavIC** in the worldwide maritime navigation system.
- The agenda and interventions pushed by the developed countries are not entirely pragmatic from the point of view of India's interests with efforts to push products & companies based in West

Issue of High Risk Area
- o IMO demarcated **'High-Risk Areas'** when piracy was at its peak particularly by Somalian pirates.
- o The IMO's demarcation resulted in half the Arabian Sea and virtually the entire south-west coast of India being seen as piracy-infested, despite the presence of the Indian Navy and Coast Guard.
- o The **"Enrica Lexie"** shooting incident of 2012, off the coast of Kerala, was a direct fallout of the demarcation.
- o It took great efforts by India to revoke the promulgation.

Way forward

- IMO also needs to reduce **nitrogen oxides (NOx)** and **ozone-depleting gases.**
- At the earliest, **India should fill the vacant post** of the permanent representative at the IMO.
- India should have **well-laid-out procedure** and agenda to deal with procedures of IMO to further its interests.
- Promulgate **new policies** which makes the shipping industry in India adopt greener technologies

Connecting the dots

- Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships a.k.a Hong Kong Convention
- Montreal Protocol

1.25 lakh to attend 'Kem chho Trump' show

Part of: GS Prelims –International and GS-II- International relations

In news:

- The inauguration of the new Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Stadium, the largest cricket stadium in the world.
- Mr. Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold the "Kem chho Trump" (Howdy Trump) event at the stadium Mahatma Gandhi's favorite hymn, "Vaishnav Jan to" will be played in the background music.

From Prelims Point of view:

Vaishnava Jana To

- Vaishnava Jana to be a Hindu bhajan, written in the 15th century by the poet Narsinh Mehta in the Gujarati language.
- The poem speaks about the life, ideals and mentality of a Vaishnava jana (a follower of Vaishnavism).

U.S. nod for air defence system sale to India

Part of: GS Prelims –International and GS-II- International relations

In news:

- U.S. Department of State has approved the potential sale of a $1.867 billion Integrated Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS) to India.
- The Integrated Air Defence Weapon System, also known as the National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System (NASAMS), provides integrated air missile defence
- The IADWS system includes radar, launchers, targeting, and guidance systems, advanced medium-range air-to-air missile (AMRAAM) and Stinger missiles, and related equipment and support

AMRAAM

- The AIM-120 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missile (AMRAAM)
- It is an American beyond-visual-range air-to-air missile (BVRAAM) capable of all-weather day-and-night operations fire-and-forget weapon

- AMRAAM is the world's most popular beyond-visual-range missile

National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System was developed by USA in partnership with Norway. NASAMS-II is an upgraded version of NASAMS of Norway called Norwegian Advanced Surface to Air Missile System.

Trade talks between India -U.S.

Part of: GS Prelims –International and GS-II- International relations
In news:
Trade Issues:

- Medical device price caps levied by India,
- A rationalisation of tariffs levied by both sides,
- Greater market access for U.S. agricultural and dairy products.
- Full restoration of GSP (Generalised System of Preferences)

Full restoration of GSP (Generalised System of Preferences is unlikely at present, given the USTR's notice that aims to treat India and a number of other countries as "developed countries",

New "health cess" (US) will impact pricing for medical devices, and the raising of tariffs on several items including electric vehicle (EV) components, dairy products, shelled walnuts, edible vegetable oils, infant foods, and soy products may also become an issue

From Prelims Point of View
Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)

- Umbrella that comprises the bulk of preferential schemes granted by industrialized nations to developing countries.
- Reduced Most Favored Nations (MFN) Tariffs or duty-free entry of eligible products exported by beneficiary countries to the markets of donor countries.
- GSP was adopted at UNCTAD in New Delhi in 1968

UNCTAD

- United Nation Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is a permanent intergovernmental body established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1964.
- It supports developing countries to access the benefits of a globalized economy more fairly and effectively.

Indo- US relationship: Developed Tag on India & its implications

Part of: GS Prelims –International and GS-II- International relations
Context
U.S. has removed more than a dozen countries, including India, from its list of countries that are classified as "developing" for trade purposes.
These countries will now be classified instead as "developed" economies, thus stripping them of various trade benefits.
What is developing country status?

- The office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) maintains a list of countries that it classifies as developing, developed, and least-developed.
- Countries that are classified as developing are allowed to export certain goods to the U.S. without being hit by punitive tariffs that are usually imposed on goods from developed countries
- The "developing country" status owes its origin to the U.S. Trade Act of 1974, which authorised the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) to help poor countries develop faster.
- These benefits were extended further under the World Trade Organization wherein rich countries agreed to grant trade benefits to countries that classified themselves as poor.
- About two-thirds of countries that are members of the WTO classify themselves as "developing" countries and avail benefits.

Benefits of GSP to India

1. Indian exporters benefit indirectly – through the benefit that accrues to the importer by way of reduced tariff or duty free entry of eligible Indian products
2. Reduction or removal of import duty on an Indian product makes it more competitive to the importer – other things (e.g. quality) being equal.
3. This tariff preference helps new exporters to penetrate a market and established exporters to increase their market share and to improve upon the profit margins, in the donor country.

Why is India being stripped of this status?

- India has traditionally been one of the largest beneficiaries under the GSP, with over 2,000 goods having been exempted from import tariffs (until it was stripped off in 2019). This has also been one of the reasons for India having trade surplus with USA, whereby the Trump administration wants to reduce the gap
- Trump administration has argued that countries like India and China have witnessed significant growth in the last few decades and thus are not more developing countries
- USA has further cited the share of global trade enjoyed by India and China and their membership in the G20 club to argue that they enjoy significant economic power

Impact of US decision

- The task of reclaiming the lost GSP benefits now becomes even harder.
- It will increase the overall tax burden on Indian goods entering USA, thus making it costlier than before.
- It will pressurize India to open its market to US goods Ex: India offered to scale back tariffs on American dairy and other products after the U.S. complained about the restricted access that American companies have.
- It will add further pressure on the global economy, which has already witnessed a slowing of growth this year.
- It may further lead to entrenched Trade war if those countries which were stripped off their developing status, also increases tariffs on US goods

Conclusion

With both the U.S. and its various warring trading partners looking to protect their domestic producers rather than consumers who benefit from lower tariffs, escalations of trade war seem likely.

Connecting the dots!

- US-China Trade war

Developing Status – should it be based on mere economic progress or on broader socio-economic indicators?

India- US relationship: Trump Visit to India

Part of: GS Prelims –International and GS-II- International relations

Context

During Mr. Trump's visit to India on Feb 24-25, there is the prospect of more cooperation on trade and tariffs and also the possibility of major defence deals.

US-India Trade

- U.S.-India trade in goods and services has grown at a steady clip from $16-billion to $142-billion during 1999-2018.
- However, the trade growth is not without wrinkles. U.S. and Indian officials have disagreed for years on tariffs, foreign investment limitations, agricultural trade, medical devices, digital economy and IPR issues
- At the heart of Trump's foreign policy strategy are concerns about the trade deficit that the U.S. has with its economic partners worldwide, although India does not rank among the top 10 in this regard.
- In 2019 India's trade deficit with the U.S. of $23.3-billion is dwarfed by China's corresponding figure of $346-billion

Chronology of U.S.-India trade squabbles

- In March 2018, the Trump administration slapped "national security" tariffs of 25% on $761-million worth of steel and of 10% on $382-million of aluminium imported from India
- Trump administration ended a year-long review of the U.S. Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) in June 2019 by removing India from the tariff concession system.
- These measures are said to have impacted nearly $5.8 billion of India's exports, or more than 12% of exports to the U.S. in 2017.
- India immediately imposed higher retaliatory tariffs on 28 U.S. products including almonds, walnuts, cashews, apples, chickpeas, wheat, and peas.
- U.S. also recently changed the status of India, among other countries, to a "developed" country, to further reduce trade concessions that it could receive from the U.S.
- India has expressed its concern regarding restrictions on visas for highly skilled professionals seeking to take up employment in the U.S, even though laws that brought in restrictions, for example by imposing higher visa fees, were passed before Mr. Trump entered office.

Hope for a positive announcement on trade?

- There were initial signs that a "limited trade deal" might be hammered out when Mr. Trump and Mr. Modi meet.
- However, the aspiration of trade deal fell through when it became clear that nothing on that scale would be finalised until after November 2020 US Presidential elections.
- There is however possibility of a "mini trade deal" or more simply a smaller trade package announcement. This might include an increase in India's LNG imports from the U.S.
- An MoU for India's gas importer Petronet to invest $2.5 billion in U.S. company Tellurian Inc's LNG project, that was signed during Mr. Modi's visit to Houston, is likely to be formalised during Mr. Trump's visit

India – US defence prospects (during Trumps Visit)

- There is more positive news on the defence cooperation with the likely announcement during the visit of Mr. Trump of a deal for 24 Lockheed Martin-built MH-60R Seahawk Multi-Role Helicopters for the Indian Navy.
- These 24 helicopters, said to be worth $2.4-billion, are likely to be procured through the Foreign Military Sales route of the U.S. government. India's Cabinet Committee on Security has cleared their purchase
- India and the U.S. are also said to be in negotiations regarding India's potential purchase **of drones, additional P-8I long-range**, multimission maritime patrol aircraft and also Raytheon intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) aircraft.

India – US Strategic prospects (during Trumps Visit)

- Trump has reiterated his promise **withdraw US troops in Afghanistan** with the prospects of US- Taliban deal
- This might lead to revival of the Taliban's influence, Pakistan-based terror elements or Pakistan's ISI gaining a stronger foothold in the power vacuum that will inevitably develop there. This could compromise Indian interests considerably

Way forward

- India should come out with well defines Strategic Policy in its western sphere, which includes maritime arena also (Western Indian Ocean).
- India should improve the competitiveness of its own industries to make its products & services attractive to consumers so that they are able to overcome obstacles imposed temporarily by foreign governments.

Connecting the dots

- US-China Trade war
- India not joining RCEP trade deal
- Indo-US 2015 joint Vision of Indo-Pacific

India, U.S. 'Comprehensive Global Strategic Partners', ink deals on energy

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- International relations
In news:

India and the United States strengthened their partnership with agreements on healthcare and energy, and issued a joint statement that designated the two countries as **"Comprehensive Global Strategic partners"**.

Highlights:

- India - US called upon Pakistan to rein in cross-border terror threats
- Sought justice for the victims of 26/11 attack and the Pathankot terror attack of 2016.
- Called for concerted action against all terrorist groups including Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, the Haqqani Network, TTP, D Company, and all their affiliates
- Both India – US recognized the efforts of the ASEAN region to create a code of conduct in the South China Sea region.
- Agreed to undertake development activities in third countries and intensify cooperation in the space domain
- U.S. and India were working to revitalise the quadrilateral initiative consisting of Japan, the U.S., India and Australia
- Both sides also working on cybersecurity and counter-terrorism issues.

From Prelims Point of View:

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)

- Informal strategic dialogue between India, USA, Japan and Australia
- **Objective** : to ensure and support a "free, open and prosperous" Indo-Pacific region
- First mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe
- In 2017, India, the US, Australia and Japan gave shape to the long-pending "Quad" Coalition to develop a new strategy to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any influence (especially China).
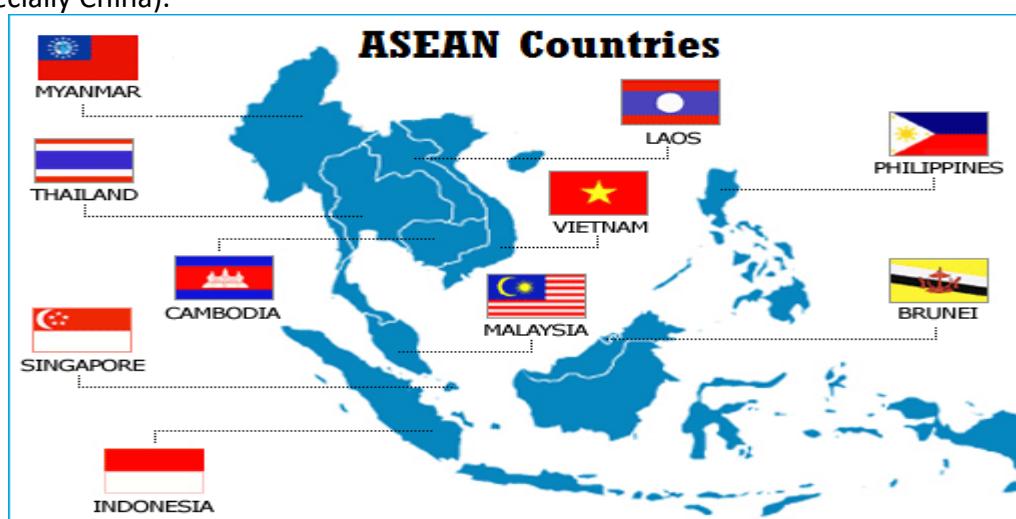
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  - **Src: Financetwitter**

ASEAN

- **Association of Southeast Asian Nations** is a regional organization to promote political and social stability amid rising tensions among the Asia-Pacific's post-colonial states.

- Secretariat – Indonesia, Jakarta.

International Conference on Standardisation of AYUSH Terminologies

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- Governance

In news:

- Two day International Conference on Standardisation of AYUSH Terminologies (**ICoSDiTAUS-2020)** was held in New Delhi.
- The conference was jointly organized by the Ministry of AYUSH and the WHO
- It adopted the "New Delhi Declaration on Collection and Classification of Traditional Medicine (TM) Diagnostic Data".
- The New Delhi declaration emphasised the commitment of the countries to Traditional Medicine (TM) as a significant area of health care.
- It further sought the opportunity for including traditional systems of medicine like Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD)
- ICD published by WHO is the standard diagnostic tool for health management across the world. The ICD provides a method of classifying diseases, injuries, and causes of death.
- More than 100 countries use the ICD system to report mortality data, a primary indicator of health status.

India's Need for Regional bonding

Part of: GS Prelims –International and GS-II- International relations

Context

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's participation in The Hindu's Huddle Conclave, where he discussed on the India's foreign policy & the need for greater regional integration.

India's recent steps

- India has more or less shut down all conversations on SAARC (Summit not being held since 2014)
- India has walked away from the ASEAN-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).
- Failure of BIMSTEC and SAARC to engender more intra-regional trade in comparison to other groupings such as ASEAN & EU.
- Indian government has taken a protectionist attitude on multilateral trade pacts and is relying more on direct bilateral deals with countries rather than overarching ones that might expose Indian markets to flooding by Chinese goods

About South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

- It was established on 8 December 1985.
- Its member countries are—Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan (2005)
- The Headquarters and Secretariat of the Association are at Kathmandu, Nepal.

- SAARC comprises 3% of the world's area, 21% of the world's population and 3.8% (2018) of the global economy.

About Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

- Established in 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration
- Its member countries are – Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal & Bhutan
- With Pakistan not being a member of organisation it was envisaged as a platform for India to speed up its regional integration process.
- It acts as a bridge between South and South East Asia
- Important Connectivity Projects are:
    - Kaladan Multimodal Project – links India and Myanmar.
    - Asian Trilateral Highway - connecting India and Thailand through Myanmar.
    - Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement - for seamless flow of passenger and cargo traffic.

Significance of SAARC and BIMSTEC

- **Neighbourhood first:** Primacy to the country's immediate neighbours.
- **Geostrategic significance:** Can counter China (OBOR initiative) through engaging our neighbours in development process and economic cooperation.
- **Regional stability:** These regional organisations can help in creation of mutual trust and ensure that regional interest over ride bilateral disputes
- **Global leadership role:** It offers India a platform to showcase its leadership in the region by taking up extra responsibilities.
- **Game changer for India's Act East Policy:** Linking of South Asian economies with South East Asian region will bring further economic integration and prosperity to India particularly in its under-developed Eastern region
- **Potential for India's export:** With closer economic integration of economies in the region, India's domestic companies will get access to much bigger market thus boosting their revenues

Challenges for SAARC & BIMSTEC

- **Broad area of cooperation** leads to diversion of energy and resources.
- **Inadequate Political Will:** India's inclination towards Big powers which leads to neglecting its relationship with its neighbours
- **Bilateral tensions**, especially between India and Pakistan, spilling over into SAARC meetings.
- **Perception of India being a Big Brother** vis-à-vis its neighbours whereby India enforces its own agenda on small neighbouring countries through these groupings
- **Slow implementation** of the projects announced by India - declines India's credibility to deliver on its promises thus pushing Nations to seek help from China or West.
- **Rising China** in the region with its overarching Belt & Road initiative (Cheque book Diplomacy of China)

Suggestion made by Mr. Wickremesinghe at the conclave

- An even **smaller sub-grouping of four countries** with complementary economies: India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Thailand, to begin the process of reducing tariffs and demolishing non-tariff barrier regimes
- **Proactive India's leadership** and more integrated South Asian region would enable India & others to negotiate for better terms with RCEP so as not to be cut out of the "productivity network" in Asia
- Also there is need to come up with **concrete Economic Integration Road Map** to speed up the process of greater cooperation & integration in regional arena

Conclusion

For any regional sub-grouping in South Asia to flourish, it is India that will have to make the most concessions given the vast trade deficits India's neighbours have at present, which it may not wish to do. India needs to be more accommodative for the realisation of its ambitions.

Connecting the dots

- ASEAN and EU – difference in structure & functioning of these regional organisation
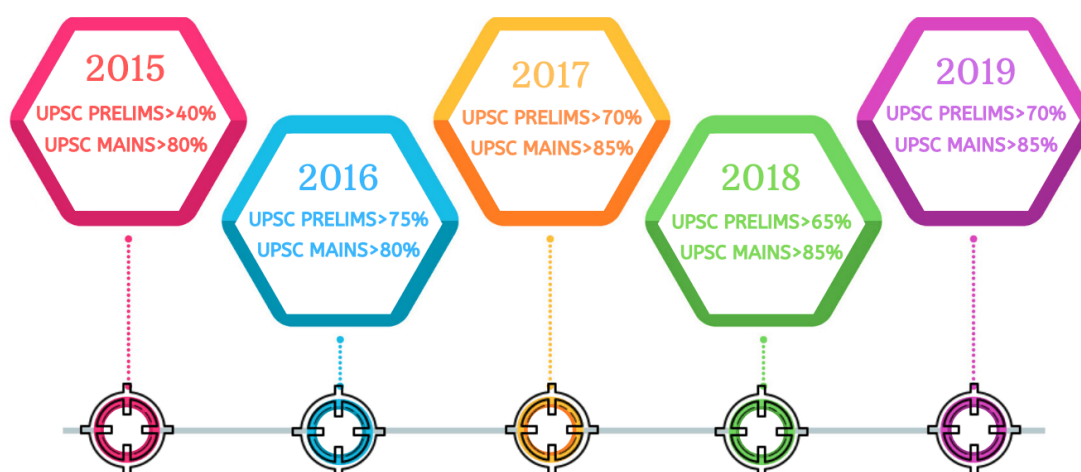
ECONOMY

Economic Survey

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Economy

In News

- The Economic Survey 2019-20 with the theme of ethical wealth creation was tabled in the Parliament by the Union Minister for Finance.(Details in the mains section)

About Economic Survey

- It is an official government's report on the state of the economy in the past one year, the key challenges it anticipates, and their possible solutions.
- The document is prepared by the **Economic Division of the Department of Economic Affairs** (DEA) under the guidance of the Chief Economic Adviser (CEA)
- Government is **not constitutionally bound to present the Economic Survey** or to follow the recommendations that are made in it

Key Highlights of the Economic Survey 2019-20

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Government Budgeting.

WEALTH CREATION: THE INVISIBLE HAND SUPPORTED BY THE HAND OF TRUST

Exponential rise in India's GDP and GDP per capita post-liberalisation coincides with wealth generation. Also, the liberalized sectors grew significantly faster than the closed ones.

Survey suggests strengthening the invisible hand by promoting pro-business policies to:

- Provide equal opportunities for new entrants.
- Enable fair competition and ease doing business.
- Eliminate policies unnecessarily undermining markets through government intervention.
- Enable trade for job creation.
- Efficiently scale up the banking sector.
- Introducing the idea of *trust as a public good*, which gets enhanced with greater use.
- Policies must empower transparency and effective enforcement using data and technology.
- **ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND WEALTH CREATION AT THE GRASSROOTS**
- India ranks third in number of new firms created, as per the World Bank. About 1.24 lakh new firms created in 2018, an increase of about 80 % from about 70,000 in 2014.
- A 10% increase in registration of new firms in a district yields a **1.8 % increase in Gross Domestic District Product (GDDP).** Entrepreneurship at district level has a significant impact on wealth creation at the grassroots.

- Literacy and education in a district foster local entrepreneurship significantly: New firm formation is the lowest in eastern India with lowest literacy rate (59.6 % as per 2011 Census).
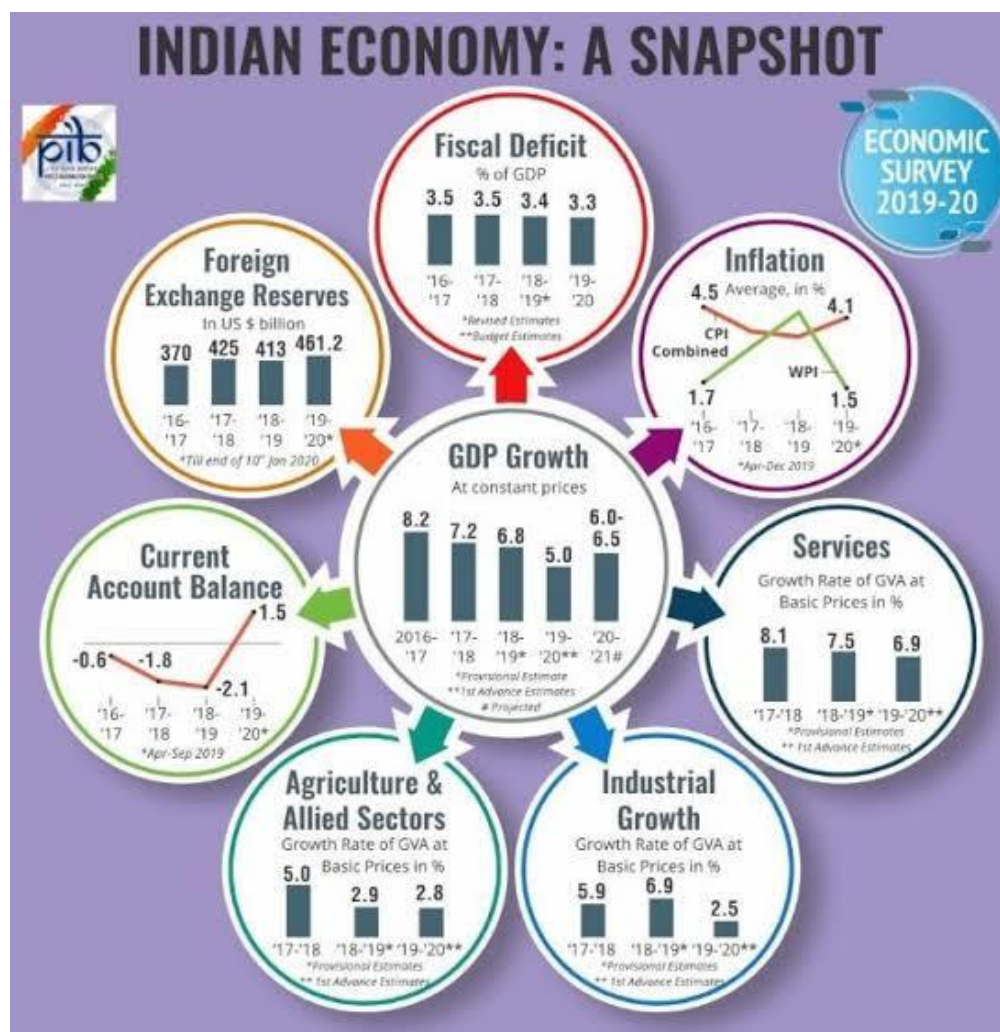
Pic Source: India Today

PRO-BUSINESS VERSUS PRO-MARKETS

India's aspiration to become a $5 trillion economy depends critically on promoting "pro-business" policy and weaning away from "pro-crony" policy, that may favour specific private interests, especially powerful incumbents.

Viewed from the lens of the Stock market, creative destruction increased significantly post-liberalization:

- Before liberalization, a Sensex firm expected to stay in it for 60 years, which decreased to only 12 years after liberalization.
- Post Liberalization, **every five years, one-third of Sensex firms are churned out**, reflecting the continuous influx of new firms, products and technologies into the economy.

Pro-crony policies such as discretionary allocation of natural resources till 2011 led to rent-seeking by beneficiaries while competitive allocation of the same post 2014 ended such rent extraction.

Crony lending that led to willful default, wherein promoters collectively siphoned off wealth from banks, led to losses that dwarf subsidies for rural development.

UNDERMINING MARKETS: WHEN GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION HURTS MORE THAN IT HELPS

Four examples of anachronistic government interventions:

1. Essential Commodities Act (ECA), 1955 distorts

- The incentives for the creation of storage infrastructure by the private sector.
- Movement up the agricultural value chain.
- Development of national market for agricultural commodities.
- With raids having abysmally low conviction rate and no impact on prices, the ECA only seems to enable rent-seeking and harassment.

2. Drug Price Control under ECA:

- The regulation of prices of drugs, through the DPCO 2013, led to increase in the price of the regulated pharmaceutical drug vis-à-vis that of an unregulated but similar drug.
- Solution: Government, being a huge buyer of drugs, can intervene more effectively to provide affordable drugs by combining all its purchases and exercising its bargaining power.

3. Government intervention in Grain markets:

- Policies in the food-grain markets led to:
  - Emergence of Government as the largest procurer and hoarder of rice and wheat.
  - Crowding out of private trade.
  - Burgeoning food subsidy burden
  - Inefficiencies in the markets, affecting the long run growth of agricultural sector.
- The food-grains policy needs to be dynamic and allow switching from physical handling and distribution of food-grains to **cash transfers/food coupons/smart cards**

4. Debt waivers: Analysis of debt waivers given by States/Centre:

- Full waiver beneficiaries consume less, save less, invest less and are less productive after the waiver, compared to the partial beneficiaries.
- Debt waivers disrupt the credit culture.
- They reduce formal credit flow to the very same farmers, thereby defeating the purpose.

Creating Jobs and Growth by Specializing in Network Products

- Survey says India has unprecedented opportunity to chart a China-like, labor-intensive, export trajectory.

- By **integrating "Assemble in India for the world" into Make in India**, India can:
  - o Raise its export market share to about 3.5 % by 2025 and 6 % by 2030
  - o Create 4 crore well-paid jobs by 2025 and 8 crore by 2030.
- Survey suggests a strategy similar to one used by China to grab this opportunity:
  - o Specialization at large scale in labour-intensive sectors, especially network products.
  - o Laser-like focus on enabling assembling operations at mammoth scale in network products.
  - o Export primarily to markets in rich countries.
  - o Trade policy must be an enabler

TARGETING EASE OF DOING BUSINESS IN INDIA

- A jump of 79 positions to 63 in 2019 from 142 in 2014 in World Bank's Doing Business rankings.
- India still trails in parameters such as Ease of Starting Business, Registering Property, Paying Taxes and Enforcing Contracts.
- Electronics exports and imports through Bengaluru airport illustrate how Indian logistical processes can be world class.
- The turnaround time of ships in India has almost halved to 2.48 days in 2018-19 from 4.67 days in 2010-11.

Suggestions for further Ease of Doing Business:

- Close coordination between the Logistics division of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, Ministry of Shipping and the different port authorities.
- Individual sectors such as tourism or manufacturing require a more targeted approach that maps out the regulatory and process bottlenecks for each segment.

2019 GOLDEN JUBILEE OF BANK NATIONALISATION: TAKING STOCK

- Since 1969, India's Banking sector has not developed proportionately to the growth in the size of the economy.
- India has **only one bank in the global top 100** – same as countries that are a fraction of its size: Finland (about 1/11th), Denmark (1/8th), etc.
- The onus of supporting the economy falls on the **PSBs accounting for 70 % of the market share** in Indian banking:
- In 2019, investment for **every rupee in PSBs, on average, led to the loss of 23 paise,** while in NPBs (New Private Banks) it led to the gain of 9.6 paise.

Solutions to make PSBs more efficient:

- Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) for PSBs' employees
- Representation on boards proportionate to the blocks held by employees to incentivize employees and align their interests with that of all shareholders of banks.
- Creation of a GSTN type entity that will aggregate data from all PSBs and use technologies like big data, artificial intelligence and machine learning in credit decisions for ensuring better screening and monitoring of borrowers, especially the large ones.

FINANCIAL FRAGILITY IN THE NBFC SECTOR
- Survey investigates the key drivers of Rollover Risk of the shadow banking system in India in light of the current liquidity crunch in the sector.
- Key drivers of Rollover Risk:
    - Asset Liability Management (ALM) Risk.
    - Interconnectedness Risk.
    - Financial and Operating Resilience of an NBFC.
    - Over-dependence on short-term wholesale funding.
- Analysis of a diagnostic (Health Score) by quantifying the Rollover risk provides an early warning signal of **impending liquidity problems.**
- The Survey prescribes to efficiently **allocate liquidity enhancements** across firms (with different Health Scores) in the NBFC sector, thereby arresting financial fragility in a capital-efficient manner.

Privatization and Wealth Creation
- Survey examines the realized **efficiency gains from privatization** in the Indian context and bolsters the case for aggressive disinvestment of CPSEs.
- Strategic disinvestment of Government's shareholding of 53.29 per cent in HPCL led to an increase of around Rs. 33,000 crore in national wealth.
- Likewise an **analysis of the before-after performance of 11 CPSEs** which underwent strategic disinvestment from 1999-2000 to 2003-04 show Privatized CPSEs have been able to generate more wealth from the same resources

THALINOMICS: THE ECONOMICS OF A PLATE OF FOOD IN INDIA
- An attempt to quantify what a common person pays for a Thali across India.
- A shift in the dynamics of Thali prices since 2015-16.
- Absolute prices of a vegetarian Thali have decreased significantly since 2015-16 across India; though the price has increased during 2019-20.

Post 2015-16:
- Average household gained close to Rs. 11, 000 on average per year from the moderation in prices in the case of vegetarian Thali.
- Average household that consumes two non-vegetarian Thalis gained close to Rs. 12, 000 on average per year during the same period.

From 2006-07 to 2019-20:
- Affordability of vegetarian Thalis improved 29 %.
- Affordability of non-vegetarian Thalis improved by 18 %.

INDIA'S ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE IN 2019-20

GDP growth pegged at 6-6.5% in fiscal year starting April 1, up from 5% in current fiscal

To achieve GDP of $5 trillion by 2024-25, India needs to spend about $1.4 trillion over these years on infrastructure

Current Account Deficit (CAD) narrowed to 1.5 % of GDP in H1 of 2019-20 from 2.1 % in 2018-19

India's BoP position improved from US$ 412.9 bn of forex reserves in end March, 2019 to US$ 461.2 bn as on 10th January, 2020.

Net FDI inflows were US$ 24.4 bn in the first eight months and Net FPI in the first eight months of 2019-20 stood at US$ 12.6 bn.

External Debt Remains low at 20.1% of GDP as at end September, 2019.

The Gross Non performing Advance Ratio:

- Remained unchanged for Scheduled Commercial banks at 9.3% between March and September 2019
- Increased slightly for the Non-Banking Financial Corporations (NBFCs) from 6.1% in March 2019 to 6.3% in September 2019.

Bank Credit growth (YoY) moderated from 12.9% in April 2019 to 7.1% as on December 20, 2019.

Total **formal employment** in the economy increased from 8 % in 2011-12 to 9.98 % in 2017-18.

About 76.7 % of the households in the rural and about 96 % in the urban areas had houses of pucca structure

Money earned in India by NRIs will be taxed

Part of: GS Prelims – Economy and GS-III – Budget

In news:

- The Finance Bill has proposed three major changes to prevent tax abuse by citizens that don't pay taxes anywhere in the world —
- reducing the number of days that an Indian citizen can be granted non-resident status for tax purposes from 182 to 120;
- citizens who don't pay taxes anywhere will be deemed to be a resident;
- The definition of 'not ordinarily resident' has been tightened.

Non-Resident Indian

- An Indian citizen who is ordinarily residing outside India and holds an Indian Passport.
- A person is considered NRI if She is not in India for 182 days or more during the financial year Or;
- If he/she is in India for less than 365 days during the 4 years preceding that year and less than 60 days in that year.

Bank of India, State Bank cut interest rates:

Part of: GS Prelims –Economy and GS-III- Banking

In news:

- Recently, The State Bank of India (SBI) and the Bank of India (BoI) have reduced their lending rates by cutting the marginal cost of fund-based lending rate (MCLR)

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced measures to ease interest rates

From Prelims Point of View:

Marginal cost of fund-based lending rate:

- The minimum interest rate that a bank can lend at.
- MCLR is a tenor-linked internal benchmark, which means the rate is determined internally by the bank depending on the period left for the repayment of a loan.
- It is closely linked to the actual deposit rates and is calculated based on four components: the marginal cost of funds, negative carry on account of cash reserve ratio, operating costs and tenor premium.
- Reserve Bank of India introduced the MCLR methodology for fixing interest rates from 1 April 2016.
- It replaced the base rate structure, which had been in place since July 2010.banks are free to offer all categories of loans on fixed or floating interest rates.
- The actual lending rates for loans of different categories and tenors are determined by adding the components of spread to MCLR.
- Therefore, the bank cannot lend at a rate lower than MCLR of a particular maturity, for all loans linked to that benchmark.

Protectionism: In an economically interconnected and technologically inseparable world

Part of: GS Prelims –Economy

Context

India's international trade posture has appeared to turn protectionist with recent actions by the Indian government

What events have led to the perception for rising Protectionism in India?

- During the presentation of Union Budget 2020-21, Finance Minister made several references to the problems with free trade and preferential trade agreements (FTAs and PTAs) that pose undue risk to domestic industry
- Government raised tariffs on the import of more than 50 items.
- Changes in Customs Act provisions to penalise imports suspected to originate from third countries, which try to misuse FTA & PTAs
- India declined to attend a meeting of trade negotiators in Bali (February 3-4) that was discussing the next step in the ASEAN led RCEP trade agreement.
- Government's decision to scrap all bilateral investment treaties with 57 countries and bringing in a new Bilateral Investment treaty (BIT) model in 2015.

Reasons given by India for taking above measures:

- Rise in trade deficits with FTA partner thus the need to revisit the treaties
- The primary motive of rising trade barriers is to protect Indian markets from dumping — primarily by Chinese goods

- Countries (EX: RCEP) unwilling to consider the agreement in Services, that involves migration of professionals, which is India's strong area

India's unfinished agenda with regard to Trade treaties

- Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) being negotiated with Australia since 2011. However, talks hit a dead end in September 2015. With Australia's focus on RCEP, no progress has been made since then.
- **India-UK trade agreement** will not able to see the light of the day until UK finalises its Brexit deal with EU
- **India- EU Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA)** has not made any progress since 2013. India coming up with new BIT model in 2015 by scrapping earlier BITS had made the negotiations harder than before thus delaying the inking of agreement
- **India-US FTA-** At present there have only been some "non-paper" talks on the issue, and possible take years to fructify given the rising protectionism in US and India alike
- **Bilateral trade agreements –** India wished to renegotiate its FTA with ASEAN, South Korea and Japan given that these agreements have increased India's trade deficit with these countries. However, all these Nations will be ready to negotiate only after finalising their RCEP deal which would take couple of years more.

India moving in a direction opposite to that of world

India is currently focusing on inking bilateral trade agreements rather than go for multi-lateral trade treaties (not signing RCEP). However, world is now divided into multilateral regional FTAs which include:

- North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) for North America,
- Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR for its Spanish initials) for South America
- The European Union
- Eurasian Economic Union (Russia and neighbors)
- African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA)
- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) FTA
- RCEP

India is not a member of any of these regional trade agreements. India has also virtually abandoned SAARC. Additionally, world does not favour trade in services the way it does in goods, as most countries have turned migration-averse.

Conclusion

India's cannot rise in Asia without closer trade links with the East or the backing of South Asia.

Historically, the decline of colonial powers and more ancient empires can be traced to times when they turned inward and disengaged from foreign trade

India thus needs to adopt a more open approach towards global trade.

Did you know?

- Only three countries: Kyrgyzstan, Belarus and most recently Brazil have agreed to sign a new investment treaty based on that model.
- India has trade surpluses with smaller economies, particularly in the neighborhood, where Indian exports form more than 80% of total trade with Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Sri Lanka, respectively.

Connecting the dots!
- WTO settlement body decline – India's avenue to resolve any bilateral disputes reduces
- Impact on rupee value and investment flow due to protectionist measures

Innovation in India- National Bio-Entrepreneurship Competition (NBEC)
Part of: GS Prelims –Economics

India is home to the third-largest congregation of startups, after the US, and China with innovators coming up with bottom-up science-based solutions to challenges
India's biggest deep science ideas platform that has succeeded in reaching 34 of 36 states/UTs - National Bio-Entrepreneurship Competition (NBEC)

About NBEC
- It is a national platform for bio-entrepreneurs to present their innovative business ideas with significant societal impact in the life sciences domain
- It is a joint initiative by BIRAC (a research assistance non-profit established by the government's department of biotechnology) and C-CAMP (Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms, India's premier life sciences innovation hub)
- Ideas are encouraged from all domains of life sciences, including healthcare, agriculture, food, nutraceuticals, environment, water, and animal health.

How does it help innovators?
- The framework of NBEC is designed such that competitors are judged solely on the merit of the idea and its societal impact.
- If the idea is good, supporting infrastructure is provided through a network of innovation hubs, industry, and mentorship.
- A big cohort of participants is invited to competition, which helps to form partnerships with industry leaders, and innovation hubs to operationalize their concepts.
- It thus helps idea to be translated into reality and enter the market in a sustainable manner.

The value proposition lies in three broad areas—
- A robust framework that democratises innovation access - many NBEC ideators are women, and from tier 2-3 cities/towns of India.
- Emphasis on ideas with national societal impact -
- Connecting innovators up the idea-to-market value chain.

Some of the successful indigenous technologies which are being provided the support through this platform are:

- **Biodegradable nanofiber carriers –** That can carry the same active fertilizer dosage in a 5 g pouch as a 5 kg bag today, thereby reducing logistics costs by 1000x and increasing shelf life by 2x. This solution simultaneously revolutionizes the agriculture, fertiliser, environmental, and energy sectors
- **Miniaturised Urinary Tract Infections (UTI) detection kit** – A credit card-sized test platform that can detect four major UTI pathogens in 30-60 minutes compared to the 24-48 hours it takes today in a laboratory setup, at affordable prices
- **Image-based screening solutions for eye diseases** to overcome the challenge of unavailability of specialist doctors
- Compostable sanitary napkins made from banana fibres

Therefore, carefully structured ideas platforms like NBEC serve as ideal vehicles to effect socio-economic impact at scale across India

Way Forward

- It is this idea-first framework that India must **implement across other verticals like cybersecurity, energy, defence, urban design, health, and water** management to unlock greater innovation-led entrepreneurship.
- With deep science ideas platforms, India can position itself as a sustainable solutions innovator, and provider.

Connecting the dots!

- Atal Innovation Mission
- Challenges to Innovation – Inadequate Funding- from both private & Public, Lack of Academia-industry collaboration.

Repo rate kept unchanged

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Economy

In news:

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decided to keep the interest rates unchanged in the wake of a rise in inflation.

From Prelims Point of view:

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):

- MPC is a six-member committee constituted by the Central Government
- Section 45ZB of the amended RBI Act, 1934
- Once in every six months, the Reserve Bank is required to publish a document called the Monetary Policy Report to explain: (1) the sources of inflation and(2) the forecast of inflation for 6-18 months ahead.
- The committee comprises six members - three officials of the Reserve Bank of India and three external members nominated by the Government of India.
- The Governor of Reserve Bank of India is the chairperson ex officio of the committee.

SRC: Hindu

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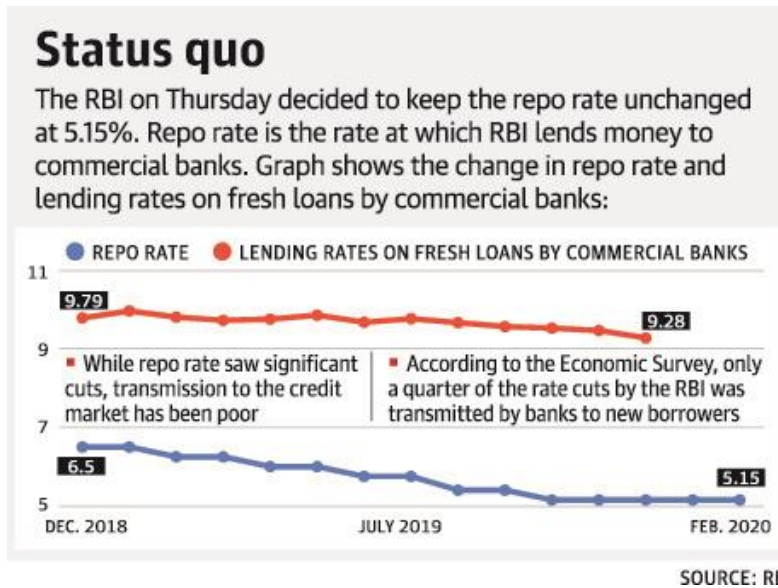
UPI- India's Digital Payment Revolution

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Economy

Context

Google writing a letter to the US Federal Reserve two months ago asking them to learn from Indian digital payments

Also, digital payment transactions on the Universal Payment Interface (UPI) platform rose from 0.1 million in October 2016 to 1.3 billion in January 2020
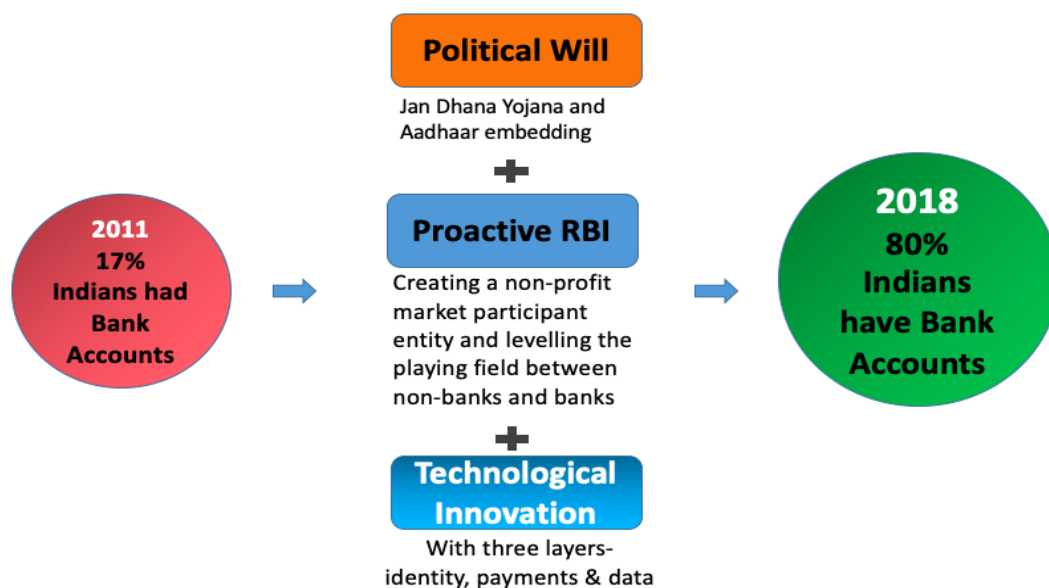
India's payment revolution comes from

- **A clear vision** - shifting the system from low volume, high value, and high cost to high volume, low value, low cost
- **A clear strategy** -regulated and unregulated private players innovating on top of public infrastructure (UPI)
- **Trade-offs balanced by design** -regulation vs innovation, privacy vs personalisation, and ease-of-use vs fraud prevention

About UPI

- It is a common platform through which a person can transfer money from his bank account to any other bank account in the country instantly using nothing but his/her UPI ID.
- Launched in 2016 as Mobile First digital payments platform
- Immediate money transfer through mobile device round the clock 24*7 and 365 days based on the Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) platform.
- UPI is completely interoperable and as such, it is unique in the world, where you have an interoperable system on the 'send' and 'receive' side
- Developed by: National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) under the guidance from RBI

Significance of UPI

- It created interoperability between all sources and recipients of funds (consumers, businesses, fintechs, wallets, 140 member banks),
- Settled instantly inside the central bank in fiat money – Convenience to consumers and merchants and
- Blunted data monopolies -big tech firms have strong autonomy but weak fiduciary responsibilities over customer data).

UPI offers the following policy lessons.

- First, the India stack — interconnected yet independent platforms or open APIs — are a public good that lowers costs, spurs innovation, and blunts the natural digital winner-takes-all..
- Second, collaboration can create ecosystems that overcome existing obstacles— the execution deficit of government, the trust deficit of private companies, and the scale deficit of nonprofits.
- Third, complementary policy interventions are important. Demonetisation and GST acted as a catalyst for the transition to digital payments .
- Fourth, human capital and diversity matter. This revolution needed career bureaucrats to partner with academics, tech entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, global giants and private firms.

However, more needs to be done

- The central government must deadline digitising all its payments.
- The RBI must implement the 100-plus action items (outlines in RBI's Vision 2021 document) and the recommendations of Nandan Nilekani Committee for Deepening Digital Payments.
- RBI should make use of RuPay and UPI to tap the remittances market – which presently stands at 70billion USD and is largely in informal domain
- RBI must replicate the core design of UPI — fierce but sustainable private and public competition — in bank credit to increase our present 50% Credit-to -GDP ratio to atleast 100%(OECD level)

Conclusion

- This experience shows that India doesn't need to be Western or Chinese to be modern. If our policymakers had copied Alipay or US banks, we wouldn't have witnessed this digital payments revolution
- Replicating similar model in education, healthcare, and government services will help in achieving the socio-economic goals outlined in our Constitution

Connecting the Dots

- UPI 2.0 launched on August 2018
- Nandan Nilekani Committee for Deepening Digital Payments.
- More about NPCI

Disinvestment of LIC: Is India short-selling the family silver?

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Economy

Context

The public sector in India is a picture of contradictions.

- It elicits derision and ridicule in market circles. The government is apologetic about it with analysts are **demanding for its dismantlement** citing its irrelevance
- At the same time, when markets are on a free fall, **investors look** at public sector entities like **LIC to bail them out**

Despite the privatization wave across the world, the reach and influence of state-owned Enterprises (SOEs) keep growing.

- According to OECD, there are about 40 countries in the developed and developing world (excluding China) having SOEs valued at $2.5 trillion and **employing nearly 10 million people**
- In addition, governments hold **minority shareholdings valued at $912 billion,** employing 2.8 million people.
- Finance (26 per cent), electricity and gas (21) and transport (18) are the major sectors in which SOEs have a significant presence in value terms.

China's SOEs

- China's financial SOEs together hold $34 trillion of assets compared to non-financial SOEs' $26 trillion.

- They employ millions and form a large part of global GDP
- China SOEs are categorized into various industries for garnering revenues for the government to maintain economic stability.
    - Key industries (defence, electricity, oil, aviation, rail, shipping, etc)
    - Pillar industries (autos, chemicals, construction, electronics) and
    - Normal industries (tourism, pharma, investment)

Divestment of public sector is not something unusual in emerging markets.

- A host of big SOEs with large IPOs like Agriculture Bank of China ($22 billion), ICBC ($22 billion), Bank of China ($11 billion), Rosneft ($11 billion) are inspirations for many emerging economies.
- China **has listed all its four major insurance companies.** China Life, the country's biggest insurer raised $3 billion in 2003 when the market was down; Ping An made $5 billion in 2007 at its peak; China Pacific garnered $3.1 billion in 2009.
- Even **General Motors of the US**, which pulled off the biggest IPO in 2010 at $23 billion, was 61% owned by the US government then; this fell to 33% after the share issue
- **Large IPOs of SOEs in India** such as Coal India ($3.3 billion), ONGC (2.2 billion) and GIC (1.6 billion) may look suboptimal compared to companies of similar stature and significance in other countries

Concern about Disinvestment

- The question over disinvestment is about **how and when** — selling them for meeting immediate needs or after making them strong enough to attract global interest.
- The concern thus is whether India is able to realize the full value these companies hold or **is it too hasty in cashing out**.

The case of LIC

- On the **net premiums written, LIC, with $48.9 billion** (December 2018), is placed 17 among the 25 top global insurers and 21st on the basis of non-banking assets (Global Insurance Market Trends, OECD 2019).
- On premiums written, LIC's is $100 billion less than top ranked UnitedHealth Group of the US ($156 billion), and about $50 billion less than Ping An of China (4th rank).
- Premium written by Ping An is double of LIC's
- In terms of **non-banking assets,** LIC's $438 billion is less than half of Allianz's $1 trillion.
- On the other hand, **gross claims paid** by India's insurance sector at 17.2% in life and 15.9% in non-life are on the higher side when compared with those in the US (2.8/4.6 per cent) and Korea (6.9/12.3 per cent).

Doubts over Utility of Listing

- Many public sector banks with great listing history two decades back been merged to save the banking industry
- Growth and stability in the regions of Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe after rampant privatization are **not substantively better when compared to Asia**, which largely thrives on growth driven by a large public sector
- It is the active support of the state that enabled Chinese financial firms to mop up most of the new capital issuance in the world.

Conclusion

A sell-off to raise quick cash won't be such an effective way in the long run for an economy in pursuit of global leadership. Selling family silver is easy, but creating heirlooms that a family can take pride in is difficult.

Connecting the dots

- Air India disinvestment
- BSNL and MTNL performance
- Need for Public Broadcaster in form of AIR/Doordarshan

India's position on Global Hunger Index alarming: VP

Part of: GS Prelims –Economy and GS-III- Poverty

In news:

Vice president said:

- India ranks 102nd on the Global Hunger Index, Despite high food production.
- Nutritional security requires measures to improve protein and vitamin deficiencies

From Prelims Point of view:

Global Hunger Index (GHI) Report

- Prepared by the **Concern Worldwide** (an Irish agency) and the **Welt Hunger Hilfe** (a German organization)
- The report is based on four GHI indicators namely, undernourishment, child stunting, child wasting, and child mortality.
- India's child wasting rate was extremely high at 20.8% - the highest
- India's rank has slipped from 95th position (in 2010) to 102nd (in 2019)

HOW THE COUNTRY FARED

India struggles to eradicate hunger

■ India's rank ■ Countries behind India

113	114	116	117
30	19	21	15
83	95	95	102
2000	2005	2010	2019

Improvement slows

India: 38.8 → 30.3

World: 29.0 → 20.0

2000 2005 2010 2019

Note: The reference periods for different indicators are different due to data availability
Source: Concern Worldwide, Welt Hunger Hilfe
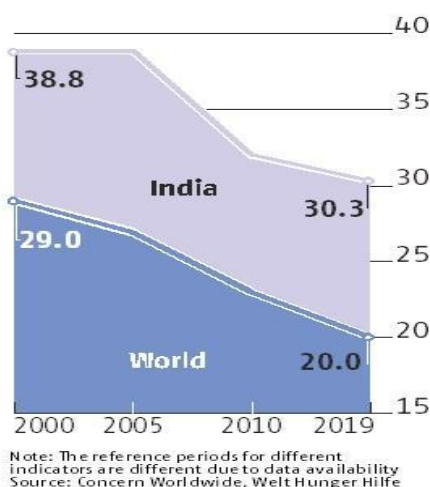
SRC: The Hindu

Child wasting

- Child wasting refers to the share of children under the age of five who are wasted, i.e, they have low weight with respect to their height, reflecting acute undernutrition.

No headway in India-U.S. trade talks

Part of: GS Prelims –Economy and GS-III- Trade

Concerns:

- liberalising e-commerce, and investment norms for retail
- Medical device price caps levied by India,
- a rationalisation of tariffs levied by both sides,
- Greater market access for U.S. agricultural and dairy products.
- Full restoration of GSP (Generalised System of Preferences)

From Prelims Point of View

Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)

- Umbrella that comprises the bulk of preferential schemes granted by industrialized nations to developing countries.
- Reduced Most Favored Nations (MFN) Tariffs or duty-free entry of eligible products exported by beneficiary countries to the markets of donor countries.
- GSP was adopted at UNCTAD in New Delhi in 1968

UNCTAD

- United Nation Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is a permanent intergovernmental body established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1964.
- It supports developing countries to access the benefits of a globalized economy more fairly and effectively.

LPG prices seen sharp rise

Part of: GS Prelims –Economy

Context

LPG prices which are revised on a monthly basis rose sharply in February, highest since Jan 2014.The rate for unsubsidized 14.2 kg cylinders rose by **₹144.50 -₹149 in metro cities**

Comparison of Price rise

- Prior to this round, the government had raised LPG cylinder prices by ₹62, starting from August 2019 – Indicating less penchant for subsidy rationalisation
- However, the price had increased by only **₹82 over five years to mid-2019 –** indicating retail price has been highly subsidized given the populist sentiment attached to it.

Who will the price rise affect?

- The price increase will affect **retail consumers who have given up the subsidy.**
- For those who avail subsidy, the increase would be mostly **absorbed by the rise in subsidy.** For Ujjwala consumers, the subsidy would go up from ₹174.86 to ₹312.48 per cylinder.
- Of the 27.76 crore retail consumers, 26.12 crore consumers avail LPG subsidy.

Implications for the broader economy

- At a time when consumer demand, in general, for goods and services in the country has slumped, more cash in the hands of the retail consumer may have helped spur demand
- Price rise of LPG sucks away even more disposable income from those consumers who pay market rates for LPG.
- As a result, household budgets are bound to go up, especially for those not availing the subsidy.
- The increase in LPG price could spur inflation even further. The January inflation metric was the highest since May 2014, when the figure was at 8.33%.

What influences LPG prices in India?

- Domestic prices of LPG are based on a formula — the import parity price (IPP), which is based on international LPG prices.
- Saudi Aramco's LPG price acts as the benchmark for the IPP and includes the free-on-board price, ocean freight, customs duties, port dues and the like.
- This dollar-denominated figure is converted into rupees before local costs are added – bottling, marketing, margins for companies and tax
- This helps the government arrive at the retail selling price for LPG

The government resets the LPG price every month depending on international prices and the rupee-dollar exchange rate in the preceding weeks.

Reason for recent steep hike in LPG Prices

- Crude Oil prices tend to affect Saudi Armaco's Propane price
- Owing to rise in crude oil prices in December and early January, Saudi Aramco had raised its propane prices to $565 per metric tonne in January ($440 a metric tonne in December)
- This increase in propane prices led to increase in LPG price hike in February
- However, the exchange rate been within the range of ₹71-₹72 to the dollar

What is the future outlook?

- The coronavirus (COVID-19) disease outbreak and fears of a global slowdown have pushed oil prices down through January, save for a few spikes.
- With international crude prices on the downtrend, it is plausible the LPG prices too would see a slump.
- Aramco has lowered its propane price for February to $505 per metric tonne.
- Assuming not many changes on exchange rate front, a softening of LPG prices in the domestic context may be expected.

Did You Know?

- LPG - a mix of propane and butane -is an energy-rich fuel source with a higher calorific value per unit than other commonly used fuels, including coal, natural gas, diesel, petrol.
- The carbon footprint of LPG is 20% lower than that of fuel oil and 50% lower than coal.
- LPG is non-toxic and has no impact on soil, water and underground aquifers
- It is used in transportation, in commercial business, industry, farming, domestic heating and cooking

Connecting the dots!

- PAHAL Scheme - direct cash transfer of subsidy for Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) used in household cooking.
- Give it Up Campaign of LPG

A.R. Rahman's NGO gets FCRA licence

Part of: GS Prelims –Economy and GS-II- Money laundering

In news:

- The Union government has granted Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) licence this year to more than 20 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including the A.R. Rahman Foundation
- Any NGO or association that intends to receive foreign funds has to compulsorily register under the FCRA, monitored by the Union Home Ministry.
- In 2014, the FCRA licences of more than 16,000 NGOs were cancelled
- Under the FCRA Act, registered NGOs can receive foreign contribution for five purposes — **social, educational, religious, economic and cultural.**

Foreign funding
- FCRA licences of 20,674 NGOs were cancelled from 2012 onward
- 10,002 registrations were cancelled in 2015 alone
- Before 2011, the number of FCRA registrations stood at 40,376

Source: The Hindu

From Prelims Point of View:

NGOs

- The term 'NGO' is used to describe a body that is neither part of a government nor a conventional for-profit business organisations
- Groups of ordinary citizens that are involved in a wide range of activities that may have charitable, social, political, religious or other interests.
- Helpful in implementing government schemes at the grassroots.
- In India, NGOs can be registered under Indian Societies Registration Act, 1860, Religious Endowments Act,1863, Indian Trusts Act, etc.
- India has the largest number of active NGOs in the world,(In 2009, 33 lakh)
- NGOs receive funds from abroad, if they are registered with the **Home Ministry under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA).**

Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010
- Implemented by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The Acts ensures that the recipients of foreign contributions adhere to the stated purpose for which such contribution has been obtained.
- Under the Act, organisations require to register themselves every five years.

US-India Trade Deal: Threat to Dairy Sector

Part of: GS Prelims –Economy and GS-II- Money laundering

Context

During Trumps's visit to India, these are prospects of Indo-US deal being finalised in specific sectors including dairy sector (with potential of $100 million).

Market access for US dairy products in India may have adverse impact on domestic dairy sector.

Significance of the dairy sector in India's overall economic scheme

- **Rural Livelihoods**: 80 million rural households are dependent on Dairy sector for their livelihood
- **Largest agricultural commodity-** Milk and milk products output is 20.6 per cent of the combined output of paddy, wheat and pulses
- **Provides alternative employment**: crop production generates employment for the rural workforce for an average of 90-120 days in a year, while dairy sector can provide employment during the remaining period.
- **Contribution to National Economy:**
  - While the share of agriculture and allied (A&A) sector in the gross value added (GVA) has consistently declined from 18.2% in 2014 to 17.2% in 2017, the **share of livestock to GVA has increased from 4.4 % to 4.9 %** during the same period
  - Within the A&A sector, among the key livestock products, **milk and milk products** have the highest share, at **around 67.2 per cent in 2017.**

Dairy Trade: India and USA

- US is a net exporter in dairy trading, with its share in global exports standing at 4.9 per cent as opposed to an import share of around 2.8 per cent in 2018
- Share of India is minuscule at 0.3 per cent and 0.06 per cent in global dairy exports and imports, respectively, in 2018.
- India's dairy exports to US have increased by almost seven times from $2.1 million in 2015-16 to $14.9 million in 2018-19. However, India's imports from US has seen moderate increase from $0.07 million in 2015-16 to $0.22 million in 2018-19
- Thus, India has a trade surplus vis-à-vis USA in dairy sector of nearly $14.41 million in 2018-19

Reasons behind India's trade surplus with the US in dairy

- India has a comparative advantage in the export of 'melted butter' and 'processed cheese' to the US because the cost of production of both these products is cheaper in India

- Melted butter' (*ghee*) has the largest share in exports to the US at 56%, followed by 'processed cheese' (21%), butter (10%), 'other cheese' (3.9%), and 'other fats' and 'oils derived from milk' (3.5%) in 2018-19.
- **Lower duties** on dairy products in the US help provide a boost to diary exports from India. An average final bound duty on dairy products in the US is around 19 per cent, as against close to 64 per cent in India.
- **Cultural and religious sentiments**: Indian authorities' mandatory certification (non-negotiable considering religious sentiments) from the concerned US agency states that "the source animal should not have been fed animal-derived blood meal". This weeds out significant imports from the US

Source: Ministry of Commerce & Industry

Comparison of Indian dairy farmer vs US dairy farmer

- In 2017, India contributed 21% of the world's milk production, thus making it the largest milk producer in the world.
- This has been made possible by the almost **73 million marginal and landless farmers** who directly work in the dairy sector and hold, on average, two milch animals per farmer.
- Indian farmers enjoy favourable terms of trade in the dairy arena, with their share in the consumer price standing at around 60 per cent (highest in the world)
- However, in the US, there are around 0.04 million dairy farmers holding an average of 241 milch animals per farmer. These big farmers only get around 43 per cent of what the consumer pays.
- According to *The World Dairy Situation,2019* report, **milk yield per cow** in the US is the highest in the world, standing at 10,500 kg per cow as against 1,715 kg per cow in India
- Importantly, a dairy farmer in the **US** is able to **sell milk at a price 16.6 per cent above the average world market price**, as compared with the similar number standing at 15.6 per cent in India

Implications on India due to Trade deal in dairy sector

- It is evident from the numbers that despite lower milk yield and dominance of small and marginal farmers in dairy activity, **India is comfortably placed to produce milk at a cheaper rate**
- Thus, opening market access for the sector is likely to place these dairy farmers (largely small & marginal) in a disadvantaged position in relation to the large-scale dairy farmers in US.
- For the Indian dairy industry, the trade deal will not only adversely affect the industry as a whole but also the **socio-economic conditions** of millions of small, landless and marginal farmers **— especially women**, who are active in this industry.
- It is likely to temper the sentiments in the **rural economy**, which is already dealing with a gamut of problems at present
- The deal could play spoil sport in fulfilling the goal of **doubling farmers income by 2022**

Conclusion

Thus, it will be prudent on the part of Indian authorities to take adequate precautionary measures in proceeding ahead with the trade pact with the US on dairy products

Connecting the dots!

- RCEP and India – Dairy Sector (New Zealand)
- Trade deal in other sectors like manufacturing, financial services etc. – implication on India's domestic economy

India's Economic Slowdown

Part of: GS Prelims –Economy

Context

The economy grew at 4.7 per cent in the October-December quarter, down from the revised estimate of 5.1 per cent in the second quarter

However, the situation is much worse than what the headline numbers suggest.

- At the aggregate level, gross value added grew by 4.5% in the third quarter, down from 4.8% in the previous quarter.
- But excluding public administration, defence and other services, which largely connote government spending, value added by the rest of the economy grew by a mere 3.7% in the third quarter, down from 5.2% in the same quarter last year
- Growth thus continues to be propped up by higher government spending.
- Manufacturing sector has seen contraction (negative growth) for two consecutive quarters
- For the full year, manufacturing sector is expected to grow barely at 1%, down from 5.7% in the last year.
- Construction activity also slowed down reflecting the continued dismal performance of the real estate sector.
- Gross fixed capital formation, which represents investment in the economy, has now contracted for two straight quarters

- NSO now expects investments to contract by 0.6% in 2019-20, after growing by 9.8 per cent in the previous year,

Future Bright Prospects

- Gross value added is expected to pick up to 5 per cent in the fourth quarter, up from 4.5 per cent in the third quarte
- Data of the eight core sectors have grown for two consecutive months.
- National statistics office thus believes that the economy has bottomed out and an upward trend is likely in coming quarters
- Capital investments announced by government (National Infrastructure Pipeline) will kickstart private sector and start yielding results in medium to long term
- The structural changes brought in economy through Insolvency & Bankruptcy code, GST and JAM trinity (Financial Inclusion) will enable formalization of the economy in the long run.

Downside risks

- The Centre's revenues may well fall short of the revised estimates. This may impinge on its ability to maintain its spending at current levels in the fourth quarter.
- The full impact of the coronavirus is yet to play out. Economic activity in February and March is likely to be impacted directly and indirectly, depending on the duration and intensity of its spread.
- Disruptions in supply chains and lower external demand due to trade tensions of USA with China & others, may further add to domestic issues.

Conclusion

One of the reasons for current slowdown has been the weak demand in the country especially from rural sector. Thus, government should try to increase disposable incomes (through schemes like MGNREGA) in the hands of people which will revive the growth in economy.

Connecting the dots

- Impact of Coronavirus on world markets
- Multilateral trade deals during weak domestic economic situation – prospects & dangers

AGRICULTURE

Crop Insurance

Context

Flagship Crop insurance schemes of Central government are:

- RWBCIS -Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme
- PMFBY - Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana

Centre decided to restrict its premium subsidy in PMFBY and RWBCIS to 30% for unirrigated areas and 25% for irrigated areas (from the existing unlimited)

Also, it decided to make enrolment of farmers in these schemes as voluntary from the 2020 Kharif season.

About PMFBY

- Launched in 2016 after rolling back the earlier insurance schemes viz. National Agriculture Insurance Scheme (NAIS) and Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS).
- Premium: Farmers need to pay uniform premium of only 2% of insured amount for Kharif crops, 1.5% for Rabi crops and 5% for horticulture crops.
- The remaining part of actuarial premium (charged by insurance companies) will be shared equally between Central and State government (with no upper limits)
- The scheme is mandatory for farmers who have taken institutional loans from banks.
- It's optional for farmers who have not taken institutional credit.

If a farmer's Kharif crop was insured for Rs 1,00,000 and the rate of actuarial premium was 40%, then the

Old Regime:

- Premium paid by the farmer was 2% - Rs 2,000
- Premium paid by the Centre was 19% -Rs 19,000
- Premium paid by the Centre was 19% -Rs 19,000

Under New Regime - the Centre will give subsidy for premium rates up to 30%.

This means that the Centre will have to pay premium at the rate of 14% (out of 30%, the farmer's share is 2%, and the Centre's and state's 14% each)

The state has to bear the entire burden of the premium subsidy in cases where the rate of premium goes beyond the threshold of 30%.

- Premium paid by the farmer was 2% - Rs 2,000
- Premium paid by the Centre -Rs 14,000
- Premium paid by the State – Rs 14,000 + remaining Rs 10,000

A second interpretation is that the Centre may stop supporting insurance of certain crops in certain areas where the rate of premium is more than 30%

Why the changes to restrict the premium subsidy?

- While the average premium rate under PMFBY and RWBCIS at the national level was 12.32% for 2018-19, for some crops in certain districts, the rate of premium has been higher than 30% in recent years.
- For example: the rate of premium for Kharif groundnut has reached 49% in Rajkot of Gujarat, and the rate for Rabi paddy crop Ramnathapuram (Tamil Nadu) has reached 42%.
- By capping the subsidy for premium rates up to 30%, the Centre wants to disincentivise certain crops in such areas where growing these crops involve high risks in terms of crop insurance premiums.

Implications of capping premium amount

- **Increased States Share:** After the new changes come into effect, the share of the states is expected to go up in those states in which such crops are cultivated.
- **Additional Financial burden on States**: The states are already defaulting on their share of premium, and the Centre's new cap will increase fiscal pressure on them
- **Delay in claim settlement:** For example Madhya Pradesh has not paid its share of premium even for Kharif 2018, which comes to Rs 1,500 crore. As a result, farmers have not got their claims.

Implication on making insurance schemes voluntary

- Making the scheme voluntary is expected to increase the disposable incomes of farmers which will help in fuelling rural demand.
- The area covered under insurance and the number of enrolled farmers are expected to come down significantly as it is now made voluntary
- In such a scenario, the rate of premium of certain crops in some areas may go beyond 30%.
- It will further make farmers vulnerable to crop failures thus impacting their income security.

The other changes in crop insurance schemes

- The government has given flexibility to states/UTs to implement PMFBY and RWBCIS
- It also gives States the option to select any number of additional risk covers/features like prevented sowing, localised calamity, mid-season adversity, and post-harvest losses. Earlier, these risk covers were mandatory.

Impact of these changes

- This may bring down the rates of overall premium as the state governments now will not be required to invite bids factoring these risks.
- It will make these schemes less attractive for farmers.

Do You Know?

- During 2018-19, about 5.64 crore farmers are enrolled with PMFBY for an insured sum of Rs 2,35,277 crore, and 30% of the gross cropped is insured.
- During 2018-19, an amount of Rs 29,105 crore was collected as gross premium under PMFBY and RWBCIS, which included farmers' share of Rs 4,918 crore and share of Rs 12,034 crore each by Centre & States

Connecting the dots!

- Social Security & Insurance for crops
- Food Productivity and Biotechnology

Income scheme to cover fewer farmers

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Policies

In news:

- One year after the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, the Centre has revised the farmer income support scheme's beneficiary target down to just under 12 crore from 14 crore

From Prelims Point of View

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi

- Under this programme, vulnerable landholding farmer families, having cultivable land upto 2 hectares, will be provided direct income support at the rate of Rs. 6,000 per year.
- This income support will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers, in three equal installments of Rs. 2,000 each.
- Expenditure: Rs 75000 crore for the scheme will bear by the Union Government in 2019-20.

ENVIRONMENT/POLLUTION

In Kerala, 2,130 islands brought under CRZ regime

Part of: GS Prelims –Environment   and GS-III - Conservation

In news:

- 2,130 backwater islands of Kerala, including Maradu, have been brought under the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) regime thereby imposing curbs on development activities.
- This is for the first time that the list of the Kerala islands is being drawn up.
- The list of the islands was prepared by the National Centre for Earth Science Studies

Coastal Regulation Zones (CRZ)

CRZ Notification 2018 is based on the recommendations of Shailesh Nayak committee.

- Coastal stretches of seas, bays, estuaries, creeks, rivers, and backwaters were declared as CRZs under coastal zone regulation notification in 1991.

- CRZs have been classified into 4 zones for the purpose of regulation:

  o **CRZ-I:** includes **ecologically sensitive areas,** where no construction is allowed except activities for atomic power plants, defense.
  o **CRZ-II:** includes designated **urban areas** that are substantially built up. Construction activities are allowed on the landward side only.
  o **CRZ-III:** includes relatively undisturbed areas, **mainly rural areas**. No new construction of buildings allowed in this zone except repairing of the existing ones. However, constructions of dwelling units in the plot area lying between 200-500m of the high tide line are allowed.
  o **CRZ-IV:** includes the water area covered between Low Tide Line and 12 nautical miles seaward. Except for fishing and related activities, all actions impugning on the sea and tidal water will be regulated in this zone.

NGT cancels eco-clearance to high-rise near Kaikondrahalli Lake

Part of: GS Prelims –Environment and GS-III Conservation

In news:

- Eco Clearance was a 'breach of environment norms, violation of municipal laws and buffer zone regulations'.
- The EC was granted in January 2018 by the Karnataka State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA).

From Prelims Point of view:

- Kaikondrahalli Lake, a small urban lake in Bengaluru

National Green Tribunal:

- Set up under the National Green Tribunal Act (2010)
- Effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.

- India became the third country in the world to set up a specialised environmental tribunal, (Australia and New Zealand)
- Disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of filing of the same.

SC voices concern over deforestation

Part of: GS Prelims –Environment and GS-III- Conservation

In news:

Chief Justice of India said:

- Deforestation is so rapid that before anyone knows everything will be lost
- Condemned humanity's tendency to abuse natural resources for greed and profit.
- Estimate the value of a tree, factoring in the value of the quantum of oxygen it emits in its lifetime.

From Prelims Point of View:

Deforestation

- Large-scale removal of trees from forests (or other lands) for the facilitation of human activities.
- Result in the loss of biodiversity, damage to natural habitats, disturbances in the water cycle, and soil erosion.
- Contributor to climate change and global warming.

Reasons:

- Agriculture – small-scale and large scale farming
- Logging – cutting of trees for use as raw material
- Mining and urban expansion – clearing of forest area for the construction of infrastructure

Human-wildlife conflict

Part of: GS Prelims –Environment and GS-III- Conservation

Context

Death of four tigers in Mhadei, Goa, and the arrest of the locals who poisoned the animals after their complaints were not attended by forest authorities

As a result, CM of Goa stated to demarcate and fence the borders of the wildlife sanctuaries in order to end 80 per cent of the problem. Although the intentions are good, this isn't a solution.

Some examples of human-wildlife conflict include:

- Predation on livestock or domestic animals by wild animals
- Damage to crops and fences
- Wildlife strewing about residential garbage
- Vehicle/wildlife collisions, aircraft/bird collisions
- Damage caused by squirrels or bats to fruit and fruit trees
- Bird nesting in undesirable residential locations

Reasons for man-animal conflict:

- Expansion of human settlements into forests – expansion of cities, industrial areas, railway/road infrastructure, tourism etc.
- Allowing livestock to graze in forest areas
- Land use transformations such as change from protected forest patches to agricultural and horticultural lands and monoculture plantations are further destroying the habitats of wildlife.
- Unscientific structures and practices of forest management in the country
- Infestation of wildlife habitat by invasive exotic weeds leads to decreased availability of edible grasses for wild herbivores
- Decreased prey base caused by poaching of herbivores has also resulted in carnivores moving out of forests in search of prey and to indulge in cattle lifting.

India's Conservation culture

- Despite a billion people India still has most of our large wildlife species- India today has the largest population of the tiger, Asian elephant, leopard, sloth bear, gaur and many others
- Part of Culture: People have accepted coexistence of human & animals, and incorporated it in our culture. All our deities have animals associated with them; it shows the inclusion of these animals in our mind space.
- The Velip community in Goa worship the tigers and this practice is done even today.
- Animals are viewed also as renewable resource: Unlike activities such as mining, tigers are a renewable resource. They are always going to be there, and so will the rivers and the forests, giving the local people income and development — as long as there are tigers.

Fencing is not the solution but alternative measures like:

- Inclusion of local community in forest wildlife management
- To ensure that money which comes in through tourism (of Tiger reserves) should be used for the development of the local villages as has been done in Tadoba tiger reserve, Maharashtra
- Also, compensation procedures need to be improved- In Maharashtra, a decade ago, the compensation amount was poor, and the process was cumbersome as well as time consuming. Today, a helpline has been established, compensation rates have increased vastly, and the process is under the Right to Services Act

Conclusion

The solutions are simple: Inclusive development with a long-term vision that cares for the environment. We need to involve local communities who will be the custodians of the tigers and tigers that can, in turn, provide the communities much-needed development in such remote areas.

Did You know about these Innovative practices to minimise man-animal conflicts ?

- In the Western Ghats of India, a new conservation initiative has utilized texting as an early warning system to prevent human-elephant encounters. Elephant tracking collars embedded with SMS chips automatically text nearby residents, warning them of recent elephant movements.

- In Canada, authorities have constructed wildlife corridors, areas of preserved native habitat in human dominated regions, providing wildlife with a safe pathway as they travel between one to another.
- To keep elephants at a safe distance from their farms and homes, some African villagers have turned to two unlikely, all-natural solutions: bees and hot peppers. Elephants dislike the chemical capsaicin found in chili peppers, prompting farmers in Tanzania to smother their fences with a mixture of oil and chili peppers.

Eastern Ghats: A browning east

Part of: GS Prelims –Environment and GS-III- Conservation

Context

Climate Change impact warnings for Eastern Ghats underscore the need for their protection

If the Western Ghats are the crown jewels of India's natural heritage, the Eastern Ghats spread across some 75,000 sq. km. from Odisha to southern Tamil Nadu,

About Eastern Ghats

- Eastern Ghats run almost parallel to the east coast of India leaving broad plains between their base and the coast.
- It is a chain of highly broken and detached hills starting from the Mahanadi in Odisha to the Vagai in Tamil Nadu.
- Eastern Ghats almost disappear between the Godavari and the Krishna. They lose their hilly character and are occupied by Gondwana formations (KG Basin is here).
- They are eroded and cut through by four major rivers viz. Godavari, Mahanadi, Krishna and Kaveri
- Eastern Ghats are older than Western Ghats
- The eastern Ghats are lower in elevation than the western ghats
- The highest peak of Eastern ghats is the Mahendragiri (1500 m)
- It receives an annual rainfall of 1200mm to 1500 mm
- Western and the Eastern Ghats meet at the Nilgiri hills

Significance of Eastern Ghats

- Fostering biodiversity and storing energy in trees.

- In these mountains exist a reservoir of about 3,000 flowering plant species, nearly 100 of them endemic, occurring in the dry deciduous, moist deciduous and semi-evergreen landscapes.
- Many animals, including tigers and elephants, and some 400 bird species are found in these discontinuous forests
- Provides ecosystem services to millions.
- Modulating Climate especially during the retreat of Monsoons (North Eastern Monsoon)

Eastern Ghats faces a threat from Climate Change

- Disruption of the annual average temperature and diminished rainfall would decrease the productivity of these forests, in terms of their ability to store carbon, and provide subsistence material.

- It also leads to impoverishment of areas experiencing rainfall reduction in the driest quarter of the year and a rise in seasonal temperature reflected in reduced plant species diversity
- By some estimates, the Ghats have shrunk by 16% over the past century, and just one region, Papikonda National Park (Andhra Pradesh), lost about 650 sq. km. in two decades from 1991.

Measures to be taken

- Protecting the Eastern Ghats is an ecological imperative
- Schemes for restoration of forest peripheries through indigenous plant and tree species must be pursued
- Relieving the pressure on forests can be done through policies that reduce extraction of scarce resources and incentivise settled agriculture.
- India should fulfil its commitments under the Paris Agreement to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes through enhanced forest and tree cover.

Conclusion

Improving tree cover nationally is certain to confer multiple benefits, including modulation of the monsoon, improved air quality and wider spaces for biodiversity to persist. Given the multiple role Eastern Ghats play, it is necessary that government take necessary steps to preserve it.

ANIMALS/NATIONAL PARKS IN NEWS

Habitat loss felled leopards

Part of: GS Prelims –Environment and GS-III- Conservation

In news:

- India's leopard population is only a tenth of what it was over a century ago
- Due to human pressures, conflicts with humans, poaching, habitat loss and availability of prey
- Scientists say that an initiative similar to 'Project Tiger' is required
- Decline of 75% to 90% between 120 and 200 years ago,
- Centre for Wildlife Studies & Wildlife Institute of India Reports

From Prelims Point of View:

Project Tiger:

- Project Tiger was launched in Jim Corbett National Park of Uttarakhand in 1973.
- Tiger reserves are governed by the Project Tiger (1973).
- Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Ministry of Environment and Forests.
- Administered by the National Tiger Conservation Authority.
- Aim: Protect tigers from extinction by ensuring a viable population in their natural habitats.
- Government has set up a Tiger Protection Force under PT to combat poachers.
- PT funds relocation of villagers to minimize human-tiger conflicts.

Pangolins be the source of novel coronavirus

Part of: GS Prelims –Environment and GS-III- Conservation

In news:

- Pangolins could be responsible for the spread of the virus to humans in China.
- The genome sequence of the coronavirus isolated from pangolins was 99 per cent identical with that separated from infected humans.

Pangolins:

- Pangolins are considered to be one of the most trafficked animals in the world and are classified as a critically endangered species
- People who sell pangolins can be imprisoned for a period of 10 years or morepoached every year due to their "medicinal value" and the consumption of their meat in countries such as China and Vietnam.
- It is believed that the novel coronavirus spread from the seafood market in Wuhan, where live animals are sold

From Prelims Point of view:
The SARS coronavirus, which was identified in 2003, is believed to have spread from bats to civet cats to human beings.

Under threat

The pangolin is the most trafficked mammal in the world. A look at some of its characteristics

- A pangolin's tongue is longer than its body
- It can consume 70 million ants a year
- Pangolins have no teeth; they 'chew' with gravel and keratinous spines inside the stomach
- They close their ears and nostrils to keep insects out
- The animal marks its territories with urine, faeces and stinky secretion from a special gland
- Baby pangolins are carried on their mother's back and tail

There are eight pangolin species — four each in Africa and Asia; two of them are in India

- Scales, made of keratin, like human nails and hair, comprise about 20% of a pangolin's body weight

The Chinese Pangolin was officially categorised as critically endangered in 2014, but I think it is extinct today. The Indian Pangolin, marked endangered that year, is now critically endangered and disappearing fast

RITESH SAROTHIYA
Officer-in-charge, Madhya Pradesh Forest Department's Special Task Force

Indian pangolin

Part of: GS Prelims –Environment and GS-III- Conservation

In news:
- scientists have radio-tagged the Indian pangolin, an endangered animal
- Tagging the animal will help understand the habits of the reclusive, nocturnal animal
- Radio-tagging is part of a joint project by the forest department and non-profit organisation, the Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT).

IASBaba's Value addition

Ninth 'World Pangolin Day' on 15th February, 2020.
- Celebrated in February every year to raise awareness of pangolins and bring together stakeholders to help protect these species from extinction.

From Prelims Point of view:

Indian pangolin:
- Has thick scaly skin
- Hunted for meat and used in traditional Chinese medicine.
- Pangolins are among the most trafficked wildlife species in the world.

- Out of the eight species of pangolin, the Indian and the Chinese pangolins are found in India.
- Both these species are listed under Schdule I Part I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

IUCN Red List

- Indian Pangolin: Endangered
- Chinese Pangolin: Critically Endangered

Elephantine conflict

Part of: GS Prelims –Environment and GS-III- Conservation

In news:

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

- West Bengal, Odisha and Assam — account for about half of both human and elephant deaths in the overall human-elephant conflict in the country,.
- Past five years 2,361 human deaths were recorded in elephant attacks across the country ,48% fatalities were from these three States,
- Unnatural deaths of elephants (mainly due to poaching, train accidents, electrocution and poisoning), 53% occurred in these three States alone.

Baba's Value addition:

The Indian elephant

- One of three extant recognised subspecies of the Asian elephant and native to mainland Asia
- Listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List
- the wild population has declined by at least 50% since the 1930s to 1940s
- Threatened by habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation.

Deadly conflict

In casualties due to human-ele-phant conflicts in the country, West Bengal record-ed the highest number of human deaths between 2014 and 2019. The major cause of elephant deaths was electrocution, in which over 65% of elephants died
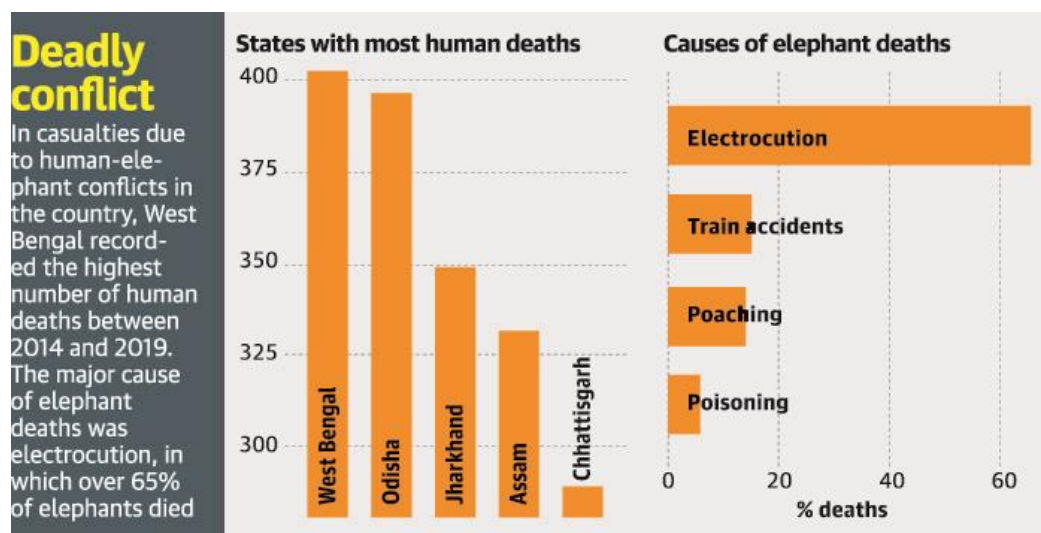
Src: the hindu

Project Elephant.

- Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF)flagship elephant conservation programme — **Project Elephant.**
- Launched in 1992, Centrally-sponsored scheme
- Primarily aimed at protecting elephant, their habitats and corridors
- Addressing issues of man-animal conflict and welfare of domesticated elephants.
- Recent years project has run aground.

Convention on Migratory Species

Part of: GS Prelims –Environment and GS-III- Conservation

In news:

- India will host the 13th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS COP13)
- A major United Nations wildlife conference
- Theme"Migratory species connect the planet and together we welcome them home".

From Prelims Point of View

- Signed in 1979 in Germany and is known as the Bonn Convention
- Environmental treaty of the UN that provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats
- Only global convention specializing in the conservation of migratory species, their habitats and migration routes.
- Appendix I of the Convention lists 'Threatened Migratory Species'.
- Appendix II lists 'Migratory Species requiring international cooperation'

India's bird population suffers long-term decline

Part of: GS Prelims –Environment and GS-III- Conservation

In news:

State of India's Birds 2020 (SoIB) assessment states:

- Over a fifth of India's bird diversity, ranging from the Short-toed Snake Eagle to the Sirkeer Malkoha, has suffered strong long-term declines
- 80% loss among several common birds
- every bird species that was found to be increasing in numbers over the long term, 11 have suffered losses
- **Rufous-fronted Prinia, Nilgiri Thrush, Nilgiri Pipit and Indian vulture** were confirmed as suffering current decline
- The **common sparrow** has become rare in cities and urban areas. reasons for this is a decrease in insect populations as well as nesting places

Threat

- loss of habitat due to human activity,
- widespread presence of toxins, including pesticides;
- Hunting and trapping for the pet trade..

From Prelims Point of View:

Rufous-fronted Prinia: IUCN (least concern)

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/5a/Status_iucn3.1_LC.svg/220px-Status_iucn3.1_LC.svg.png

Nilgiri thrush: IUCN (Endangered)

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/7/70/Status_iucn3.1_EN.svg/220px-Status_iucn3.1_EN.svg.png

Nilgiri pipit: IUCN (Vulnerable)

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/6/63/Status_iucn3.1_VU.svg/220px-Status_iucn3.1_VU.svg.png

Indian vulture: IUCN (Critically Endangered)

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/4/4b/Status_iucn3.1_CR.svg/220px-Status_iucn3.1_CR.svg.png

Govt. plans research on 'indigenous' cows

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Govt Policy

In news:

- Government has unveiled a programme to research on 'indigenous' cows. (SUTRA PIC or Scientific Utilisation Through Research Augmentation-Prime Products from Indigenous Cows)
- Funded by multiple scientific ministries, the initiative, SUTRA PIC, is led by the Department of Science and Technology

Five themes:
- Uniqueness of Indigenous Cows,
- For Medicine and Health,
- For Agricultural Applications,
- For Food and Nutrition,
- Cows-based utility items.

Aims
- To perform scientific research on complete characterisation of milk and milk products derived from Indian indigenous cows
- Scientific research on nutritional and therapeutic properties of curd and ghee prepared from indigenous breeds of cows by traditional methods; development of standards for traditionally processed dairy products of Indian-origin cow

Malai Mahadeshwara Wildlife Sanctuary to be a tiger reserve

Part of: GS Prelims –Environment and GS-II- Conservation

In news:
- Approval from the NTCA (National Tiger Conservation Authority) is expected to notify the Malai Mahadeshwara Wildlife Sanctuary as a tiger reserve.

From Prelims Point of View:

Project Tiger:
- Launched in 1973 with 9 tiger reserves
- Currently, The Project Tiger coverage has increased to 50 tiger reserves are constituted on a core/buffer strategy.
- Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change providing central assistance to the tiger States

National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA):
- Statutory body by 2006 amendment of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- Launched in 2005ecommendations of the Tiger Task Force.
- Supervisory/coordination role, performing functions as provided in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
- M-STrIPES (Monitoring System for Tigers - Intensive Protection and Ecological Status) *is* an app based monitoring system, launched across Indian tiger reserves by the NTCA in 2010.

INFRASTRUCTURE/ENERGY

Industrial production shrinks 0.3% in December

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II- Competitive Federalism; GS-III- Economy

In news:

- The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) had grown by 2.5% in December 2018.
- India's industrial production growth turned negative in December, contracting by 0.3%, mainly on account of a decline in manufacturing sector output
- According to the National Statistical Office (NSO) data, the manufacturing sector output contracted by 1.2% in December 2019 as against a growth 2.9%

From Prelims Point of View:

Index of Industrial Production

- Growth rates in different industry groups of the economy in a fixed period of time.
- It is compiled and published monthly by the Central Statistical Organization (CSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

Composite indicator rate of industry groups classified under:

- Broad sectors, namely, Mining, Manufacturing, and Electricity.
- Use-based sectors, namely Basic Goods, Capital Goods, and Intermediate Goods.

Core industries of India represent about 40% of the weight of items that are included in the IIP.

Significance of IIP:

- IIP is the only measure on the physical volume of production.
- It is used by government agencies including the Ministry of Finance, the Reserve Bank of India, etc, for policy-making purposes.
- IIP remains extremely relevant for the calculation of the quarterly and advance GDP estimates.

Following SC rap, telcos asked to pay AGR dues immediately

Part of: GS Prelims –Economy and GS-III- Infrastructure

In news:

- The Supreme Court ordered contempt proceedings initiation against Telcom companies for failing to pay even a "single penny" to the government in Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) dues, worth ₹1.47 lakh crore, despite an October 2019 judgment.

From Prelims Point of view:

Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR)

The usage and licensing fee that telecom operators are charged by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT)

- Divided into spectrum usage charges and licensing fees (3-8 %)

Timeline:

Missed call | The SC on Friday warned telecom firms of contempt proceedings if they delay paying dues. A timeline:

2005: Govt.'s definition of Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) calculation challenged by firms. Govt. says AGR includes all revenues while companies argue that it includes only revenue from core services

2015: Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal rules that the companies' definition is right

Oct. 24, 2019: SC sets aside the tribunal's judgment saying govt.'s definition is right. Orders telecom firms to pay ₹1.47 lakh crore

Feb. 14, 2020: SC threatens telecom firms with contempt proceedings, slams officials for failing to enforce ruling

SOURCE: AGENCIES

SRC: The Hindu

https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareImage?Pictureid=GKP74B873.1

Bone of contention:

The definition of AGR has been under litigation for 14 years.

- **As per DoT**, the charges are calculated based on all revenues earned by a telco – including non-telecom related sources such as deposit interests and asset sales.
- **As per Telcos**, insist that AGR should comprise only the revenues generated from telecom services.

AGR is very important in Mains Perspective too, it will soon be covered in Mains section

NH 66 expansion hit more lives, ecology than estimated

Part of: GS Prelims –Economy and GS-III- Infrastructure

In news:

- The expansion of National Highway 66 (NH 66) from Karwar to Kundapura has impacted many more lives and livelihoods of coastal families of Uttara Kannada
- It was argued that the construction of the highway would bring development in all areas it passed through and led to economic growth of the region

- The project Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) report did not estimate the population that would be affected by environmental impacts, instead giving only the estimate of people who would be affected by land acquisition for the project.

From Prelims Point of View:

NH 66

- Runs roughly north–south along the western coast of India
- Connects Panvel (a city south of Mumbai) to Cape Comorin (Kanyakumari),
- Passing through the states of Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Indian Railways' Corporate Train model

Part of: GS Prelims –Economy and GS-III- Infrastructure

In news:

Indian Railways plans to offer as many as 500 trains to private operators over the next five years.

The Kashi Mahakal Express is the country's third 'corporate' train after the two **Tejas Express** trains between Delhi-Lucknow and Mumbai-Ahmedabad. All these three trains are run by PSU **IRCTC**

How does the model work?

- In this model, the corporation takes all the decisions of running the service — fare, food, onboard facilities, housekeeping, complaints etc.
- Indian Railways is free from these encumbrances and gets to earn from IRCTC a pre-decided amount, being the owner of the network.
- This amount has three components- haulage, lease and custody.
- In other words, IRCTC has to pay Indian Railways a sum total of these three charges, roughly Rs 14 lakh for the Lucknow Tejas runs in a day (up and down) and then factor in a profit over and above this.

What powers does IRCTC have?

- Being a corporate entity with a Board of Directors and investors, IRCTC insists that the coaches it gets from Railways are new and not in a run-down condition, as is seen in many trains.
- In this model, IRCTC has full flexibility to decide the service parameters and even alter them without having to go to Railway ministry or its policies.
- IRCTC gets the freedom to decide even the number of stoppages it wants to afford on a route, depending on the needs of its business model.
- The Lucknow Tejas, for instance, has two stops, whereas the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Tejas has six stops. These stops are business decisions.

Is this the same model for private tain operators?

- Private players may not need to pay lease and custody charges as it is expected that they will bring in their own rolling stock.

- Companies will have to bid for a network of routes and bids will be finalized on a **revenue-sharing model.**
- They (companies) will have to pay the haulage (charges for using tracks) charges at ₹686 per km to the railways. Along with this, they will have to have a portion of their revenue.
- **Infrastructure, maintenance and safety** will be handled by the railways.
- Private train operators will be allowed to procure trains, operate and maintain them, provide better on-board experience and services to passengers, in terms of food, comfort, entertainment, among others.
- Companies will also have **freedom to decide the fare**

Necessity/Merits of such plans

- **To meet growing passenger demand:** Indian Railways runs around 13,000 passenger trains every day and an additional requirement of 3,000-4,000 trains is estimated.
- Over the next five years, after the **two dedicated freight corridors** are operationalised and a lion's share of freight trains move to the corridors, a lot of capacity will free up in the conventional railway lines for more passenger trains to run to cater to the demand.
- Private train operators will bring with them the **technical and managerial expertise** which leads to optimum utilization of resources.
- The step is also expected to **boost private investment in the sector**
- It will also **ease burden on government finances** and helps reduce the loss of Indian Railways (because of under-recovery of cost due to low fares and hefty overheads)
- It will create the environment for **enhanced service quality and user experience** for the passengers

Way Ahead

Government needs to create an enabling ecosystem (policies, banking, infrastructure provision, regulation, ease of doing business) to tap the full potential of private players in railway sector.

Connecting the dots!

- Bibek Debroy Committee
- Should government insist on "Made in India" rakes for private players who wish to enter the sector? – Critically analyse

Mahadayi project cost skyrockets by 1,674% since inception

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- river dispute

In news:

- Kalasa-Banduri Nala project in the Mahadayi basin drags on over the inter-State river water dispute, the cost over the last 20 years has risen steeply from about ₹94 crore in 2000 to ₹1,677.30 crore now.

From Prelims Point of View

Kalasa-Banduri Nala Project

- Undertaken by the Government of Karnataka to improve drinking water supply to the three districts of Belagavi, Dharwad, and Gadag.

- Involves building across Kalasa and Banduri, two tributaries of the Mahadayi river to divert water to the Malaprabha river.
- Malaprabha river supplies the drinking water to Dharwad, Belgaum, and Gadag districts.
- The Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal was set up in 2010. Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra

Mahadayi:

- The west-flowing river
- Originates in Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary (Western Ghats), Belagavi Karnataka.
- Called as Mandovi in Goa.
- Joined by a number of streams to form the Mandovi which is one of two major rivers (the other one is Zuari River) that flows through Goa.
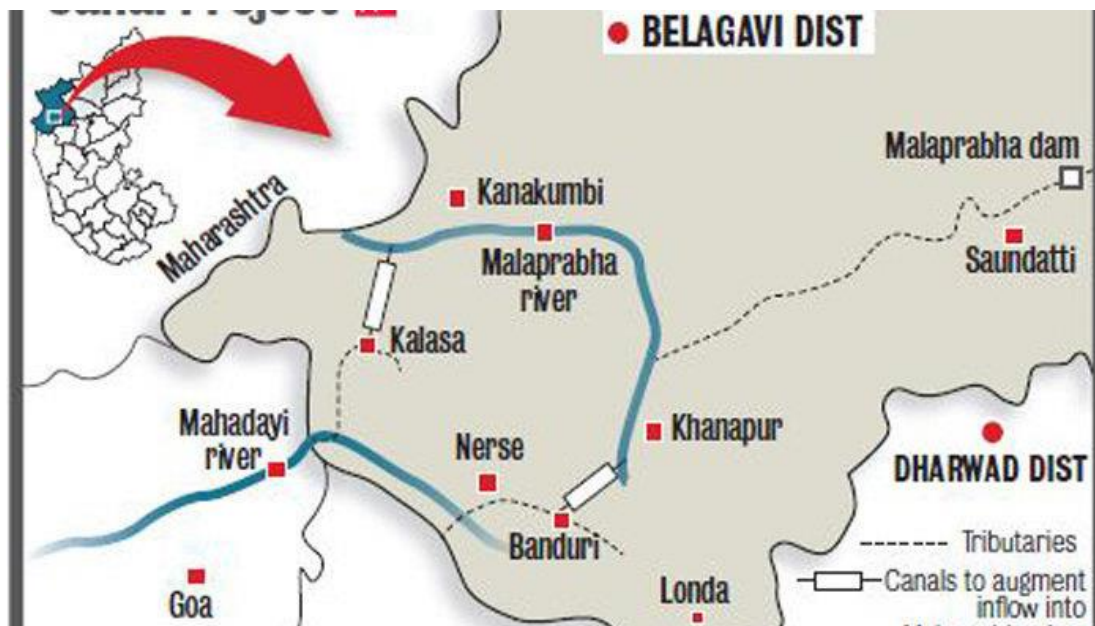
Source: Change.org

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Four-fold jump in Li-ion battery imports since 2016

Part of: GS Prelims –Science & Tech and GS-III- Technology

In news:

- India has quadrupled its imports of lithium-ion (Li-ion) batteries
- lithium-ion are vital for powering a range of devices from cell phones to electric vehicles
- India lacks manufacturing capacity;
- India is world's largest importer
- Imports from China, Japan and South Korea
- To promote indigenous development of such batteries, the Union Cabinet in 2019 approved a programme, called a **National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery**
- Electric vehicles are expected to account for a significant share in the growth of the Li-ion battery demand in India
- The government has announced investments worth $1.4 billion to make India one of the largest manufacturing hubs for electric vehicles by 2040.

From Prelims point of view:

Lithium-ion

- Rechargeable battery.
- Used for portable electronics and electric vehicles
- Developed by John Goodenough, Stanley Whittingham, Rachid Yazami and Akira Yoshino
- Lithium ions move from the negative electrode through an electrolyte to the positive electrode during discharge, and back when charging.
- Li-ion batteries use an intercalated lithium compound as the material at the positive electrode and typically graphite at the negative electrode.
- There is a safety hazard since they contain a flammable electrolyte, and if damaged or incorrectly charged can lead to explosions and fires.
- Samsung were forced to recall Galaxy Note 7 handsets following lithium-ion fire

National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery:

- Recommend and drive the strategies for transformative mobility and Phased Manufacturing Programmes for EVs, EV Components and Batteries.
- A Phased Manufacturing Program (PMP) will be launched to localize production across the entire EV value chain.
- Determine the contours of PMP, and will finalise the details of such a program.

- The details of the value addition that can be achieved with each phase of localisation will be finalised by the Mission with a clear Make in India strategy for the electric vehicle components as well as battery.
- The Mission will coordinate with key stakeholders in Ministries/ Departments and the states to integrate various initiatives to transform mobility in India.
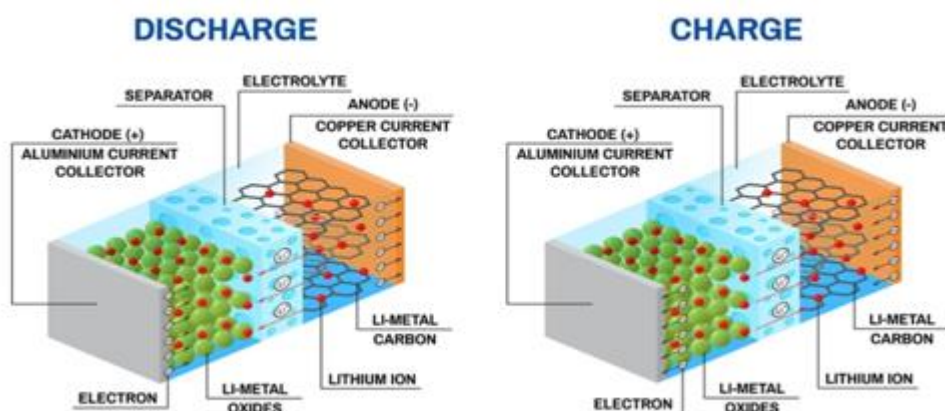
SRC: Basix

Electric vehicles:

- An electric vehicle uses one or more electric motors or traction motors for propulsion.
- An electric vehicle may be powered through self-contained battery, solar panels or an electric generator to convert fuel to electricity.
- E vehicles and policy related to it will be soon dealt in the mains section

Reverse Osmosis (RO) Purifiers – Draft notification by Government

Part of: GS Prelims –Science & Tech and GS-III- Technology

About Reverse Osmosis

- Reverse Osmosis is a technology that is used to remove a large majority of contaminants from water by pushing the water under pressure through a semi-permeable membrane.
- It works by using a high-pressure pump to increase the pressure on the salt side of the RO and force the water across the semi-permeable RO membrane, leaving around 95% to 99% of dissolved salts behind in the reject stream.
- The amount of pressure required depends on the salt concentration of the feed water. Higher the concentration of salt, higher is the pressure required.
- An RO membrane rejects contaminants based on their size and charge
- Reverse Osmosis is also used to produce water that is suitable for many industrial applications that require demineralized or deionized water

Reverse Osmosis
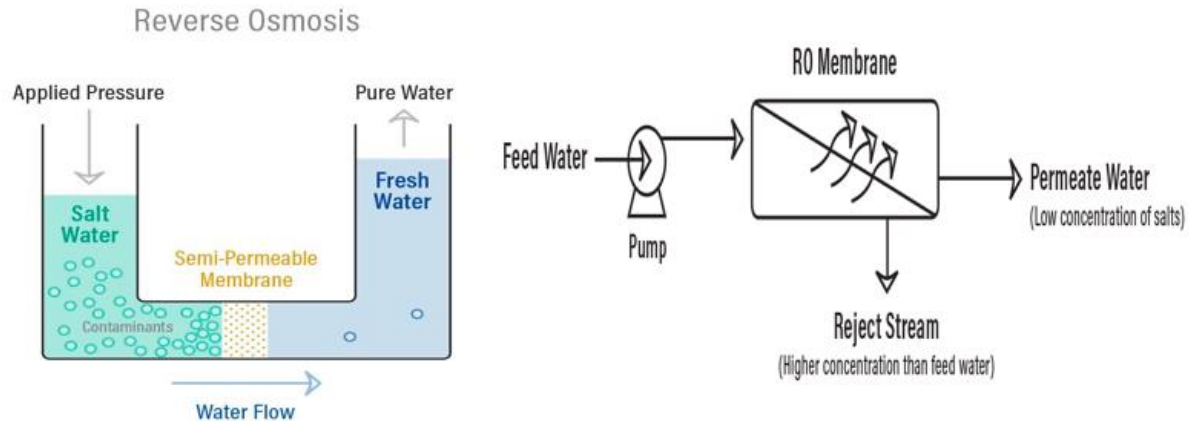
Issues with RO System

- **Wastage**: RO systems now recover only 20 per cent of water while 80 per cent go waste
- **Can remove beneficial mineral:** The process can cut the levels of calcium and magnesium, which are vital nutrients.
- **Membranes get clogged easily** which happens when materials build up on the membrane and slow down the flow of water. Thus it requires constant replacement which increases operational costs
- **Not 100% purification capability:** BIS standards clearly state that RO system is not recommended for treatment of raw water having Arsenic level above 0.1 mg/l and Fluoride level above 8.0 mg/l.

May 2019 NGT order had stated that

- RO Purifiers should be prohibited where TDS (total dissolved solids) - which covers trace chemicals, certain viruses, bacteria and salts - in water was less than 500 miligram per litre (mg/l)
- It had asked the government to redesign the RO system in a way that treated water would have a minimum 150 mg/l TDS concentration.
- It also stressed on remineralisation to compensate for loss of minerals during RO treatment
- It asked RO manufacturers to increase efficiency of systems to recover 60% of water inputs

Draft notification by the Union Environment Ministry (MoEFCC)

- The notification issued on February 3, 2020 mentions that use of membrane-based water purification system (MWPS), mainly RO purifiers, shall be prohibited where drinking water complies with the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).
- Enforcement will largely be the responsibility of CPCB and State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs), taking water supply agencies on board to certify whether they provide potable drinking water in a particular area as per the prescribed BIS standard.

Concerns with the notification
- The notification does not mention any limits prescribed in NGT order
- The notification implies, these filters are only prohibited if the home gets water supply that conforms to BIS standards for Drinking Water.
- Although several State and city water boards claim BIS standards, the water at homes falls short of the test parameters
- The resort to prohibition (to restrict home filters) may cause consumer apprehension

Conclusion
- The case for restricting people's choices on the means they employ to ensure potable water is thus weak in view of above concern
- Government's primary aim should be to persuade authorities to upgrade and supply BIS-standard water at the consumer's end and it should be done without additional costs.

Do You Know?
- The BIS norms are voluntary for public agencies which supply piped water but are mandatory for bottled water producers.
- The Composite Water Management Index (CWMI) of NITI Aayog says that 70% of water supply is contaminated.
- India is ranked 120th among 122 countries in an NGO, WaterAid's quality index.

Connecting the dots!
- **Nal Se Jal**: Government's mission to ensure piped drinking water to every rural Households by 2024

Genome India Project

Part of: GS Prelims –Science & Tech and GS-III- Technology

The Genome India Project, is a collaboration of 20 institutions including the Indian Institute of Science and some IITs, whereby in the first phase the genomic data of 10,000 Indians will be catalogued
By sequencing the genome, researchers can discover the functions of genes and identify which of them are critical for life.

What is Genome?
- Every organism's genetic code is contained in its Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid (DNA), the building blocks of life.
- A genome is defined as an organism's complete set of DNA, including all of its genes. It contains all of the information needed to build and maintain that organism.
- In humans, a copy of the entire genome — more than 3 billion DNA base pairs — is contained in all cells that have a nucleus.

The Human Genome Project (HGP) – from 1990 to 2003 – was an international programme that led to the decoding of the entire human genome. India was also a collaborator for this programme

What is need for Genome India project if HGP has mapped human genome?

- 95% of the genome samples available use the white, Caucasian genome as the base. Most genomes have been sourced from urban middle-class persons and are not really seen as representative and useful for India specific needs.
- India's project aim is to ultimately build a grid of the Indian reference genome, to understand fully the type and nature of diseases and traits that comprise the diverse Indian population
- For example, if the Northeast sees a tendency towards a specific disease, interventions can be made in the region, assisting public health, which make it easier to battle the illness.

Benefits/Significance of Indian Project

- **Personalised Medicine**: Propensities to disease can be mapped to variations across genomes and as a result public health interventions can be targeted better, and diseases anticipated before they develop
- **Deeper Understanding of Ecology:** Traversing from the world's tallest mountain range to warm seas through multiple bio-zones, this project could provide much information on the interplay of species and genetic groups within them
- **International Cooperation:** The Indian project will aim to vastly add to the available information on the human species and advance the cause, both because of the scale of the Indian population and the diversity here.

Challenges to the Genome India Project

- **Medical Ethics:** The project aims only to create a database of genetic information and gene modification is not a stated objective. However, the presence of such wide knowledge enhances the risk of doctors privately performing gene modification**.**
- **Data & Storage:** After collection of the sample, the anonymity of the data and questions of its possible use and misuse needs to be addressed especially since India has not passed the data privacy bill
- **Fear of Scientific Racism:** scientific studies of genes and classifying them could reinforce racial/caste stereotypes and allow for politics and history to acquire a racial twist.
- **Political Misuse:** In India a lot of politics is now on the lines of who are "indigenous" people and who are not. A Genome India Project could add a genetic dimension to the cauldron.

Way Ahead

Genome India Project provides an opportunity for India to make progress in the fields of biotechnology and healthcare. Thus, it needs to be carried with necessary safeguards about data & ethical issues.

Did you know?

- Shenzen-based scientist helped create the world's first gene-edited babies.
- He Jiankui stunned the world when he announced in 2018 that twin girls had been born with modified DNA to make them HIV-resistant

Connecting the dots!

- Agriculture and Genetic engineering
- Biotechnology and issue of equity.

Data Encryption: Its impact on Child Safety Online

Part of: GS Prelims –Science & Tech and GS-III- Technology

Context

After Facebook announced end-to-end encryption for Facebook Messenger and Instagram, a coalition of child protection organisations and experts from all over the world sent a letter to its CEO expressing concerns about company's proposals.

The encryption proposed will **not impact Facebook's main social platform** but all its Messaging services like Facebook Messanger, Instagram Direct and Whatsapp**.**

What is end-to-end encryption?

- It is a system of locking messages wherein only those who are communicating can view them.
- Encryption kicks in the minute the message is sent, and only unravels for the intended recipient.
- No third party can decrypt the message, including platform administrators and law enforcement agencies.
- It can only be shared through screenshots.
- The advantage with this kind of encryption is that it ensures online privacy.

What it is being criticised?

- **Protection to anti-social content:** Paedophiles and persons who wish to exchange child sex abuse material are permanently shielded, as are terrorists and an infinite variety of scam artists.
- It will be **difficult to trace distributors** of child pornography/terrorist content. Such a move will not allow the due process of monitoring for content that is not safe for children.
- **Contradictory provision of Service:** Limiting the ability of companies themselves to detect and prevent behavior which contravenes their own terms of services is wrong and makes a mockery of the very idea of having terms of service in the first place

Conclusion

The true test will be to pick that mode of encryption that will ensure privacy but address concerns of online safety too

Did you know?

- The Rajya Sabha ad-hoc committee that went into the issue of pornography on social media and its effect on children has called specifically to permit breaking of end-to-end encryption to trace distributors of child pornography.
- In 2018, Facebook made 16.8 million reports to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), leading to 2,500 arrests and 3,000 children being safeguarded in the U.K alone.

Connecting the dots!

- Privacy Vs Ability to monitor anti-social content (Ethical Dilemma for Societies)
- Justice Sri Krishna Committee on Data protection
- Facebook's Free Basics Campaign and Issue of Net Neutrality

Google to end 'Station' programme

Part of: GS Prelims –Science & Tech and GS-III- IT

In news:

- Google Started the 'Station' programme to bring free public Wi-Fi to 400 busiest railway stations in India.
- Now decided to gradually wind down the service globally

What?

- Google believes that better data plans and improving mobile connectivity have made it "simpler and cheaper" for users to get online.

The programme was kick-started in India in 2015 as a partnership between **Google, Indian Railways** and **RailTel** to bring fast and free public WiFi.

Inflight Wi-Fi

Part of: GS Prelims –Science & Tech and GS-III- IT

Context

Domestic aircraft carrier Vistara will be the first to offer inflight Wi-Fi by March-end. As of now, only data services will be offered and voice calls could be introduced later

What is in-flight connectivity?

- In-flight connectivity essentially allows those onboard aircraft to access voice, video and data services after the aircraft has attained an altitude of 3,000 meters.
- In-flight connectivity for aircraft flying over Indian airspace was approved by the DoT in May 2018.

How does in-flight connectivity work?

- It relies on **onboard antenna** as well as satellites for Internet and mobile communications.
- Onboard Antenna
  - Here, signals are picked from the nearest tower on the ground.
  - However, the connection does become an issue after a certain altitude if the aircraft is passing over an area with no towers, say a large water body.
- Through Satellite
  - It works in a manner similar to how satellite TV signals are transmitted.
  - So, an onboard router, which connects to the plane's antenna transmits data to a personal electronic device.
  - The signals are then transmitted to ground station via satellites and are redirected to a billing server for calculation of the data consumption.
  - Finally, the signal is relayed to the World Wide Web.

Onboard Wifi

- While the telecom commission has allowed Internet services onboard, the telecom operator has said it will be made available when devices are used only on flight mode.
- Internet services, hence, could only be used through onboard WiFi as of now.

Sky, Space, Ground, Cloud

On ground plane's antenna will connect to terrestrial Internet services; once up to 3,000 m, it will switch to satellite

The aircraft antenna will communicate with a satellite. India has allowed the use of only the INSAT system

Aircraft will have antenna mounted on the roof. This will entail a cost; they may prefer to offer service only in new planes rather than ground old ones to retrofit

Internet Cloud

Core Router

INSAT/GSAT Satellite

Earth Station Antenna

Switch

Billing Server

In the final stage, the signals will be relayed to intercepting servers, and onward to the World Wide Web

Intercepting Server

Signals will be transmitted to a ground station, which will redirect the traffic to a billing server to calculate amount of data consumed

Source: TRAI recommendations on in-flight connectivity

Cost of in-flight connectivity

- The airlines are free to decide the tariff, as the **DoT has not regulated that aspect**
- Globally, given the high cost of satellite connectivity, the internet services available onboard aircraft are charged at a premium over what is available otherwise
- The airlines will have to incur high cost of installing equipment, including the installation of antennae on aircraft, increased fuel cost due to extra weight- all these additional cost could find a way into ticket prices.

What about mobile communication Services?

- Even as the process to streamline broadband services onboard flights has been initiated, mobile communication on airlines (MCA) might still take time to be a reality.
- The TRAI, had, however, recommended that both broadband and MCA should be allowed over Indian airspace.
- Several stakeholders had raised concerns over providing MCA to passengers citing a complex regulatory framework with issues such as interference, roaming, and spectrum use.
- Also, with in-flight broadband connectivity allowing messaging services and voice calling, there is little requirement to speed up MCA

However, some of the **challenges with regard to inflight connectivity** includes

- Relatively slow speeds of Internet
- Security risks due to possible interference with flight communication systems.

Expensive service which may increase the flight ticket price

Scientists oppose study into 'qualities' of indigenous cow

Part of: GS Prelims –Science & Tech and GS-III- conservation

In news:

- Many scientists have petitioned the Department of Science & Technology (DST) to withdraw a proposal that solicits research into indigenous cows.

Concerns

- The research programme appeared to endorse the belief that indigenous cows had "special" and "unique" qualities
- Possibility of money being "wasted to investigate imaginary qualities derived from religious scriptures".
- Programme did not encourage fair comparison with other breeds of cows around the world or other bovine species within India
- Proposal was drafted unscientifically

From Prelims Point of View:

Background:

- Government has recently unveiled a programme to research on 'indigenous' cows. (SUTRA PIC or Scientific Utilisation Through Research Augmentation-Prime Products from Indigenous Cows) led by the Department of Science and Technology

Aims

- To perform scientific research on complete characterisation of milk and milk products derived from Indian indigenous cows

- Scientific research on nutritional and therapeutic properties of curd and ghee prepared from indigenous breeds of cows by traditional methods; development of standards for traditionally processed dairy products of Indian-origin cow

5G- Rollout should not be in hurry

Central government had set a target of 2020 for the commercial launch of 5G services, largely in line with rest of the world.

What is 5G?

- It is the next generation cellular technology that will deliver multi-Gbps peak rates, ultra-low latency, massive capacity, and a more uniform user experience
- Speed will be range of 2-20 Gigabit per second (Gbps) in contrast to 4G link speeds in averaging 6-7 Megabit per second (Mbps) in India
- But once 5G becomes commercial, users will be required to change their current devices in favour of 5G-enabled ones.

Applications of 5G

- **Expansion of wireless technologies —**across completely new sectors of the economy from industrial (robotics) to commercial, educational, health care (Tele-surgery),

agricultural (sensors), financial (block chain technology) and social sectors (climate studies).

- **Internet-of-Things (IOT)-** 5G will form the backbone of IOT. 5G will help in creating **cyber-physical networks** which not only interconnect people, but also interconnect and control machines, objects, and devices
- **Sensor-embedded network** that will allow real time relay of information across fields such as manufacturing, consumer durables and agriculture.
- **Smart transport infrastructure** -5G will enable vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-infrastructure communication, making driverless cars, among other things, a reality.

Economic Impact of 5G adoption

- 5G is expected to create a cumulative economic impact of $1 trillion in India by 2035.
- 5G-enabled digitalisation revenue potential in India will be above $27 billion by 2026.
- Additionally, global telecom industry GSMA has forecast that India will have about 70 million 5G connections by 2025.

Major challenges of adopting 5G are

1. Standardisation of 5G:

- As it stands today, 5G is not a defined standard.
- Fragmentation of next generation approaches will only mean that development time and costs will increase.
- Thus, there is a need for standardising an approach and bringing all of the major technology partners on board

2. Huge Investments required for enabling infrastructure:

- 5G will require a fundamental change to the core architecture of the communication system. Simply upgrading the existing Long Term Evolution core will not be able to support 5G
- A report on 5G by Deloitte stated that rolling out 5G might require an additional investment of $60-70 billion.

3. Pricing Issue:

- There is a strong correlation between broadband price and adoption levels: for example - 1% increase in mobile broadband prices results in 0.13% decrease in adoption rates (low income) according to International Telecommunication Union
- And a 1% decrease in mobile broadband adoption results in 0.19% decrease in GDP per capita (low income).

4. 5G enabled Devices & its affordability:

- 5G smartphone models are likely to cost much more than present phone— with enhanced features, cameras and sensors to support AR and VR applications
- A significant number (close to 300 million) of users are still on 2G/2.5G networks — and feature phones are widely in use. Device cost is of relevance to a price-sensitive market like India.

5. Financial Health of Telecom Sector:

- By end of 2019, the industry's cumulative debt was pegged at around ₹7 lakh crore.

- Also, total mobile revenues in India have fallen by more than 20 per cent over past four years.
- This restricts telecos capability to roll out 5G in a sustainable manner.

6. Uncertainity in 5G spectrum Auction:

- The COAI has also pointed out that 5G is overpriced by at least 30% to 40% compared to international standards and auction in other markets such as South Korea and the U.S.
- Telecos have pointed out that the reserve price of these airwaves is very high. Besides, there are currently no India-specific use cases for deployment of 5G.

7. Potential health hazards of tens of thousands of radiating base stations.

Even technologically advanced countries like Israel are refusing to implement 5G on account of a host of unknowns like potential health impact of 5G radiations

8. Dependence on China: Huawei which is a Chinese firm owns the majority of 5G technology in the world. However, there are concerns that dependence on China for critical infrastructure like 5Gcould compromise India's security.

Conclusion

Inspite of the potential benefits of 5G, India needs to be cautious while rolling out 5G. A balanced assessment of its potential applications and demand must be made. Realistic and gradual expansion up the value chain is needed. In this scheme of things, more mature policy making is expected.

Connecting the dots

- US ban on Huawei
- 5G Spectrum allocation
- Aggregate Gross Revenue (AGR) issue of telecos and its impact on 5G rollout

NASA's InSight Mars Mission

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III- Science & technology

In news:

- NASA's Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport (InSight) lander touched down on Mars at the end of 2018.
- InSight is the first mission dedicated to looking deep beneath the Martian surface.
- Among its science tools are a seismometer for detecting quakes, sensors for gauging wind and air pressure, a magnetometer, and a heat flow probe designed to take the planet's temperature.
- It is part of NASA's Discovery Program.
- InSight is a two year mission that will study the deep interior of Mars to learn how all celestial bodies with rocky surfaces, including Earth and the Moon, formed.

DEFENCE/INTERNAL SECURITY/SECURITY

Navy will have its third Scorpene sub this year

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains II - Polity

In news:

- The third Scorpene submarine, **Karanj**, will be delivered to the Indian Navy by December and all six submarine deliveries would be completed by 2022
- The first Scorpene, Kulvari, was commissioned in 2018.
- The second Scorpene Khanderi was inducted in September last year.

From Prelims Point of vew:

Scorpene-class submarines:

- These are a class of diesel-electric attack submarines jointly developed by the French Direction des Constructions Navales (DCN) and the Spanish company Navantia, and now by Naval Group.
- It features diesel propulsion and an additional air-independent propulsion (AIP)

Lucknow Declaration Adopted at the 1st India-Africa Defence Ministers Conclave, 2020

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- Defence

In news:

- The first India-Africa Defence Ministers' Conclave held in Lucknow
- adopted the Lucknow Declaration

Highlights:

- To deepen cooperation to combat the growing threat of terrorism
- Preserve maritime security by sharing information, intelligence and surveillance

From Prelims Point of view:

DEFEXPO

The DefExpo is biennial event organized by Ministry of Defence. The 11th edition of the event promises to bring in new technological solutions.

- Defence Exhibition Organisation is an autonomous organisation of the Indian Government established in 1981.
- The organisation was established to promote export potential of the Indian defence industry.
- The agency is responsible for organising international exhibitions such as DEFEXPO and Indian participation at overseas exhibitions.

India to work with Russia on copters

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- Defense, India's foreign relations

In news:

- Production Localization of Ka-226T light utility helicopters
- (Defexpo 2020) Russian Helicopters (RH) signed a road map with IRHL for localization of Ka-226T helicopter production in India.
- IRHL is a joint venture between Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Russian Helicopters (RH), which will assemble the Ka-226T helicopters in India.

From Prelims Point of view:

Ka-226T:

- The Ka-226T is a design of Russia's famed Kamov design bureau. It is a light helicopter, with a maximum take-off weight of over 3.5 tones and can carry a payload of up to 1 ton.

Defence Acquisition Council (DAC):

- Highest decision-making body in the Defence Ministry for deciding on new policies and capital acquisitions for the three services (Army, Navy and Air Force) and the Indian Coast Guard.
- The Minister of Defence is the Chairman of the Council.
- It was formed, after the Group of Ministers recommendations on 'Reforming the National Security System', in 2001, post Kargil War (1999)

New structure for Military Affairs

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Defence

In news:

- The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), procurement cases will be put up as prioritised by the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).
- Formal structure comprising civil and military officials for the **Department of Military Affairs** (DMA) headed by the CDS **(At present, we have an interim structure, they have no financial power)**
- The proposed DMA will have a Secretary, Transformation and Coordination, which will be the Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (IDS), Additional Secretary and five Joint Secretaries.
- Additional Secretary will be a three-star officer while the Joint Secretaries include three officers, one from each service of the rank of Major General or equivalent ,Major Gen.

From Prelims Point of view:

Department of Military Affairs:

- The DMA will be the **fifth department in the Ministry** after the Department of Defence, the Department of Defence Production, the Department of Defence Research and Development and the Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare.
- The DMA's mandate includes **promoting jointness in procurement, training and staffing for the Services**; facilitating restructuring of the military commands for optimal utilisation of resources by bringing about a jointness in operations, including through the establishment of joint/theatre commands and promoting use of indigenous equipment

The DMA would deal with

- The armed forces;
- The integrated headquarters of the Ministry, comprising the Army, Naval and Air and defence staff headquarters;
- The Territorial Army; and
- Works relating to the three services and procurement exclusive to them, except capital acquisitions

Defence Acquisition Council

- Highest decision-making body in the Defence Ministry
- Decides on new policies and capital acquisitions for the three services (Army, Navy and Air Force) and the Indian Coast Guard.
- Minister of Defence is the Chairman of the Council.
- Formed, after the Group of Ministers recommendations on **'Reforming the National Security System',** in 2001, post Kargil War (1999).

Peninsular command

Part of: GS Prelims –Polity and GS-II- Defence

In news:

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) talked about:

- A road map for restructuring the Armed Forces that would holistically counter threats along the borders with China and Pakistan as well as in the Indian Ocean, backed by logistical agreements with other countries.
- An **Indian Ocean-centered Peninsular Command,** possibly formed by merging the Eastern and Western Naval Commands

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS):

- Cabinet Committee on Security approved the creation
- Principal military adviser to the defence minister
- Appointed in a four-star rank at par with the three service chiefs
- Permanent chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC)
- Function as the Military Adviser to the Nuclear Command Authority.

SRC: Maps of India

https://www.mapsofindia.com/images2009/printable_maps/indian-subcontinent-map.jpg

Exercise Indradhanush

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II- International Affairs

In news:

- The 5th edition of **India-UK joint Air Force Exercise 'Indradhanush'** began at Air Force Station, Hindan (Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh) on 24th February, 2020.
- The theme of this edition of the exercise is **'Base Defence and Force Protection**
- Other joint exercises between India and UK are **Konkan** (Navy) and **Ajeya Warrior (Army)**

PERSON IN NEWS

Person in news	Description
1. Ahmer Khan	**In news:** • Kashmir journalist wins AFP's Kate Webb Prize. Freelance reporter Ahmer Khan was named the winner of the 2019 Kate Webb Prize • For his coverage on the ground in India-controlled Kashmir during Delhi's lockdown of the region **From Prelims Point of View:** Kate Webb • New Zealand-born Australian war correspondent • Earned a reputation for fearless reporting throughout the Vietnam War • She continued to report from global hotspots including Iraq during the Gulf War

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MISCELLANEOUS

In News	Description
1. National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS)	• Research Centre specializing in biological research (Bangalore) • Under the Department of Atomic Energy • Basic and interdisciplinary research in the frontier areas of biology. • The research interests of the faculty are in four broad areas ranging from the study of single molecules to systems biology.
2. SuperCam	• NASA is sending a new laser-toting robot as one of seven instruments aboard the Mars 2020 rover Called SuperCam • It fires lasers to study rocks, and will look for signs of past life on Red Planet. • The robot is used for studying mineralogy and chemistry; It might help scientists find signs of fossilised microbial life on Mars. • SuperCam includes a microphone so scientists can listen each time the laser hits a target.
3. Centre to form new law Commission	• The Union Cabinet gave its approval to set up the 22nd Law Commission. • The new panel, will have a three-year term. Chairperson, four full-time members, Law and Legislative Secretaries in the Law Ministry will be ex-officio members of the commission. • A retired Supreme Court judge or Chief Justice of a High Court will head the commission. From Prelims point of view: Law Commission • Advises the government on complex legal issues. • The term of the previous law panel ended last August. • Originally formed in 1955, the commission is reconstituted every three years and so far, 277 reports have been submitted to the government. • Previous Law Commission, under Justice B.S. Chauhan (retd.), supported simultaneous elections. • Law Commission of India is neither a constitutional body nor a statutory body, it is an executive body established by an order of the Government of India. • The Commission is established for a fixed tenure and works as an advisory body to the Ministry of Law and Justice.

4. Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA)	• Apex national body representing automobile dealers of India • Founded in 1964 by four regional Auto Trade associations • **Objectives:** To protect and promote the Indian retail automobile market. • Registered body under the Companies Act 1956.
5. Vodafone Idea pays ₹1,000 cr. in AGR dues	Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) • It is the usage and licensing fee that telecom operators are charged by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT). • It is divided into spectrum usage charges and licensing fees Spectrum Usage Charge • It is the charge that is required to be paid by the licensees providing mobile access services, as a percentage of their Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR). • The spectrum slabs/rates for the same are notified by the Government from time to time.
6. India-Maldives Relation	• India first to recognize the Maldives after its independence in 1965 • India established its mission at Malé in 1972. • Maldives archipelago comprising 1200 coral Islands lies next to key shipping lanes which ensure uninterrupted energy supplies to countries like China, Japan, and India. • More than 97% of India's international trade by volume and 75% by value passes through the region. • Maldives member of SAARC
7. Hosni Mubarak, ousted by Arab Spring in 2011, dies	In news • Egypt's former President Hosni Mubara died • He was swept from power, like other regional potentates, by the popular uprisings of the 2011 Arab Spring. From Prelims Point of View: Arab Spring : • A series of antigovernment protests, uprisings and armed rebellions that spread across the Middle East. • Reasons : Oppressive regimes and a low standard of living • Protests begin in Tunisia • Revolution spread like fire to five other countries: Libya, Yemen, Egypt, Bahrain and Syria • Result of the revolution: Either the regime was toppled or major uprisings or social violence occurred, including riots, civil wars, mass murdering or insurgencies.

8. National Science Day 2020	• National Science Day is celebrated every year on 28 February by the Government of India to commemorate the discovery of the 'Raman Effect'. Designated 28 February as in 1986. • On this day, Sir C.V. Raman announced the discovery of the 'Raman Effect' for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1930 • The Raman Effect is a change in the wavelength of light that occurs when a light beam is deflected by molecules.
9. RAISE 2020	• It is India's first Artificial Intelligence summit to be organized by the Government in partnership with Industry & Academia. • The summit will be a global meeting of minds to exchange ideas to use AI for social empowerment, inclusion and transformation in key areas like Healthcare, Agriculture, Education and Smart Mobility amongst other sectors. • It is being organized by Ministry of Electronics & IT
10. 100 Springs Initiative	• It aims at improving access to safe and adequate water for the tribal communities living in difficult and inaccessible parts of rural areas in the country. • The initiative will help in harnessing the potential of perennial springs' water to address natural scarcity of water in tribal areas. • It also includes provision of infrastructure for piped water supply for drinking; provision of water for irrigation; community-led total sanitation initiatives; and provision for water for backyard nutrition gardens, generating sustainable livelihood opportunities for the tribal people. • Launched by Ministry of Tribal Affairs
11. Red Snow	• Red snow has been noticed around Ukraine's Vernadsky Research Base, off the coast of Antarctica's northernmost peninsula. • Reason: It is the algae that give the snow its red tinge • This alga species, Chlamydomonas Chlamydomonas nivalis, exists in snow in the polar and glacial regions, and carries a red pigment to keep itself warm. • Impact: These algae change the snow's albedo. Darker the tinge, the more the heat absorbed by the snow. Therefore, the red snow causes the surrounding ice to melt faster • Cause of Concern: While the melt is good for the microbes that need the liquid water to survive and thrive, it's bad for glaciers that are already melting from a myriad of other causes

12. "Second Moon"	• Astronomers have observed a small object orbiting Earth- named 2020 CD3 - which they have dubbed a "mini-moon" or the planet's "second moon". • However, it is actually an asteroid, about the size of a car with diameter about 1.9-3.5 m. Such an asteroid is called a Temporarily Captured Object (TCO) • Unlike Earth's permanent Moon, the mini-moon is temporary which will eventually break free of Earth's orbit and go off on its own way. • Explanation: When an asteroid's orbit crosses Earth's orbit, it can sometimes be captured into the latter orbit. This is what happened with 2020 CD3. The orbits of such objects is unstable • Did you know? The previously discovered 2006 RH120 orbited Earth for some time in 2006 before it escaped in 2007 • Once caught in Earth's orbit, such objects usually remain for a few years before they break free and go into independent orbit around the Sun.
13. IMD: Summer to be hotter than usual	In news: • The forecast from IMD indicates that the MAM (March-May) season averaged temperatures are likely to be at least half a degree hotter than normal About Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) • IMD was established in 1875. • It is an agency of the Ministry of Earth Sciences of the Government of India. • It is the principal agency responsible for meteorological observations, weather forecasting and seismology
14. NIA makes first arrest in Pulwama case	In news: • Pulwama case: Forty CRPF jawans travelling in convoy were killed by a vehicle-borne suicide attack on February 14, 2019 in Pulwana City of Jammu & Kashmir Prelims Value Addition • NIA was created after the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks with the enactment of the National Investigation Agency Act 2008. NIA is the Central Counter Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency of India and it works under overall guidance of Ministry of Home Affairs

(TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE)

Model questions: (Answers are provided at the end)

Q.1) Consider the following statements about Economic Survey

1. It is an official government's report on the state of the economy in the past one year, the key challenges it anticipates, and their possible solutions
2. Government is constitutionally bound to present the Economic Survey before tabling the Union Budget

Which of the above statement(s) given above is/are correct?

  a. 1 only
  b. 2 only
  c. Both 1 and 2
  d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.2) Beijing Declaration often seen in news is related to which of the following field?

  a. Environment Conservation
  b. Security in South China Sea
  c. Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
  d. None of the above

Q.3) Consider the following statements about Surajkund International Crafts Mela

1. It is being organized since 1987 to showcase the richness and diversity of handicrafts, handlooms and cultural heritage of India.
2. It is being held in Himachal Pradesh in 2020 with partner Country as Maldives

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

  a. 1 only
  b. 2 only
  c. Both 1 and 2
  d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.4) Consider the following statements about Huduma Namba

1. It is a Unique Identity Number provided to each citizen in Kenya
2. It resembles the Aadhar system of India with regard to Centralized databases, use for availing public service and collection of biometric data

Which of the statement(s) given above is/are correct?

  a. 1 only
  b. 2 only
  c. Both 1 and 2
  d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.5) When the annual Union Budget is not passed by the Lok Sabha ?

  a. The Budget is modified and presented again
  b. The Budget is referred to the Rajya Sabha for suggestions
  c. The Union Finance Minister is asked to resign
  d. The Prime Minister submits the resignation of Council of Ministers

Q.6) What is the difference between "vote-on-account" and "interim budget"?

1. The provision of a "vote-on-account'' is used by a regular Government, while an "interim budget'' is a provision used by a caretaker Government
2. A "vote-on-account'' only deals with the expenditure in Government budget, while an "interim budget''

includes both expenditure and receipts

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a. 1 only

b. 2 only

c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.7) Under which one of the following Constitution Amendment Acts, Bodo language was added to the list of languages under the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India, thereby raising their number to 22?

a. Constitution (Ninetieth Amendment) Act

b. Constitution (Ninety-first Amendment) Act

c. Constitution (Ninety-second Amendment) Act

d. Constitution (Ninety-third Amendment) Act

Q.8) One of the implications of equality in society is the absence of?

a. Privileges

b. Restraints

c. Competition

d. Ideology

Q.9) In the light of the argument in the above passage, which one of the following statements is the most convincing explanation?

a. The Right of personal property is a Natural Right duly supported by statutes and scriptures.

b. Personal property is a theft and an instrument of exploitation. The Right of personal property is therefore violative of economic justice.

c. The Right of personal property is violative of distributive justice and negates the principle of cooperation.

d. The comprehensive idea of economic justice demands that the Right of each person to acquisition of property has to be reconciled with that of others.

Q.10) In India, if a religious sect/community is given the status of a national minority, what special advantages it is entitled to?

1. It can establish and administer exclusive educational institutions.

2. The President of India automatically nominates a representative of the community to Lok Sabha.

3. It can derive benefits from the Prime Minister's 15-Point Programme.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a. 1 only

b. 2 and 3

c. 1 and 3

d. 1, 2 and 3

Q.11) Which one of the following schedules of the Constitution of India contains provisions regarding anti-defection Act?

a. Second Schedule

b. Fifth Schedule

c. Eighth Schedule

d. Tenth Schedule

Q.12) Velutheeyam is

a. a new species of snake found recently

b. an alloy of tin and aluminium

c. Classical dance of Kerala

d. None of these

Q.13) Which one of the following was probed by the Liberhan Commission?

a. Test Cricket Match Fixing

b. Best Bakery Case

c. Tehelka Tapes Case

d. Demolition of the disputed structure at Ayodhya

Q.14) How is the National Green Tribunal (NGT) different from the Central Pollution Control Board

1. The NGT has been established by an Act whereas the CPCB has been created by an executive order of the Government.

2. The NGT provides environmental justice and helps reduce the burden of litigation in the higher courts whereas the CPCB promotes cleanliness of streams and wells, and aims to improve the quality of air in the country.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a. 1 only

b. 2 only

c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.15) Which of the following provisions of the Constitution of India have a bearing on Education?

1. Directive Principles of State Policy

2. Rural and Urban Local Bodies

3. Fifth Schedule

4. Sixth Schedule

5. Seventh Schedule

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

a. 1 and 2 only

b. 3, 4 and 5 only

c. 1, 2 and 5 only

d. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Q.16) The provisions in Fifth Schedule and Sixth Schedule in the Constitution of India are made in order to

a. protect the interests of Scheduled Tribes

b. determine the boundaries between States

c. determine the powers, authority and responsibilities of Panchayats

d. protect the interests of all the border States

Q.17) What is/are the purpose/purposes of the 'Marginal Cost of Funds based Lending Rate (MCLR)'?

1. These guidelines help improve the transparency in the methodology followed by banks for determining the interest rates on advances.

2. These guidelines help ensure availability of bank credit at interest rates which are fair to the borrowers as well as the banks

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

a. 1 only

b. 2 only

c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.18) The power of the Supreme Court of India to decide disputes between the Centre and the States falls under its

a. advisory jurisdiction

b. appellate jurisdiction

c. original jurisdiction

d. writ jurisdiction

Q.19) Which one of the following pairs of metals constitutes the lightest metal and the heaviest metal, respectively?

a. Lithium and mercury

b. Lithium and osmium

c. Aluminium and osmium

d. Aluminium and mercury

Q.20) Consider the following statements:

1. Toothless mammals such as Pangolins are not found in India.

2. Gibbon is the only ape found in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a. 1 only

b. 2 only

c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.21) From which one of the following did India buy the Ka 226 T light helicopter?**

a. Israel

b. France

c. Russia

d. USA

Q.22) What is "Luknow declaration ", sometimes seen in the news?

a. An Israeli radar system collaboration with India

b. India's indigenous anti-missile Programme

c. An American anti-missile system

d. A defence collaboration between India and Africa

Q.23)

The graph given below indicates the changes in key policy rates made by the Central Bank several times in a year :
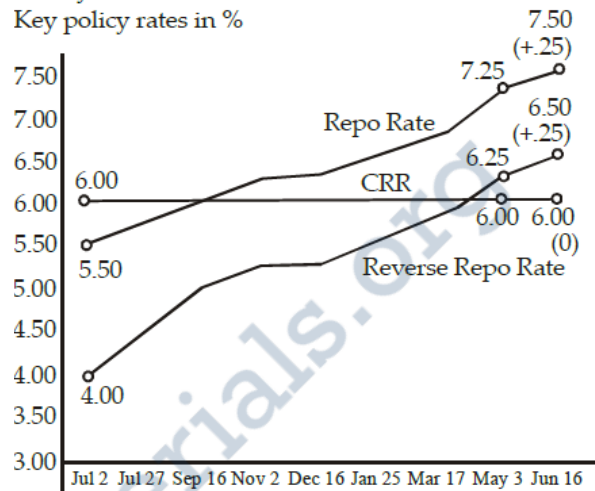
Which one of the following can be the most likely reason for the Central Bank for such an action?

a. Encouraging foreign investment

b. Increasing the liquidity

c. Encouraging both public and private savings

d. Anti-inflationary stance

Q.24) what is 'SuperCam', recently in the news?

a. Electric plane tested by NASA

b. new laser-toting robot the Mars 2020 rover by NASA

c. Space observatory launched by China

d. Reusable rocket designed by ISRO

Q.25) NASA's Deep Impact space mission was employed to take detailed pictures of which comet nucleus?

a. Halley's Comet

b. Hale-Bopp

c. Hyakutake

d. Tempel 1

Q.26) Right to Privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of Right to Life and Personal Liberty. Which of the following

in the Constitution of India correctly and appropriately imply the above statement?

a. Article 14 and the provisions under the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution

b. Article 17 and the Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV

c. Article 21 and the freedoms guaranteed in Part III

d. Article 24 and the provisions under the 44th Amendment to the Constitution

Q.27) With reference to 'National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF)', which of the statements given below is/are correct?

1. Under NSQF, a learner can acquire the certification for competency only through formal learning.

2. An outcome expected from the implementation of NSQF is the mobility between vocational and general education.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

a. 1 only

b. 2 only

c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.28) With reference to Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, consider the following statements

1. It is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Labor and Employment.

2. It, among other things, will also impart training in soft skills, entrepreneurship, financial and digital literacy.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

a. 1 only

b. 2 only

c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.29) Where is the famous Virupaksha temple located?

a. Bhadrachalam

b. Chidambaram

c. Hampi

d. Srikalahasti

Q.30) The sea coast of which one of the following states has become famous as a nesting place for the giant Olive Ridley turtles from South America?

a. Goa

b. Gujarat

c. Orissa

d. Tamil Nadu

Q.31) Match List I with List II and select the correct answer using the codes given below the lists:

List I (Rivers)

List II (Dams)

1. Alamatti   A. Cauvery

2. Mettur   B. Krishna

3. Gandhi Sagar   C. Narmada

4. Sardar Sarovar   D. Chambal

Codes:

a. A-1; B- 4; C-2; D-3

b. A-2; B-1; C-4; D-3

c. A-2; B-1; C-3; D-4

d. A-1; B-3; C-4; D-2

Q.32) In India, in the overall Index of Industrial Production, the Indices of Eight Core Industries have a combined weight of 37.90%. Which of the following are among those Eight Core Industries?

1. Cement

2. Fertilizers

3. Natural gas

4. Refinery products

5. Textiles

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

　a. 1 and 5 only

　b. 2, 3 and 4 only

　c. 1, 2, 3 and 4 only

　d. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Q.33) Consider the following statements : **Most international agencies which find Development Programme in India on intergovernmental bilateral agreements, mainly provide:**

　1. Technical assistance

　2. Soft loans which are required to be paid back with interest

　3. Grants, not required to be paid back

　4. Food assistance to be paid back

Choose the options below

　a. 2 and 4 are correct

　b.1, 2 and 3 are correct

　c. 1, 2 and 4 are correct

　d. 3 and 4 are correct

Q.34) Consider the following countries:

　1. Brazil

　2. Mexico

　3. South Africa

According to UNCTAD, which of the above is/are categorized as "Emerging Economies"?

　a. 1 only

　b. 1 and 3 only

　c. 2 and 3 only

　d. 1, 2 and 3

Q.35) With reference to India, which one of the following statements is NOT correct?

　a. IPCL is India's largest petrochemical company

　b. RIL is the largest private sector company in India

　c. MTNL is listed on NYSE

　d. BSNL is the first telecom service organization in India to launch a nationwide cellular service at one time

Q.36) Consider the following statements.

　1. The number of post office in India is in excess of 1 lakh.

　2. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) was formed in the year 2000.

　3. Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) was established in the year 1997.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

　a. 1, 2 and 3

　b. 1 and 2

　c. 1 only

　d. 3 only.

Q.37) Which of the following is/are the indicator/indicators used by IFPRI to compute the Global Hunger Index Report?

　1. Undernourishment

　2. Child stunting

　3. Child mortality

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

　a. 1 only

　b. 2 and 3 only

　c. 1, 2 and 3

　d. 1 and 3 only

Q.38) Consider the following statements:

　1. Toothless mammals such as Pangolins are not found in India.

　2. Indian Pangolin is the only species of Pangolins found in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

　a. 1 only

b. 2 only

c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.39) A present group of nations known as G-8 started first as G-7. Which one among the following was not one of them?

a .Canada

b. Italy

c. Japan

d. Russia

Q.40) With reference to Indian transport systems, consider the following statements:

1. Indian railway system is the largest in the world

2. National Highways cater to 45 percent of the total and transport demand

3. National Highway No. 7 is the longest in the country

Which of these statements are correct ?

a. 1 and 2

b. 1 and 3

c. 2 and 3

d. 1, 2 and 3

Q.41) Which among the following National Highway routes is the longest?

a. Agra-Mumbai

b. Chennai-Thane

c. Kolkata-Hajira

d. Pune-Machilipatnam

Q.42) In the context of Indian wild life, the flying fox is a

a. Bat

b. Kite

c. Stork

d. Vulture

Q.43) Consider the following fauna of India:

1. Indian Vulture

2. Nilgiri thrush

3. Nilgiri Pipit

Which of the above is/are endangered?

a. 1 and 2 only

b. 1 only

c. 1, 2 and 3

d. None

Q.44) 'Station' programme to bring free public Wi-Fi busiest railway stations in India started by

a. Ministry of IT

b. Google

c. Wipro

d. Infosys

Q.45) A present group of nations known as G-8 started first as G-7. Which one among the following was not one of them?

a. Canada

b. Italy

c. Japan

d. Russia

Q.46) Consider the following statements regarding Kambala festival

1. It is believed to be celebrated to please the Gods for a good harvest

2. It is the annual buffalo race of Karnataka

Which of the above statement/s is/are incorrect?

a. 1 only

b. 2 only

c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 or 2

Q.47) Consider the following pairs:

Tribe	State
1. Limboo(Limbu)	: Sikkim
2. Karbi	: Karnataka
3. Dongaria Kondh	: Odisha
4. Bonda	: Tamil Nadu

Which of the above pairs are correctly matched?

    a. 1 and 3 only

    b. 2 and 4 only

    c. 1, 3 and 4 only

    d. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q.48) Consider the following statements:

    1. Aadhaar card can be used as a proof of citizenship or domicile.

    2. Once issued, Aadhaar number cannot be deactivated or omitted by the Issuing Authority.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

    a. 1 only

    b. 2 only

    c. Both 1 and 2

    d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.49) The identity platform 'Aadhaar' provides open "Application Programming Interfaces (APIs)". What does it imply?

    1. It can be integrated into any electronic device.

    2. Online authentication using iris is possible.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

    a. 1 only

    b. 2 only

    c. Both 1 and 2

    d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.50) In India, the problem of soil erosion is associated with which of the following?

    1. Terrace cultivation

    2. Deforestation

    3. Tropical climate

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

    a. 1 and 2 only

    b. 2 only

    c. 1 and 3 only

    d. 1, 2 and 3

Q.51) Consider the following statements:

    1. The mode of removal of a Judge of a High Court in India is same as that of removal of a Judge of the Supreme Court.

    2. After retirement from the office, a permanent judge of a High Court cannot plead or act in any court or before any authority in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

    a. 1 only

    b. 2 only

    c. Both 1 and 2

    d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.52) Which of the following is an unusual feature of the replication cycle in coronaviruses?

    a. The RNAs all terminate in a common 3′ and produce nested set transcripts

    b. They take advantage of recombination with the long CGNA genome

    c. Both a & b

    d. They use capped cellular DNAs

Q.53) Which of the following coronaviruses has caused thousands of deaths around the world as an 'emergent' virus?

    a. MERS

    b. SARS

    c. OC43

    d. HIV

Q.54) H1N1 virus is sometimes mentioned in the news with reference to which one of the following diseases?

    a. AIDS

    b. Bird flu

    c. Dengue

    d. Swine flu

Q.55) Robert Webster is known for his work associated with which one of the following?

    a. Cardiology

    b. Influenza virus

    c. HIV/AIDS

    d. Alzheimer

Q.56) Which of the following statements with respect to the FCRA (Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act) 2010 are true?

1. Any person who receives foreign contribution as per provisions of this Act shall transfer to other person though that person is not authorized to receive foreign contribution as per rules made by the Central Government

2. Any organization of a political nature has been placed in the category prohibited to accept foreign contribution.

3. All organizations engaged in social sector implementation of government programmes have been exempted from the provisions of the act.

    a. 2only

    b. 2 & 3 only

    c. 1 & 3 only

    d. All of the above

Q.57) Consider the following statements about Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

1. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established by World Economic Forum.

2. It is a policy-making body and promotes operational measures for combating money laundering and terrorist financing.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

    a. only 1

    b. only 2

    c. Both 1 and 2

    d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.58) Consider the following statements about the Financial Action Task Force (FATF):

1. It is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 by G -20

2. It sets global standards to tackle the problem of money laundering

3. Pakistan has an observer status in FATF

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

    a. 1 & 2 Only

    b. 2 Only

    c. 1, 2 & 3

    d. 2 & 3 Only

Q.59) Apart from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh who are the other member countries of SAARC?

   a. Nepal, Bhutan, Thailand and Singapore

   b. Nepal, Bhutan, Malaysia and Maldives

   c. Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan

   d. Nepal, Bhutan, Singapore and Sri Lanka

Q.60) Consider the following statements:

   1. M-STrIPES is launched by the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

   2. National Tiger Conservation Authority is a statutory body.

   3. National Tiger Conservation Authority is chaired by the Prime Minister.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

   a. 1 only

   b. 2 and 3 only

   c. 2 only

   d. 1, 2 and 3

Q.61) The term M-STRIPES' is sometimes seen in the news in the context of

   a. Captive breeding of Wild Fauna

   b. Maintenance of Tiger Reserves

   c. Indigenous Satellite Navigation System

   d. Security of National Highways

Q.62) For short-term climatic predictions, which one of the following events, detected in the last decade, is associated with occasional weak monsoon rains in the Indian sub-continent?

   a. La Nina

   b. Movement of Jet Stream

   c. El Nino and Southern Oscillations

   d. Greenhouse effect at global level

Q.63) According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the disease which causes the death of the largest number of people today is

   a. AIDS

   b. Tuberculosis

   c. Malaria

   d. Ebola

Q.64) Which one of the following antimicrobial drugs, is suitable for treatment of both tuberculosis and leprosy?

   a. Isoniazid

   b. P-aminosalicylic acid

   c. Streptomycin

   d. Rifampicin

Q.65) Where is the famous Vijaya Vittala temple having its carved pillars emitting musical notes and Virupaksha temple located?

   a. Belur

   b. Bhadrachalam

   c. Hampi

   d. Srirangam

Q.66) Which one of the following rivers thrice forks into two streams and reunites a few miles farther on, thus, forming the islands of Srirangapattanam, Sivasamudram and Srirangam?

   a. Cauvery

   b. Tungabhadra

   c. Krishna

   d. Godavari

Q.67) In which of the following regions of India are shale gas resources found?

   1. Cambay Basin

2. Cauvery Basin

3. Krishna-Godavari Basin

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

   a. 1 and 2 only

   b. 3 only

   c. 2 and 3 only

   d. 1, 2 and 3

Q.68) Which one of the following is not an ASEAN member?

   a. Cambodia

   b. China

   c. Laos

   d. Philippines

Q.69) Exercise Indradhanush is a joint military exercise between India and _____?

   a. USA

   b. Sri Lanka

   c. UK

   d. None of the above

Q.70) Consider the following statements about International Conference on Standardisation of AYUSH Terminologies

1. It was recently held in Nagpur, India

2. The conference succeeded in taking forward the objective of expanding the International Classification of Diseases(ICD) into the realm of Traditional Medicine systems at a conceptual level with all the countries endorsing the same.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

   a. 1 Only

   b. 2 Only

   c. Both 1 and 2

   d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.71) Consider the following statements about InSights Mars Mission

1. It is launched by NASA in collaboration with ISRO and JAXA

2. It is the first mission dedicated to looking deep beneath the Martian surface.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

   a. 1 Only

   b. 2 Only

   c. Both 1 and 2

   d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.72) Rakhigarhi, an Indus Valley Civilizational Site is located which State of India?

   a. Uttar Pradesh

   b. Rajasthan

   c. Punjab

   d. Haryana

Q.73) National Science day is celebrated on 28th February to commemorate which event?

   a. Formation of Indian Science Congress

   b. Birthday of Homi Jehangir Bhabha

   c. Discovery of Raman Effect by C.V.Ramans

   d. None of the above

Q.74) Consider the following statements about 1000 Springs initiative

1. It is an initiative by Ministry of Rural Development

2. The it aims at improving access to safe and adequate water for the tribal communities living in difficult and inaccessible parts of rural areas in the country.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a. 1 Only

b. 2 Only

c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.75) Consider the following statements about RAISE 2020

1. It is India's first Artificial Intelligence summit

2. It is organized by Ministry of Human Resource & Development in partnership with Industry & Academia.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a. 1 Only

b. 2 Only

c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.76) Mahadayi water dispute often seen in the news is related to which states?

1. Karnataka
2. Tamil Nadu
3. Goa
4. Maharashtra

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a. 1 and 2 Only

b. 1 and 3 Only

c. 3 and 4 Only

d. 1, 3 and 4 Only

Q.77) Consider the following statements about National Investigation Agency (NIA)

1. It is a statutory body which functions as the Central Counter Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency of India

2. it works under overall guidance of Ministry of Defence

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a. 1 Only

b. 2 Only

c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.78) Consider the following statements about Red Snow

1. The presence of algae that carries red pigment gives the red colour to snow.

2. The algae change the albedo of the snow, which makes the melting of ice slower.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a. 1 Only

b. 2 Only

c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.79) Consider the following statements about 2020 CD3

1. It has been dubbed by the astronomers as Earth's "Mini Moon" or "Second Moon"

2. Unlike Earth's permanent Moon, 2020 CD3 is temporary that will eventually break free of Earth's orbit and go off on its own way.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a. 1 Only

b. 2 Only

c. Both 1 and 2

d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q.80) Consider the following statements about Indian Meteorological Department (IMD)
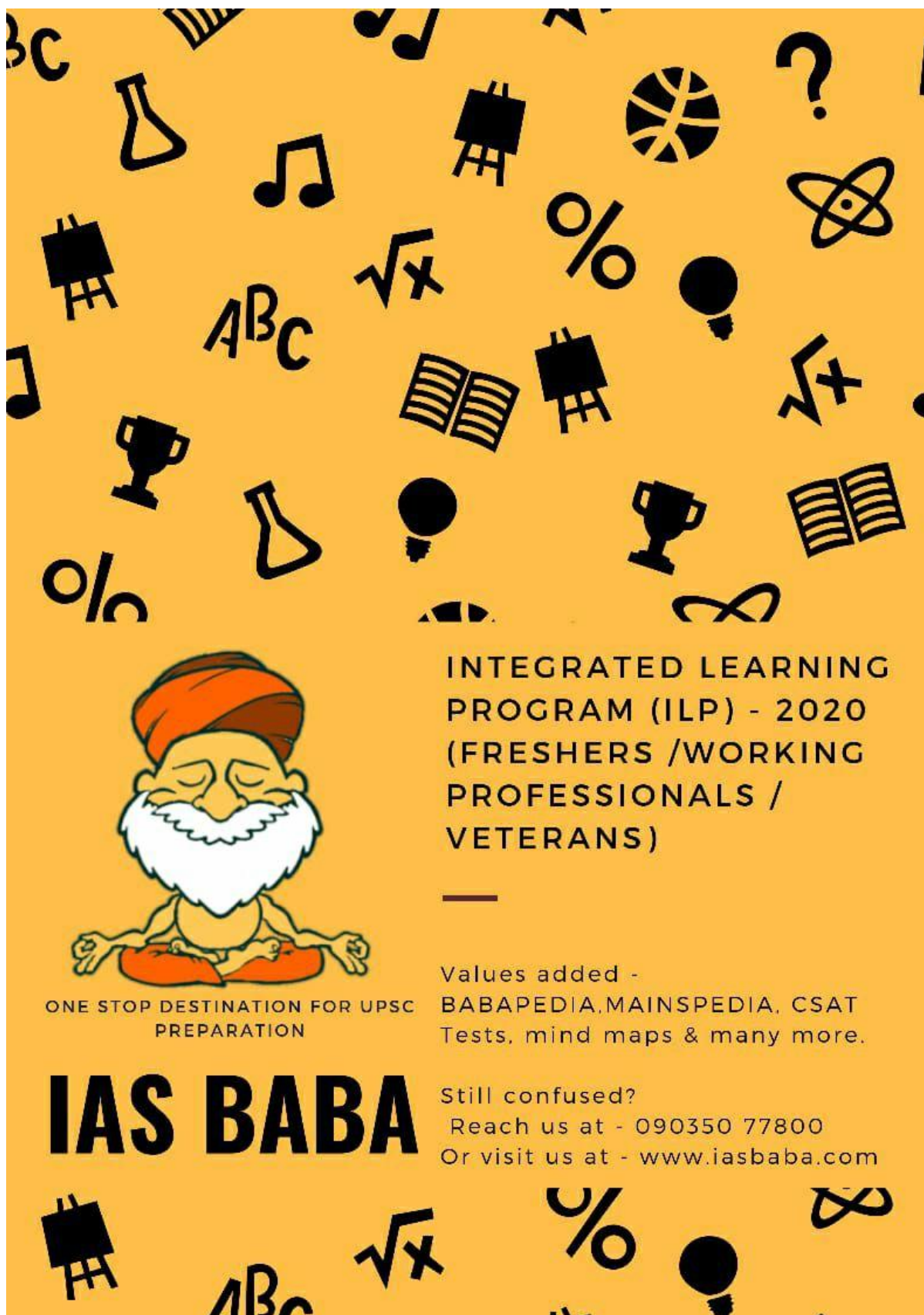
1. It is the principal agency responsible for meteorological observations, weather forecasting and seismology in India

2. It is an agency of the Ministry of Science & Technology

Which of the above statements is/are correct?
a. 1 Only
b. 2 Only
c. Both 1 and 2
d. Neither 1 nor 2

2020 FEBRUARY MONTH CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs SOLUTIONS

1	A	28	B	55	B
2	C	29	C	56	A
3	A	30	C	57	B
4	C	31	B	58	B
5	D	32	C	59	C
6	B	33	B	60	C
7	C	34	D	61	B
8	A	35	A	62	C
9	D	36	A	63	B
10	C	37	C	64	D
11	D	38	D	65	C
12	B	39	D	66	A
13	D	40	C	67	D
14	B	41	C	68	B
15	D	42	D	69	C
16	C	43	B	70	B
17	A	44	B	71	B
18	C	45	D	72	D
19	B	46	D	73	C
20	A	47	A	74	B
21	C	48	D	75	A
22	D	49	C	76	D
23	D	50	B	77	A
24	B	51	A	78	A
25	D	52	A	79	C
26	B	53	B	80	A
27	B	54	D		