

1. The executive has the power to issue ordinances in exceptional circumstances. A series of such ordinances have been issued during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Can you recall the most important ones?

Demand of the question:

It expects students to write about ordinance making power of the executive i.e. President (Union) & Governor (State) in specific. It also expects students to recall & write about the most important ordinances promulgated by the President during the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic.

Introduction:

The executive has been empowered to promulgate Ordinances based on the advice of the central government & state government under Article 123 & 213 respectively of the Constitution. As Indian Parliament shut down due to ongoing COVID-19 crisis, President of India promulgated number of ordinances to deal with the situation during this period; same practise has been followed by Governors of various states.

Body:

Conditions to issue Ordinances:

- Executive can promulgate an ordinance only when both the Houses of Parliament/Legislature are not in session or when either of the two Houses of Parliament/Legislature is not in session. The second provision implies that an ordinance can also be promulgated by the president only when one House is in session because a law can be passed by both the Houses and not by one House alone.
- An ordinance issued by him/ her has the same force and effect as an act of the Parliament/Legislature.

Promulgation of ordinances during COVID-19:

Since the start of lockdown period till today, a series of Ordinances are promulgated by the President; important ones with their respective importance and impact are mentioned below:

Taxation and other Laws (Relaxation of Certain Provisions) Ordinance, 2020:

- Taxation and other Laws (Relaxation of Certain Provisions) Ordinance, 2020 has been promulgated to provide relaxation in the provisions of certain Acts including extension of time limit, in the taxation and other laws.
- A special fund “Prime Minister’s Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES FUND)” has been set up for providing relief to the persons affected from the outbreak of Corona virus.
- Keeping in view the challenges faced by taxpayers in meeting the compliance requirements under such conditions these kind of relaxations proved to be helpful to reduce taxpayers hardships.

Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020:

- 30% reduction in salaries payable to MPs to meet exigencies of COVID 19.

- It in turn led to divert the expenditure from spending on salary to spending on healthcare infrastructure.

Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020:

- To protect healthcare service personnel and property including their living/working premises against violence during epidemics.
- The Ordinance provides for making such acts of violence cognizable and non-bailable offences and for compensation for injury to healthcare service personnel or for causing damage or loss to the property in which healthcare service personnel may have a direct interest in relation to the epidemic.
- This Ordinance issued with hope that it will infuse confidence in the community of healthcare service personnel so that they can continue to contribute to serving mankind through their noble professions in the extremely difficult circumstances being witnessed during the current Covid-19 outbreak.

Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020:

- It was promulgated to make sure the sufficient availability & affordability of essential commodities to people during the COVID-19.

Banking Regulation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020:

- The Ordinance amends the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 as applicable to Cooperative Banks.
- Ordinance seeks to protect the interests of depositors and strengthen cooperative banks by improving governance and oversight by extending powers already available with RBI in respect of other banks to Co-operative Banks as well for sound banking regulation, and by ensuring professionalism and enabling their access to capital.

But, Ordinance making power of executive comes in contradiction with the principle of Participative democracy. In Participative democracy representative come together, debate, discuss and then form a law for the welfare of people.

- Our Constitution does not prohibit meetings that may require maintenance of physical distancing or remote meetings.
- It states that the President may summon Parliament “to meet at such time and place as he thinks fit”.
- Rules of procedure of house specify that Speaker has the power to decide how to organize sittings. Speaker may permit meetings to be held outside. Thus, there is no prior parliamentary action required to permit meetings through video-conferencing.

Conclusion:

Though the Ordinance making power of executive comes in contradiction with the Participative democracy it seems suitable when it comes to emergency situations like COVID-19. Hence, In a democracy like India, Ordinances play a pivotal role but it should be taken care of that their nature should not turn harmful to democracy.

2. How are the activities pursued by pressure groups different from lobbying? Explain. What role do pressure groups play in the polity? Discuss.

Demand of the question:

It expects student to write about the difference in activities pursued by pressure groups and lobbying. The Question also expects student to discuss the role pressure groups play in polity.

Introduction:

In general terms a pressure group is a group of people who are organised actively for promoting and defending their common interest. Whereas the term 'lobbying' means any attempt to influence the decision-making of a government or opposition representative in the exercise of their official functions on behalf of a third party, for a fee or other reward.

Body:

Difference in Activities pursued by Pressure groups & Lobbying:

- The pressure groups are also called interest groups or vested groups. They are concerned with specific programmes and issues and their activities are confined to the protection and promotion of the interests of their members by influencing the government.
- Whereas Lobbying activity may corresponds to interest of small section of people's interest, company or organisation.
- The pressure groups influence the policymaking and policy implementation in the government through legal and legitimate methods like correspondence, publicity, propagandising, petitioning, public debating, informing legislators and so forth.
- Whereas lobbying activities emerged as more of sophisticated activities where direct contact with legislator is established in terms of give and take.
- Sometimes Pressure groups resort to illegitimate and illegal methods like strikes, violent activities and corruption which damages public interest and administrative integrity.
- Lobbying activities are back stage activities where no one can surely say who the real people are involved in it. Depending on the type of polity in the country lobbying activities can be legal or illegal. As lobbying is legitimate in some of the states of USA whereas it has no legal basis in India.

Role of Pressure groups in Polity:

- Pressure groups in India represent interest of various sections of Indian society and economy such as Business groups, Trade unions, Professionals group, Students organisation, Agrarian groups etc.
- Interest Articulation: Pressure Groups bring the demands and needs of the people to the notice of the decision-makers.
e.g. Narmada Bachao Aandolan.

- Agents of Political Socialisation: Pressure groups are agents of political socialisation in so far as they influence the orientations of the people towards the political process.
- Pressure Groups and Administration: Pressure Groups are actively involved with the process of administration. e.g. Student groups play a pivotal role in helping the administration for implementation of various schemes & scholarships for students.
- Pressure groups play a leading role in the formulation of public opinion.
- Pressure groups help in improving the quality of government. Consultation with affected groups is the rational way to make decisions in a free society.
- Pressure groups complement the work of opposition political parties by exposing the bad policies and wrongdoings of the government. Pressure groups thereby improve the accountability of decision makers to electorates.
- Pressure groups help to educate people, compile data and provide specific information to policy makers, thus they work as an informal source of information.

Shortcomings of Pressure Groups:

- Misuse of power: Instead of the pressure groups exerting influence on political process, they become tools and implements to sub serve political interests.
- Narrow selfish interests: Some Pressure Groups promote narrow selfish interest.
- Instability: Most pressure groups do not have autonomous existence; they are unstable and lack commitment, their loyalties shift with political situations which threatens general welfare. They many a times resort to unconstitutional means like violence. Naxalite movement started in 1967 in West Bengal is one such example.
- Propagating extremism: Pressure groups can allow too much influence over the government from unelected extremist minority groups, which in turn could lead to unpopular consequences.

Conclusion:

Democratic politics involves taking decisions through consultation, debate, discussions etc. Pressure groups can form good channel of communication between citizen and government but at the same time their vested interests if any needs to be checked so that true meaning of democracy can be fulfilled i.e. "participative democracy".

3. India's traditional medicine and way of life hold immense trade and brand potential. Do you agree? Substantiate your views.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to write about importance of India's traditional medicine and way of life. The question also expects students to analyse whether India's traditional

medicine and way of life hold immense trade and brand potential or not with Substantiation.

Introduction:

India has a very rich and diverse treasure of traditional medicine and way of life. The COVID-19 crisis underscored the importance of India's traditional medicine and way of life, hence it holds immense trade & brand potential but at the same time there are some concerns regarding its contemporary life application.

Body:

Potential of India's Traditional medicine & way of life:

- India has the unique distinction of having six recognized systems of traditional medicine. They are-Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Yoga, Naturopathy and Homoeopathy.
- Synthetic drugs, surgeries have some adverse side effects with their own limitations.
- Traditional Indian medicines hold an advantage in this scenario as they pose no side effects and have a wide scale application because of its consonance with nature.
e.g. Simple cure for Cough is mentioned in Ayurveda to chew the leaves of Tulsi along with Clove.
- Mostly traditional medicines are made from the plant extracts as they are naturally available so it proves to be more cost effective when compared with the costly allopathic medicines.
- As these medicines stand test of time for thousands of years there is no need to invest more money and time to do new research in it. So, it increase their trade value because of reduction in cost of research and development.
e.g. Sushrut Samhita contains description of about 650 drugs and discusses different aspects related to other surgery.
- As this knowledge is available to all, A small household business can also be started in the form of MSME.
- The Indian pharmaceutical industry, currently stands at around Rs 1,00,000 crore industry. As per the estimation, the international market for traditional medicine is anticipated to acquire a market worth of US \$5 trillion by the end of year 2050.
- As per study conducted by Spain based "Natural Products and Chemistry Research Organisation" the extent of Indian exports of the medicinal and aromatic plants has increased from 2010 to almost double the value in the year 2014. Despite India's share in global export market of traditional medicine being 0.5%, the country still holds a great importance at global level and more so in the upcoming years.
- India's traditional way of life signifies living in consonance with nature. Where it focuses on habit building as per the natures rule, which in turn helps to live a healthy life

e.g. Waking up before Sun rise helps a person to get Vitamin D from early morning sun rays.

- Indian traditional way of life not just holds unique things about leading a healthy life style but they hold unique things about how to live in society, how to maintain relations, how to behave with the animals, birds etc.
- As Western civilisation is facing crisis in terms of family values, societal relations and health; projection of Indian way of life and promoting traditional medicine in trade has potential to be the "Brand of India".

However, there are some concerns regarding contemporary life application of traditional medicine and way of life:

- Traditional medicines though effective, they require more time than allopathic medicines to show its effect. So, in today's fast moving world waiting for a long period of time doesn't seem applicable.
- Also some of the traditional medicines need rare earth metals such as gold, silver etc, which may increase the cost of medicine.
- Traditional way of life doesn't suit current work culture of working late night, working for long hours, having meals at specific interval of time etc.
- Traditional medicines may not stand challenges posed by new diseases like currently the whole world is striving hard to find cure for COVID-19.

Government of India has taken steps to promote traditional medicine & way of life:

- With the proclamation at United Nations, world started celebrating 21 June as Yoga day. So, Yoga became a global brand.
- Government of India established Ministry of AYUSH in 2014 to ensure the development and propagation of AYUSH systems of medicine and health care.
- Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) is a pioneering Indian initiative to prevent exploitation and to protect Indian traditional knowledge from wrongful patents.

Conclusion:

It is a well-known fact that Indian traditional medicines & way of life played an important role in meeting the global health care needs and helped people to live a satisfactory life. Hence, it is visible that Indian traditional medicine and way of life holds an immense trade & brand potential but at the same time it needs to address the needs & challenges posed by modern lifestyle.

4. The office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India is the keystone in the arch of constitutional measures of accountability. Comment.

Demand of the question:

It expects student to elaborate about the role and function Comptroller and Auditor General plays in Indian Polity to fulfil her/his accountability. It also expects student to write about how the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) represents a Principal figure in the arch of constitutional measure of accountability.

Introduction:

The Constitution of India (Article 148) provides for an independent office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG). She/he is the head of the Indian Audit and Accounts Department. CAG is guardian of the public purse and controls the entire financial system of the country at both the levels—the Centre and the state.

Body:

Abound to Her/his duty to uphold the Constitution of India and laws of Parliament in the field of financial administration CAG plays following roles and performs important functions to fulfil her/his accountability as mentioned below:

- CAG audits the accounts related to all expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India, Consolidated Fund of each state and UT's having a legislative assembly.
- She/he audits all expenditure from the Contingency Fund of India and the Public Account of India as well as the Contingency Fund and Public Account of each state.
- She/he audits all trading, manufacturing, profit and loss accounts, balance sheets and other subsidiary accounts kept by any department of the Central Government and the state governments.
- She/he audits the receipts and expenditure of all bodies and authorities substantially financed from the Central or State revenues.
- She/he audits the accounts of any other authority when requested by the President or Governor e.g. Local bodies.
- CAG also acts as a guide, friend and philosopher of the Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament.

Keystone in the arch of Constitutional measures of accountability:

- CAG audit reports are handed over to the PACs i.e. Public Accounts Committee at the centre and at the state.
- Three CAG reports i.e. audit report on appropriation accounts, audit report on finance accounts and audit report on public sector undertakings are examined by PAC.
- At the central/state level, these reports are submitted by CAG to president/governor, who makes them to be laid in parliament/legislature. Here CAG stands different from other measures of accountability as the CAG reports are submitted to the executive.
- CAG also assists the committee in its deliberations by preparing a list of the most urgent matters which deserve the attention of the PAC. Here, CAG plays his role by bringing the most important matters to the attention of PAC.
- She/he also helps in making the actions of the committee clear to the witnesses and in making the action of the government clear to the committee.
- CAG position is sometimes one of interpreter and translator, explaining the officials' views to the politicians and vice-versa which in turn ensure accountability of the government.

- The responsibility of the CAG does not end here. He has to watch whether the corrective action suggested by her/him has been taken or not. In cases where it has not been taken, She/he reports the matter to the PAC which will take up the matter. It ensures accountability not just with respect to auditing matters but also with respect to implementation.
- Hence, CAG stands as a keystone in the arch of constitutional measure of accountability where CAG not only represents the structure of accountability but also holds together the structure of accountability.

Despite playing this most important role CAG has some considerable challenges to address:

- In present times audits are getting complex because forms of corruption and maladministration extremely difficult to detect.
- Besides the historic task of keeping a close watch on the Central and State governments, CAG are now auditing several public-private partnerships (PPP) projects.
- No criterion or procedure has been prescribed either in the Constitution or in the statute for the appointment of CAG.
- This goes against the international best practices prevalent across the world.
- The CAG has the authority to inspect any Government office and to call for any accounts. However, in practice, the supply of records is often denied.
- The work of audit of accounts of the Union and of the States is actually done by the officers and staff of the IA&AD. However, no statutory recognition has been given to the work of IA&AD in India as against National Audit Office of the UK.
- CAG of India only performed the role of an Auditor General and not of a Comptroller but in Britain it has the power of both Comptroller as well as Auditor General.
- In India the CAG audits the accounts after the expenditure is committed i.e. ex post facto. In UK no money can be drawn from the public exchequer without the approval of the CAG.
- In India, CAG is not a member of the parliament while in Britain; CAG is a member of house of the Commons.

To address these kind of challenges some reforms are suggested by former CAG Vinod Rai :

- Bring all private-public partnerships (PPPs), Panchayati Raj Institutions and government-funded societies, within the ambit of the CAG.
- CAG Act of 1971 should be amended to keep pace with the changes in governance.
- A collegiums type mechanism be set up to choose a new CAG on the lines of selecting a Chief Vigilance Commissioner (CVC).

Conclusion:

In view of the nature of work of CAG, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar said that the CAG shall be the most important Office under the Constitution of India. Hence, It becomes imperative to maintain the independent nature of office of the CAG which in turn will ensure that CAG will remain as a keystone in the arch of constitutional measure of accountability.

5. What are the different constitutional bodies, apart from the judiciary, that have the mandate to protect the rights of citizens, especially the disadvantaged ones? Discuss.

Demand of the question:

It expects student to write about the various constitutional bodies, apart from the judiciary, that have mandate to protect the rights of citizens. It also expects student to write about what roles do these bodies play while protecting the rights of citizen, especially the disadvantaged ones.

Introduction:

Human rights are basic fundamental rights which are integral part for the development of human being in the absence of which a person cannot live life with dignity. Constitution of India protects the fundamental rights or human rights of the people, provisions for the same have been made not only in the Articles of the Constitution but also through judiciary and different constitutional bodies.

Body:

India is the biggest democracy in the world. Being a democratic country one of the main objectives is the protection of the basic rights of the people.

- In this context, Judiciary plays an important role by protecting the rights of citizens. As judiciary protects rights of citizens in general scenario various different constitutional bodies protect rights of citizens in relation to specific issues/section.
- In Indian Context Scheduled Castes(SC),Scheduled Tribes(ST),Backward Classes(BC) and linguistic minorities form the disadvantaged ones. Hence different Constitutional bodies are set up to safeguard the rights of these disadvantaged sections. Their names and mandates are as mentioned below.

National Commission for SCs:

- The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (SCs) is a constitutional body in the sense that it is directly established by Article 338 of the Constitution.
- It investigate and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and other legal safeguards for the SCs and to evaluate their working.
- It inquire into specific complaints with respect to the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the SCs.
- Commission presents an annual report to the president.

National Commission for STs

- National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (STs) is a constitutional body in the sense that it is directly established by Article 338-A of the Constitution
- It investigate and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and other legal safeguards for the STs and to evaluate their working;

- It inquires into specific complaints with respect to the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the STs.
- Commission presents an annual report to the president.

National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC):

- Earlier the commission used to be statutory body but the 102nd Amendment Act of 2018 conferred a constitutional status on the Commission. The amendment inserted a new Article 338-B in the constitution. Hence, the Commission ceased to be a statutory body and became a constitutional body.
- It investigates and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and other legal safeguards for the socially and educationally backward classes and it evaluate their working.
- It inquires into specific complaints with respect to the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the socially and educationally backward classes.
- The Commission presents an annual report to the President.

Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities:

- In pursuance of the provision of Article 350-B of the Constitution, the office of the Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities was created in 1957.
- The Commissioner takes up all the matters pertaining to the grievances arising out of the non-implementation of the Constitutional and Nationally Agreed Scheme of Safeguards provided to linguistic minorities

Role played by these bodies:

- They have worked towards complaints related mostly to promotions, discrimination and harassment on various counts, conduct of departmental enquires, transfers etc.
- NCSC monitors the implementation of the various legal provisions in force regarding atrocities against dalits. Over the years, the Commission has conducted several on-the-spot inquiries into complaints of atrocities.
- Commissions monitors the levels of literacy and educational development of the disadvantaged sections and have taken special interest in female literacy rates.
- On economic front, they have recommended land ceiling and the redistribution of surplus land by various state governments, suggested a range of tenancy reforms and several measures to prevent the alienation of tribal land.
- Literacy rate among SC/ST men and women increased by around 9% and 14 % respectively compared to 10% and 5% among non-SC/ST community.
- Health indicators including IMR, MMR etc., have improved and seen a reduction of more than 5% with respect to disadvantaged sections of society as per the report by Registrar General of India, Sample Registration System.

Several issues of the communities need attention of commission:

- NCRB data shows a spike in the number of cases filed under SC/ST prevention of atrocities act which shows the discrimination and atrocities are increasing.

- The incidents like dalit lynching in Una, Gujarat; caste related honour killings in Haryana shows that the commission has been ineffective in bringing behavioural change in the society.
- There are delays in conducting the inquiry and in delivering judgements. Also, there is a perception that the Commission tends to confirm the government's position on most cases.
- The commission inability to reduce the incidence of atrocities and violence against dalits, or to effectively fight the persistent scourge of untouchability is a biggest failure on its part.
- The Commission has been active in suggesting ways of streamlining procedures, implement reservations but is failing in bringing fundamental reforms.
- The commission decisions being only recommendatory, without a strong follow up mechanisms are mostly ignored.

Conclusion:

It is crystal clear that rights acts like check on the arbitrary power and if they are safeguarded through the institutions like these then they will definitely help people to live a life of dignity. But the functions of the commissions can be improved by giving them the power of criminal investigation, power to penalize, fixed time period for discussion of commission reports, suo motu powers.

6. Boycott of Chinese goods is knee-jerk reaction. India must boost manufacturing, cut reliance on China. Critically comment.

Demand of the question:

It expects student to write about pros and cons of the Nationwide call given by various organisations, civil society groups & people to boycott Chinese goods. The question also expects student to analyse both aspects of whether India should boost manufacturing and cut reliance on China or not.

Introduction:

A Nationwide call has been given by various organisations, civil society groups & people to boycott Chinese goods due to the escalated tensions at the Line of Actual Control- Galwan Valley, followed by a border clash between the Indian and Chinese troops which resulted in casualties of 20 Indian soldiers

Body:

India's trade relation with China:

- To begin with, boycotting Chinese products is easier said than done.
- India is dependent on China for a wide array of goods, ranging from electronics to fertilisers.
- Any attempt to reduce imports from China through tariffs or other non-tariff barriers, will raise prices for Indian consumers i.e. we need to pay more for smart TV, mobile phones, car, air-conditioner.

- India also imports capital goods and intermediate products from China, such restrictions will affect domestic manufacturing competitiveness, and thus further erode the country's export competitiveness. Moreover, in the short-run, ensuring uninterrupted alternative supplies may not be a feasible option.
- There is also the issue of Chinese investment in the Indian start-up space to contend with. Companies like Alibaba and Tencent have invested in "unicorns" such as Zomato, Paytm, Ola cabs and others.
- Two-way trade was worth \$88 billion in the fiscal year to March 2019, with a deficit of \$53.5 billion in China's favour, India's widest with any country.

Impact on India:

- If imposed, a large-scale boycott will hurt Indian businesses at a time when they are struggling to cope with the effects of COVID-19 pandemic.
- Additionally, even a slight increase in duties would raise the cost of import for vendors, which would eventually result in hiked prices for the consumers.
- As per reports, 75 percent of the smart phones sold in India are made by Chinese companies.
- At least 45 percent of consumer durables imported to India come from China. The sector is estimated to be around Rs 763 billion. AC, refrigerators and televisions lead the pack.
- Most of the times, the poorest consumers are the worst-hit in a trade ban because they are the most price-sensitive.

Though the sudden outrage to boycott Chinese goods seems Knee-jerk reaction but it has some postulates too:

- The sudden outrage to boycott Chinese goods has played a role in bringing together Indians on the International stage during the ongoing COVID-19.
- Boycott will definitely hurt Chinese businesses, threaten their survival during this crisis.
- Boycott will also send a strong message to China that having a favourable trade deficit doesn't mean that China can act aggressively on any front of the border and try to expand its territory.
- Boycott of Chinese goods will also send a message to the Chinese government that they will now have to handle the war like situations on the border, in health sector and in the economic sector too.

But considering the whole scenario in the short run boycotting Chinese goods seems a knee-jerk reaction and hence We need to adopt a sustainable approach to boost manufacturing and cut reliance on China.

Ways to Boost to Manufacturing sector:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi called to build a self-reliant India (Aatm-Nirbhar Bharat), citing its experience in managing local demand without having to rely on imports in a major way during the lockdown.
- India's exports to China grew from \$16.5 to \$16.95 billion in 2019 while imports declined from \$73.8 billion to \$68.2 billion in 2019.

- India's share in the global exports of manufactured products remains around 2% which is far less than 18% share of China. Hence, we need to formulate policies which will boost manufacturing sector in India.
- This is not to deny the need to build up domestic capabilities, across sectors through the initiatives such as Make in India, App innovation challenge.
- While making sure that the Indian a manufacturing sector is growing also acquiring heights in new fields is also important through initiatives such as Smart India Hackathon etc.
- Prioritising Made-in-India products on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM), an Amazon-style procurement portal can prove to be effective.
- Also MSME needs to be boosted by financing them through schemes like MUDRA yojna so that import of intermediate products can be reduced.
- The long-term objective should be to push through long-pending legislation that aims to address the structural bottlenecks that continue to plague and hinder domestic competitiveness.

Conclusion:

It is to be understood that that turning a border dispute into a trade war is unlikely to solve the border dispute. But, it doesn't mean that India should put aside its pride and act like a soft state. Hence, Boosting manufacturing sector beside avoiding a knee jerk reaction till the time we get Self reliant seems to be the profitable way forward.

7. Even though, there is a broad agreement on the numerous benefits of having a free market economy, government intervention is essential in certain fields/sectors. Elucidate.

Demand of the question:

It expects student write about free market economy and its benefits in short. It also expects students to analyse both aspects of whether government intervention in certain fields/sector keeps the interest of those fields/sectors or not.

Introduction:

The free market economy is an economic system based on supply and demand with little or no government control. Free markets are characterized by a spontaneous and decentralized order of arrangements through which individuals make economic decisions.

Body:

Free Market Economy:

- In a free market economy, firms and households act in self-interest to determine how resources get allocated, what goods get produced and who buys the goods.
- Ideally, there is no government intervention in a free market economy ("laissez-faire"). However, no truly free market economy exists in the world.

- Post-1991 India has adopted free market policies. However government frequently intervenes through mechanisms like social sector schemes, regulatory mechanisms to ensure equitable economic growth.

Benefits of free market economy:

- The producers are more incentivized to produce their best goods and services due to the feature of the profit motive and the ability to hold private property.
- Since all resources and factors of production are under private ownership they are used in the most productive manner. This results in optimum utilization of resources.
- Consumers also benefit in a free market economy. Firstly they have the freedom to choose whichever products or services they wish to buy. Also, the competition is high and the producers are motivated to make their best products in large quantities at reasonable prices.
- Free market economy also promotes fundamental rights of freedom and choice for both the consumer and the producers.

Despite the broad agreement on the above mentioned benefits of free market economy government intervention is essential in certain fields/sectors due to following reasons:

- One disadvantage of a free market economy is that some producers are driven exclusively by their profit motives. Such an objective should not be prioritized over the needs of workers and consumers.
- Put simply, a Construction company should never compromise the safety of its workers or disregard environmental standards and ethical conduct just so it can make supernormal profits. Hence, government intervention is necessary to protect the rights of worker, citizens and to protect environment through laws and regulations. Recently the Maharashtra government enacted "The Real Estate Regulatory Authority Act (RERA)" which will review and issue resolutions on a regular basis regarding real estate sector.
- Unethical behaviour: In 2010, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, which is one of the biggest environmental disasters in the United States, happened because the company used substandard cement and other cost-reducing measures. In this regard Government of India has already enacted acts like, Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 etc.
- Market failures: At times, a free market economy can spin out of control, causing dire consequences. Good examples of market failure include the Great Depression of the 1930s and the real estate market crash that happened in 2008. Market failures can lead to devastating outcomes such as unemployment, homelessness, and lost income.
- Due to the fiercely competitive nature of a free market economy, businesses will not care for the disadvantaged like unorganised sector workers. This leads to higher income inequality. We can observe this in the market where

in a big coffee shop a person can buy a coffee for nearly 250 Rs. but at the same time a small tea/coffee vendor can sell a coffee for nearly 15 Rs..

- With respect to agricultural sector government intervention is in form of subsidies, interest free loan (NABARD). i.e. Government intervenes in these sectors to reduce the hardships of farmer
- Also, there are certain specific fields where governments intervenes not because of necessity but because of responsibility i.e. in the fields of Nuclear energy (Atomic Energy Regulatory Board -AERB), Defence (DRDO) etc.

But the coin has other side too:

- Wide scale government intervention may result in market being toy in the hands of Politicians.
- Lack of incentives to improve the quality and performance may result in stagnant growth trajectory of certain sectors. Recently to rejuvenate BSNL government needed to announce 70000 Cr. bailout package.

Conclusion:

Our constitution is based on the principle of just, equal society-economy. Hence, it becomes imperative for the government to intervene in certain sector/fields of free market economy when it seems necessary but it should not lead to politicization of those sectors so that India can achieve its target to be a 5 trillion \$ economy by 2024.

8. How do different market regulators ensure fairness and equity? Illustrate with the help of suitable examples.

Demand of the question:

It expects student to write about the role played by different market regulators to ensure fairness and equity in the market. It also expects student to write about how their(Regulators) roles can be improved with respect to new emerging challenges.

Introduction:

In India, the different markets are regulated with the help of independent regulators, associated with the field of insurance, banking, commodity market, and capital market and also the field of pension funds.

Body:

Post 1990, Privatisation saw the advent of the 'Indian Regulator' that became the 'nurturer' and 'parent' of its sector. Over a period of time, a number of regulatory bodies, ranging from RBI, SEBI, IRDA, PFRDA to TRAI, electricity regulators, CCI, FDA have been set up in India.

Ensuring fairness and equity:

- Regulators have been empowered to set the policy agenda, outline regulations, punish non-compliance and garner resources to manage their affairs. e.g. Prompt Corrective Action plan of RBI

- Control Fraud: Market regulators put systems in place to prevent fraud as financial customers aren't always sophisticated enough to do so themselves. e.g. Time to time guidelines given by RBI to ensure fairness in Banking Sector.
- Promote Fairness: Regulators aim to reduce profits that insiders could extract from the markets. Laws against insider trading, for instance, help to level the playing field. e.g. In India, SEBI under the "SEBI (Insider Trading) Regulation, 1992" intends to curb and prevent the menace of insider trading in securities.
- Set Mutually Beneficial Standards: Regulators help analysts to easily compare companies by requiring compliance with accounting standards set by them. e.g. In India it is done by The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI). So, here ICAI ensures fairness and equity by maintaining transparency for every player in market.
- Prevent Excessive Risk: Regulators require financial firms to maintain minimum levels of capital so that the firms honour their commitments and ensures firm's owners have some "skin in the game." e.g. The CRR and SLR standard set by RBI for Nationalised banks and Private banks.
- Ensure Liabilities are Funded: Regulators watch over insurance companies and pension funds to ensure adequate reserves are maintained to cover liabilities because managers of these entities tend to underestimate long-term liabilities especially when there is an incentive not to do so. e.g. Time to time circulars issued by IRDAI and PFRDA in this regard.
- In this COVID-19 crisis when big insurance companies were offering COVID-19 insurance, which in turn gave a tough competition to small insurance companies. Here, IRDAI intervened & mandated all general and health insurers to offer to have a COVID-19 specific product, addressing basic health insurance needs of insuring public related to the pandemic and have a standard product with common policy wordings across the industry. It ensured fairness and equity.

Hindrances to ensure fairness and equity:

- Politicisation in Regulatory bodies - As economic agents inherently intend to maximise profits, market misconduct happens in every domain. Policy makers go overdrive and frame restrictive policies and denounce regulators.
- Non- experts to lead: The selection of non-experts to lead the regulatory bodies may bring lack of efficiency in the functioning of such bodies. Recently, this issue was raised when the former Finance secretary was appointed as RBI chairman.
- Many regulatory bodies causes overlapping of powers, Recent Controversy between SEBI and IRDAI over Unit Linked Insurance Policy.

Way forward for more effective regulatory regime:

- Appointment of persons to head regulatory organisations should be attempted in a far more transparent manner. Which in turn ensure no interference of any political nature.

- "Regulatory Impact Assessments" are adopted by OECD countries to assess the performance of regulatory bodies. India can also mandate such techniques through legislation and thereby preserve economic value.
- Financial sector legislative reforms commission(FSLRC) recommended to merge those regulatory bodies whose functions overlap. A multiplicity of regulatory agencies has created scope for regulatory arbitrage, apart from making it difficult to protect consumer interest. It will help to improve the quality of regulations by simplifying regulatory process. e.g. Merging of SEBI,PFRDA & IRDA is recommended by FSLRC.

Conclusion:

Regulatory bodies have played a very crucial role in post liberalization era to have a level playing field and thereby contributed in the sector specific growth by ensuring fairness and equity. But, over the period of time new challenges emerged. Hence, to tackle these challenges regulatory bodies need to be empowered to ensure fairness and equity in different markets.

9. The government's decision to introduce long-pending agricultural reforms will help in better price discovery for farmers. Comment.

Demand of the question:

It expects student to write about the need to introduce long pending agricultural reforms & what kind of reforms are introduced. It also expects student to analyse both aspects of whether the introduced new reforms will help in better price discovery for farmers or not.

Introduction:

In order to revive the Indian economy, the Central government has announced the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. Agricultural reforms are part of the third tranche of the economic package announced under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan to counter Covid-19 pandemic which may yield better income for farmer in coming days.

Body:

The central government introduced major agricultural market reforms through three ordinances:

- The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance 2020. (ECA)
- The Farming Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance, 2020.(FPTC)
- The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020.

Need to Introduce these Reform:

- India has surplus production in most agri-commodities but farmers have been unable to get better prices due to lack of investment in necessary infrastructure such as Ware house, Cold Storage etc.

- The imposition of the curbs on stocking of farm produce and regulation of the prices of commodities, etc. under Essential Commodities Act (ECA) are some of factors responsible for less interest of entrepreneurs hence, less investment in the farm sector.
- There are restrictions for farmers in selling agri-produce outside the notified Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) which in turn put less money in the hands of farmer.
- The farmers are also restricted to sell the produce only to registered licensees of the State Governments, which restricted farmers option to explore new markets.
- Further, barriers exist in free flow of agriculture produce between various States owing to the prevalence of various APMC legislations enacted by the State Governments.

A window of opportunity amidst eclipse of COVID-19:

- The amendment to ECA would deregulate the commodities such as cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onions and potatoes. It will help to lessen the fears of private investors of excessive regulatory interference in their business operations.
- Any limits under ECA over these commodities will be imposed only in exceptional circumstances such as war, famine, extraordinary price rise and natural calamity.
- The freedom to produce, hold, move, distribute and supply will lead to harnessing economies of scale and attract private sector/foreign direct investment into the agriculture sector.
- It will help drive up investment in cold storages and modernization of the food supply chain.
- An amendment to FPTC will create an ecosystem where the farmers and traders would enjoy freedom of choice of sale and purchase of agri-produce.
- It will also promote barrier-free inter-state and intra-state trade and commerce outside the physical premises of markets notified under State agricultural produce marketing legislations.
- It empowers farmers for engaging with processors, wholesalers, aggregators, large retailers, exporters etc. and thus eliminating intermediaries resulting in full realization of price.
- Farmers have been provided adequate protection. Sale, lease or mortgage of farmers' land is totally prohibited and farmers' land is also protected against any recovery.
- It also provides an effective dispute resolution mechanism with clear timelines for redress.
- These reforms are expected to build necessary agrarian infrastructure in the country which will lead to build "One India, One Agriculture Market"

Though these kind of reforms are the most awaited reforms since Independence. There are some pitfalls too as pointed out by some experts:

- These reforms have kept away the state from its limited revenue resources.

- Clearly, the move is to promote free trade under the slogan of one nation one market.
- The peasantry at large will be at the mercy of the Agri Business Corporations since there will not be any arrangements for price support and price stabilisation for crops.

Despite the above mentioned pitfalls, many agriculture experts opined:

- The country got Independence in 1947 but farmers are going to get freedom after the promulgation of this ordinance.
- These steps have been advocated by agriculture economist Ashok Gulati for decades and he welcomed the steps. "What the government is doing with these reforms is that, it is creating alternative channels for farmers to sell their produce. So, they will have more choices". Which will yield better prices discovery for farmers.

Conclusion:

These newly introduced reforms are the most awaited reforms since the Independence of India in 1947. It has opened up a new window to improve the farmers income by better price realisation. In the long run it will help India to achieve its target to double farmers income by 2022.

10. The largest funding for the development of a vaccine for COVID-19 has come from the private sector. What does it tell? Is the private sector filling in the gaps created by the inherent inefficiencies of public institutions? Critically comment.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to express their views over the roles played by private as well as public health institutions while funding for the development of COVID-19 vaccine. It also expects students to analyse both aspects of whether private sector is filling the gaps created by the inherent inefficiencies of public institutions or not.

Introduction:

While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to wreak havoc, researchers worldwide are working around the clock to find a vaccine against genetic sequence of SARS-CoV-2, the virus causing the COVID-19 pandemic. With respect to funding for the development of vaccine it seems that private institutions have got the front row but it doesn't mean that public institutions are lagging in it.

Body:

Just as automakers famously shifted to make tanks and planes during World War II, today's global giants Moderna, Altimmune, BioNTech & Pfizer, GlaxoSmithKline, etc. are investing tremendous amount of money in the research for vaccine development of COVID-19.

COVID-19 pandemic has exposed lacunas in the public health institutions across the world:

- Paucity of Resources: Doctors work in extreme conditions ranging from overcrowded out-patient departments, inadequate staff, medicines and infrastructure.
- Overburdened Doctors: Owing to disproportionate Doctor Patient ratio, limited number of doctors, nurses and medical staff have to cater to a large number of patients.
- Inadequate Funding: Expenditure on public health funding has been consistently low in India (approximately 1.3% of GDP). As per OECD, India's total out-of-pocket expenditure is around 2.3 % of GDP.
- Sub-optimal Public Health System: Due to this, it is challenging to tackle Non-communicable Diseases, which is all about prevention and early detection.

It diminishes preparedness and effective management for new and emerging threats such as pandemic like Covid-19. Here, Private Health Institutions comes in to picture in terms of investment, quality of service, delivering benefits etc.

It doesn't mean that Private institutions' don't have any lacunas:

- In India most of private health institutions have presence only in the metros and other major urban centres.
- Private institutions are expensive which are not affordable to the poor and marginalised sections of the country. e.g. In New Delhi a private hospital denied admission/treatment to the COVID-19 suspect as she was not able to bear the cost of treatment.
- There is general impression prevails that private establishments are often unethical, greedy, treating medical service as a business and hospitalisation as a source of profit.

So, it can be seen that though public health institutions lack in some aspects, private institutions have their own lacunas too.

Vaccine development is a lengthy process which often takes years, with many challenges. 78 of the confirmed active vaccine candidates, 56 (72%) are being developed by private/industry developers, with the remaining 22 (28%) of projects being led by public institutions.

Hence a collaborative approach should be adopted to tackle this crisis.

There are various examples of the public institutions which are also working at a war time speed to tackle this crisis:

- Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII), the world's largest vaccine manufacturer in terms of dosage, is one of the partner firms for AstraZeneca's and Oxford's COVID-19 vaccine candidate. The vaccine has now entered its final phase of human trials.
- Operation Warp Speed (OWS) is a collaboration of several US federal government departments and the private sector to accelerate development of drug and vaccine candidates for COVID-19 (ACTIV).

- Researchers at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies have estimated that, as of the end of April, the G20 countries alone had already committed \$6.3 trillion in fiscal spending, or about 9.3% of their combined 2019 GDP, to save lives and assist economies, at levels that exceed their responses to the 2008 global financial crisis.
- The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) is working with global health authorities and vaccine developers to support the development of vaccines against COVID-19.
- The collaborative approach is already followed by National institute of Health (USA), which will collaborate with the private institutions.

Conclusion:

As vaccine for the novel corona virus is unlikely to be ready for mass use before 2021, and no sign of medicine to cure is in sight; Instead of looking for the gaps filled by one sector or other we need to adopt a collaborative approach where both sectors will work together, in turn it help human kind to survive on this planet.

11. Do you think NGOs are indispensable for extending relief after natural or man-made calamities? Substantiate your views.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to write about the role played by NGO's while extending relief during natural or manmade calamities. It also expects students to substantiate their view with careful analysis.

Introduction:

Ever since independence, NGOs have played a crucial role in helping the needy in India, providing aid & elevating the socio-economic status of millions in the country. But, with respect to extending relief during calamities their role doesn't confine only providing to aid but rebuilding the destroyed landscape & providing relief while working hand-in-hand with public authorities.

Body:

The Disaster Management Act 2005 emphasizes the need for continuous and integrated process of planning, organising, coordinating and implementing policies and plans on DM in a holistic, community based, participatory, inclusive and sustainable manner. Which in turn suggest when it comes to disaster then government should adopt a holistic approach to tackle the disaster.

Role played by NGO's while extending relief in Natural and man-made calamities:

- A Natural or manmade calamity is a result of natural or man-made causes that leads to sudden disruption of normal life, causing severe damage to life and property to an extent that available social and economic protection mechanisms are inadequate to cope.

- Replicate micro-level initiatives: The community-focussed approach, which is the main strength of NGOs.
- Optimum use of resources. In Asian countries, where limited resources, logistic and infrastructure facilities pose challenges, optimal use of available financial and human resources, support systems is a must for timely calamity response and effective calamity reduction measures.
- Check Overlapping, Duplication, & Confusion. Timely response to natural calamities remains a difficult task in South Asian countries, where a majority of people live in dispersed rural settlements with inadequate communication facilities.
- Supplement Govt's Response with Sector-focused Initiatives. Experience in Orissa and in other parts of India shows that NGO focus on sector-specific issues such as livelihood, community organisation, community asset creation, women group formation, etc.
- Strengthen Community-Based Disaster Preparedness. In South-Asia poverty and low awareness explain higher human casualty and deeper adverse impact of disasters.

Hence it seems imperative to include NGO's while tackling Natural or manmade calamity. But there are some issues with respect to some NGO's too:

- Accreditation remains a big challenge as it is very difficult to distinguish whether an organization wants to work for the cause or has been set up only for the purpose of receiving government grants.
- NGOs have acted as a cover for organized crime in past and are often seen as fronts for fundamentalist causes. So, during a calamity it may happen that NGO may use the organisation as cover to expedite the crisis.

But We cannot ignore some of the fantastic works done by some NGO's during this COVID-19 crisis:

- The Akshaya Patra Foundation is an NGO in India headquartered in Bengaluru. Since the COVID-19 crisis, The Akshaya Patra Foundation, in close coordination with State Governments and District Administration, has stepped in to provide relief by providing food to thousands of people across the country.
- Waste pickers are the communities most vulnerable to infections. Pune-based Kashtakari Panchayat (NGO) has organised a fundraiser to support nearly 7,000 workers in Pune. The funds will be used to provide safety kits, consisting of gloves, masks, soaps and sanitizers, and a month's supply of essentials, like grains, pulses, oil, sugar and tea.

Conclusion:

As we know that the Natural or Man-made calamities test the humankind's will to win over the adversities. Hence, when we want to tackle the natural or manmade calamities then NGO's role seems indispensable but it should be made sure that the

NGO works in consonance with the objective and not against it so that help & relief can reach up to the last person the ladder.

12. The undergraduate admission season is close. Lakhs of students will apply to different colleges and universities. Do you think, too much emphasis on marks as the entry criteria creates mediocrity and stifles talent? Comment.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to express their views on whether marks should be the criteria or the talent for the assessment. It also expects students to analyse both aspects of whether having a mark based evaluation is good or talent based.

Introduction:

Except the Primary school admissions, rest of the admission world over works on the system of marks/grades. Here, arises the Talent vs. Marks debate, where marks as admission criteria are questioned but answer stumbles on what should be the alternative.

Body:

In India the British introduced education systems to create clerks and civil servants. They now prepare to become engineers or doctors. We have not deviated much from that pattern till today.

- To get admission in to higher educational institutes the set criteria is more the marks higher the chances to get admission.
- Mostly, the society thinks that becoming an engineer or a medical professional, are the only reputed and well earning professions. Which leads to humongous competition for few hundreds of seats.
- Hence students do marks oriented study, This is one of the fundamental flaws of our education system.
- The current system of examination assesses student on the set criteria and hence, too much focus is given to evaluation of student with respect to those criteria.

Here, the rat race begins to get more marks by sidelining and without realising the true potential of student.

Mediocrity and Stifling of talent:

- When there is smoke there is fire! The fire we are concerned about is the unproductive, fruitless education being provided in educational institutes.
- Students study only to score marks in exams, and sometimes to crack exams like IIT-JEE, AIIMS or CLAT and NEET.
- Students learning in an environment where their marks define who they are and where do they stand in the crowd.
- There is less focus on achieving excellence.

- Knowledge is largely forgotten after the semester exam is over. Still, year after year Indian students focus on cramming information. The best crammers are rewarded by the system.
- But, there is one positive side of having a marks oriented approach of studying i.e. it promotes a healthy competition if not exaggerated so.

We should realise that getting higher marks is not the only criteria through which a person's talent can be assessed. One such example of fine talent is the Sachin Tendulkar who was failed in 10th standard examination but still known as Master blaster in the history of cricket.

Way forward:

- Giving a sound career counselling to students especially to the parents. And generating a wide scale awareness in society are the primary steps.
- A person is more valuable human resource because of its vivid qualities, skills and talents. Hence, giving justice to its skills, talents and knowledge should be the way. Which will eventually help the person to realise his/her true self.
- Humanities, art, law, accountancy, music, drama etc. these streams also provide bright career options. e.g Shahrukh khan who is known as Baadshah of Bollywood Industry, opted out of MBA to focus on career in acting.
- Evaluation of students should not be centred around their marks in exams. Shifting to grading system based on classroom participation, project work, communication and leadership skills and extracurricular performance.
- Sooner than later personalizing and customizing learning in our education system will be more better option.

Conclusion:

As we know every human being is unique in its characteristic we should not adopt One size fits all approach. Hence, adopting a more holistic approach to assess the true talent of student combined with marks will be the better way so that we can utilize our this large demographic dividend to taste the fruits of development.

13. The prevalence of caste politics in India is an indicator of retrograde political attitude. Do you agree? Critically comment.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to write about what role do caste politics play to influence political attitude in Indian political scenario. It also expects students to analyse both aspects of whether prevalence of caste politics in India is an indicator of retrograde political attitude or not.

Introduction:

Theoretically speaking caste and democratic political system stand for opposite value

systems. Caste is hierarchical. On the other hand, democratic political system advocates freedom to an individual and equality of status. Despite this contradictory nature, caste has influenced Indian political attitude.

Body:

Politics does not function in vacuum. It operates in society in which it is influenced by social forces and social forces are also influenced by political attitude too. In this perspective caste's influence on Indian Political attitude can be seen in following ways:

- Caste as a social stratification system is a salient feature of Indian society which has influenced the structure of society in socio-economic and political scenario.
- Political Socialisation: 'Caste values' and caste interests influence persons political thinking, awareness and participation.
- Caste and nomination of candidates: Due to this process of political socialisation of caste, 'caste consciousness' arouses among people.
- While nominating their candidates from different constituencies the political parties keep in mind the cast of candidate and caste of the voters in that particular constituency. It in turn affects democratic ideals of equality, justice.
- Caste and voting behaviour: In the election campaigns, votes are demanded in the names of caste. Which in turn affects peoples' thinking as people tend to vote to the candidate who takes interest in solving their castes problem only.
- Caste as divisive in Indian Politics: At times it leads to an unhealthy struggle for power and acts as a divisive force.
- Caste and organization of government: The caste factor affects state government policies and decisions. The ruling party tries to use its decision-making power to win the favour of major caste groups.
- Regional political power for furthering the interests of the caste groups which support or can support their regimes.
- Social and political tensions: The provisions made for the protection of interests of scheduled castes & tribes have also disturbed the social harmony in the Indian society.

But, at the same time prevalence of caste politics has resulted in the welfare and development of marginalised sections of society in following ways.

- Caste as cohesive force in Indian Politics: It is a source of unity among the members of groups and acts as a cohesive force.
- Prevalence of caste politics in India also resulted in the enactment of legislations to protect the rights of disadvantaged and marginalised sections of society. e.g. Prevention of atrocities against SC & ST's Act -1989, Protection of Civil Rights Act-1976.
- Many caste based political parties are working more efficiently to solve the problems of their respective castes people.

Though prevalence of caste politics in India has contributed in some way to modernize political attitude it doesn't indicate that it is the way through which welfare of marginalised and disadvantaged sections can be achieved.

The following points should also need to be considered to neutralise the role of prevalent caste politics in political attitude:

- The politician should rise above the politics of caste.
- Remodelling of education system on secular lines should take place which in turn help to have a more egalitarian society and will lead to change in political attitude.
- All schools must encourage community living by organizing community meals and all students should be included in it. It will result in empathy and compassion for fellow human beings.

Conclusion:

Overall it is observed that, caste has been politicised to pursue economic and social interest rather than achieving the democratic ideals of justice, equality and fraternity. This process has reached an impasse and caught into vicious circle. Hence, we need to do away with the prevalent caste politics, which will definitely result in elimination of retrograde political attitude and achieve the more egalitarian social order.

14. What role have social influence and persuasion played in containing the spread of COVID-19? Illustrate.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to write about how social influence and persuasion played role in containing the spread of COVID-19. It also expects students to write about how more effectively it can be used to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Introduction:

The government, civil society groups, Bollywood - Hollywood celebrities, common people etc used social influencing and persuasion as tools to spread the message to contain the spread of COVID-19. "Janata curfew" is a classical example of Social influence and persuasion.

Body:

Role played by social influence and persuasion to contain spread of COVID-19:

- Social influence and persuasion are the keys to bring behavioural changes to solve societal & global problems like caste system, patriarchy, climate change, solid waste management, COVID-19 etc.
- Government of India took a simple but very effective Social influencing move by putting information about COVID-19 symptoms and the following steps to tackle as the caller tune of mobile rings. It led to wide scale spread of information to people, as there are nearly 116 crore mobile phone subscribers in India today.

- Government of India's social media handles are frequently posting the information related to COVID-19 on its social media platforms like Instagram, facebook. So information with great details reached people. For instance, how to wash hands in graphical format influenced peoples hand washing habit leading to contain the spread of COVID-19.
- One of the main weapon to fight with corona virus is to social distancing. Celebrities all over the world appealed to the fellow citizens to maintain social distancing. Which considerably persuaded people and influenced their habits. e.g. Video messages by celebrities like Akshay Kumar and Amitabh Bachhan etc.
- Political leaders lead with examples, either through their speeches or acts told people what to do and what not to. For instance, Prime ministers and Presidents of various countries faced camera while giving information with mask put on.
- New York Governor, provided a great example when he made a plea for ventilators asking for anyone who could (within his state or outside) to send the ventilators they are not using and New York will gladly supply you with more later. It led to people donating ventilators to hospitals in New York.
- People who were felling low to follow home or institutional quarantine also understood the importance of the quarantine procedure and started following quarantine strictly it also helped to contain the spread of virus.
- Hence, cumulative effect can be seen that in many of the countries the COVID-19 curve has started to flatten.
- It also led to normalise the new normal i.e. wearing the mask, frequently washing hands, maintaining social distance etc.
- after a few weeks of social distancing and self-isolation because of Covid-19, we have noticed the decline in our social interactions and might have felt the change in our mental and physical health. Social influencing also helped to tackle these kind challenges too.

In this way Social influencing and persuasion have played a very effective role to make people aware and change their thinking, behaviours, attitudes & habits according to the need of time.

- Many of the false information's were also spread through the social media platforms which influenced people's minds. For instance, Corona virus also spreads through eggs, which in turn affected poultry industry.
- But in these kind of scenarios too, social influencing and persuasion played role through spread of right information. It in turn also assured the livelihood of many people and helped to contain spread of corona virus.

Also following practises can also be followed to increase the effectivity of Social influence and persuasion:

- Highlight a gap: For young people who might resist, ask what they would suggest an elderly grandparent or a younger brother or sister do. Health officials in Thailand used this approach in anti-smoking campaign. Rather than telling smokers their habit was bad, they had little kids come up to

smokers on the street and ask them for a light. Not surprisingly, the smokers told the kids no.

- Pose questions : Public health messaging tries to be direct: Junk food makes you fat, Drunk driving is murder. But being so forceful can make people feel threatened. The same content can be phrased in terms of a question: "Do you think junk food is good for you?" If someone's answer is no, they're now in a tough spot. Same can be done by posing question to those people who roam around without using mask.

Conclusion:

Therefore, social influence and persuasion are dynamic & powerful tools that hold a huge potential to change the face of world. If creatively used, they can prove to be the most effective tool to tackle the fight with COVID-19 ,and win over it too.

15. What purpose does the merger of government owned banks and PSU's serve? Discuss.

Demand of the question:

It expects students to discuss the purpose behind merger of public sector banks. It also expects students to discuss both aspects of impact of merger of government owned banks and PSU's.

Introduction:

With the motive to strengthen the banking sector, expand the national presence and global reach of these banks and PSU's government announced merger of 10 public sector lenders into four bigger and stronger banks. Earlier to this the Oil & Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) merged together, resulted in ONGC buying up the 51% government stake in HPCL.

Body:

As the merger came in to effect there are 12 PSU's - six merged banks and six independent public sector banks.

Purpose Behind the Merger Plan

- Merger was proposed through a ministerial panel called "Alternative Mechanism" headed by Finance Minister.
- Economic Survey (2015-16) pointed out that constant failure of banks to lend credit to both emerging as well as existing industries has resulted in stagnation in the economic growth of the nation.
- Economic Survey (2015-16) also pointed out that Problem of credit lending, based on the twin balance sheet crisis, can be checked by the formation of bigger banks.
- To keep pace with the growing economy, there is a need for big banks that can lend to big industries & entrepreneurs that require large amounts of credit.

- As per banks' prudential norms, banks take risks only for those entities that are appropriate as per banks' size.
- Banks usually avoid investing in a single entity or business. Also to protect weak PSBs from loss - thereby securing customers and financial system.
- Hence to invest in large projects, banks with huge lending capacity were needed which can also lend to PSU's.
- Banks also need large credit, better customer service & connect in order to invest in mega projects through lending.
- Larger banks can invest in standardizing these processes in larger set of customer-facing entities through technology up gradation, fraud detection, etc.
- Bigger banks would also be able to adhere to BASEL III norms.
- Bigger banks & large PSU's with diverse portfolios have lesser chances of failure since it is unlikely that different sector of an economy will face a crisis at a same time.

Impact of Merger:

- Large banks will have large balance sheets which can lend to different sectors of economy as per need in turn lead to growth of Indian economy.
- The large banking entities & PSU's will be able to absorb financial shocks better. It will also build capacity in PSBs to raise resources without depending on the state exchequer.
- Consolidated banks will have a better ability to raise resources from the market.
- Large PSU's can work in synchronous with the government policies.
- A synergistic relationship would efficiently use one another's network, customer base, better managerial efficiency ,and it will also improve Operational Efficiency.
- Stronger and globally competitive banks would provide increased choices to the stakeholders.
- Because of consolidation capital allocation, performance assessment, and steering would become easier for the government.

Former RBI Governor has warned that while creating large banks one might end up with a big weak bank. Hence, challenges posed by these merger exercises can't be blindsided:

- There is a concern among employees that amalgamation may lead to rationalization of bank branches & employees.
- The merger also sends out poor signals about banking & PSU's governance which will affect trust of customers in banking system.
- A strong banks merger with a weaker and under-capitalized PSB would stall the bank's recovery efforts as the weaknesses of one bank may get transferred and the merged entity may become weak.
- Same scenario can be seen in PSU's merger.
- For instances, a weak Dena Bank (under Prompt Corrective Action) may impact stronger banks like Bank of Baroda & Vijaya Bank.

- Bigger banks & PSU's may monopolise market economy.

Conclusion:

Merged larger banks & PSU's offer more resilience to the banking & PSU's sector but blindsiding experts opinions like twin balance sheet problem, NPA's ,and risk control system would not be helpful to give boost to banking & PSU's sector. Hence, strong foundation of PSBs needed so that banking & public undertakings sector in Indian economy becomes strong enough to achieve the target of \$5 trillion GDP economy by 2024.

