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NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020

NATIONAL RECRUITMENT AGENCY

SELF RELIANT FOREIGN POLICY

EIA NOTIFICATION -2020



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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 **63th edition** of IASbaba's Monthly Magazine. This edition covers all important issues that were in news in the month of **AUGUST 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."

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HISTORY/CULTURE/GEOGRAPHY

UK to Issue Coin in Honour of Mahatma Gandhi

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains I – History

Context:

- Britain is considering minting a coin to commemorate Mahatma Gandhi.
- The consideration is seen as part of efforts to celebrate achievements of people from the Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.
- As part of a global reassessment of history, colonialism and racism triggered by the death in May of a Black man, George Floyd, in the United States, some British institutions have begun re-examining their past

Do You Know?

Gandhiji's birthday, October 2, is observed as the International Day of Non-Violence.

Black Lives Matter Protest is a movement in USA, against systemic violence meted out to the African American community

Galapagos Islands

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains I – Geography

In News: Chinese fishing fleet entered the Galapagos region and Ecuador has officially expressed its "discomfort" to China over the fishing vessels.

About

- The Galapagos Islands, spread over almost 60,000 sq km, are a part of Ecuador, and are located in the Pacific Ocean around 1,000 km away from the South American continent.
 - The giant tortoises found here – 'Galápagos' in old Spanish– give the islands its name.
 - Ecuador made a part of the Galapagos a wildlife sanctuary in 1935, and the sanctuary became the Galapagos National Park in 1959. In 1978, the islands became UNESCO's first World Heritage Site.
 - The Galapagos Islands host a wide array of aquatic wildlife, including marine iguanas, fur seals, and waved albatrosses.
-

Revamp of Lingaraj Temple, Odisha

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

In News:

- The Odisha government has decided to give a facelift to the 11th century Lingaraj Temple, similar to its pre-350-year structural status.
- This is a part of the Lingaraj Temple Heritage Development Project under Ekamra plan.
- Through Ekamra plan, it is expected that heritage redevelopment will enhance the attraction of Bhubaneswar as a tourist site and claim for a UNESCO heritage site will be stronger.

Important value additions

Lingaraj Temple

- It was built in 11th century AD.
- Dedicated to: Lord Shiva.
- The largest temple of the city Bhubaneswar.

- It is believed to have been built by the Somvanshi King Yayati I.
- It is built in red stone.
- It is a classic example of Kalinga style of architecture.
- The temple is divided into four sections:
 - GarbhaGriha (sanctum sanctorum)
 - Yajna Shala (the hall for prayers)
 - BhogaMandap (the hall of offering)
 - Natya Shala (hall of dance).
- It signifies the convergence of Shaivism and Vaishnavism sects in Odisha.
- The presiding deity of the Temple: Hari-Hara.
- The other attraction of the temple: Bindusagar Lake.
- **Other Important Monuments in Odisha:**
 - Konark Sun Temple (UNESCO World Heritage Site)
 - Jagannath Temple
 - Tara Tarini Temple
 - Udaygiri and Khandagiri Caves



Image source: [Click here](#)

NuakhaiJuhar celebrated

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

Key takeaways

- **Celebrated in:** Western Odisha and adjoining areas of Simdega in Jharkhand.
- It is an agricultural festival.
- It is observed to welcome the new rice of the season.
- It is observed on the fifth day of the lunar fortnight of the month of Bhadrapada or Bhaadra (August–September), the day after the Ganesh Chaturthi festival.
- People offer the newly harvested crop called Nabanha to their respective presiding deities, as a part of the rituals

Brahmaputra Ropeway

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-I – Physical Geography; GS-III – Infrastructure

In News:

- The Assam government has inaugurated a 1.8-km ropeway across the Brahmaputra River.
- It is being described as India's longest river ropeway.

BRAHMAPUTRA & OTHER ROPEWAYS

1.8 km

Between Guwahati city and North Guwahati town, across the river Brahmaputra.

2.5 km

In Gulmarg, J&K. One of the world's highest (4,390 m) cable-based lift services.

4 km

In Auli in Uttarakhand, said to be the longest in the country (not a river ropeway)

2 km

In Darjeeling, West Bengal, one of the oldest ropeway services in India, started 1968).

Image source: [Indian Express](#)

Key takeaways

- It Connects KachariGhat (Guwahati) to DolGovinda Temple on the northern bank.
- It passes the famous Umananda temple on a small island.
- The ropeway uses a “twin-track, single-haul, bi-cable double reversible jig back” system.
- **Benefits:**
 - It cuts travel time between the two banks to 8 minutes. Presently it takes 30 minutes or more (ferry) and over an hour (road).
 - It promotes tourism in the State.

Important value additions

The Brahmaputra

- It is also called YarlungTsangpo in Tibet, Siang/Dihang River in Arunachal Pradesh and Luit, Dilao in Assam.
- It is a trans-boundary river which flows through Tibet, India and Bangladesh.

Panel to conserve Edakkal caves constituted

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-I – Ancient History; Architecture

In News:

- A nine-member expert committee has been constituted to conduct a detailed study on the present state of the renowned Edakkal caves on the Ambukuthi hills in Wayanad district, Kerala.
- The neolithic petroglyphs on the cave walls need to be protected from illegal constructions, mining, and urbanisation.
- The Edakkal caves are believed to be camping shelters of the Neolithic community.

Pulikali

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

In News:

- It is a recreational folk art and a colourful part of Onam celebrations in Thrissur, Kerala.
- It will be an online-only affair this year due to COVID-19.
- Onam is an annual harvest festival.
- In Pulikali, performers painted like tigers and hunters in bright yellow, red, and black dance to the beats of instruments like Udukku and Thakil.
- The performance revolves around the theme of tiger hunting.
- Pulikali was introduced in Thrissur by ShakthanTampuran two centuries ago

Behrupiya: Folk Artists

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

In News:

- ‘Behrupiyas’ were recently in news due to their livelihoods being affected due to Covid-19 pandemic.
 - Behrupiyas are impersonators, mostly known to perform in villages and markets all over India.
 - The behrupiya festival is a traditional Indian style of street theatre.
 - It takes place every year in different locations- Delhi, Ahmedabad, Udaipur and others.
 - In the past, they assisted in circulating, transmitting and publicising the various knowledge forms among the people.
 - The vibrant tradition of Ramleela can also be seen as an extension of this practice which continues even today.
-

Great Andamanese Tribe

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-I – Tribes

In News:

- Recently, the Great Andamanese tribe were in news when some of its members tested positive for COVID-19.
- They are one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal group (PVTG) of the region.
- This is one of the first cases of COVID-19 infection among the endangered PVTGs of the region.

Important value additions

The Great Andamanese

- They are one of five PVTGs that reside in the Andamans archipelago.
- They speak Jeru among themselves.
- Total population is just 74.
- The five PVTGs residing in Andamans are Great Andamanese, Jarawas, Onges, Shompens and North Sentinelese.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)s

- **Concerned Ministry:** Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) & Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MTA)
- 75 tribal groups have been categorized as PVTGs by MHA.
- They reside in 18 States and UT of A&N Islands.
- MTA implements “Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)” scheme exclusively for them.
- Under the scheme, Conservation-cum-Development (CCD) Plans are to be prepared by each State/UT for their PVTGs based on their need assessment.
- The plans are then appraised and approved by the Project Appraisal Committee of the Tribal Affairs Ministry.
- **Sectors for which activities are undertaken:** Education, Health, Livelihood and Skill Development, Agricultural Development, Housing & Habitat, Conservation of Culture etc.

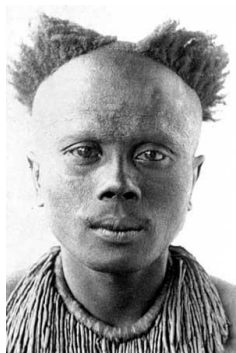


Image source: [Click here](#)

Three decades of Mandal Moment

Context: Thirty years ago, on 7th August 1990, the VP Singh government decided to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission, and providing 27% reservations for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in government jobs

Mandal Commission

- In exercise of the powers conferred by Article 340 of the Constitution, the President appointed a backward class commission in December 1978 under the chairmanship of B. P. Mandal.
- The commission was formed to determine the criteria for defining India's "socially and educationally backward classes" and to recommend steps to be taken for the advancement of those classes.
- The Mandal Commission submitted its report in 1980 and generated an all-India other backward classes (OBC) list of 3,743 castes and a more underprivileged "depressed backward classes" list of 2,108 castes.
- The Commission concluded that India's population consisted of approximately 52% OBCs,
- therefore 27% government jobs should be reserved for them.

What were the factors which led to the historic moment in Modern Indian Politics?

- The decision was in the wake of the gradual political rise of the backward communities, which was due to a set of complex factors.
- Political Outcome of Past Policies: The impact of the Green Revolution led to economic empowerment of OBCs and increased their desire for upward professional mobility through reservation in government jobs
- Electoral Compulsion: The demographic weight of the backward communities amplified their aspirations. In a Democratic society like India, the demands of such large sections of society could not be neglected both electorally & democratically.
- Political Compulsions: To counter the Mandir politics of late 1980s which sought to prioritise religion over caste, the government of the day promoted Mandal Politics

Was OBC reservation opposed and if so on what lines?

- The Mandal moment saw ferocious backlash by sections of upper castes, particularly in northern & western regions of India

- This opposition was articulated on two axes
- That reservations compromised merit
- If at all reservations should open up beyond what was offered to SC & STs, it should be on economic lines (and not on caste basis)

What has been the Supreme Court's verdict on OBC reservation?

- The Supreme Court dealt with Constitutional Validity of OBC reservation in 'Indira Sawhney'
- Case or Mandal Case.
- The SC upheld the 27% reservation for OBCs but also stated that only caste was not an indicator of social and educational backwardness.
- SC also said that the 'creamy layer' among the OBCs should not be the beneficiaries of the reservations.
- Supreme Court in the same case also upheld the principle that the combined reservation beneficiaries should not exceed 50% of India's population.

What has been the major Criticism of OBC reservation?

- Backlash by left out sections: The resentment of those communities which did not have a share in the reservation pie increased. Mandal Politics launched an era of open hostility between upper castes & backward communities, particularly in the Hindi heartland
- Appeasement Politics: Political parties, in order to appease their constituents, continued to expand reservation. This has undermined the entire purpose of reservation, envisaged as a tool to address historic injustice
- Demand for Subcategorization of OBCs: Within OBCs, some communities benefited more than others, which led to a political divide and demands for sub-categorisation, a process currently underway.
- According to the Rohini Commission, out of almost 6,000 castes and communities in the OBCs, only 40 such communities had gotten 50% of reservation benefits for admission in central educational institutions and recruitment to the civil services.

Way Ahead

- Making Agriculture Economically Viable: As the small landholders, tenants, agricultural labour, impoverished village artisans, unskilled workers, forms the bulk of the OBCs community, it becomes imperative to make agriculture (the backbone of the rural economy) economically viable.
- Strengthening Private Sector: A revived private sector that offers jobs to unemployed youth reduces the demand for jobs in the public sector and reservation.
- Review of Reservation Policy: The entire architecture of reservations needs a review, with the aim of creating a just, inclusive and equal society, without pandering to populist movements

Connecting the dots:

- Rohini Commission
- Constitutional (103rd Amendment) Act of 2019 -- Reservations for Economically Weaker Sections in Unreserved Category

Tribal Freedom Fighters' Museums

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains I – Modern History

About:

- Ministry of Tribal Affairs to set up Tribal Freedom Fighters' museums to give due recognition to sacrifices and contribution to country's freedom struggle by tribal people.
- Government to set up permanent museums in the States where tribals lived, struggled against the British and refused to be bowed down.

Do you know?

- All the museums will have strong usage of technologies like Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), 3D/7D holographic projections etc.
 - These museums will trace the history along the trails, along which the tribal people in hills and forests fought for their right to live and will.
 - Thus, it will combine ex situ display with in situ conservation, regeneration initiatives.
 - It is expected that by the end of 2022 all the museums will come into existence.
-

High Temperature at Death Valley

Part of: GS Paper – I Physical Geography

Context: Recently, Death Valley (USA) registered a temperature of 54.4°C which, once verified, could be the highest temperature in more than a century. The temperature was recorded at the USA National Weather Service's automated weather station at Furnace Creek on 16th August 2020.

Background:

- The temperature has been termed as preliminary and not final as it awaits verification.
- According to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Death Valley's all-time record high is 56.7°C taken on 10th July 1913 at Greenland Ranch. It still stands as the hottest ever recorded on the planet's surface. However, since the temperature-recording mechanisms a century ago were not as advanced, many have doubted if that reading was reliable.



Effects of Extreme Heat:

- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), extreme heat can exacerbate pre-existing health conditions, including respiratory diseases, heart conditions and kidney disorders.
- The immediate effects on the human body are heat cramps, dehydration and even potentially fatal heat strokes.
- It can also have a severe impact on agriculture and forests.
- It either causes vegetables to wilt and die or encourage the spread of plant diseases.
- It causes wildfires which lead to forest cover reduction and death of fauna.
- It affects infrastructure too by straining power grids and causing blackouts. It can ground planes, melt roads and cause the inside of vehicles to overheat to dangerous levels.

Marthoman Jacobite Syrian Cathedral Church

Part of: GS I- Indian Architecture

Context: Recently, the Kerala government has taken control of Marthoman Jacobite Syrian Cathedral Church at Mulanthuruthy in Ernakulam district, Kerala.

Malankara Church

- The Church at Mulanthuruthy has been in the focus of a dispute between Jacobite and Orthodox factions of the Malankara Church, a prominent non-Catholic Christian community.
- The Malankara Church first split in 1912, into the Jacobite and Orthodox groups. However, the two Churches reunified in 1959, but the truce lasted only until 1972-73.
- Since then, the two factions have been engaged in battle over ownership of churches and their wealth.

- The SC had upheld the validity of the 1934 constitution of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church to govern the parishes (administration) under the Church.
- However, the Orthodox faction was still denied access to the Church, therefore they appealed in the Kerala High Court, which directed the Kerala government to take over the Church and hand it over to Orthodox faction.

Gothic Architecture

- It is a European style of architecture popular in the 12th-16th century.
 - Origin: This architecture has its roots in France and England.
 - Features: Pointed arches, ribbed vaults, and flying buttresses.
 - The Britishers merged some Indian features of architecture to the Gothic architecture, which resulted in the Indo-Gothic style of architecture.
 - Examples of Indo-Gothic style of architecture: Madras High Court, Victoria Memorial, The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (previously Victoria Terminus) etc.
-

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POLITY/GOVERNANCE

NEP 2020: KVs unlikely to change medium of instruction

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Education reforms

Context:

- The new NEP contained a clause which provides for the mother tongue or local language to be used as the medium of instruction “wherever possible” at least until Class 5, but preferably till Class 8 and beyond.
- Kendriya Vidyalayas and schools affiliated to the CBSE cater to the needs of people in transferable jobs. It would not be practical to use students’ mother tongue or regional languages as the medium of instruction for such schools.

Do you know?

- Kendriya Vidyalayas cater to the needs of Central government employees posted anywhere and it contains students from all over India from Jammu and Kashmir to Kanniyakumari.
- Therefore, it becomes practically difficult to teach in their mother tongue or different medium of instructions in one class.
- KVs are directly controlled by the Education Ministry.
- Most of the CBSE schools are also catering to the requirement of people in transferable jobs.

A.P. Governor clears Bill which provides for three capitals

Part of: GS Mains II – Government policies and interventions for development

In news:

- In a major turning point in the history of Andhra Pradesh, Governor gave his assent to the A.P. Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions and A.P. Capital Region Development Authority Repeal Bills - 2020.
- The clearance of the decentralisation Bill facilitates the development of Amaravati, Kurnool and Visakhapatnam as the Legislative, Judicial and Executive Capitals respectively.



Pic: Multiple State Capitals

Do you know?

- The repeal of the Capital Region Development Authority Act (CRDA) paves the way for the formation of the Amaravati Metropolitan Region Development Authority.
 - The government is free now to give the 'three capitals' proposal a tangible shape
-

The significance of the Char Dham board verdict

Context: The Uttarakhand High Court on July 21 upheld the constitutionality of the Uttarakhand Char Dham Devasthanam Management Board Act, 2019

Uttarakhand Char Dham Devasthanam Management Act, 2019.

- The Act entrusted management of Char Dham temples to a Board whose Chairman and members are, by and large, nominated by the State Government.
- Two of the Char Dham temples in Uttarakhand, Shri Badrinath and Shri Kedarnath temples, were, prior to the 2019 Act coming into force, under the control and management of a managing committee constituted under the U.P. Shri Badrinath and Shri Kedarnath Temples Act, 1939.
- This 1939 Act was repealed by the 2019 Act.
- The 2019 Act brings within its ambit the Gangotri and Yamunotri Dhams also.

Challenged in Court of Law

- The act was challenged on the ground that it violates Articles 14, 25, 26 and 31-A of the Constitution of India
- It was alleged that the 2019 Act divests ownership of its properties from the temple, and vests it in the Board controlled by government

What were the major Issues which was highlighted in this Judgement?

1. Precedence of upholding similar laws:
 - Such laws are in place for a number of temples such as Jagannath Puri (1955), Vaishno Devi (1988), Shrinathji at Nathdwara (1959), Mahakal at Ujjain (1982), Kashi Vishwanath (1983), and Tirupati Balaji temple (1987).
 - All these acts were upheld by the Courts of India
2. Distinction between religious and Secular activities:
 - Offerings (of money, fruits, flowers or any other thing) are given to the deity, religious practice ends with these offerings.
 - The collection and distribution of these offerings for the maintenance and upkeep of temple are secular activities
3. Char dhams Doesn't belong to any religious denomination
 - The Supreme Court in Nar Hari Sastri And Others vs Shri Badrinath Temple Committee (1952) had already held Badrinath to be a public temple of Hindus and not confined to any family or denomination.
 - Also, SC held that secular activities of these temples can be regulated by the state.
 - The Court explicitly said that legislature is not bound to demonstrate mismanagement of temples while enacting such laws.
4. Regulation of religious practices/administration is not specific to Hinduism
 - There are as many as 27 waqf laws and the Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee Act too was enacted in 1925.

- In the latest judgment, Chief Justice Ranganathan observed that it is not necessary that the legislature should make a law uniformly applicable to all religious institutions
5. Article 26 is not absolute
- The court clarified that 'in matters of religion', right to management is a guaranteed fundamental right under Article 26(b)
 - But in respect of properties, the right to administer properties under Article 26(c) is to be exercised in 'accordance with law'.
 - Thus, the state is entitled to regulate administration of religious or temple properties by means of validly enacted law.

Connecting the dots:

- Article 31 of Indian Constitution
-

Social Security Code

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Govt policies and schemes;

Key facts:

- Even 73 years after Independence, only 9.3% of India's 466 million-strong workforce has social security.
- This means the remaining 90.7% still cannot aspire to protections that civil servants, employees of most registered private sector enterprises, banks and public sector employees, legislators and judges take for granted.
- No other G20 country has such a high share of informal workers.

About:

Report on Social Security Code by Parliamentary Committee on Labour –

- Recommended the eligibility period for gratuity payable to an employee on termination of his employment should be reduced to one year from the present provision of five years.
 - Also recommended that this facility be extended to all kinds of employees, including contract labourers, seasonal workers, piece rate workers, fixed term employees and daily/monthly wage workers.
 - Stressed that there should be a robust redressal mechanism in case an employer does not pay up the dues.
 - Highlighted that the draft social security code does not state any goal of providing social security to all its citizens.
 - Recommended that the Social Security Code should have provisions to hold the employer liable for payment of gratuity to the employees within a stipulated time frame.
-

Time to unlock: On a year after the removal of J&K's statehood

Context: A year has passed since Jammu & Kashmir was stripped of its special status (Article 370) as well as Statehood.

Why was Constitutional Status of Jammu & Kashmir changed?

- Article 370 was a considered stumbling block in bringing Kashmir closer to the rest of India, a source of extremism and separatism in the Kashmir Valley, and an avenue for Pakistan to gain a foothold in the Valley.
- The reorganisation of the erstwhile J&K State (abrogating Article 370, Converting from State to Union Territory, making Ladakh as separate UT) was defended on the ground that it leads to greater integration of J&K with the rest of the country.

Issues that needs to be addressed

- Vacuum in Political Activity: Mainstream politics in J&K has become impossible with leaders in detention and those released reportedly undertaking to stay away from any public discussion on J&K's future
- Against Transparency: Neither the J&K government nor the Centre has released a list or number of leaders who were detained last year
- Democratic Process Undermined: The legislative route that the Centre took (without consultation with State) and the communication restrictions on the population that followed, casts a shadow on India's standing as a constitutional democracy
- Spirit on Indian Federalism Weakened: J&K's special status within the Indian Union represented asymmetry, which is integral to the Indian federal experience. For ex: Several of North Eastern States enjoy varying degree of asymmetric Federalism
- Judicial Activism Lacking: The judiciary — the J&K High Court and Supreme Court — has not shown any urgency to settle the constitutional & legal questions raised by reorganisation of J&K
- Links to Chinese aggression: Some scholars have linked the continuing Chinese aggression in Ladakh to the change in J&K's status
- India's Global reputation in upholding Human Rights: At least two dozen politicians in J&K, including former CM Mehbooba Mufti, remain in detention, some not notified, which is against Democratic Credentials of India.

Way Ahead

- Constitutional Change is not enough: The Kashmir conflict is a function of complex historical grievances, politico-ethnic demands, increasing religious radicalisation, and Pakistan's interference in the Kashmir Valley. Any solution needs to be holistic
- Human Rights based Policy: Respect for human rights should be a key component of the Kashmir policy, as this and upholding national interest go hand in hand.
- Centre needs to start a conversation with the people of J&K: This can be achieved by release all political prisoners and holding elections with participation from all sections of society (including mainstream regional political parties)

Connecting the dots:

- State Reorganisation Act, 1956
- Article 371 of Indian Constitution

Digital Quality of Life Index 2020: SurfShark

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – E-Governance & GS-III- Infrastructure; IT & Computers

In News:

- Recently, the **Digital Quality of Life (DQL) Index 2020** has been released by SurfShark, an online privacy solutions provider.

Key takeaways

- According to it, India ranks among the lowest in the world in terms of Internet quality.
- Coverage: 85 countries were covered (81% of the global population).
- Parameters:
 - Internet affordability
 - Internet quality

- Electronic infrastructure
- Electronic security
- Electronic government
- Top rank: Denmark
- Indian Rankings: India stands at the overall rank of 57 out of the 85 countries.
 - Internet Affordability: 9th place. It outperforms countries like the UK, the USA and China.
 - Internet Quality: 78th place
 - E-infrastructure: 79th place
 - Electronic Security: 57th position.
 - E-government: 15th place

Important value additions

Government Initiatives Related to Internet

- Digital India Programme: An umbrella program to prepare India for a knowledge-based transformation.
- E-Kranti: National e-Governance Plan 2.0 - an essential pillar of the Digital India initiative.
- Digilockers: certain official documents on the cloud can be stored.
- BHIM App: To enable digital payments.
- PradhanMantriGramin Digital SakshartaAbhiyan: To make citizens digitally literate.
- Bharat Net programme: To provide an optical fibre network in all gram panchayats.

Government to set up National recruitment agency

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – Education

In News: Recently the government has approved the creation of a national recruitment agency for conducting a **Common Eligibility Test** for various government jobs.

The decision is likely to benefit crores of young people who apply for jobs every year

Single exam

The National Recruitment Agency (NRA) will conduct a Common Eligibility Test (CET) for recruitment to government jobs

- The NRA will initially conduct the CET for three sectors – Railway Recruitment Board, Staff Selection Commission and Institute of Banking Personnel Selection
- It will be held separately for three levels – graduate, 12th pass and 10th pass – for the non-technical posts of the three agencies
- Examination will be conducted online twice a year in 12 languages and will be based on a common curriculum

- Scores will be valid for a three-year period. Students can write the test multiple times and their best score will be taken into account
- According to the DoPT Secretary, there are 1.25 lakh vacancies every year in Group B and C for non-gazetted officers, and about 2.5 crore people apply every year for examinations to fill these vacancies



Image source: [The Hindu](#)

Key takeaways

- 3 of the over 20 Central Government recruitment agencies would be brought under the (NRA).
 - Gradually, all Central government recruitment agencies would be brought under the NRA.
 - A **common eligibility test (CET)** would enable these candidates to appear once and apply to any or all of these recruitment agencies for the higher level of examination.
 - Initially, the preliminary test for the **Railway Recruitment Board**, the **Staff Selection Commission** and the **Institute of Banking Personnel Selection** would be conducted by the NRA.
 - In the beginning, the exam would be held online in 12 languages.
 - Centres would be set up in every district to increase access.
 - The CET score of the candidate shall be **valid for a period of three years** from the date of declaration of the result.
 - The **best of the valid scores** shall be deemed to be the current score of the candidate,
-

Domicile-based job quota

Context: The Madhya Pradesh government's recent decision to reserve all government jobs for "children of the state".

Why such type of reservation is advocated?

- It is argued that giving preferential treatment to the residents of a state will help in **rightful allocation of the resources of the state** and would encourage people to work within the boundaries of their state.
- This is also seen as a way to **stop migration of people** from backward states to metropolitans, thereby reducing the burden on such cities.

Distinction between domicile status and place of birth

- According to the SC ruling in DP Joshi vs Madhya Bharat case, 1955, **Domicile or status of residence is a fluid concept** that can change from time to time, **unlike place of birth**, which is fixed.
- Domicile of a person means his **permanent home**.
- The place of birth is one of several grounds on which domicile status is conferred.

Instances where local based reservations are made:

Jammu and Kashmir

- Before abrogation of the special status, the jobs were reserved for state subjects.
- Presently, Government jobs are reserved for domiciles.
- Any person who has resided in J&K for 15 years and their children are domiciles.
- Those who have studied in J&K for seven years and appeared for Class 10 and 12 exams from there are domiciles.
- Central government employees, who have served in J&K for 10 years, and their children are also eligible to apply for government jobs.

Maharashtra

- Only local residents fluent in Marathi are eligible for government jobs.
- A local is defined as one who is domiciled in the state and has lived there for over 15 years.
- The only exception is for residents of Belgaum, Karnataka. Maharashtra has repeatedly staked claim over Belgaum as a large population there comprises Marathi speakers.

Assam

- In Assam, there is no reservation for residents of the state.
- But the MHA-appointed committee for implementation of Clause 6 of Assam Accord has recommended job reservations upto 80-100 per cent in different levels in government and private sectors for “Assamese People”.
- This is to be determined on the basis of a 1951 cut-off — persons or their descendants residing in Assam prior to 1951.

West Bengal

- No such reservation in Bengal. But, in certain posts in state government, reading and writing skills in Bengali is a criterion.

Meghalaya

- In state government jobs, Khasis, Jaintias and Garos have a combined reservation of 80 per cent. Other STs and SCs have a reservation of 5 per cent.

Arunachal Pradesh

- There is 80 per cent reservation for Arunachal Pradesh Scheduled Tribes in state government jobs.

What does the Constitution say about domicile based reservation?

- **Article 16(2) of the Constitution**, which guarantees equal treatment under law in matters of public employment, prohibits the state from discriminating on grounds of place of birth or residence
- **However, Article 16(3) of the Constitution** provides an exception by saying that Parliament may make a law “prescribing” a requirement of residence for jobs in a particular state. This power vests solely in the Parliament, not state legislatures.
- Constitutionally, some states also have special protections **under Article 371**. Andhra Pradesh under Section 371(d) has powers to have “direct recruitment of local cadre” in specified areas.

Why does the Constitution prohibit reservation based on domicile?

- When the Constitution came into force, the idea of the **universality of Indian citizenship** took root.
- As India has common citizenship, which gives citizens the liberty to move around freely in any part of the country, the requirement of a place of birth or residence cannot be qualifications for granting public employment in any state.

What has the Supreme Court said on reserving jobs for locals?

- While domicile-based reservations have been upheld in education, courts have been reluctant to expand this to employment.
- In **Dr Pradeep Jain v Union of India**, the issue of legislation for “sons of the soil” was SC said that Prima facie this would seem to be constitutionally impermissible but did not expressly rule on it as the case was on different aspects of the right to equality.
- In **Sunanda Reddy v State of Andhra Pradesh (1995)**, the Supreme Court affirmed the observation in Pradeep Jain to strike down a state government policy that gave 5% extra weightage to candidates who had studied with Telugu as the medium of instruction
- In 2002, the Supreme Court invalidated the appointment of government teachers in Rajasthan, where the state selection board gave preference to “applicants belonging to the district or the rural areas of the district concerned.”

How do some states then have laws that reserve jobs for locals?

- Exercising the power it has under Article 16(3), Parliament enacted the Public Employment (Requirement as to Residence) Act,
- The act aimed at abolishing all existing residence requirements in the states and enacting exceptions only in the case of the special instances of Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura and Himachal Pradesh.

- Some states have gone around the mandate of Article 16(2) **by using language**.
- States that conduct official business in their regional languages prescribe knowledge of the language as a criterion.
- This ensures that local citizens are preferred for jobs. For example, states including Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu require a language test

What about securing jobs for locals in the private sector?

- Such a law will be difficult to implement even if allowed.
- The state can recommend a preference to locals but ensuring that it is followed would be difficult.
- In 2017, Karnataka mulled similar legislation but it was dropped after the state's Advocate General raised questions on its legality.
- However, in 2019, the Karnataka government once again issued a notification asking private employers to "prefer" Kannadigas for blue-collar jobs.

Conclusion

- The move to give domicile based reservation runs against the spirit of constitutional equality and runs the danger of being struck down by government.

Connecting the dots

- Reservation is [not a fundamental right](#)

India does need a Fiscal Council

Context: The fiscal situation in India has been under severe stress even before COVID-19 and the novel coronavirus pandemic has worsened it.

Fiscal Situation of Union

- The fiscal deficit of the Centre in 2019-20 as estimated by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) was 4.6%, 0.8 percentage point higher than the revised estimate.
- For the 2020-21, even without any additional fiscal stimulus, the deficit is estimated at about 7% of GDP as against 3.5% estimated in the Budget due to a sharp decline in revenues.
- The consolidated deficit of the Union and States could be as high as 12% of GDP and the overall debt could go up to 85%.

Criticism w.r.t Fiscal Consolidation

- **Unaccounted Liabilities:** When off Budget liabilities are considered, the situation looks even more alarming.
- **Transparency:** Besides large deficits and debt, there are questions of comprehensiveness, transparency and accountability in the Budgets.
- **Obscure Actions undertaken to keep the liabilities hidden:** These include
 - Special banking arrangements for covering arrears of fertilizer subsidy
 - Issuing short-term bonds
 - Unsecured loans and borrowing from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF) by the Food Corporation of India towards meeting food subsidy and its arrears.
 - Financing irrigation projects from the Long Term Irrigation Fund (LTIF) created by the NABARD
 - Financing of railway projects through borrowings from the Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC)

- LIC buying out the Industrial Development Bank of India and the Power Finance Corporation buying out the Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) and remitting the money to the government as disinvestment proceeds.

To address the above challenges, **14th Finance Commission** recommended the establishment of an independent Fiscal Council

- This council should be appointed by and reporting to Parliament by inserting a new section in the FRBM Act.

What is the mandate of Fiscal Council?

- A Fiscal Council is an **Independent fiscal institution (IFI)** with a mandate to promote stable and sustainable public finances. The council assists in calibrating sustainable fiscal policy by making an objective and scientific analysis.
- The important tasks of these IFIs include:
 - Independent analysis, review and monitoring and evaluating of government's fiscal policies and programmes
 - Developing or reviewing macroeconomic and/or budgetary projections
 - Costing of budget and policy proposals and programmes
 - Presenting policy makers with alternative policy options

Merits of Fiscal Council

- **Watchdog of Public Finance:** An unbiased report to Parliament helps to raise the level of debate and brings in greater transparency and accountability.
- **Reduces Populism:** Costing of various policies and programmes can help to promote transparency over the political cycle to discourage populist shifts in fiscal policy and improve accountability.
- **Public Awareness:** Scientific estimates of the cost of programmes and assessment of forecasts could help in raising public awareness about their fiscal implications and make people understand the nature of budgetary constraint.
- **Upholds Spirit of Constitution:** The Council will work as a conscience keeper in monitoring rule-based policies, and in raising awareness and the level of debate within and outside Parliament.
- **International Trend:** According to IMF, there were 36 countries with IFIs in 2014 and more have been established in recent years.

How effective have these institutions been?

- A study by the IMF ("The Functions and Impact of Fiscal Councils", July 2013) shows that countries with IFIs tend to have stronger primary balances and more accurate macroeconomic & budgetary forecasts.
- **In Belgium,** the government is legally required to adopt the macroeconomic forecasts of the Federal Planning Bureau and this has significantly helped to reduce bias in these estimates.
- **In Chile,** the existence of two independent bodies on Trend GDP and Reference Copper Price has greatly helped to improve Budget forecasts.
- **In the U.K.,** the Office for Budget Responsibility has been important in restoring fiscal sustainability.
- Cross-country evidence shows that fiscal councils exert a strong influence on fiscal performances, particularly when they have formal guarantees of independence.

Conclusion

A Fiscal Council is an important institution needed to complement the rule-based fiscal policy. Of course, it is not a 'silver bullet'; if there is no political will, the institution would be less effective.

Connecting the dots

- Fifteenth Finance Commission

The marginalisation of justice in public discourse

Context: The pursuit of greed and narrow self-interest leads to severe inequalities, to an unequal division of social benefits. This has made us to look at what Justice entails.

Ethical Challenges with Development

- The burden of realising national goals such as development is not equally shared by all. This leads to **unfair division of social labour**
- The burden is easily passed on to those who are powerless to desist it. Some people sacrifice virtually everything they have and others benefit without forgoing anything at all.
- The least paid workers and peasants in our society are expected to offer the greatest sacrifices for building the nation
- Also, concern for a fair distribution of benefits and burdens — the core issue of justice — is rare in mainstream public discourse.

What is Justice?

- The basic idea of justice is that 'each person gets what is properly due to him or her', that the benefits and burdens of society be **distributed in a manner that gives each person his or her due**.

What is David Hume's 'circumstances of justice'?

- The idea of distributive justice presupposes not only a social condition marked by an absence of love or familiarity, but also others which the Scottish philosopher, David Hume, termed 'the circumstances of justice'.
- For instance, a society where everything is abundantly available would not need justice.
- Each of us will have as much of everything we want. Without the necessity of sharing, justice becomes redundant.
- Equally, in a society with massive scarcity, justice is impossible. In order to survive, each person is compelled to grab whatever happens to be available.
- **Justice, therefore, is possible and necessary in societies with moderate scarcity.**
- Justice also presupposes that people are neither totally alone nor organically united with others
- If one was totally fused with others, with no distinction between self and other, then again, sharing will be unnecessary.
- **Justice therefore presupposes a moral psychology in which humans are neither wholly selfish nor entirely benevolent.**
- Since most societies share these conditions, we can say that justice is a necessary social virtue and has great moral value.

What are the challenges with achieving Justice?

- Our society is afflicted by deep material, cultural and knowledge-related inequalities.
- While dealing with resource/burden sharing, prominence given to hierarchical notions of Justice rather than egalitarian Justice
- In **hierarchical notions**, what is due to a person (Justice) is established by her or his place within a hierarchical system. For instance, by rank determined at birth (Caste System)
- In societies still infested with live hierarchies, people must first struggle for recognition as equals, for what might be called **basic social justice**.
- Then, they must decide how to share all social benefits and burdens among equal persons — the essence of egalitarian distributive justice.

Challenges with Egalitarian Justice

Two main contenders exist for interpreting what is due to persons of equal moral worth.

- First, the need-based principle for which, what is due to a person is **what she really needs**, i.e., whatever is necessary for general human well-being (basic needs)
- Second, the principle of desert for which, what is due to a person is **what he or she deserves** determined by her own qualities and hard work
- Most reasonable egalitarian conceptions of justice try to find **a balance between need and desert**.
- They try to ensure a distribution of goods and abilities (benefits) that satisfies everyone's needs. After this, rewards are permissible to those who by virtue of natural gift, social learning and personal effort, deserve more.

Conclusion

Putting justice back into public discourse should be our priority. Or else, the dreams of our nation will never turn into reality.

Connecting the dots

- Amartya Sen's Theory of Justice (Freedom is futile without Capabilities, hence one needs to build capacities of people)

Namath Basai: A unique programme in Kerala

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – Policies and Interventions; Education & GS-I – Society (Tribes)

In News:

- Namath Basai is a unique programme being carried out in Attappady, Kerala.
- Under it, tribal children are taught in their mother tongue.

Key takeaways

- The programme is being implemented by the SamagraShiksha Kerala (SSK).
 - SSK is a programme for the school education sector (pre-school to class 12).
 - Aim: To improve school effectiveness.
- It offers pre-recorded classes through a YouTube channel.
- It is available in three tribal languages of the Irula, Muduka and Kurumba tribes.
- It is being introduced in tribal belts of Wayanad and Idukki as well.
- Classes are offered in the Oorali, Mutuvan and Paniya languages in Idukki.

Important value additions

Kurumba Tribe

- **Popularly known as:** Mala Pulayans, Hill Pulayans and PambaPulayans.
- **Traditional occupation :** Foraging and shifting cultivation.
- Art of body tattooing.
- Skilled in manufacture of baskets and mats
- **Religion:** Animism (belief in spirituality of objects, places, and creatures) and Totemism (Worship of any species of plants or animals thought to possess supernatural powers)

Irula or Irular Tribe

- Occupation: Agriculturists
- Grow Paddy, Ragi, dhal, plantains, chillies and turmeric
- **Religion:** Majority worship Vishnu (Rangaswami and Siva). Some worship the tiger and practice animism.

Mudugars or Muduka tribe

- Have social divisions at kal (clan) level.
- **Traditional Occupation:** Food gatherers and hunters.
- **Religion:** Hinduism (Worship Shiva)

On JEE-NEET during the pandemic

Context: Conducting Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) and National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (NEET) amid a pandemic is not easy, but options are limited

About NEET & JEE

- The NEET is the only gateway for MBBS/BDS admissions in the country.
- JEE Main is for students aspiring to pursue undergraduate courses in top engineering institutes in India
- JEE is not mandatory for State government-run and private institutions.
- Both JEE & NEET is conducted by National Testing Agency

Dilemmas faced by Union Education Ministry

- Sustaining a merit-based admission process (through conducting exams)
- Ensuring physical and emotional well-being of aspirants during COVID-19 times and thus the pressure of postponing exams
- Limiting the academic disruption caused due to pandemic

Supreme Court on conducting these exams: When petitions were filed to postpone the exams, SC declined to interfere with the conduct of the two common entrance tests.

Arguments in favour of Conducting Exams

- **Support of Judiciary:** From an academic perspective, the Supreme Court has observed that the career of students “cannot be put in peril for long”.
- **Support of Parent/Students:** A “silent majority” favours the exams as an overwhelming number of registered candidates have downloaded their admit cards.
- **Support by Academics:** Directors of several IITs have expressed concern that further delay could lead to a “zero academic year” and any quick alternative to the crucial exams will dilute the quality of education

Arguments against conducting exams

- **Fear of contracting COVID-19 from examination centres:** The NEET will be conducted in 3,843 centres across 155 cities, whereas the number of applicants is about 15.97 lakh.
- **Practical Challenges:** With many States not resuming public transport services and hotels remaining closed, travel and accommodation for candidates from interior regions is a major challenge
- **Disproportionately impact Girls’ prospects of Higher Education:** Social and cultural pressures are such that girls from villages and tier-3 towns are likely to face hurdles as travelling alone would not be encouraged under these unusual circumstances.

Way Ahead

- The government must explore alternatives such as allowing States to conduct medical admissions based on Class XII Board marks using standard normalisation.
- NEET could be limited to central institutions.
- The examination slots could be staggered and the number of centres increased drastically.

Connecting the dots

- NEET and its [criticisms](#)
- National Testing Agency

The 'quota within quota' debate

Context: A five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court reopened the legal debate on sub-categorisation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for reservations, or what is commonly referred to as “quota within quota” for SCs and STs.

The Constitution treats all Schedule Castes as a single homogeneous group.

Special quotas framed by some states

- In **Tamil Nadu**, a 3% quota within the SC quota is accorded to the Arundhatiyar caste, after the Justice M S Janarthanam report stated that despite being 16% of the SC population in the state, they held only 0-5% of the jobs
- In **2000, the Andhra Pradesh legislature** passed a law reorganising 57 SCs into sub-groups and split the 15% SC quota in educational institutions and government jobs in proportion to their population. However, this law was declared unconstitutional in **2005 E V Chinnaiah Case**
- **Punjab** too has had laws that gave preference to Balmikis and Mazhabi Sikhs within the SC quota;

Can States declare a caste as Schedule Caste?

- In the 2005 decision in **E V Chinnaiah v State of Andhra Pradesh and Others**, the Supreme Court ruled that only the President has the power to notify the inclusion or exclusion of a caste as a Scheduled Caste, and states cannot tinker with the list.
- Andhra Pradesh had submitted that the law was enacted as states had the power to legislate on the subject of education, and reservation in admission fell within its legislative domain. The court, however, rejected this argument.

What are the grounds for sub-categorisation?

1. Inequality within Scheduled Castes as benefits have not trickled down

- States have argued that among the SCs, there are some castes that remain grossly under-represented despite reservation in comparison to other Scheduled Castes
- Thus, the benefits of reservation have not trickled down to the “weakest of the weak” and this calls for sub-categorisation

2. Concept of Creamy Layer

- The “creamy layer” concept puts an income ceiling on those eligible for reservation.
- While this concept applies to OBC, it was applied to promotions of SCs for the first time in 2018 in in **Jarnail Singh v LachhmiNarain Gupta case**
- The central government has sought a review of the 2018 verdict and the case is currently pending

3. Sub-categorisation does not violate Article 341

- In the E V Chinnaiah case in 2005, Supreme court had held that merely giving preference does not tinker, rearrange, subclassify, disturb or interfere with the list in any manner since there is no inclusion or exclusion of any caste in the list as notified under Article 341.

4. Does not Violate Right to Equality

- Sub-categorisation would achieve equitable representation of all SCs in government service and would be about “real equality” or “proportional equality”.

What are the arguments against Sub-Categorisation?

- **The test or requirement of social & educational backwardness** cannot be applied to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The special treatment is given to the SCs due to untouchability with which they suffer.
- **In a 1976 case, State of Kerala v N M Thomas**, the Supreme Court laid down that “Scheduled Castes are not castes, they are class.”
- **Integrity of President’s SC list** will be endangered as such decisions will be made to appease one vote-bank or the other.

Conclusion

- The objective of reservation is to ensure that all backward classes march hand in hand and that will not be possible if only a select few get all the coveted services of the government.

The constitutional goal of social transformation cannot be achieved without taking into account changing social realities

New rules for administration notified in the Union Territory of J&K

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – Polity & Governance

In News:

- New rules for administration were recently notified in the Union Territory of J&K.
- **Ministry:** The Union Home Ministry.
- The new rules specify the functions of the Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) and the Council of Ministers (CoM).



Image source: [Click here](#)

Key takeaways

- Police, public order, All India Services and anti-corruption will fall under the executive functions of the L-G.
- The CM or CoM will have no say in their functioning.
- Matters which affect the interest of any minority community shall essentially be submitted to the L-G after intimating the CM.

- The CoM, led by the CM, will decide service matters of non-All India Services officers, proposal to impose new tax, land revenue, reconstituting departments or offices and draft legislation.
- However, in case of difference of opinion between the L-G and a Minister, when no agreement could be reached even after a month, the decision of the L-G shall be deemed to have been accepted by the CoM.

Possibility of Common Electoral Roll discussed

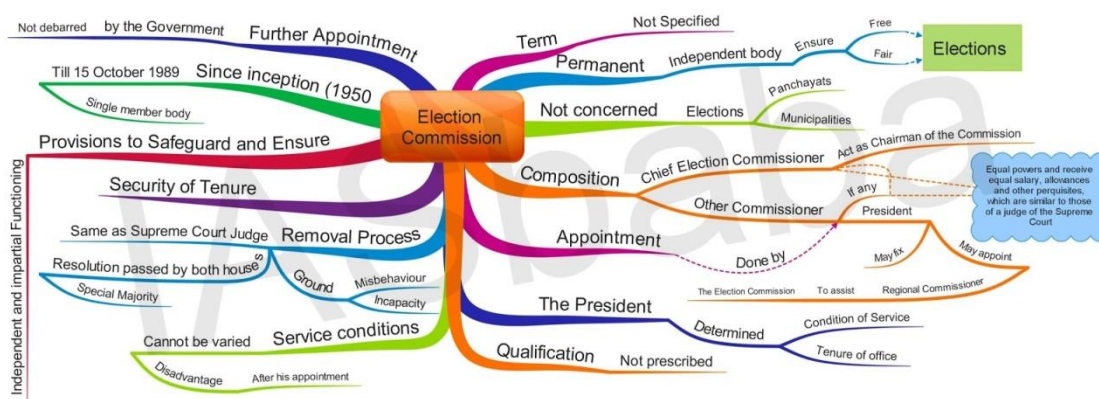
Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – Polity & Governance

In News:

- Recently, the possibility of having a common electoral roll for elections to the panchayat, municipality, state assembly and the Lok Sabha were discussed by the Indian Central government.

Important value additions

- In many states, the voters' list for the panchayat and municipality elections is different from the one used for Parliament and Assembly elections.
- The supervision and conduct of elections are supervised by two authorities — the [Election Commission](#) (EC) and the State Election Commissions (SECs).



- **EC:** Supervise elections to the President and Vice-President offices, and to Parliament, the state assemblies and the legislative councils.
- **SECs:** Supervise municipal and panchayat elections.
- They are free to prepare their own electoral rolls for local body elections, and this exercise does not have to be coordinated with the EC.
- Each SEC is governed by a separate state Act.

Do you know?

- Currently, all states, except Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Odisha, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and the Union Territory of J&K, adopt EC's rolls for local body polls.
- [The pitch for a single voters list is not new.](#)
- The Law Commission recommended it in its 255th report in 2015.
- The EC too adopted a similar stance in 1999 and 2004.

Sutlej-Yamuna Link Canal Project

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-I – Water Resources & GS-II – Inter-State Relations; Dispute Redressal Mechanisms

In News:

Recently, Center's proposal to proceed with Sutlej-Yamuna Link Canal Project may cause political unrest in Punjab. **Key takeaways**

- The dispute can be traced back to the Indus Water Treaty (1960) between India and Pakistan.
- It allowed India free and unrestricted use of Ravi, Beas and Sutlej.
- 1966: Creation of Haryana from the old (undivided) Punjab threw up the problem of giving Haryana its share of river waters.
- Recently, SC has directed the Chief Ministers of both states to negotiate and settle the SYL canal issue at the highest political level to be mediated by the Centre.
- However, Punjab has asked for a tribunal for fresh time-bound assessment of the water availability.
- Punjab is unwilling to share water because it is facing severe water crisis due to over-exploitation of its underground aquifers for the wheat/paddy monocycle.



Civil rights lawyer found guilty of criminal contempt of court

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

In News:

The Supreme Court has recently found civil rights lawyer Prashant Bhushan guilty of criminal contempt of court.

The lawyer had made a defamatory tweet against the CJI.

Key takeaways

The judgment:

- The tweet scandalised the SC as an institution.
- It held that being the epitome of the Indian judiciary, an attack on the SC can lead to ordinary litigants and judges of High Courts across the country losing the confidence in the SC.
- It acknowledged that its contempt powers could be used only to uphold the majesty of law and
- The powers cannot be used to vindicate an individual judge against whom a defamatory remark is made.
- It said that the prior consent of the Attorney General (AG) is not required to suo motu initiate the inherent contempt powers of the SC. The suo motu contempt powers are drawn from Article 129 of the Constitution.
- The SC has also asked Prashant Bhushan to reflect on his actions and possibly modify a statement in which he refused to apologise for his tweets.

Important value additions

Suo Moto Cognizance

- It is a Latin term.
 - Meaning: An action taken by a government agency, court or other central authority on their own apprehension.
 - A court takes a Suo Moto Cognizance of a legal matter when it receives information about the violation of rights or breach of duty through media or a third party's notification.
-

National Recruitment Agency (NRA)

Context: Recently the government has approved the creation of a national recruitment agency.

What is NRA?

- NRA is a testing agency which would be responsible for conducting the Common Eligibility Examination (CET) for non-gazetted Group B and C(non-technical) posts
- To begin with, NRA CET would cover recruitment examinations for Railway Recruitment Board (RRB), Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS Clerk, PO) and Staff Selection Commission (SSC CHSL, CGL, Steno Group C, D, JHT, etc.).
- Gradually, all Central government recruitment agencies would be brought under the NRA.
- NRA will be set up under the Societies Registration Act
- It would have representatives of the Ministry of Railways, Department of Financial Services, the SSC, RRB and IBPS.

About Common Eligibility Test

- Objective: It would merely check the eligibility of the candidates to appear for the recruitment process and is not same as a recruitment examination.

- Nature of Exam: It is like a preliminary or Tier 1 examination where the general and basic aptitude of the candidate is tested.
- Mode: This would be an online examination and would be time bound.
- Frequency: NRA would release the schedule for the CET, which would be conducted twice every year.
- Language: Candidates would be able to choose the medium of instruction from 12 major Indian languages, which will be expanded to other languages in future.
- Validity: Once the exam is conducted, the candidates would be provided with their CET score, that would be valid for a period of three years.
- Differentiated: Separate CET's would be conducted for the different levels of eligibility – 10th pass, 12th pass and graduates
- Utility: Based on CET Score level, final selection for recruitment shall be made through separate specialised Tiers (II, III, etc.) of examination which shall be conducted by the respective recruitment agencies

Would NRA also cover UPSC Exams?

- No. UPSC conducts the recruitment examinations for Group A and Group B posts. These examinations do not come under the ambit of NRA.

Merits of NRA & CET

- Leveraging Technology to enhance Integrity of exam: A standardised question bank with multiple questions of similar difficulty levels will be created in a central server. An algorithm will be used to jumble and dole out different questions, so that each candidate receives a different question paper, reducing the chances of cheating and paper leakage.
- Reduces Recruitment Cycle: Scores will be generated quickly, delivered online and be valid for a three-year period. Presently these exam cycle process takes on an average 6-12 months
- Increases Access to Exams: To make it easier for candidates, examination centres would be set up in every district of the country
- Huge Savings for recruiters & candidates: For the recruiting agencies, the savings in terms of logistics will be huge. Also, candidates would no longer have to travel to urban centres at considerable expense and hardship to take an employment test
- Applicant Friendly: The candidate may qualify the CET once and then appear for multiple recruitments directly for a period of 3 years (provided he meets the other criteria)

Challenges Ahead

- Unfilled Vacancies: New posts are sanctioned periodically, but a large number of vacancies remain unfilled. Around 7 Lakh Government Posts Remained Unoccupied till March 2018, according to government sources
- Growing Privatisation: With growing emphasis on transferring core railway services to the private sector, there may be fewer government jobs on offer in the future.
- Similar reform needed at State level: Only 14% of public employment comes under the purview of Centre (predominantly in railways & defence), with the rest falling within the purview of States.
- Needs Sustained Political Commitment: The long-term relevance of such reforms will depend on the commitment of governments to raise the level of public employment and expand services to the public

Connecting the dots

- National Testing Agency
- Issues with NEET

SC directs States to provide support to senior citizens

Part of: GS Mains II – Social/Welfare issue; Role of Judiciary

In news:

- Supreme Court directed the States to provide care, support and priority medical treatment for senior citizens, especially those living alone or quarantined, amid the pandemic.
 - Many elderly persons were battling loneliness and depression.
 - The lockdown and social isolation imposed had left many of them in the grip of anxiety.
 - Senior citizens who are aged above 60 years and especially those with medical conditions are particularly susceptible to infections during this period.
-

Three-language formula: History and Analysis

Context: Tamil Nadu has objected to the three-language formula advocated in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

A Brief History of Language Politics in India

- In the Constituent Assembly, Hindi was voted as the official language of the Union by a single vote. At the same time, it gave States the liberty to independently decide their official language.
- However, it provided that the use of English language would continue for 15 more years, and after 15 years, Parliament can enact a law to provide for continued use of English language for specified purposes.
- The Constitution also asked the government to appoint a commission at the end of five and ten years respectively to make recommendation with regards to progressive use of Hindi language.
- As the end of the fifteen years drew closer, there were widespread protests in the southern states, particularly against promotion/imposition of Hindi Language
- Keeping in mind the protests, Official Language Act was enacted in 1963 which provided for continued use of English alongside Hindi indefinitely.

Three Language Formula

- The teaching system across various regions in the country was not uniform.
- Whereas Hindi was the general medium of instruction in the north, regional languages and English were the media of instruction in other parts.
- This led to chaos and created difficulties for inter-state communication.
- Therefore, in order to uniformize the system, in 1968 the New Education Policy derived a middle path called the Three-Language Formula
- In Hindi-speaking states, the formula translated into learning Hindi, English and a modern Indian language (preferably south Indian).
- For students in non-Hindi speaking states, it mandated lessons in Hindi, English and the regional language
- The three functions which the three language formula sought to serve, were
 - Accommodating group identity
 - Affirming national unity
 - Increasing administrative efficiency

- Incidentally, the NPE 1986 made no change in the 1968 policy on the three-language formula and the promotion of Hindi and repeated it verbatim.

What has been the progress of Three Language Formula?

- Since education is a state subject, the implementation of the formula lay with the states. Only a few states had adopted the formula in principle.
- In many of the Hindi-speaking states, Sanskrit became the third language instead of any modern Indian language (preferably south Indian language). This defeated the purpose of Three Language formula to promote inter-state communications
- In non-Hindi speaking state such as Tamil Nadu a two-language formula was adopted and did not implement the three language formula

Why has Tamil Nadu historically opposed Hindi Language?

- Language being the vehicle of Culture is protected vociferously by civil society & politicians in the State. Any attempt at diluting the importance of Tamil language is viewed as an attempt at homogenisation of culture.
- An important aspect of the opposition to Hindi imposition is that many in Tamil Nadu see it as a fight to retain English.
- English is seen as a bulwark against Hindi as well as the language of empowerment and knowledge.
- There is an entrenched belief in certain sections of society that the continued attempts to impose Hindi will eventually lead to elimination of English, global link language.
- However, voluntary learning of Hindi has never been restricted in the State. The patronage for the 102-year-old Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha, based in Chennai, proves this.
- Only compulsion is met with resistance.

What has been the impact on India due to Language Politics?

- Allegation of Imposition of Hindi: In Non-Hindi speaking states Hindi is mandated as third language however, it a difficult task as at least in 20 out of 28 states Hindi is not the natural language. This leads to misconstruing promotion of Hindi as imposition.
- Identity Politics: Language, from the very birth of the independent India, remained a contentious issue and as a result it has become tied with the identity politics.
- Reactionary Policies: States have often implemented reactionary policies against the centre's enthusiasm to promote Hindi.
- For example, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal made it compulsory to learn their state languages across schools in the respective states
- Domino Effect: Such reactionary policies have a domino effect which jeopardizes other administrative functions and center-state relations.

What does NEP 2020 say about the Three Language Formula?

- Medium of Instruction: Wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language.
- The three-language formula will continue to be implemented while keeping in mind the need to promote multilingualism as well as promote national unity.

- NEP also stated that there will be a greater flexibility in the three-language formula, and no language will be imposed on any State.
- The three languages learned by children will be the choices of States, regions, and of course the students themselves, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India.

What is the Criticism of NEP 2020 with regards to Language?

- As opposed to the previous policy, the current draft suggests the introduction of languages at the primary level itself. This is criticized on the ground that it will be Cognitive burden on young children to learn languages
- Back Door Entry for Hindi: Tamil Nadu which is having two language policy in State opposes the continuation of Three Language Policy as they fear this would eventually pave the way for Hindi to enter the State through the back door.
- Scarcity of Teachers of non-Hindi Languages: Several linguistic activists and educationists observed that the move would eventually end up in students being forced to learn Hindi because of scarcity of teachers in other languages
- Discrimination in Funds: The Centre has allotted 50 crore for development of Hindi, while no such funds are given to other languages.

Is the Criticism valid?

- Out of necessity, many in the Tamil Nadu State have picked up conversational Hindi to engage with the migrant population that feeds the labour needs of society. Teaching the same in schools is thus not a threat to native language
- There is this counter-argument that Tamil Nadu is depriving students of an opportunity to learn Hindi, touted as a national link language.
- Unlike the National Education policy-1968 which mandated teaching of Hindi in non-Hindi speaking States, the latest NEP does not explicitly mention the 'third' language shall be Hindi.
- This means, apart from Tamil and English, students must learn any one of Indian languages.

Conclusion:

- India's federal nature and diversity demand that no regional language is given supremacy over another

103rd Constitution Amendment Act

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Polity – Constitution and recent amendments; Welfare/ Social issue

About:

- It provides for 10% reservation in government jobs and educational institutions for the economically weaker section in the unreserved category.
- The Act amends on the basis of family income and other indicators of economic disadvantage.

Important points:

- The new clause (6) to Article 15 and 16 to provide for reservation based on economic backwardness.
- For the purposes of this article 15 and article 16, "economically weaker sections" to be notified by the State from time to time Article 15 allows the government to carve reservation for the economically

weaker sections of society in higher educational institutions, including private ones, whether they are aided or not by the State. Minority educational institutions are exempted.

- Likewise, the new clause (6) to Article 16 provides for quota for economically deprived sections in the initial appointment in government services.

Indra Sawhney case (1992)

- Nine-judge Bench had fixed limit of 50% reservation ceiling
- Judgment also had barred reservation solely on economic criterion

Do you know?

- Article 46 asks the government to promote the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the society.
 - It provides reservation for:
 - People who have an annual income of less than Rs 8 lakh, or
 - People who own less than five acres of farm land, or
 - People who have a house less than 1,000 sq feet in a town (or 100 sq yard in a notified municipal area).
-

States get more funds to mount COVID-19 response

Part of: GS Mains II – Centre-State Relations; Governance

Context:

- Union government released more than ₹890 crore as the second instalment of COVID-19 aid
- The funds are part of ₹15,000-crore package announced in March to support the States' emergency response and the preparedness of their health systems
- The money was meant for patient treatment, manpower training and medical infrastructure.

Do you know?

- The first instalment of ₹3,000 crore was released in April to all States and UTs, and was used to ramp up testing facilities, augment hospital infrastructure and conduct surveillance activities, along with procurement of essential equipment, drugs and other supplies.
-

Import embargo on 101 defence items

Part of: GS Mains II and III – Govt policies and initiatives; Defence

Context:

- Defence Ministry to impose import embargo (ban or restrictions) on 101 items to boost indigenisation of defence production

Benefits:

- Boost indigenisation of defence production
 - Helps India to become self-reliant in defence (#AtmanirbharBharat initiative)
 - Government intends to reach a turnover of \$25 billion through indigenously manufactured defence products and also expects to export products worth \$5 billion
-

The future of Indian secularism

Context: The participation of Prime Minister in the ground breaking ceremony of Ayodhya Ram Temple has revived the debate on Secularism.

What is Secularism?

- Secularism means separation of religion from political, economic, social and cultural aspects of life, religion being treated as a purely personal matter.
- It emphasized dissociation of the state from religion and full freedom to all religions and tolerance of all religions.
- It also stands for equal opportunities for followers of all religions, and no discrimination and partiality on grounds of religion.
- A secular person is one who does not owe his moral values to any religion. His values are the product of his rational and scientific thinking.

What is India's Secularism unique?

- India's Constitutional secularism is marked by at least two features.
- First, critical respect for all religions.
- Unlike some secularisms, India's secularism is not blindly anti-religious but respects religion.
- Unlike the secularisms of pre-dominantly single religious societies, India's Secularism respects not one but all religions.
- Indian philosophy of secularism is related to "Sarva Dharma Sambhava" which means that destination of the paths followed by all religions is the same, though the paths themselves may be different. It essentially means equal respect to all religions.
- However, given the virtual impossibility of distinguishing the religious from the social, as B.R. Ambedkar famously observed, every aspect of religious doctrine or practice cannot be respected. Respect for religion must be accompanied by critique.
- Second, Principled Distance from all religions
- The Indian state abandons strict separation but keeps a principled distance from all religions.
- This means that State must intervene whenever religious groups promote communal disharmony and discrimination on grounds of religion (an inter-religious matter) or are unable to protect their own members from the oppressions they perpetuate (an intra-religious issue).
- For instance, it cannot tolerate untouchability or leave all personal laws as they are.
- Thus, State has to constantly decide when to engage or disengage, help or hinder religion depending entirely on which of these enhances our constitutional commitment to freedom, equality and fraternity.
- Secularism is not only a project of civic friendship among religious communities but also of opposition to religion-based caste and gender oppressions

Challenges with India's Secularism

- Misusing for Electoral benefits: Opportunistic distance (engagement or disengagement), mainly opportunistic alliance with religious communities, particularly for the sake of immediate electoral benefit

- Neglecting the Core Idea of Indian Secularism: Political parties have bizarrely interpreted 'respect' to mean cutting deals with aggressive or orthodox sections of religious groups at times igniting communal violence.
- Victimization of Communities: Principled intervention by State in one religion is viewed as discriminatory treatment by fringe sections of society leading to Politicisation of Secularism
- Politicisation of any one religious group leads to the competitive politicisation of other groups, thereby resulting in inter-religious conflict.
- Requires Continuous Civic Participation: India's constitutional secularism cannot be sustained by governments alone but requires collective commitment from an impartial judiciary, a scrupulous media, civil society activists, and an alert citizenry

Way Ahead

- There is need to shift focus from a politically-led Secularism project to a socially-driven movement for justice.
- Second, a shift of emphasis from inter-religious to intra-religious issues, without completely ignoring inter-religious issues

Conclusion

- Indian secularism is not an end in itself but a means to address religious plurality and sought to achieve peaceful coexistence of different religions.

Arunachal groups push for 6th Schedule status

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Indian Polity – Schedules

Context:

- Some political parties and community-based groups in Arunachal Pradesh called for - bringing the entire Arunachal Pradesh under the ambit of the Sixth Schedule or Article 371 (A) of the Constitution revival of the demand for two autonomous councils
- Currently, Arunachal Pradesh is a Fifth Schedule State, that "does not provide special rights for the indigenous communities" unlike the Sixth Schedule.

Important Value Additions:

Fifth and Sixth schedules of Indian constitution

- These two schedules provide for alternate or special governance mechanisms for certain 'scheduled areas' in mainland and certain 'tribal areas' in north-eastern India.
- The Fifth Schedule designates Schedule areas in large parts of India in which the interests of the Scheduled Tribes are to be protected. The Scheduled area has more than 50 per cent tribal population.
- The Sixth Schedule is related to the administration of North Eastern states i.e. the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram in the North-east. It has provisions for the formation of autonomous districts and autonomous regions within the districts as there are different schedule tribes within the district.

Why demand for 6th schedule over 5th schedule?

- The Sixth Schedule consists of provisions for the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram, according to Article 244 of the Indian Constitution.

- Passed by the Constituent Assembly in 1949, it seeks to safeguard the rights of tribal population through the formation of Autonomous District Councils (ADC).
- ADCs are bodies representing a district to which the Constitution has given varying degrees of autonomy within the state legislature.
- The governors of these states are empowered to reorganise boundaries of the tribal areas. In simpler terms, she or he can choose to include or exclude any area, increase or decrease the boundaries and unite two or more autonomous districts into one. They can also alter or change the names of autonomous regions without a separate legislation.

Autonomous districts and regional councils

- Along with ADCs, the Sixth Schedule also provides for separate Regional Councils for each area constituted as an autonomous region.
- In all, there are 10 areas in the Northeast that are registered as autonomous districts – three in Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram and one in Tripura.
- These regions are named as district council of (name of district) and regional council of (name of region).

ADCs empowered with civil and judicial powers

- The ADCs are empowered with civil and judicial powers, can constitute village courts within their jurisdiction to hear trial of cases involving the tribes. Governors of states that fall under the Sixth Schedule specifies the jurisdiction of high courts for each of these cases.
- The councils are also empowered to make legislative laws on matters like land, forests, fisheries, social security, entertainment, public health, etc. with due approval from the governor. The roles of the central and state governments are restricted from the territorial jurisdiction of these autonomous regions.
- Also, Acts passed by Parliament and state legislatures may or may not be levied in these regions unless the President and the governor gives her or his approval, with or without modifications in the laws for the autonomous regions.

President's address on 74th Independence Day

Context:

- President Ram Nath Kovind's address to the nation on the eve of 74th Independence Day
- The below are some of the important excerpts from his address, important for various stages of the exam -
- Self-reliance or 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative
- India's self-reliance means being self-sufficient without alienating or creating distance from the world.
- India will continue to engage with the world economy while maintaining its identity.
- It has been the tradition of India that we do not just live for ourselves, but work for the well-being of the entire world.
- Vasudhaiv kutumbakam : : the global community is but one family

- When India won freedom, many predicted that our experiment with democracy will not last long. They saw our ancient traditions and rich diversity as hurdles in democratisation of our polity. But we have always nurtured them as our strengths that make the largest democracy in the world so vibrant. India has to continue playing its leading role for the betterment of humanity.
- The ethos of our freedom struggle forms the foundation of modern India. Our visionary leaders brought together a diversity of world views to forge a common national spirit. They were committed to the cause of liberating Bharat Mata from oppressive foreign rule and securing the future of her children. Their thoughts and actions shaped the identity of India as a modern nation.
- Gandhiji's teachings answer to present day problems: Troubled by social strife, economic problems, and climate change, the world should seek relief in Gandhiji's teachings. His quest for equality and justice is the mantra for our Republic.
- The nation is indebted to doctors, nurses and other health workers who have been continuously on the forefront of our fight against this virus.
- Look at the current crisis as an opportunity to initiate reforms to revitalise the economy for the benefit of all, specially farmers and small entrepreneurs.
- The invisible virus has demolished the illusion that human being is the master of nature. It is still not too late for humanity to correct its course and live in harmony with nature. 'Human- centric collaboration' is more important than 'economy-centric inclusion', in the present context.
- Compassion and mutual help have been adopted as basic values by the people in India. We need to further strengthen this virtue in our conduct, for better future.
- Adoption of science and technology, in harmony with nature, will help sustain our survival and growth.
- Prayer for the well-being

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः, सर्वे सन्तु नरामयाः। सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु, मा कश्चिद्दुःखं भाग्भवेत्॥

It means:

- May all be happy,
- May all be free from illness, May all see what is auspicious, May no one come to grief.
- The message of this prayer for universal well-being is India's unique gift to humanity.

Talking tough: On the Naga issue

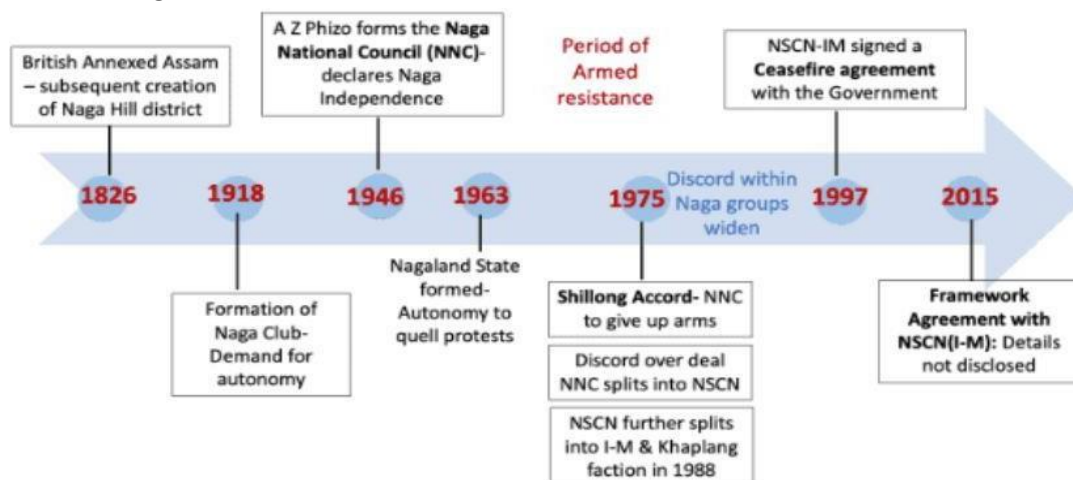
Context: The National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM) has for the first time released the details of the 2015 framework agreement (given in interpretation of agreement part of article)

Do You Know?

- Nagas belong to Indo-Mongoloid Family.
- The Nagas are not a single tribe, but an ethnic community that comprises several tribes who live in the state of Nagaland and its neighbourhood.
- Origin of Naga Issue and the timeline of the events
- The assertion of [Naga Nationalism](#) began during Colonial period and continued in Independent India. Below is the pictorial representation of the timeline

What are the key demands of the Naga groups?

- [Greater Nagalim](#) (sovereign statehood) i.e redrawing of boundaries to bring all Naga-inhabited areas in the Northeast under one administrative umbrella.
- It includes various parts of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Assam and Myanmar as well.
- Naga Yezabo (Naga Constitution)
- Naga national flag.



What was the [Ceasefire Agreement](#) which was signed in 2015?

- Signatories: Interlocutor R.N. Ravi signed the agreement on behalf of the Centre in presence of PM Modi. The other two signatories were leader of NSCN(IM) i.e. Isak Chishi Swu, who died in 2016 and Thuingaleng Muivah (86) who is leading the talks.
- Takeaway of the Agreement: The Government of India recognised the unique history, culture and position of the Nagas and their sentiments and aspirations. The NSCN(IM) also appreciated the Indian political system and governance.
- Significance: It shows the governments strong intent to resolve the long standing issue and adoption of diplomatic peaceful approach by Naga Society to fulfil their aspirations.
- Objective: Both sides agreed that October 2019 for concluding an accord, which would settle all Naga issues
- Shrouded in Secrecy: The details of the agreement have not been made public by the government citing security reasons

What has happened in the year's post signing the agreement?

- Enlarged Peace Talks: Talks were expanded in 2017 by including other Naga groups under the banner, the Naga National Political Groups (NPPGs)
- Bilateral to Multilateral Negotiations: The Framework Agreement envisaged a bilateral truce between two entities, but today it is seen to be a multilateral one with involvement of seven prominent Naga groups
- Deadlock in Talks Since October 2019: The deadlock was on the insistence for a separate flag and constitution by the NSCN(IM) to make way for India and Nagaland to be independent allies in a shared-sovereignty federal relationship

- Differences within Naga Groups: The NSCN (I-M) still insists on a “Greater Nagalim”. However, most of the NNPGs based in Nagaland have sought to settle the issue without disturbing the State boundaries while keeping the “Greater Nagalim” question in abeyance

What are the present grievances of NSCN-IM?

- Interpretation of Agreement
- The agreement released by the NSCN-IM in August 2020 stated “sharing the sovereign power” and provide for an “enduring inclusive new relationship of peaceful co-existence of the two entities”.
- The NSCN-IM claims that the word ‘new’ is politically sensitive as it goes to define the meaning of peaceful co-existence of the two entities (two sovereign powers) and it strongly indicates outside the purview of the Constitution
- The position of NSCN(IM) has been “with India, not within India”.
- Conceding to this demand, especially after the abrogation of Article 370, seems improbable for the Government.
- Grievances against Mr. Ravi (Interlocutor & also Nagaland Governor)
- The NSCN-IM has claimed that Mr. Ravi, “craftily deleted the word new from the original” to justify his own narrative and circulated to the other Naga groups including NNPGs
- NSCN-IM is also angered by Mr. Ravi’s letter to Nagaland CM, alleging the collapse of law and order and that armed gangs who question the sovereignty and integrity of the nation” were engaging in “blatant extortion”.
- This has touched a sore spot for the NSCN (I-M) as the group defended the practice by terming it “tax collection”.
- The NSCN (I-M) has demanded that Nagaland Governor R.N. Ravi should be removed as the interlocutor for talks on the Naga accord.

Way Ahead

- Any moves to alter boundaries will intensify ethnic conflicts and insurgencies beyond Nagaland.
- The accord can be concluded after consultations with Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh, all States which have a stake in the matter.
- The Central government needs reiterate its commitment to finalising the Naga accord while seeking to re-engage with the NSCN (I-M) without giving in to its arbitrary demands.

Connecting the dots;

- Article 371
- Divide & Rule Policy of British

PM-CARES entirely different from NDRF: SC

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

In News:

The Supreme Court has held recently that funds received into the [PM-CARES Fund](#) need not be credited to the [National Disaster Response Fund \(NDRF\)](#) for the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key takeaways

- SC has also held that individuals could make voluntary contributions to NDRF under Section 46(1)(b) of the Disaster Management Act of 2005.
- There would be no statutory prohibition against them.

Government's stand:

- It has maintained that PM-CARES is a public charitable trust to which anyone can contribute.
- It is not subject to audit by the CAG.
- It is not under public scrutiny.
- Contributions to it are 100% tax free.

Important value additions

- Funds such as the NDRF, formed under Section 46 of the Disaster Management Act of 2005, are provided for by Central and State Budgets.

SC to study context of charges against judges

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – Polity & Governance; Judiciary

Context:

- Supreme Court to launch a detailed examination into the circumstances under which a person can make public allegations of corruption against the judiciary.

Earlier Judgements

- SC's 1995 judgment in C Ravichandran Iyer case where the court had laid down that if members of the bar had any material about "misconduct" or "bad conduct" of a judge, they should meet the high court chief justice concerned or the Chief Justice of India to apprise them of the material against the judge.
- The apex court had said they should wait for a reasonable period of time to allow the administrative head of the HC or the SC to take appropriate action.

1992 Judgement -Justice J S Verma in S Ramaswami case

- The judgment had laid down the procedure to deal with allegations against a sitting judge.
- The judge had to be given a fair opportunity to be heard before an inquiry committee formed under the Judges Inquiry Act of 1968.
- The judgment had limited the inquiry process against a judge to be done within a tight and limited circle of high judicial functionaries and parliamentarians.
- The issue of whether allegations against a sitting judge warranted an inquiry was to be decided by Parliament on admitting a motion for removal of the judge moved by requisite number of MPs. However, it had said that during the inquiry, the sitting judge should have full right of defence.
- The dominating spirit of the 1992 judgment was to "preserve the right, interest and dignity of the judge, which is commensurate with the dignity of all the institutions and functionaries involved in the process".
- The judgment was against publicly making allegations against judges.
- But in none of these two cases, the apex court had the occasion to examine whether an advocate could go ahead and make allegations against a sitting judge without first submitting the evidence backing the charges to the HC chief justice or the CJI.

Jurisdictional conflict in the running of Delhi

Context: There has been clash of opinion over the appointment of prosecutors for conducting the Delhi riot cases

Constitutional Status of Delhi

- The 69th Amendment Act, 1992 has added two new Articles 239AA and 239AB under which the
- Union Territory of Delhi has been given a special status.
- Art. 239AA creates a legislative assembly for Delhi which can make laws on subjects under the State List and Concurrent List except on these matters: public order, land, and police.
- It also provides for a Council of Ministers for Delhi consisting of not more than 10% of the total number of members in the assembly.

What has been the tussle?

- Delhi Government had accused Lieutenant Governor (LG) of referring the decisions of an elected government to President and thus causing hurdles in governance
- The Centre, which appoints the L-G, contends that “for any Centrally administered territory and especially Delhi responsibility is on the Union Government”.
- Also, Delhi, being a Union territory, does not have a cadre of officers of its own and is part of a common cadre shared with other UTs. Thus, elected government of Delhi has less control over its officers.
- It is basically about two power centres which created confusion
- Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in Government of NCT of Delhi vs. Union of India (2018) Case
- The Supreme Court said the Delhi Lieutenant Governor cannot act independently and must take the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.
- All decisions by Delhi’s council of ministers must be communicated to the L-G but that does not mean his concurrence is required.
- Except for issues of public order, police and land, the Lieutenant Governor is bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.
- The LG has no independent authority to take decisions except in matters under Article 239 or matters outside the purview of the government.
- The court said, L-G cannot act as an obstructionist and can refer issues to the President when there is difference of opinion on any matter (Article 239AA(4)). This should happen only in exceptional matters and not as a general rule
- The government need not obtain LG concurrence in every issue of day-to-day governance.
- The national capital enjoys special status and is not a full state
- The basic message is that an elected government cannot be undermined by an unelected administrator
- For Significance of the Judgement: Click [Here](#)

Does that mean the power tussle in Delhi is completely resolved?

- Not Actually. SC did not very clearly delineate the issues in respect of which the Lt. Governor can refer a decision taken by the Council of Ministers to the President in the event of a difference of opinion on any matter (Article 239AA(4)).
- Instead, SC has given a generic guideline that in case of differences of opinion, the LG and the NCT government should act with constitutional morality and trust for each other.
- The recent appointment of prosecutors for conducting the Delhi riot cases in the High Court is a case in point

What is the controversy about appointments of prosecutors?

- When the government decided to appoint prosecutors for Delhi riots case, the Lt. Governor referred it under *proviso* to Article 239AA (4) to the President stating that there is a difference of opinion between him and the government
- In the meantime, the Lt. Governor appointed all the prosecutors whose names were submitted by the Delhi Police (under Central Government) and thus the State government's list was rejected. As a result, the decision of elected Delhi government was undermined
- Referring normal administrative matters (like appointment of Prosecutors) to the President would disturb the concept of Constitutional governance, principles of collaborative federalism, objectivity and the standards of Constitutional morality.

Way Ahead

- Lt. Governor should not emerge as an adversary having a hostile attitude towards the Council of Ministers of Delhi; rather, he should act as a facilitator.
- The words 'any matter' employed in the *proviso* to Article 239AA (4) cannot be inferred to mean 'every matter'.
- 239AA(4) represents the exception and not the general rule which has to be exercised in exceptional circumstances by the Lt. Governor. This has been clearly highlighted in the Supreme Court judgement
- The President is the highest Constitutional authority and his decision should be sought only on constitutionally important issues.

Conclusion

- The Delhi Government and the Centre must embrace a collaborative federalism and interdependence so as to avoid any disputes which will impact the welfare of common man

Connecting the dots:

- Should Delhi be granted full statehood?
- UT of Puducherry

Judicial remedies for the Jammu and Kashmir net restrictions

Context: One year of internet lockdown imposed in Jammu & Kashmir in the wake of abrogation of Article 370 on 5th August 2019.

- Communication channels (Telephone and Internet) was highly restricted in Jammu & Kashmir since 5th Aug 2019, on the grounds of National Security and Law & order (to prevent rumours & chaos)
- How has Pandemic increased the importance of internet?

- A large part of the realm of freedoms protected by the Constitution, ranging from carrying on a business, to obtaining education, health care, and information, have all moved online
- This has meant that it has become imperative for governments to improve access to the Internet for all

What are the impact of blocking internet access?

- Not in the spirit of Democracy: Internet shutdowns or slowdowns are an inherently overbroad restriction for it adversely affects millions of innocent civilians owing to the actions of a few
- Right to Freedom of speech & expression under Article 19(1)(a) is impacted as the medium to access information i.e. internet is blocked
- Right to carry on trade activities under Article 19(1)(g) is also negatively impacted with the restrictions placed on movement of people.
- Economy of the region adversely affected as access to e-banking facilities blocked due to ban on internet. Internet shutdown around the world in 2019 has cost the global economy over \$8 billion.
- Delivery of government welfare provisions affected in today's age of e-governance and digitization of the process
- Healthcare provisions impacted especially where government schemes like Ayushman Bharat have adopted digital means for delivery process
- Restricts ability to Cope with Pandemic: It has become impossible for J&K people to adapt to the pandemic, by resorting, as the rest of India has, to online classes, working from home, tele-consults with doctors or even video calls with family.

What should be the framework to adjudicate such restrictive actions of government?

- The Court in *Anuradha Bhasin* recognised the proportionality test as the framework. Under this, the government must provide a four-step justification. It has to show that
- The restrictions are in pursuance of a legitimate aim (in this case, national security),
- That they are suitable to achieving that aim,
- That there exist no less restrictive alternatives that would limit the right to a lesser extent,
- That the adverse impact of the restrictions are proportionate to their benefit.

What has been the Judiciary's reactions to such restrictions?

- Urgency Not Shown: Despite having heard two challenges to the restrictions since August 2019, the Supreme Court has remarkably not ruled on their validity.
- In Jan 2020, in *Anuradha Bhasin case*, SC granted limited relief by directing the government to publish reasoned orders and review the restrictions every seven days
- In *Foundation For Media Professionals case*, SC set up an Executive Committee to review the 2G speed restrictions that had been imposed by the Executive
- In response to the Supreme Court of India's stern approach in the recent hearing on August 7, the Central government has agreed to restore Internet in two districts on a trial basis.
- Two arguments have been advanced to justify the Court's deferential approach
- First, that such decisions are not based on objective factors that can be presented to and assessed by a judicial body, but are based on the "subjective satisfaction" of officers who possess exclusive knowledge of the situation on the ground.

- The second, and closely related, argument offered is that the Court does not have the competence to review matters of national security.

Way Forward

- It is imperative that the Court fulfils its constitutional duty by examining and going over any further reasons given by the State with a fine toothcomb.
- Less restrictive alternatives can be applied, some of these are
- Permitting the use of 4G on verified post-paid SIMs
- Blocking and intercepting specific numbers, websites or applications
- Issuing takedown orders of content that incite violence
- Limiting restrictions to particular areas for shorter durations

Connecting the dots:

- Sealed Cover Jurisprudence – Cases where such procedures were adopted
 - Is Right to access internet a Fundamental right? What are the possible implications on the Indian Polity with such recognition of new right in the age of internet?
-

Committee for Reforms in Criminal Law

Context: In July 2020, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) constituted the Committee for Reforms in Criminal Law to undo the colonial foundations of our criminal law

Why there is a need to reform Criminal Laws?

- Long Pending: The Indian Penal Code and its corollary laws, the Indian Evidence Act and the Code of Criminal Procedure, were all first enacted in the late 19th-century that have not undergone comprehensive revision
- Colonial Hangover: IPC & CrPC were largely formalised to aid the colonial government in India, over 150 years ago. They are still rooted in colonial ideas despite amendments & judgements
- Lacks Adequate recognition of Individual agency: IPC do not reflect the aspirations of a Constitution that gives primacy to liberty and equality.
- Still represent Victorian Morality: While it took 158 years for the courts to decriminalise homosexuality (section 377 of IPC) and adultery, there exists many provisions in the IPC that still echoes Victorian morality, which is especially true for women.
- Ignorant of modern-age crimes: New crimes need to be defined and addressed in IPC, especially concerning technology and sexual offences. Ex: digital technology facilitating gambling and betting

Criticisms of the Committee

- Not designed for effective Broad-based Public Consultation Process
 - The exclusive route to participation is the Committee's website. However, only about 40% of the population actively uses the Internet.
 - All the Committee's documentation and background resources, including 89 reports of the Law Commission of India (LCI), are in English. Only 10% of the Indian population speaks English, and most such persons reside in urban areas.
 - The life cycle of the Committee coincides with the COVID-19 pandemic, which prevent marginalised groups to participate meaningfully in the public consultation process

- Composition of Committee is not representative enough
 - There appears to be no representation on the Committee from subaltern caste, gender, sexual, or religious groups, who are frequently let down by the criminal justice system
 - It appears there is no representation from working class or disabled communities
 - Also, there are no members on the Committee based outside of a limited geographic region in north India
- Opacity in Committee's functioning
 - There are no published Terms of Reference
 - The precise mandate of the Committee has not been put into the public domain
 - There is nothing to explain why an ad hoc Committee was set up to deal with questions of law reform, that are typically entrusted to the Law Commission of India
 - The Committee has not undertaken to publish the representations it receives from the public during its consultation process.
- Short-duration for public consultation process
 - Within three months, respondents are expected to form and articulate reasoned opinions on almost every conceivable issue of criminal law, procedure or evidence.
 - In contrast, the Malimath Committee, which had a comparable mandate, took five times as long as this Committee to submit its report.
 - The first of the current Committee's six consultative questionnaires contains 46 questions with no formal documentation explaining the context and relevance of these questions.
 - All these diminishes the prospects of productive deliberation among stakeholders.

Conclusion

- An inclusive, transparent and meaningful public consultation process for law-making is one practical way to implement a deliberative version of democracy.

Connecting the dots:

- Charter Act of 1833 that established First law commission in 1834 under the Chairmanship of Lord Macaulay – recommendations led to drafting of IPC
-



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SOCIAL ISSUE/WELFARE

Imparting education to Tribals in their languages

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Education reforms; Govt policies and initiatives

About:

- The new National Education Policy lays emphasis on mother tongue-based instructions up to Class 5.
- Tribal communities and Odisha state will be at advantage if above provision is implemented effectively.
- Although it is easy to prescribe local language as medium of instructions up to Class 5, it is very difficult to implement it.
- Unique position
- Odisha occupies a unique position in the tribal map of India.
- Odisha has most diverse tribal communities. It is home to 62 different tribal communities including 13 particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs).
- Tribes in Odisha speak around 21 languages and 74 dialects.

Do you know?

- Odisha has been working on multilingual education (MLE) for more than past two decades.
- Academy of Tribal Language and Culture in collaborate with Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) is probably the only institute in entire country which has prepared supplementary readers in 21 tribal languages for Class 1 to 3.
- Santhali, a tribal language, has been included in Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

MGNREGS running out of funds

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Government policies and interventions for development; Welfare/Social schemes

About MGNREGA

- It stands for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005
- It guarantees 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members (at least 18 years of age) volunteer to do unskilled work.
- It has unique legal architecture of being demand-driven, and not budget constrained.
- It is social security and labour law that aims to enforce the 'right to work'.
- It has provision for unemployment allowance, when the state cannot provide work
- Agriculture and allied activities constitute more than 65% of the works taken up under the programme.
- MGNREGA has helped build rural infrastructure through approximately 10 crore families.

Problems facing MGNREGA

- Governments capping its financial resources and turning it into supply-based programme
- Workers had begun to lose interest in working under it because of the inordinate delays in wage payments.
- With very little autonomy, gram panchayats found its implementation cumbersome
- As a result, over the last few years, MGNREGA had begun to face an existential crisis.

New concerns:

- The Scheme has already used up almost half its allocated funds.

- It spent more than ₹48,500 crore out of the expanded ₹1 lakh crore allocation announced (during COVID outbreak)
- In several Gram Panchayats, the approved projects have already been exhausted.
- A number of gram panchayats in vulnerable areas have already exhausted their funds for the scheme.

Measures needed:

Centre should allocate another ₹1 lakh crore to the scheme

It has to double the permitted work limit to 200 days per household.

'Status of sex ratio at birth in India' released

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-I – Social Issues

In News:

- Recently, a report titled 'Status of Sex Ratio at Birth in India' was released by the Vice - President of India.
- **Brought out by:** The Indian Association of Parliamentarians for Population and Development (IAPPD).

Key findings of the report

- There has not been any change in the sex ratio at birth in India from 2001-2017.
 - The number of girl children born is much less than the natural norm.
 - **Suggestions:** Rigorous implementation of Pre-conception & Pre-natal Diagnostics Techniques law to bring about a balance in the sex ratio.
 - The sex ratio at birth is an important indicator and reflects the extent to which there is a reduction in the number of girl children born by sex-selective abortions.
-

National Council for Transgender Persons constituted

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-I – Society; GS-II – National Councils

In News:

- National Council for Transgender Persons has been recently constituted.
- **Ministry:** The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Key takeaways

- **Council's chairperson:** The Social Justice Minister.
 - **Members:**
 - Officials from some other Ministries.
 - Five nominated members from the transgender community.
 - **Associated Act:** Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.
 - **Functions:**
 - Advising the central government on the formulation of policies, with respect to transgender persons
 - Monitoring and evaluating the impact of policies
 - Reviewing and coordinating the activities of all the departments
 - Redressing grievances of transgender persons
 - Performing other functions as prescribed by the Centre.
-

Swachh Survekshan 2020 announced

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-I – Social Issues

In News:

- Awards for Swachh Survekshan 2020 was recently announced.
 - It is the fifth edition of the annual cleanliness urban survey.
 - Conducted by: the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
 - Cleanest City of India (> 1 lakh population category):
 - Indore (1st)
 - Surat (2nd)
 - Navi Mumbai (3rd)
 - Indore has created record by winning title of cleanest city fourth time in a row.
 - Cleanest State of India (> 100 Urban Local Bodies category) : Chhattisgarh.
 - Cleanest State of India (<100 ULB category) : Jharkhand
 - Cleanest town along the banks of river Ganga: Varanasi
 - Cleanest capital city: New Delhi
 - Cleanest city with over 40 lakh population: Ahmedabad
-

Education during pandemic

Part of: GS Mains II – Social/Welfare issue; Education; Vulnerable section

About:

- According to the United Nation's policy brief -
 - Almost 24 million children are at risk of not returning to school next year due to the economic fallout of COVID-19.
 - The educational financing gap is also likely to increase by one third.
 - More than 1.6 billion learners across the world have been affected by the disruption of the education system.
 - Vulnerable populations in low-income countries to be hit harder and longer.
 - UNESCO estimates that 23.8 million additional children and youth may drop out or not have access to school next year due to the pandemic's economic impact alone.
-

Issue with disability Quota

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II - Social/Welfare issue; Vulnerable section

Context:

- Delhi High Court issued notice to UPSC on a plea challenging this year's preliminary examination notice for direct recruitment to civil services.
- The petition filed by Sambhavana (a registered society of the disabled for the disabled) claimed that the UPSC's notice reserves only 24 vacancies for persons with disabilities out of a total 796 expected approximate vacancies. (it neglects the minimum reservation to be provided to disabled persons)
- The number of vacancies were below the 4 % mandatory reservation under section 34 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016.
- 4% mandatory reservation under Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016:

- Section 34(1) of RPwD mandates a minimum 4% reservation for the benchmark disabled of the total number of vacancies in the cadre strength in each group of posts meant to be filled with such disabled.
 - It mandates equal distribution of one (20% each) among the disabled classes of the blind, deaf, locomotor plus the combined class of autism, etc. with those having multiple disabilities.
-

Daughters have equal right on property: SC

Part of: GS Mains II – Social/Women issue

Context:

- The Supreme Court recently held that daughters, like sons, have an equal birth-right to inherit joint Hindu family property.
- The verdict now grants equal rights to daughters to inherit ancestral property would have retrospective effect.
- The judgement observes that “a daughter always remains a loving daughter. A son is a son until he gets a wife. A daughter is a daughter throughout her life”.

Do you know?

- A three-judge Bench ruled that a Hindu woman’s right to be a joint heir to the ancestral property is by birth and does not depend on whether her father was alive or not when the law was enacted in 2005.
- The substituted Section 6 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 confers the status of coparcener to a daughter born before or after the amendment in the same manner as a son.
- Coparcener is a person who has a birth-right to parental property.

2005 Amendment

- The Mitakshara school of Hindu law codified as the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 governed succession and inheritance of property but only recognised males as legal heirs.
 - The law applied to everyone who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion.
 - Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains and followers of Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj are also considered Hindus for the purposes of this law.
 - In a Hindu Undivided Family, several legal heirs through generations can exist jointly.
 - Women were recognised as coparceners or joint legal heirs for partition arising from 2005.
 - Section 6 of the Act was amended in 2005 to make a daughter a coparcener by birth in her own right in the same manner as the son.
 - The law also gave the daughter the same rights and liabilities as the son.
 - The law applies to ancestral property and to intestate succession in personal property.
-

Youth faced several challenges during lockdown

Part of: GS Mains II – Social/Youth issue

Context:

- According to Population Foundation of India (PFI) survey -

- Majority of the young women in Bihar, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh were not able to sufficiently access sanitary pads during the COVID•19 lockdown.
 - More than one in five men and women between the ages of 15•24 reported experiencing depression (due to challenges of economic insecurity, family clashes and increased domestic chores)
 - About 22% of young people said they experienced depression due to the lockdown, citing factors such as worry about the lack of job opportunities, delay in completing their studies, family pressure and lack of privacy and isolation away from friends.
 - The survey aimed to assess the challenges to mental and reproductive health faced by adolescents and young adults due to COVID•19
-

Licencing system for tobacco sellers

Part of: GS Mains II – Social/Health issue; Role of NGOs/Voluntary Groups

Context:

- Voluntary groups working for tobacco control demanded a licencing mechanism for retail tobacco sellers which would restrict the sale of tobacco products and curb their consumption by the youths.

Do you know?

- Cigarette and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003 regulates the sale of tobacco products.
- World No Tobacco Day is observed around the world every year on 31 May.

Concerns:

- Young tobacco users are vulnerable to catching influenza-like infections and they could expose non users to the tobacco products.
 - Youths are getting addicted to tobacco “faster than ever before” and the projected number of deaths from tobacco far exceeded than those of COVID•19.
-

Social change through sports

Part of: GS Mains I – Society; Social change

Context: (Case study)

- Skateparks which were built in some villages in MP helped few skateboarders (children from poor or middle-class families and farmer families) to participate in world championships.
- Children find hope in skateboarding to pull their households out of extreme poverty.
- Skateboards, shoes and trips to tournaments are crowd•funded.
- Sport heralds social change
- The sport is helping challenge caste and gender prejudices in the village.
- The sport has accorded identity to tens of children and their families.
- Young skaters must stick to three non--negotiable rules: ‘No school, no skating’, ‘Everyone is equal’ and ‘Girls first’.
- This has improved school attendance.
- Boys share their boards with girls during practice hours.
- The sport has brought the village’s two communities — tribals and the dominant Yadavs — on the same platform.

- Sports create an equitable space.

Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA-2020)

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – Education

In News:

- The Atal Rankings of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA) 2020 was released recently.

Results were based on following parameters:

- Budget and funding support
- Infrastructure and facilities
- Awareness
- Promotions
- Support for idea generation and innovations

Top College/University	Category
IIT Madras	Institutes of National Importance, Central Universities, and Centrally Funded Technical Institutes
Institute of Chemical Technology, Mumbai	Government and Government Aided Universities
College of Engineering, Pune	Government and Government Aided Colleges
Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology, Bhubaneswar	Private or Self-Financed Universities
S R Engineering College, Warangal	Private or Self-Financed Colleges
Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women	special category for higher educational institutions for women

Important value additions

- Atal Rankings of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA)
- Initiative by: Ministry of HRD/Education
- Implemented by: AICTE and Ministry's Innovation Cell,
- Aim: To systematically rank higher education institutions and universities in India on indicators related to Innovation, Start-up and Entrepreneurship Development amongst students and faculty.

Over 80% of students depend on mobiles for learning: NCERT

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – Education

In News:

- Recently, a survey was conducted by the NCERT from Classes 8-12 from Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs), Navodaya Vidyalaya Samitis (NVS) and schools affiliated to the CBSE regarding online education in the light of COVID-19.

Key takeaways of the Survey

- 80-90% of older students use mobiles rather than laptops to access digital schooling.
- Almost 30% said absent or intermittent electricity connections hindered their learning.
- Half the students did not even have access to their textbooks.

- In KVs, 84% of students used mobiles, while 19% used laptops for learning, similar to the ratio in CBSE schools.
- In the NVS (meant for gifted students from rural areas) less than 10% of learners used laptops, while 88% were dependent on mobile phones. Less than 6% used TV or radio.

Only **four States have completed mapping** of the devices available to students — smartphone, basic mobile, radio, TV, personal or community computer — according to the **Students' Learning Enhancement Guidelines** released by the Education Ministry.

Bondas tribal community

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-I – Society; GS-II - Health

In News:

- Bondas, a tribal community, was recently in news, when four of its members tested positive for COVID-19.

Key takeaways

- The community resides in the hill ranges of Malkangiri district in Odisha.
 - It belongs to a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG).
 - It lives in settlements comprising small hutments in the hills of the Khairaput block.
 - Odisha is home to 62 tribal communities — the largest diverse groups of tribal population in India.
 - 13 of them are PVTGs.
 - Tribal populations are found in the entire seven districts of Kandhamal, Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh, Nabarangpur, Koraput, Malkangiri and Rayagada.
-

WOMEN ISSUE

Women & Abortion Services

Context: The more serious ramifications of the pandemic have been the rather extensive, even if unintended, disruption of health-care services.

What impact did Pandemic have on Contraceptive & Abortion Services?

- Long lockdown periods led to disruption in family planning and contraception services i.e. it reduced the access to these services due to restrictions imposed.
- About two million women missed out on services between January and June; 1.3 million were in India alone

Factors that caused disruption in contraceptive services are:

- **Diversion of Health Services:** The bulk of health-care services shifting to cater to COVID-19 related emergencies led to shortage in abortion services
- **Disruption of Transport:** India listed abortions as essential services under the lockdown, but the disruption of transport services hampered access to centres of care
- **Lack of awareness** about these services being available during this period also restricted the ability to access these services
- **Shortage of drugs:** A study in six States by the Foundation for Reproductive Health Services India, showed a severe shortage of medical abortion drugs in pharmacies.

What has been the consequences?

Reduced access to contraceptive & abortion services has led to

- **Unwanted pregnancies:** UNFPA projections indicate an additional 7 million unintended pregnancies are expected to occur.
- Increase in **domestic violence**
- Increased **maternal mortality**
- Constrained the **reproductive rights** of women

Way Ahead

- The need for contraceptive services remains high in India, with over 1 in 3 women (35%) reporting a need for contraceptive advice
- Providing uninterrupted abortion and contraceptive counselling, devices and care services are essential to safeguard women
- Contraceptive & Abortion services must continue through measures such as telemedicine, incentives to local clinics to open their doors, resolving drug supply chain disruption.

Connecting the dots

- Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act amendments

Hindu women's inheritance rights

Context: The Supreme Court expanded on a Hindu woman's right to be a joint legal heir and inherit ancestral property on terms equal to male heirs.

- Coparcener is a person who has a birthright to parental property.

What is the The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005?

- The Mitakshara school of Hindu law codified as the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 governed succession and inheritance of property
- The original act only recognised males as legal heirs.
- The law applied to everyone who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion.
- Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains and followers of Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj are also considered Hindus for the purposes of this law.
- Section 6 of the Act was amended in 2005 to make a daughter of a coparcener also a coparcener by birth "in her own right in the same manner as the son"
- The law applies to ancestral property and to intestate succession in personal property — where succession happens as per law and not through a will

Do you know?

- The 174th Law Commission Report had also recommended this reform in Hindu succession law.
- Even before the 2005 amendment, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu had made this change in the law,

How did the case come about?

- While the 2005 law granted equal rights to women, questions were raised in multiple cases on whether the law applied retrospectively
- Also, there were questions if the rights of women depended on the living status of the father through whom they would inherit
- Additionally, there were different verdicts by two-judge Supreme Court Benches
- In *Prakash v Phulwati* (2015), a two-judge Bench headed by Justice A K Goel held that the benefit of the 2005 amendment could be granted only to "living daughters of living coparceners" as on September 9, 2005 (the date when the amendment came into force).
- In *Danamma @ Suman Surpur vs. Amar* (2018), contrary to the 2015 ruling, a two-judge SC Bench held that the share of a father who died in 2001 will also pass to his daughters as coparceners as per 2005 law
- These conflicting views by Benches of equal strength led to a reference to a three-judge Bench in the current case. The ruling now overrules the earlier verdicts.

What is the ruling?

- A three Judge SC bench ruled that a Hindu woman's right to be a joint heir to the ancestral property is by birth and does not depend on whether her father was alive or not when the law was enacted in 2005.
- The court decided that the amended Hindu Succession Act, which gives daughters equal rights to ancestral property, will have a retrospective effect.

- It also clarified that an unregistered oral partition, without any contemporaneous public document, cannot be accepted as the statutory recognised mode of partition.
- The bench also clarified that if the property had already been written in the name of an heir before the amendment came into effect, the woman would not be able to claim a share.

Significance of the Judgement

- Resolves Legal Confusion: The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 thus gives Hindu women the right to be coparceners or joint legal heirs in the same way a male heir does.
- Right to Equality: The verdict corrected the discrimination on the ground of gender and upheld the fundamental right of equality guaranteed by the Constitution
- Economic Empowerment of Daughters: The daughters cannot be deprived of their right of equality conferred upon them by Section 6
- Codification of Norms: The concept of uncodified Hindu law of unobstructed heritage has been given a concrete shape under the provisions of Section 6(1)(a) and 6(1) of the act

Connecting the dots:

- Instant triple talaq became a cognizable offence a year ago on August 1, 2019.
- Codification of Personal Laws

Minimum age of marriage for women

Context: During the Independence Day Speech, PM announced that the central government has set up a committee to reconsider the minimum age of marriage for women

Do You Know?

- Currently, the law prescribes that the minimum age of marriage for men as 21 years and 18 and for women as 18 years.
- The minimum age of marriage is distinct from the age of majority which is gender-neutral. An individual attains the age of majority at 18 as per the Indian Majority Act, 1875

What is the committee that the Prime Minister mentioned in his speech?

- On June 2, the Union Ministry for Women and Child Development set up a task force to examine matters pertaining to age of motherhood, lowering Maternal Mortality Ratio and the improvement of nutritional levels among women
- The task force will examine the correlation of age of marriage & motherhood with health, medical well-being, nutritional status of the mother & child
- Headed by former Samata Party president Jaya Jaitely, the committee includes Member Health at the NITI Aayog, Dr Vinod Paul, and several Secretaries to the Government of India.

Why is there a minimum age for marriage?

- The law prescribes a minimum age of marriage to essentially outlaw child marriages and prevent the abuse of minors.
- Personal laws of various religions that deal with marriage have their own standards, often reflecting custom
- For Hindus, Section 5(iii) of The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, sets 18 years as the minimum age for the bride and 21 years as the minimum age for the groom.

- However, child marriages are not illegal — even though they can be declared void at the request of the minor in the marriage.
- In Islam, the marriage of a minor who has attained puberty is considered valid.
- The Special Marriage Act, 1954 and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 also prescribe 18 and 21 years as the minimum age of consent for marriage for women and men respectively.
- Additionally, sexual intercourse with a minor is rape, and the 'consent' of a minor is regarded as
- invalid since she is deemed incapable of giving consent at that age

How has the law evolved over years?

- The Indian Penal Code enacted in 1860 criminalised sexual intercourse with a girl below the age of 10.
- A legal framework for the age of consent for marriage in India only began in the 1880s.
- The provision of rape was amended in 1927 through The Age of Consent Bill, 1927, which declared that marriage with a girl under 12 would be invalid.
- In 1929, The Child Marriage Restraint Act set 16 and 18 years as the minimum age of marriage for girls and boys respectively. This law,
- It was eventually amended in 1978 to prescribe 18 and 21 years as the age of marriage for a woman and a man respectively.

How did freedom movement deal with these laws?

- Conservative Stance: The laws faced opposition from conservative leaders of the Indian National Movement, who saw the British intervention as an attack on Hindu customs.
- Progressive Stance: However, there were other who propounded for increasing the age of consent so that education is not neglected for the sake of marriage
- The Age of Consent Bill, 1927 is popularly known as the Sarda Act after its sponsor Harbilas Sarda, a judge and a member of Arya Samaj

Why is the law being relooked at?

- To reduce the risks of early pregnancy among women. Early pregnancy is associated with increased child mortality rates and affects the health of the mother.
- To deter Child Marriages: Despite laws mandating minimum age and criminalising sexual intercourse with a minor, child marriages are very prevalent in the country (estimated at 4.1 million in 2017)
- Gender-neutrality Laws: Making the age equal to that of men is in the spirit of right to equality.
- Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution which guarantee the right to equality and the right to live with dignity, were violated by having different legal ages for men and women to marry.
- Conclusion
- The minimum age of marriage, especially for women, has been a contentious issue. It is high time that the laws dealing with same are changed in the spirit of Constitutional values.

Connecting the dots:

- Wage Inequality between men and women
- Glass Ceiling in Corporates and measures taken by government to break this.



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HEALTH ISSUE

Menstrual Hygiene Management National Guidelines, 2015

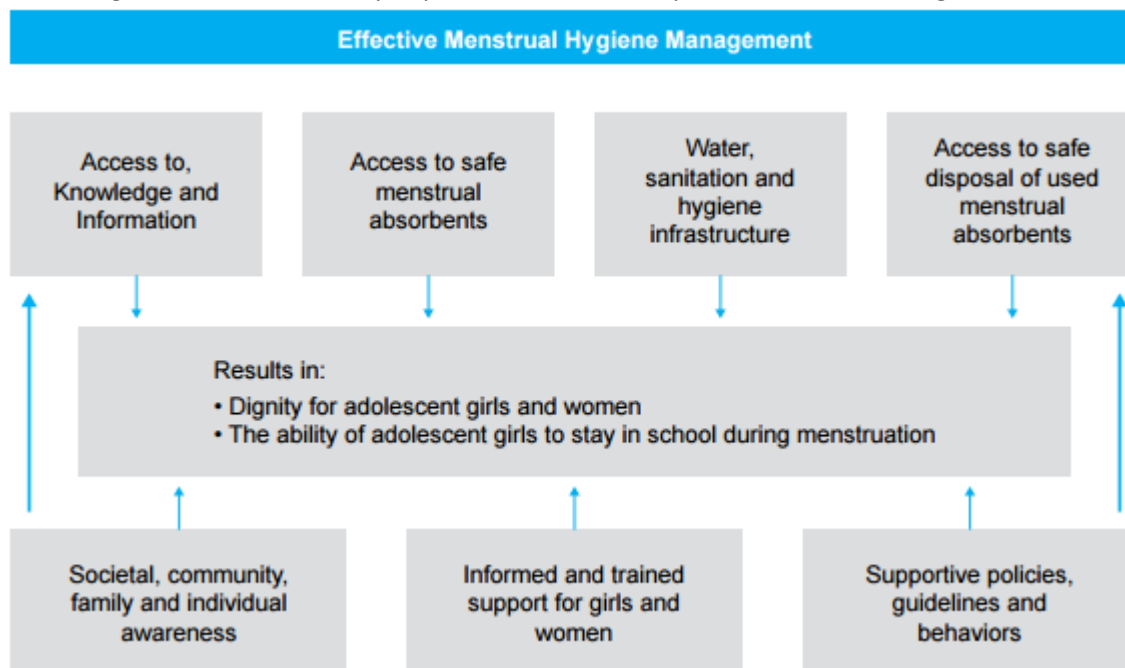
Part of: GS Mains II and III – Children/Women welfare; Health/Social issue

Context:

- National Guidelines on Menstrual Hygiene Management was released by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation in 2015
- It seeks to address every component of menstrual hygiene ranging from, raising awareness, addressing behaviour change, creating a demand for better hygiene products, capacity building of frontline community cadre, sensitization of key stakeholders, convergence needed for effective outreach and intervention, creation of WASH facilities including safe disposal options, etc.

Measures needed

- The Guidelines should recognise sanitary napkins as an essential commodity, and to add it to the schedule of the Essential Commodity Act.
- Maharashtra's Rural Development department had initiated ASMITA scheme – to ensure that women and young adolescent girls in rural areas have access to quality and affordable sanitary napkins through a network of women SHGs. (Such schemes need effective implementation)
- Vending machines for sanitary napkins should be set up across schools, colleges and other locations.



Pic: Menstrual Hygiene Management

National Cancer Registry Programme Report 2020

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

In News:

- The National Cancer Registry Programme Report 2020 was recently released.

- Released by: The **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** and the **National Centre for Disease Informatics and Research (NCDIR)**, Bengaluru.

Key takeaways

- Number of Cases: Cancer cases in India are likely to increase by 12% to 15.6 lakhs by 2025.
- Major Cause: **Tobacco-related cancers** (27.1% of the total cancer burden)
- Regional Distribution: Highest in the northeastern region and in higher proportions in men.
- Gender Prevalence:
 - Most common cancers among women: breast cancers (14.8%) and cervical cancer (5.4%).
 - Most common cancers among men: Lung, mouth, stomach and oesophagus cancers
- A **significant increase** in the incidence rates of **breast cancers in women** and **lung, head and neck cancers in both men and women** was observed.
- A **declining trend** was seen in most of the cervical cancer.

Important value additions

Cancer

- A type of disease characterized by the growth of abnormal cells beyond their usual boundaries
 - It is one of the **leading causes** of death globally.
 - World Cancer Day celebrated each year on 4th February.
 - 2020 theme: 'I Am and I Will'.
-

DhanwantriRath: Ayurveda Health Services

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

In News:

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the **All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA)** and **Delhi Police**.
- Ayurveda Preventive and Promotive health services** in the residential colonies of **Delhi Police** shall be extended under the MOU.
- Catered by: **All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA)**
- Supported by: Ministry of AYUSH

Key takeaways

- A **mobile unit named 'DhanwantariRath'** and **Police Wellness Centres** shall be used for the services.
- DhanwantariRath** would consist of a team of Doctors who would be visiting Delhi Police colonies regularly.
- Objectives:
 - To reduce the incidence/prevalence** of various diseases.
 - To reduce** the number of **referrals to hospitals**.
 - To reduce cost** to the healthcare system as well as patients.
- Earlier, **AYURAKSHA**, a joint venture of **AIIA and Delhi Police** aimed for **maintaining the health of frontline Covid warriors like Delhi police personnel** through Ayurveda immunity boosting measures was launched.

Important value additions

Ayurveda

- 'Ayurveda' in totality means 'Science of life'.
- It is considered as **one of the ancient health care systems**.
- Ayurveda is said to be the offshoot of Atharva-Veda.

- The **Ministry of AYUSH** (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) was **formed in 2014** to ensure the **optimal development and propagation** of AYUSH systems of health care.

All India Institute of Ayurveda

- It is an **autonomous organisation under the Ministry of AYUSH**.
 - It has been conceived as an **apex institute for Ayurveda**.
 - Aim: To **bring a synergy** between traditional wisdom of Ayurveda and modern tools and technology.
 - The institute offers postgraduate and doctoral courses in various disciplines of Ayurveda also.
 - It is located in **New Delhi**.
-

Reversing health sector neglect

Context: The pandemic has highlighted the need for effective universal health coverage (UHC)

What steps have been taken by government to achieve UHC?

- The government is poised to employ **Ayushman Bharat–PradhanMantri Jan ArogyaYojana (AB-PM-JAY)** health insurance as the tool for achieving UHC.
- Plans are reportedly under way to extend coverage to the non-poor population under AB-PM-JAY, which currently covers the bottom 40% of the population.

Challenges/Criticism of Government’s approach on achieving UHC

- **Private Sector Prioritised:** Taking the health insurance route to UHC driven by private players, rather than strengthening the public provisioning of health care, is reflective of the non-negotiability of private health care in India.
- **Urban Bias in Private Health Services:** There is stark maldistribution of private health-care facilities -almost two-thirds of corporate hospitals concentrated in major cities
- **Coverage doesn’t ensure access:** Low budgetary appropriations for insurance could mean that universal insurance does not translate to universal access to services, much akin to what was seen under the Affordable Care Act in the U.S.
- **Experiencepoints to different direction:** Insurance-based incentives to drive private players into the rural countryside have been largely unsuccessful, and experience suggests that the public sector could be the only effective alternative.
- **Little homework before expansion:** Envisaging universal health insurance without enough regulatory robustness to handle everything from malpractices to monopolistic tendencies, will only lead to distorted results.
- **Need for Legislations:** Government should enact ‘Clinical Establishments Act’ for effective monitoring & compliance, before embarking on a universal scheme involving large-scale public-private collaboration
- **Path-dependent resistance to reform:** The bigger and deeper the reform, the more the resistance. Covering the remaining population under the AB-PM-JAY presents massive fiscal and design challenges.
- **Fiscal Challenges:** Meeting requirements of Universalisation through general revenue financing would greatly strain the exchequer and looks very unlikely especially in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic.
- **Administrative Challenges:** Turning AB-PM-JAY into a contributory scheme based on premium collections would be a costly and daunting undertaking, given the huge informal sector and possible adverse selection problems.

- **Technical Challenges:** Harmonising benefits and entitlements among various beneficiary groups, and a formalisation and consolidation of practices in a likely situation of covering outpatient care, are formidable additional challenges
- **Challenges with National Digital Health Mission (NDHM)** that complements the UHC Scheme
 - Integration and improved management of patient and health facility information are very welcome.
 - However, in the absence of robust ground-level documentation practices and its prerequisites, it would do little more than helping some private players and adding to administrative complexity and costs like the electronic health records did under the US ACA.

Way Ahead

- While upheavals offer windows for pushing reform, a protracted presence of the pandemic in the country could undermine its gravity and the perceived urgency for major reform.
- Civil society would need to utilise this opening to generate widespread public consensus and pressure for health-care reform
- At the same time, politics would need to recognise the unprecedented populist significance of health and marshal enough will to negotiate organised opposition to change.

Connecting the dots

- Ayushman Bharat–PradhanMantri Jan ArogyaYojana (AB-PM-JAY)

Draft Health Data Management policy released in the public domain

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – Policies and Interventions; Health

In News:

- The National Health Authority (NHA) has released the Draft Health Data Management Policy in the public domain.
- The policy is part of the National Digital Health Mission (NDHM).

Keytakeaways

- The Draft Policy is the maiden step in realizing NDHM's guiding principle of "Security and Privacy by Design" for the protection of individuals' data privacy.
- Data collected across the National Digital Health Ecosystem (NDHE) will be stored in at the central level, the state or Union Territory level and at the health facility level, by adopting the principle of minimality at each point.
- It encompasses various aspects pertaining to health data like data privacy, consent management, data sharing and protection.

Important value additions

National Digital Health Mission (NDHM).

- It was announced by Prime Minister on the occasion of 74th Independence Day.
- The National Health Authority (NHA) has been mandated to design and roll out NDHM in the country.
- NHA is also responsible for the implementation of Ayushman Bharat

COVID vaccine likely by mid-2021: WHO scientist

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Health/Social issue; International Organization

About:

- WHO's chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan said that a realistic timeline to start receiving the first million doses of COVID vaccine is mid-2021.
- She also warned that it might take longer "as it is not easy to understand the virus completely."

COVAX initiative

- It aims at having two billion doses of the vaccine by the end of 2021.
- COVAX Facility is a mechanism to ensure free, rapid and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines across the world.

Do you know?

- Around 27 vaccines are in clinical trials, and another 150 odd are in pre-clinical testing.

Containing COVID virus

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II - Govt policies and initiatives; Social/Health issue; Governance

Context:

- PM flagged the need for more testing, tracing in 10 affected States in order to keep the fatality rate from COVID-19 in India to below 1%.
- He stressed that 10 States which account for 81% of the cases and 82% of the fatalities need to step up testing, contact tracing within 72 hours of testing and isolation of those infected.
- 10 States — West Bengal, Gujarat, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Punjab — are with high COVID-19 levels.

Measures/Suggestions to contain COVID

- Some States asked the Centre to lift the current cap of 35% on COVID-19 related expenditure on State Disaster Relief Fund (SDRF) as it was not sufficient to meet current requirements.
- Some States appealed for an immediate ad hoc grant of Rs. 1,000 crore from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) to fight the pandemic
- Some appealed to the Centre to make one year of government service mandatory for fresh medical graduates and postgraduates so that their services can be utilised in fighting COVID-19.
- Some appealed to initiate measures for immediate commencement of final year medical and paramedical courses so that students could be used in COVID-19 services in areas outside of the designated hospitals.
- Doubling of medical seats
- Fund 50% of RT-PCR tests using PM-CARES

Important value additions:

- About State Disaster Relief Fund (SDRF)
- SDRF has been constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
- It is the primary fund available with the State governments for responses to notified disasters to meet expenditure for providing immediate relief.

- The Centre contributes 75% of the SDRF allocation for general category States and Union Territories and 90% for special category States and Union Territories (northeastern States, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir).
 - The annual Central contribution is released in two equal installments as per the recommendation of the Finance Commission.
 - Disaster (s) covered under SDRF: Cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloudburst, pest attack, frost and cold waves.
 - A State Government may use up to 10% of the funds available under the SDRF for providing immediate relief to the victims of natural disasters that they consider to be 'disasters' within the local context in the State and which are not included in the notified list of disasters of the Ministry of Home Affairs.
-

Poor access to abortion drugs

Part of: GS Mains II – Social/Women issue; Health issue

Context:

- According to a study by Foundation for Reproductive Health Services India (FRHSI)
- Over•regulation of drugs to curb gender-•biased sex selection has hindered access to safe, legal and cost•-effective abortion.
- Five out of six States have been reported to have “overwhelming shortage” of abortion pills or medical abortion drugs.
- The only State that seemed to be better was Assam (69.6%).
- About 79% of chemists do not stock the drugs to avoid legal issues and excessive documentation requirements.

Abortion pills or Medical abortion (MA) drugs:

- Abortion pills or MA drugs are abortifacients which terminate a pregnancy by expelling an embryo or fetus.
- Abortion pills are different from emergency contraceptive pills (ECD).
- ECD are taken 72 hours after unprotected sex to prevent an unintended pregnancy.

Major reason for shortage of drugs:

- The primary reason for non-availability of MA drugs seems to be the incorrect understanding that medical abortion combipacks can be used for gender biased sex selection among regulatory officials.
- A Medical abortion combipacks is indicated for use only up to nine weeks while an ultrasound can detect the sex of the fetus at 13-14 weeks' gestation.

Do you know?

- Medical abortion drugs are the most preferred method with 81 % of abortions being administered through them.
 - Their lack of availability hinders women, who do not wish to opt for surgical abortion methods.
 - In the midst of the pandemic with restricted movement clinical methods of family planning are not adequately available; there is a dire need to ensure unrestricted access to drugs.
-

SalivaDirect test

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II- Health issue

Context: On August 16, 2020, the United States Food and Drugs Administration authorised the emergency use of saliva based diagnostic test for COVID-19. About SalivaDirect test.

About SalivaDirect test

- SalivaDirect test is an inexpensive test, developed by a team from the Yale School of Public Health, has high sensitivity and can detect the virus even when the number of virus copies in the saliva sample is as low as 6•12 copies per microlitre.
- Collecting and testing saliva samples involves three steps — collecting saliva without preservative buffers, proteinase K treatment and heat inactivation, and dualplex RT-qPCR virus detection.
- Disadvantages in previously using Nasopharyngeal swabs is it leads to false negative results due to errors at the time of sample collection.
- The sensitivity of the new SalivaDirect test was about 93%, according to a preprint posted on medRxiv “Official data shows 88-94% [sensitivity]” which is the best accuracy rate (sensitivity) of any saliva test as tweeted by Andy Slavitt, a former acting administrator of the Centres for Medicare and Medicaid Services in the Obama administration.

New test on the block
SalivaDirect, a new rapid detection test for COVID-19 is touted to be simple, cheap and accurate

WHY IS IT DIFFERENT? SalivaDirect uses saliva samples, as opposed to the more invasive nasopharyngeal swabs	WHO DEVELOPED IT? It was developed by researchers from Yale School of Public Health in partnership with the National Basketball Association (NBA)
IS IT AFFORDABLE? Compared to other tests approved by the Food and Drug Administration, SalivaDirect is affordable — each test could cost as little as \$10, or less — and has the highest sensitivity (88-94%)	HOW ARE SAMPLES COLLECTED? The test could allow for 'at-home, self-administered sample collection', according to a researcher involved in developing the test

INDIA'S COUNT
With 57,361 new cases and 925 deaths recorded on Sunday, India's COVID-19 tally rose to 26,46,975 infections and 51,021 fatalities

- Pic source: The Hindhu

Green Corridor: Organ Donation

Part of: GS II- Health

Context: Recently, a heart was brought from Pune to Chennai with the help of a “green corridor” created for unrestricted movement.

Key takeaways:

- A green corridor is a demarcated, cleared out special road route created for an ambulance that enables retrieved organs meant for transplant to reach the destined hospital.
- Green corridors require a concentrated effort from transplant coordinators, local police, traffic police and airport staff. Awareness of the general public towards green corridors is also important.
- Procedure: When a patient is declared brain dead and his family consents to organ donation, the availability of a recipient is first checked within the city, state, region and then nationally.
- Need: Organs have a short preservation time, and green corridors ensure the ambulance escapes traffic congestion and reaches the destination in the shortest possible time.
- Coordinated by: The requisite regulatory procedures and coordination was carried out with National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO).

National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation

- National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO) is a National level organization set up under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, located in New Delhi.
- NOTTO's various state centers are called State Organ and Tissue Transplantation Organisation (SOTTO).
- It coordinates and establishes a network for procurement and distribution of organs and tissues as per the Transplantation of Human Organs (Amendment) Act 2011.
- NOTTO in collaboration with the National Informatics Centre (NIC) is developing a national registry of organ and tissue donors.
- This initiative will help in maintaining data and surveillance of all transplants across the country and also plans to map post-transplant survival rate of patients.
- SC to study context of charges against judges

Thalassemia Screening and Counselling Centre launched

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

In News:

- Thalassemia Screening and Counselling Centre at Indian Red Cross Society's National Headquarters (IRCS NHQ) Blood Bank, New Delhi was recently inaugurated.
- Ministry: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare

Important value additions

Thalassemia

- It is a type of Haemoglobinopathies. Sickle cell disease is another example.
- It is an inherited disorders of red blood cells and
- It is preventable.

- In India, Thalassemia Major (TM) and the severe form of Thalassemia Intermedia (TI) constitute the major burden of disease.
- It is caused by inheritance of abnormal (beta) Thalassemia genes from both parents or abnormal beta-Thalassemia gene from one parent and abnormal variant haemoglobin gene (HbE, HbD) from the other parent.
- India has the largest number of children with Thalassemia major in the world.
- The only cure: Bone Marrow Transplantation (BMT).
- It is difficult and not affordable by the parents of all these children.

Alternative treatment: Repeated blood transfusions, followed by regular iron chelation therapy to remove the excessive iron overload.

National Digital Health Mission

Context: During the Independence Day Speech, PM Modi launched the National Digital Health Mission and said that the initiative which is completely technology based will revolutionise the health sector in India

What is the basic idea of NDHM?

- By Digital Health Infrastructure created by NDHM, instead of ferrying medical records in polythene bags from doctor to doctor, Indians will be able to access their lab reports, x-rays and prescriptions irrespective of where they were generated, and share them with doctors or family members — with consent.

What are the key features of NDHM?

- Six key building blocks or digital systems namely, HealthID, DigiDoctor, Health Facility Registry, Personal Health Records, e-Pharmacy & Telemedicine
- Unique Health ID: Every Indian under the mission would get an ID card containing all relevant information about his/her medical conditions and treatments, tests etc
- Comprehensive Health Profile: Ranging from doctor appointment to the medication prescribed, medical tests, every bit of detail will be available in the health profile of an individual across public and private healthcare.
- National Health Authority (NHA), the attached office of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has been given the mandate to design, build, roll-out and implement the NDHM in the country.
- Encouraging Private Players for promotion of Health Data Analytics & Medical Research
- Private stakeholders will have an equal opportunity to integrate with these building blocks and create their own products for the market.
- However, core activities and verifications, for example, generation of Health ID or approval of a doctor/facility shall remain with the government.
- Additional components, like Personal Health Record (PHR) and Electronic Medical Record (EMR) solutions can be developed by private players in line with the guidelines that will be issued.

Merits of NDHM

- Creates Digital Health Ecosystem: It will reduce the existing gap between various stakeholders such as doctors, hospitals and other healthcare providers by bringing them together and connecting them in an integrated digital health infrastructure.

- **Voluntary Scheme:** The NDHM is a holistic, voluntary healthcare programme. While option of digital Health ID will be there, in case a person does not want Health ID, then also treatment needs to be provided.
- **Data Safeguards:** All products by private participants shall be as per official guidelines taking care of security, privacy and standards of the NDHM ecosystem
- **Improves Healthcare Service Efficiency:** The created Digital Health infrastructure enables users to obtain a longitudinal view of their healthcare records. Electronic Medical Records will increase accountability, improves patient outcomes, and advances evidence-based policymaking.
- **Addresses Healthcare Challenges:** The Digital Health infrastructure greatly reduces the risk of preventable medical errors and significantly increase quality of care.
- **Reduces Information Asymmetry:** The Digital data will empower all Indians with the correct information and sources enabling them to take an informed decision to avail the best possible healthcare.
- **Aligned with International Goals:** NDHM will be a major stride towards achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3.8 of Universal Health Coverage, including financial risk protection
- **Last Mile Connectivity Issue:** The provision of promoting e-pharmacy & Telemedicine will enable people in rural areas access quality healthcare providers.

Data Ownership issues addressed:

- The health data will reside at individual hospital servers in a federated architecture.
- Citizen will own his/ her health data and would require consent to share data.
- All the basic registries of patients/hospital/medical professionals that enable data sharing will be owned by a government entity.

Challenges Ahead

- **Cannot be a Substitution:** Digitalisation is welcome but is no substitute for inadequate human resources and infrastructure in the health sector.
- **Doesn't address core concern of Health care sector:** The real issue in India's health sector is the abject lack of primary health facilities in much of India.
- **Digital awareness about the utility of the scheme is needed for its successful adoption by beneficiaries** so that it eases the process and not
- **To enable seamless data exchange, all users (pharmacists, laboratories, radiology clinics, insurers and hospitals) must be incentivised to adopt a standard language of communication**

Did You Know about similar project by UK?

- In 2005, the UK's National Health Service (NHS) started deployment of an electronic health record systems with a goal to have all patients with a centralised electronic health record by 2010.
- While several hospitals acquired electronic patient records systems as part of this process, there was no national healthcare information exchange.
- The project had been beset by changing specifications, technical challenges and clashes with suppliers, which left it years behind schedule and way over cost.

- The program was ultimately dismantled after a cost to the UK taxpayer was more than £12 billion, and is considered one of the most expensive healthcare IT failures.
-

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

Study in India - Stay in India scheme to come up

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

In News:

- The Central Government would soon come up with a programme called “Study in India - Stay in India”.
 - Objective:
 - To prevent students from leaving the country seeking higher education abroad and also
 - To bring back Indian students studying abroad.
-

Inclusion of the Disabled in National Food Security Act, 2013

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – Welfare schemes

In News:

- State Governments/UTs have been asked to include all eligible disabled persons under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013.
- **Ministry:** The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution

Keytakeaways

- The disabled persons should get their entitled quota of food grains under NFSA & [PradhanMantriGaribKalyan Anna Yojana](#) (PMGKAY) as per provisions of the Act.
- Fresh ration cards should be issued for those who are not covered as per the eligibility criteria.
- The disabled person should also be covered by States/UTs under the priority households.

Important value additions

- PMGKAY is a part of [PradhanMantriGaribKalyan Package](#) (PMGKP) to help the poor fight the battle against Covid-19.
 - **Section 10 of the NFSA:** Identification and coverage of persons under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY). Disability is one of the criteria for inclusion of beneficiaries under AAY households.
 - **Section 38 of the NFSA:** The Central Government may from time to time give directions to the State Governments for effective implementation of the provisions of the Act.
 - Hence, the disabled persons without ration cards are also eligible for getting benefits under [Atmanirbhar Bharat](#) package.
-

States can have sub-groups among SC/ST

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – Welfare schemes

In News:

- Recently, the Supreme Court held that States can sub-classify Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in the Central List.

Keytakeaways from Justice ArunMishra's judgement:

- Reservation has created inequalities within the reserved castes itself.
- Benefits of reservation are being used by a few.
- Caste, occupation, and poverty are interwoven.
- The State cannot be deprived of the power to take care of the qualitative and quantitative differences between different classes.
- ST and SC in the Central List do not constitute a homogenous group.

Do you know?

- The judgment is significant as it will provide the push to extend the creamy layer concept to the SC and ST.
- In 2004, the Chinnaiah judgment had held that allowing the States to unilaterally make a class within a class of members of the SC would lead to changes in the Presidential list.
- The issue has now been referred to a seven-judge Bench of the court.

Important value additions

- The Central List of SC and ST are notified by the President under Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution.
 - The consent of the Parliament is required to exclude or include castes in the List.
 - Thus, States cannot unilaterally add or pull out castes from the List.
 - The Supreme Court has reasoned that sub-classifications within the Presidential/Central List do not amount to changing it. No caste is excluded from the list.
-

eSanjeevani platform

Part of: Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Govt schemes and initiatives; Health

Context:

- The Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare presided over a review meeting with States/UTs on the eSanjeevani and eSanjeevani OPD platforms.
- It was conducted as 1.5 lakh tele-consultations were completed on the tele-medicine service platforms of the Health Ministry.

Do you know?

- In a short span of time since its launch in November 2019, tele-consultation by eSanjeevani and eSanjeevani OPD have been implemented by 23 States (which covers 75% of the population) and other States are in the process of rolling it out.

About eSanjeevani

- It is a national telemedicine service that offers tele-consultations enabling patient to doctor consultations from the confines of their home, as well as doctor to doctor consultations.
- This eSanjeevani platform has enabled two types of telemedicine services viz. Doctor-to-Doctor (eSanjeevani) and Patient-to-Doctor (eSanjeevani OPD) Tele-consultations
- The former is being implemented under the Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centre (AB- HWCs) programme.

- The telemedicine platform is hosting over 40 online OPDs, more than half of these are speciality OPDs which include Gynaecology, Psychiatry, Dermatology, ENT, Ophthalmology, antiretroviral therapy (ART) for the AIDS/HIV patients, Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) etc.
-

Indigenisation of Defence

Part of: GS Mains II and III – Govt schemes and policies; Defence; Indigenisation of technology

Context:

- Ministry of Defence (MoD) has decided to impose a ban on 101 import items to boost indigenisation of defence production.

Do you know?

- MoD had bifurcated the capital procurement budget for 2020-21 between domestic and foreign capital procurement routes.
- Government has targeted to reach a turnover of USD 25 billion by 2025 through indigenously manufactured defence products and also expects to export products worth \$5 billion.
- Benefits of indigenisation of defence
- Boosts indigenisation of defence production
- Reduces fiscal deficit (India is second-largest arms importer in the world)
- Indigenisation in defence is important to national security
- India can generate FOREX by exporting defence equipment
- This could lead to innovation and R&D in the defence sector
- Steps towards achieving self-reliance goal

Steps taken:

- 3 facilities were inaugurated - Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) and BEML's (Bharat Earth Movers Limited) Industrial Design Centre at its Bangalore Complex

The three facilities include -

- manufacturing facility for sighting devices for T-90 Tanks at the Opto Electronics Factory, Dehradun,
 - automated assembly line for the production of Pinaka Rockets at the Ordnance Factory, Chandrapur and
 - assembly and testing facility of Stabilised Remote Controlled Gun (SRCG) at the Ordnance Factory, Tiruchirappalli
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Krishi Megh (National Agricultural Research & Education System -Cloud Infrastructure and Services)

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Govt schemes and initiatives; Skill development; Agriculture

Context:

- Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare virtually launched Krishi Megh along with KVC ALUNET (Krishi Vishwavidyalaya Chhatr Alumni Network) and Online Accreditation System for Higher Agricultural Educational Institutions (HEI).
- Krishi Megh is a step forward towards digital agriculture of New India.

About Krishi Megh:

- Krishi Megh is the National Agricultural Research & Education System -Cloud Infrastructure and Services.
- It aims to protect the precious data of the government's premier research body Indian Council of Agricultural Research.
- It has been set up at National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM) in Hyderabad.

Key features:

- Krishi Megh has been set up under the National Agricultural Higher Education Project (NAHEP), funded by both the government and World Bank.
- The data recovery centre at NAARM is synchronized with the data centre at the main data centre of the ICAR is at Indian Agricultural Statistics Research Institute (IASRI) Delhi.
- Built to mitigate the risk, enhance the quality, availability and accessibility of e-governance, research, extension and education in field of agriculture in India.
- Cater the need to save and preserve the important research-based data in a prompt digitised form to enable its access anywhere in any corner of the country and the world.

About KVC ALUNET:

- Its development has been a result of an idea of social networking for the alumnus of the Agricultural Universities.
- It will enable the alumni of all the 74 Agricultural Universities in connecting with each other and making it possible to assist the students in internship, placements and to provide support to their almmaters

New Educational Policy: Ignores the role of Parents

Context: The [NEP](#) has been received with broad praise.

The goal of universalisation of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and the focus on achieving universal foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) is especially laudable.

Challenges ahead for NEP

1. Translating policy into action on the ground at scale

- This is challenging because most of the policy suggestions are not new - several state governments have been trying hard to implement such reforms
- However, the lack of consistent political will and the slow pace of adopting emerging technologies have stymied these efforts.

2. Parents are not involved

- Parents, from less-privileged backgrounds find it difficult to understand the value of the current reforms such as curriculum overhaul, teacher-training or activity-based learning in schools
- Parents are only mentioned 25 times, as compared to 221 mentions for teachers

3. Poor Perception of Public Schools due to technological backwardness

- Private schools take huge pains to attract their most critical constituency — parents — through fancy brochures or computer labs.
- Public educators tend to be poor publicists.

- As a result, the public-school system has lost the perception battle to the private system.

4. Lack of Political Incentives& Visibility

- There is opaqueness of progress of Child's learning levels and lack of value realisation by the constituents (Parents)
- This is why politicians across the spectrum have, in turn, not paid attention to education, as compared to other sectors such as infrastructure and skills training.
- As a result, Education reform attempts come and go, based on the whims and fancies of officials and their unpredictable tenures.

Way Ahead

- **Regular Interactions with Parents:** Models should be designed to include teachers as key facilitators for parent interactions. This increases community respect for teachers and also makes parents as stakeholders in Child's educational progress
- **Leveraging technology:** Tech- and media-enabled models of leveraging government infrastructure to build parental aspiration, information gateways and, social motivation
- **Increase Political Incentive:** We need initiatives and technology that achieve both educational and political success, as was the case with the midday meal scheme. The initiatives must create a virtuous cycle of governments pulling parents along and vice versa

Conclusion

Governments will do the hard slog only if their efforts are visible and impressive to parents, a key voting bloc

Connecting the dots

- Mid Day Meal Scheme
- Right to Education

PM-CARE

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II Governance

Context: PMO denies RTI plea seeking info on PM•CARES

About PM-CARES

- PM-CARES Fund was set to accept donations and provide relief during the Covid-19 pandemic, and other similar emergencies.

PM-CARES Fund

- PM-CARES was set up as a public charitable trust with the trust deed registered on March 27, 2020.
- It can avail donations from the foreign contribution and donations to fund can also avail 100% tax exemption.
- PM-CARES is different from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF).

Composition:

- Prime Minister as chairperson
- Defence Minister, Home Minister, Finance Minister
- Three trustees nominated by the Prime Minister "who shall be eminent persons in the field of research, health, science, social work, law, public administration and philanthropy".

- Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF)

Important value additions:

- PM-CARES Not a Public Authority: It has been stated that the PM-CARES Fund is not a Public Authority under the ambit of Section 2(h) of the RTI Act, 2005.
-

INTERNATIONAL

War and talks: On Taliban ceasefire

Context: The Taliban's decision to cease fire for three days during Id-ul-Adha

Significance of the ceasefire: It has come as a relief for Afghans who have seen unabated violence despite a peace agreement between the insurgents and the U.S

For a brief background on US-Taliban Deal: [Click Here \(Part I\)](#) and [Here \(Part-II\)](#)

A Bad Precedent w.r.t Taliban Ceasefires

- In June 2018 and May 2020, the Taliban had briefly ended hostilities to mark the end of the holy month of Ramzan.
- On both occasions, it refused to extend the ceasefire, returning to war as soon as the celebrations were over.

Is there a renewed hope that ceasefire will extend beyond festivities?

- This time, however, hopes are high that the truce could be extended as Kabul and the insurgents are preparing to launch the intra-Afghan talks that were promised in the U.S.-Taliban deal (supposed to start in March 2020).

What Stalled the Intra-Afghan Talks which were to begin in March 2020?

- Preconditions not met: Both sides failed to reach an agreement on prisoner exchange, that was considered necessary for peace talks to begin as per US-Taliban deal
- Infighting in Afghan Government
- 2019 election results were contested by the main Opposition candidate, Abdullah Abdullah, who formed a parallel administration –resulting in divided Afghan govt.
- Abdulla Abdullah came back with Afghan govt. only after being appointed the head of the High Council for National Reconciliation that will lead talks with the Taliban.
- Slow Progress of Deal: Finally, President Ghani decided to release 5,000 Taliban prisoners, which was followed by the Taliban's ceasefire announcement.

Challenges Ahead for Intra-Afghan Talks

- There are various loopholes in the US-Taliban deal which makes it harder for various stakeholders to reconcile
- When the U.S. entered into talks with the insurgent group, it did not insist on a ceasefire
- So the Taliban continues to engage in war and talks simultaneously.
- The Americans, badly looking for a way out of the conflict, kept the Afghan government out of the peace process, thus weakening their position
- The onus was on a weakened Afghan government to start talks even as the Taliban continued attacks.

Conclusion

The Taliban's ceasefire is an opportunity to kick-start intra-Afghan peace talks

Connecting the dots:

- Heart of Asia
 - Consequences of US-Taliban Deal on India's security interests
-

China Russia ties as a major determinant

Context: In June 2019, Chinese President Xi Jinping described Russian President Vladimir Putin, as “my best friend and colleague”.

Why is such a description significant?

- **No Historical Precedence:** For past 70 years such public bonhomie has not been seen between leaders of Russia and China.
- **Realignment of relationship:** It has sparked intense discussion on whether they are moving in the direction of a formal alliance.
- **Growing Collaboration:** Coordinated action in multilateral forums, increasingly sophisticated joint military exercises, and including activities with third countries such as Iran, reinforce beliefs about possibility of alliance.
- **Impact on India's Foreign Policy:** Politically reliable, trustworthy defence supplier with shared misgivings about China, that was USSR, has long been replaced by a politically agnostic, commercially motivated Russia that no longer shares our concerns about China.

How China has been a key part of Global Geopolitics since end of WW-II?

- The triangular relationship between America, China and Russia has, for the most part, shaped global politics since 1950.
- During Cold War, US viewed China as a road to victory of its ideology and breaking up the communist camp
- Post-Cold War, Russia seems to believe that the road to revival of Russian power and prestige similarly runs through China
- For three decades the Americans had occupied the favoured position in terms of its relations with the other two. China seems to have assumed that position now.

What factors have strengthened the Sino-Russian Partnership?

- **End of Cold War:** The disintegration of the Soviet Union essentially negated the Russian threat in Chinese eyes which brought both countries closer.
- **Resolution of disputes:** A peaceful boundary is one of the pillars on which the Sino-Russian partnership currently rests.
- **Common Enemy:** Both share a concern over American plans for “regime-change”. A shared distrust of American intentions has thus pushed China and Russia into closer axis.
- **External Push Factors:** Western sanctions have tended to push the Russians closer to China and it has served to strengthen China's position in the strategic triangle.
 - Falling oil prices and fears of new sanctions on Russian gas supplies are demolishing the core of Russian exports to Europe, thus compelling Russia to look for alternatives like China
- **Increasing Economic & Industrial ties in the aftermath of western sanctions**
 - China-Russia trade has more than doubled to \$108 billion
 - Russia's central bank has increased its Chinese currency reserves from less than one per cent to over 13%
 - China has surpassed Germany as the principal supplier of industrial plant and technology.

Challenges that prevent Russia & China to forge formal Alliance

- **Growing Asymmetry:** The growing power-gap is threatening to further reduce Russian influence in their 'near-abroad' and to confine Russia to the periphery of global power, which Russia is not comfortable with.
- **Clashing Ambitions:** Russia still regards itself as a world power and hopes to be at the centre of a Eurasian arrangement that stretches from the Pacific to the Atlantic. This doesn't align with strategic objectives of China's Belt & Road Initiative
- **Economic Advantage for China:** while Russia presently enjoys a nominal trade surplus, China has a clear advantage going forward
 - Most of China's exports to Russia are now at a higher technology level while the share of labour-intensive goods has declined.
 - At the other end of the spectrum, Russian exports have continued to focus on raw materials, especially oil and gas.
- **Not a Stable Boundary:** Chinese continue to nurse historical grievances despite the formal resolution of the border issue.
 - Mr. Xi's talk of "rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation" has raised fears in Russia about Chinese revanchism
 - China still make critical references to the nearly 600,000 square miles of Chinese territory that Tsarist Russia allegedly annexed in the late 19th century.
 - Russia is also concerned over Chinese migration in the Russian Far East.

Conclusion

- The new reality of Sino-Russian relations is thus one where substantial expansion of bilateral cooperation is accompanied by growing asymmetry and China's pre-eminence.
- Moscow is in real danger of permanently becoming the '**junior partner**'.
- India and Russia have a shared belief that some form of multipolarity is better than any sort of Sino-U.S. condominium. Therefore, India-Russia relationship deserves more attention from both sides.

Connecting the dots

- [Power of Siberia](#)
- Belt & Road Initiative

[China launches warship for Pakistan Navy](#)

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – International Relations; GS-III – Security challenges

In News:

- China has launched first of the four advanced naval warships for Pakistan.
- The launching ceremony for the first warship was held at the HudongZhonghua Shipyard in Shanghai.
- First ship is of Type-054 class frigate.
- **Equipped with:** Latest surface, subsurface, anti-air weapons, combat management system, and sensors.
- It will be one of the technologically advanced surface platforms of the Pakistan Navy fleet.

[Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDC\) – Transport Initiative for Asia \(TIA\)](#)

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – International Relations; Global Groupings & GS-III – Infrastructure

In News:

- India Component of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)–Transport Initiative for Asia (TIA) has been recently launched.

- **Launched by:** NITI Aayog
- **Aim:** To promote a comprehensive approach to decarbonize transport in India, Vietnam, and China.

Key takeaways

- NDC–TIA is a joint programme.
- **Supported by:** International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU).
- **Implemented by:** Consortium of seven different organisations.
- The NDC-TIA programme has a duration of 4 years.

The NDC–TIA India Component will focus on:

- Strengthening GHG and transport modelling capacities
 - Providing technical support on GHG emission reduction measures
 - Financing climate actions in transport
 - Offering policy recommendations on electric vehicle (EV) demand and supply policies etc.
-

Sri Lanka to Draft a New Constitution

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

In News:

- Sri Lanka will draft a new Constitution and abolish the 19th Amendment.
- The Amendment curtailed the powers of the President and strengthened the role of Parliament.
- Sri Lanka People's Party (SLPP) has won a landslide victory in the recently held parliamentary elections (August 2020).

Important value additions

19th Amendment

- It was passed in 2015.
 - It sought to clip the President's executive powers.
 - It also strengthened independence of key pillars such as the judiciary, public service and election.
 - It brought back the two-term limit on Presidency.
 - It was hailed by many, including members of civil society, as a progressive legislation.
 - Sri Lanka's constitution has been changed 19 times from 1978, creating a lot of uncertainties and confusion
-

Boundary Working Group: India-Nepal

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

In News:

- Recently, it has been reported that Nepal has proposed a meeting of the Boundary Working Group (BWG) in August end or early September 2020.

Important value additions

Boundary Working Group (BWG)

- It is a joint agency constituted by the governments of India and Nepal in 2014.
- **Objective:** To carry out works in the fields of construction, restoration and repair of boundary pillars including clearance of 'no-man's land' and other technical tasks.
- **Led by:** The Surveyor General of India.
- The BWG is different from the foreign secretaries meeting that is being sought to discuss the Kalapani border dispute.
- It is an important mechanism to review the boundary work.
- The BWG's inputs are critical as they are given to the governments on the basis of field-level survey.

Vaccine Nationalism

- Even before the end of final stage human trials or regulatory approval, several wealthier countries like Britain, France, Germany and the US have entered into pre-purchase agreements with Covid-19 vaccine manufacturers
- When a country manages to secure doses of vaccines for its own citizens or residents and prioritises its own domestic markets before they are made available in other countries it is known as 'vaccine nationalism'
- The reason countries are going for pre-purchase agreements is because of the longer duration for companies to manufacture such vaccines. It is predicted that worldwide supply may not reach 1 billion doses until the first quarter of 2022

Ethical Conundrum: Vaccine nationalism runs against global public health principles, there are no provisions in international laws that prevent pre-purchase agreements.

Impact of such actions

- **Inequitable Access:** Such advance agreements will make the initial few vaccines unaffordable and inaccessible to everyone apart from the rich countries
- **Deepens the Crisis:** Nations hoarding possible Covid-19 vaccines while excluding others would deepen the pandemic.
- **Slows Global Economic Recovery:** If countries with a large number of cases lag in obtaining the vaccine, the disease will continue to disrupt global supply chains and, as a result, economies around the world.

Is Vaccine Nationalism New?

- A similar situation happened in 2009 during the H1N1 flu pandemic.
- Australia, the first country to come up with a vaccine, blocked exports while some of the wealthiest countries entered into pre-purchase agreements with several pharmaceutical companies.
- The US alone obtained the right to buy 600,000 doses.
- It was only when the H1N1 pandemic began to recede that developed countries offered to donate vaccine doses to poorer economies.
- However, it must be noted that H1N1 was a milder disease and its impact was far lesser than Covid-19

Alternative Path: Global Collaboration - Sharing finite supplies strategically & globally.

- WHO, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and Gavi have come up with an initiative known as "**Covax Facility**".

- The facility aims to procure at least two billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines by the end of next year for deployment and distribution mainly in the low- and middle-income countries.
 - So far, more than 170 countries have expressed interest: about 90 low- and middle-income countries and 80 fully self-financing countries.
 - The countries who join the initiative are assured supply of vaccines whenever they become successful.
 - Moreover, the countries will get assured supplies to protect at least 20 per cent of their populations.
-

Supply Chain Resilience Initiative

Context: With COVID-19 and trade tensions between China & USA threatening supply chains or actually causing bottlenecks, Japan has mooted the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) as a **trilateral approach to trade**, with **India and Australia** as the other two partners.

What does supply chain resilience mean?

- When assembly lines are heavily dependent on supplies from one country, the impact on importing nations could be crippling if that source stops production intentionally (economic sanction) or unintentionally (natural disaster)
- **Example:** Japan imported \$169 billion worth from China, accounting for 24% of its total imports. Japan's imports from China fell by half in February 2020 that impacted Japan's economic activity.
- In the context of international trade, supply chain resilience is an approach that helps a country to ensure that it has **diversified its supply risk** across a clutch of supplying nations instead of being dependent on just one or a few

What is Objective of SCRI?

- The two-fold objective of the Japanese proposal is to attract foreign direct investment to turn the Indo-Pacific into an economic powerhouse and to build a mutually complementary relationship among partner countries.
- Under the proposal, the aim is to work out a plan to build on the existing bilateral supply chain networks.
- India and Japan already have an Indo-Japan Industrial Competitiveness Partnership that deals with locating Japanese firms in India.
- After an understanding emerges among India, Japan and Australia, the initiative could also be thrown open for the ASEAN countries.

Where does Australia stand?

- China has been Australia's largest trading partner and accounts for 32.6% of Australia's exports, with iron ore, coal and gas dominating the products shipped.
- But relations including trade ties between Australia & China have been deteriorating for a while now.
- China banned beef imports from four Australian firms in May 2020, and levied import tariffs on Australian barley.
- In June 2020, China's education Ministry warned its students aspiring to study or already studying in Australia, of 'rising racism' in that country.
- Australia, Japan and India are already part of another informal grouping, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or the Quad, which includes the U.S.

What does India stand to gain, or lose?

- It is significant that Japan has taken the initiative to include India despite India [having pulled out of the RCEP](#) that Japan helped stitch together
- Following the [border tension between India and China](#), partners such as Japan have sensed that India may be ready for dialogue on alternative supply chains.
- But an internal push to suddenly cut links with China would be impractical
 - China's share of imports into India in 2018 (considering the top 20 items supplied by China) stood at 14.5%,
 - Chinese supplies dominate segments of the Indian economy
 - In areas such as Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients for medicines such as paracetamol, India is fully dependent on China.
 - In electronics, China accounts for 45% of India's imports

Way Forward

- SCRI initiative is at the strategy stage and has some way to go before participants can realise trade benefits
- Over time, if India enhances self-reliance or works with exporting nations other than China, it could build resilience into the economy's supply networks.
- Also, India needs to accelerate progress in ease of doing business and in skill building

Connecting the dots

- Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
 - US-China Trade War
-

Turkey-Greece Stand-off

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

In News:

Recently, France has deployed its military in the eastern Mediterranean Sea amid tensions between Greece and Turkey over recently-discovered gas reserves in the region.

Key takeaways

- The EU and its allies in West Asia and North Africa made plans to build a gas pipeline from the Mediterranean to Europe's mainland to transport the gas.
- The gas transport would help reduce the EU's dependency on Russia.
- However, they have kept Turkey out of it.
- Turkey has challenged the EU pipeline project.
- It has reached an agreement with Libya to form an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) from its southern shores to Libya's northern coast across the Mediterranean.

Greece's claims:

- Turkish zone violated its maritime sovereignty.
- It has announced its EEZ with Egypt, which clashed with Turkey's zone.
- As a reaction to the deal, Turkey has sent its survey ship near the island of Kastellorizo area.
- The area is mentioned in the Greece-Egypt agreement.
- Over the past four decades, Greece and Turkey have gone to war at least three times.
- They disagree over overlapping claims to hydrocarbon resources.
- Now, France, the EU's most powerful military force, has thrown its weight behind Greece and Cyprus.
- An alliance is also emerging among Greece, Cyprus, Italy and France, which is backed by Egypt, Israel and the UAE.

- Turkey stands almost isolated, but remains a key power in the Mediterranean.



Image Source: [Click here](#)

[UAE connects first Arab nuclear plant to power grid](#)

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – International relations & GS-III – Energy Resources

In News:

- UAE has recently connected its Barakah nuclear power plant to the national grid in a new first for the Arab world.
- UAE will be able to meet its 25% of electricity needs from nuclear power.
- The UAE has substantial oil and gas reserves. Alongside, it has made huge investments in developing clean alternatives, including solar energy.
- Besides, Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter, has plans to build up to 16 nuclear reactors.
- Barakah was built by a consortium led by the Korea Electric Power Corporation at a cost of some \$24.4 billions.

[China twist in Teesta challenge](#)

Context: Bangladesh is discussing an almost \$1 billion loan from China for a comprehensive management and restoration project on the Teesta river

About Teesta River

- Teesta river is a **tributary of the Brahmaputra** (known as Jamuna in Bangladesh)
- It originates in the Himalayas in Sikkim and flows to the south through West Bengal before entering Bangladesh, where it merges with Brahmaputra
- India and Bangladesh have been engaged in a long-standing dispute over water-sharing in the Teesta.

- The two countries were on the verge of signing a water-sharing pact in September 2011, when PM Manmohan Singh was going to visit Bangladesh. But, West Bengal CM objected to it, and the deal was scuttled.
- Bangladesh has sought an “**equitable**” **distribution** of Teesta waters from India, on the lines of the Ganga Water Treaty of 1996 (an agreement to share surface waters at the Farakka Barrage near their mutual border), but to no avail.

How has India’s relationship with Bangladesh played out over the years?

- New Delhi has had a robust relationship with Dhaka, carefully cultivated since 2008, especially with the Sheikh Hasina government
- **Security Cooperation:** India has benefited from its security ties with Bangladesh, whose crackdown against anti-India outfits has helped the Indian government maintain peace in the eastern and Northeast states.
- **Economic and development partnership:** Bilateral trade has grown steadily over the last decade: India’s exports to Bangladesh in 2018-19 stood at \$9.21 billion, and imports from Bangladesh at \$1.04 billion.
- **People to People ties:** India grants 15 to 20 lakh visas every year to Bangladesh nationals for medical treatment, tourism, work, and just entertainment.

What are the irritants in Indo-Bangladesh Relations?

- **NRC and CAA:** Bangladesh had cancelled visits by ministers, and PM Hasina has expressed reservations about Citizenship Amendment Act.
- **Trade Imbalance:** Bangladesh has trade deficit (\$8.20 billion in 2018-19) with India which it wants to reduce.
- **Growing China:** Bangladesh has courted Chinese investments for its infrastructural projects. Despite India’s pressure, Bangladesh attended the Belt & Road Forum hosted by Chinese President Xi

How have relations between Bangladesh and China been developing?

- China is the biggest trading partner of Bangladesh and is the foremost source of imports.
- In 2019, the trade between the two countries was \$18 billion and the imports from China commanded the lion’s share.
- Recently, China declared zero duty on 97% of imports from Bangladesh. The concession flowed from China’s duty-free, quota-free programme for the Least Developed Countries.
- This move has been widely welcomed in Bangladesh, with the expectation that Bangladesh exports to China will increase.
- China has promised around \$30 billion worth of financial assistance to Bangladesh.
- China is the biggest arms supplier to Bangladesh and it has been a legacy issue — after the liberation, officers of Pakistan Army — who were well-versed with Chinese arms — joined Bangladesh Army and that’s how they preferred Chinese weapons

Cause of Concern about recent move on Teesta

- The project is aimed at managing the river basin efficiently, controlling floods, and tackling the water crisis in summers.
- It has come at a time when India is particularly wary about China following the standoff in Ladakh.
- This shows that China is making major inroads into India’s dominant and strategic space in the subcontinent (Nepal raising Kalapani issue and Pakistan releasing new map)

Way Ahead

- While the Teesta project is important and urgent from India's point of view, it will be difficult to address it before the West Bengal elections due 2021.
- In the meantime, Delhi can address other issues of concern like
 - Implementation of announced projects in a timely manner
 - Bangladesh sought return of the Tablighi Jamaat members impacted by the lockdown in India, which can be looked into
 - Reopening of visa issuance from the Indian High Commission in Dhaka, which helps many Bangladeshi patients to visit India for medical check-ups.
 - Reopen travel through Benapole-Petrapole land port which has been halted by the West Bengal government in the wake of the pandemic.
 - Collaborate in the development of a Covid-19 vaccine, including its trial,

Connecting the dots

- BCIM Corridor
- Microfinance Model by Muhammad Yunus

Must Read

- About marriage age of girls: [The Hindu](#)
 - About domicile based reservation: [The Hindu](#)
 - About ECI's Challenge in Bihar 2020 elections: [The Indian Express](#)
-

US against Cuba on UNHRC seat

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – International affairs; International Affairs

About:

- U.S. urged UN members not to support Cuba's bid to join the organisation's Human Rights Council.
- U.S. administration described Cuba's sale of medical services, Havana's main source of foreign exchange, as a form of human trafficking.

Do you know?

- The main criticism against HRC is that – it is made up of states not known for their human rights records. (who are outstandingly bad violators of human rights – China, Cuba and Jordan)
- Countries grossly violating human rights are still elected as members to the body.
- Cuba, which sat on the UNHRC in 2014-2016 and 2017-2019, has applied to fill one of the regional vacancies for 2021-2023.
- The seats are distributed geographically and are awarded for a period of three years. Members are not eligible for immediate re-election after serving two consecutive terms.

About UNHRC

- UNHRC is a United Nations body whose mission is to promote and protect human rights around the world.
 - It is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system.
 - It meets at the UN Office at Geneva. The headquarters of UNHRC is in Geneva, Switzerland.
 - UNHRC was established by the UN General Assembly in 2006. It is made up of 47 member nations.
-

Oslo Peace Accord

Part of: GS Prelims and GS Mains III - International Affairs

Context: The Oslo peace accords of the 1990s gave the Palestinians self-rule in parts of the West Bank.

About:

- Oslo Accords are a series of agreements between Israel and the Palestinians signed in the 1990s.
 - Oslo I (1993) formally known as the Declaration of Principles (DOP) established a timetable for the Middle East peace process. It planned for an interim Palestinian government in Gaza and Jericho in the West Bank.
 - Oslo II officially called the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza (1995), expanded on Oslo I.
 - Oslo II included -
 - Provisions for the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from six West Bank cities and about 450 towns.
 - Timetable for elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council.
 - The interim pact was only supposed to last five years while a permanent agreement was finalised but it has tacitly been rolled over for more than two decades.
 - The question of Jerusalem was left undecided under the Oslo Accords
-

ILO Conventions on child labour

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Social/Child issue; International Organizations and Conventions

News:

- All 187 countries that are members of the UN International Labour Organization (ILO) have now ratified a convention No. 182 to protect children from the worst forms of child labour, including slavery, prostitution and trafficking. The Pacific island nation Tonga became the final country to ratify the treaty.
- The two ILO Conventions on child labour are Convention No.138 on Minimum Age and Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.
- The aim of ILO Convention No.138 on the minimum age is the effective abolition of child labour by requiring countries to: 1) establish a minimum age for entry into work or employment; and 2) establish national policies for the elimination of child labour.
- The Recommendation No. 146 which accompanies Convention No. 138, stresses that national policies and plans should provide for: poverty alleviation and the promotion of decent jobs for adults, so that parents do not need to resort to child labour; free and compulsory education and provision of vocational training; extension of social security and systems for birth registration; and appropriate facilities for the protection of children, and adolescents who work.
- Convention No. 182 requires countries to take ratifying countries to take immediate, effective and time-bound measures to eliminate the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency.
- The Recommendation No. 190, which accompanies Convention No. 182, recommends that any definition of “hazardous work” should include: work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse; work underground, underwater, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces; work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools or carrying heavy loads; exposure to

hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels or vibrations damaging to health; work for long hours, night work, and unreasonable confinement to the premises of the employer.

- These Conventions have been ratified by India

Core Conventions of the ILO: - The eight Core Conventions of the ILO (also called fundamental/human rights conventions) are:

- Forced Labour Convention (No. 29)
 - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No.105)
 - Equal Remuneration Convention (No.100)
 - Discrimination (Employment Occupation) Convention (No.111)
 - Minimum Age Convention (No.138)
 - Worst forms of Child Labour Convention (No.182)
 - These Conventions have not been ratified by India
 - Freedom of Association and Protection of Right to Organised Convention (No.87)
 - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No.98)
-

UAE, Israel establish direct phone service after deal

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-II – International Relations; Bilateral agreements

Context: The Israeli and UAE Foreign Ministers inaugurated on Sunday direct phone services between the two countries in their first announced call after an peace agreement to normalise relations, said an Emirati official.

- The UAE has become the first Gulf Arab state to do so and only the third Arab nation to have active diplomatic ties with Israel.

Impact on the UAE:

- The deal smoothen the UAE's international campaign to be seen as a beacon of tolerance in the Middle East despite being governed by autocratic rulers.
- It puts the UAE out first in a regional recognition race among neighbouring Gulf Arab states.

Impact on Israel:

- The announcement justifies the year-long claims of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that his government enjoys closer ties to Arab nations than publicly acknowledged.
- The deal gives Netanyahu a domestic boost at a time when Israel's coalition government is facing infighting and the possibility of early elections.

Important value additions:

- Under the deal, Israel would suspend its plans to annex large parts of the occupied West Bank.
- The West Bank is sandwiched between Israel and Jordan. One of its major cities is Ramallah, the de facto administrative capital of Palestine.
- Israel took control of it in the Six-day Arab-Israeli war, 1967 and has over the years established settlements there.
- A joint statement from the USA, the UAE and Israel has been issued which says that delegations would meet in the coming weeks to sign deals on direct flights, security, telecommunications, energy, tourism and healthcare.
- Both nations will also partner on fighting the Covid-19 pandemic together.

- It remains unclear what prompted Israel and the UAE to make the announcement now.
- In June 2020, the UAE's ambassador to the USA warned that Israel's plan to annex the Jordan Valley and other parts of the occupied West Bank would upend Israel's efforts to improve ties with Arab nations.



Image source: [Here](#)

Abraham Accord: UAE-Israel peace agreement

Context: In a joint statement released by the US, Israel and the UAE, the leaders of the three countries agreed to the full normalization of relations between Israel and UAE.

- The agreement that will be called the 'Abraham Accord' was brokered by US President Donald Trump.

What are the clauses of this agreement?

- The deal states that UAE would recognise the state of Israel and establish formal diplomatic relations with it, while Israel would halt its controversial plan to annex swathes of the Palestinian West Bank.
- In the next few weeks, Israel and the UAE will finalise bilateral ties and cover areas of investment, tourism, security, technology, energy, environmental issues, and the establishment of embassies, in addition to other areas of cooperation.
- The joint statement mentioned that Israel and the UAE would also be "forging closer people-to-people relations".

- The statement also said that Israel will focus its efforts now on expanding ties with other countries in the Arab and Muslim world, and that the US and UAE would be assisting it in achieving that goal.

Do You Know?

- Except with Jordan and Egypt, Israel does not have diplomatic relations with Gulf Arab states owing to its long-standing conflict with Palestinians
- Israel had signed peace agreements with Egypt in 1979 and with Jordan in 1994.
- However, despite the absence of official diplomatic relations, Israel has been engaging with its neighbours with regard to issues like trade.

What are the politics behind this agreement?

- Domestic Politics of Israel: PM Netanyahu, who has been facing mishandling of the coronavirus outbreak and is on trial for corruption, may be banking on this agreement to revive his image.
- Domestic Politics of USA: This agreement brokered by US is seen as diplomatic win of President Trump ahead of the November elections, where he seeks re-election. His other foreign policy bets — Iran, North Korea or Afghanistan — were either disastrous or inconclusive.
- Politics of UAE: The agreement further burnishes its international campaign to be seen as a beacon of tolerance in West Asia despite being governed by autocratic rulers.
- To Alienate Iran: The agreement could pave the way for the region's Sunni Arab kingdoms and the Jewish-majority Israel enhancing regional cooperation against their common foe, Shia Iran.

What do the Palestinians think about this?

- Palestinians have long relied on Arab backing in their struggle for independence. This announcement marked both a win and setback.
 - It is a win as the deal halts Israeli annexation plans.
 - It is a setback as Palestinians have repeatedly urged Arab governments not to normalise ties with Israel until a peace agreement establishing an independent Palestinian state is reached.
- Palestine contends that UAE has moved away from the Arab Peace Initiative:
- It is a Saudi Arabia initiative endorsed by the Arab League that offered recognition to Israel in exchange for its full withdrawal from the occupied territories (returning to pre-1967 borders)

Significance of the agreement

- The agreement shows how the Arab countries are gradually decoupling themselves from the Palestine question
- The deal buys UAE a lot of goodwill in the US, where its image has been tarnished by its involvement in the Yemen war
- Other gulf states in the region like Bahrain and Oman could follow suit and sign similar agreements with Israel
- If the Arab states do fall in line, it would dramatically bring all Sunni nations in the region in an anti-Iran alliance with Israel
- In South Asia, it will put Pakistan in a bind, whether to follow UAE's steps (will be seen as giving up Islamic cause of Palestine) or not to follow UAE (since it is already in feud with the Saudis over not taking up Kashmir case, Pakistan cannot afford another hostile Islamic Country)

Conclusion

- The Palestinian leadership, on its part, should understand the emerging reality in West Asia — the Arab- Israel conflict is coming to a close, but the Palestine-Israel conflict is to continue without any respite.

Connecting the dots:

- Israel-Palestine [Conflict](#)
 - USA's West Asia [Peace plan](#)
-

INDIA AND THE WORLD

14th India-Singapore Defence Policy Dialogue held

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

In News:

- The 14th India-Singapore Defence Policy Dialogue (DPD) was held via video conferencing.
- Discussions on a number of issues of bilateral defence engagements between India and Singapore were held.
- The Implementing Arrangement on Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR) between India and Singapore was also signed.



Image source: [Click here](#)

ASEAN-India network of think tanks (AINTT) organised

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – Global Groupings; International Relations

In News:

- 6th Round Table of ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks (AINTT) was recently organised.
- **Organized by:** Indian Ministry of External Affairs and Foreign Ministry of Thailand.
- **Theme:** 'ASEAN-India: Strengthening Partnership in the Post COVID Era'.

Important value additions

The ASEAN-India Round Table

- **Established at:** 7th ASEAN-India Summit in Thailand in 2009.
- **Objective:** To provide policy inputs to Governments on future direction of cooperation.
- **Comprises of:** Think tanks, policy makers, scholars, media and business representatives.

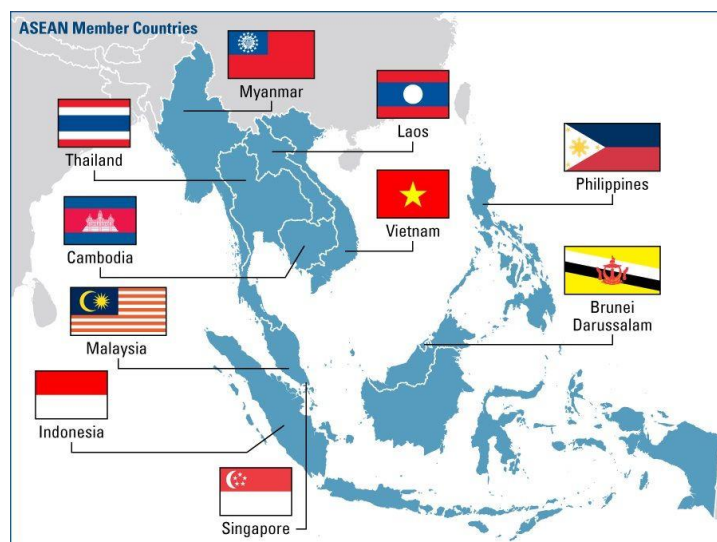


Image source: [Click here](#)

1947 agreement Tripartite agreement

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – India-Nepal relations; International relations

About:

- Tripartite agreement between the United Kingdom, India and Nepal was a treaty signed in 1947 concerning the rights of Gurkhas in military service.
- In 1947, India became independent from the United Kingdom, and it was decided between the two governments to split the Gurkha regiments between the British and Indian armies — six Gurkha units became part of the new Indian Army, while four were transferred to the British Army.
- As a part of this arrangement, it was agreed that Gurkhas in British and Indian service should enjoy broadly the same conditions of service, to ensure that there was no unfair advantage to serving in one or other, thus maintaining economic stability and social harmony in the Gurkha recruiting areas.
- Thus, the governments of the United Kingdom, India and Nepal came to sign the Tripartite Agreement (TPA).

Why in news?

- Nepal Minister said 1947 pact on Gurkha soldiers have become redundant.
- Gurkha veterans have been alleging that the U.K. has been discriminating against them.

Suspension of H-1B visas and its impact

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Foreign policies affecting India's interests; Diaspora

Context:

- US President on June 23 suspended the H-1B visas, along with other types of foreign work visas, until the end of 2020 to protect American worker.
- Trump administration announced that it won't tolerate firing of Americans for cheap foreign labour.

- This would be a major set back for the Indians as a majority of the H-1B visas were allotted to Indians.

Impact on Indians

- Suspending H-1B and other work visas is likely to affect the movement of skilled professionals, and to have impact on Indian nationals and industry
- People-to-people linkages, as well as trade and economic cooperation in technology and innovation sectors, are an important dimension in the US-India partnership.

According to a domestic rating agency -

- Suspension of the H1-B visas by the US will cost domestic IT firms Rs 1,200 crore and have a marginal 0.25-0.30 per cent impact on their profitability.

What is a H-1B visa?

- The H-1B is a visa in the United States under the Immigration and Nationality Act, which allows US employers to temporarily employ foreign workers in speciality occupations.
- A speciality occupation requires the application of a specialised knowledge and a bachelor's degree or equivalent of work experience.
- The duration of a stay is three years and can be extended up to six years. Once this period is over, the visa holder will need to re-apply.

Operation Gibraltar

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – India and Pakistan relations; Security issues

About:

- Operation Gibraltar was the codename given to the strategy of Pakistan to infiltrate Jammu and Kashmir, and instigate the locals in starting a rebellion against Indian rule there.
- Pakistan specifically chose this name to draw a parallel to the Muslim conquest of Spain that was launched from the port of Gibraltar.

Do you know?

- In August 1965, Pakistan Army's troops disguised as locals, entered Jammu and Kashmir from Pakistan with the goal of fomenting an insurgency among Kashmiri Muslims. However, the strategy went awry from the outset due to poor coordination, and the infiltrators were soon discovered.
- The operation sparked the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, the first major engagement between the two neighbours since the Indo-Pakistani War of 1947.

India-Pakistan: Concerns

Part of: GS Mains II – India and its neighbours; International Relations

In news:

- Pakistan Prime Minister unveiled a “new political map” of Pakistan that includes the entire erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir as well as Junagadh in Gujarat.
- Indian government has dismissed the new Pakistan map as a “political absurdity”.

Do you know?

- Such maps were published in 1947-48 when Mohammed Ali Jinnah was Pakistan's first governor general.

FATF meeting soon

- Ahead of the crucial Financial Action Task Force (FATF) meetings in October, India to highlight Pakistan's inaction.
 - Pakistan's performance in acting against terror-•financing infrastructure will be assessed.
-

India-China: Concerns

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – India and its neighbours; International Relations

About:

- India rejected the Chinese initiative to discuss the Kashmir issue in a closed-door meeting in United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and reiterated that Kashmir is a domestic issue.
- China's attempt did not attract sufficient support from the UNSC members.

Do you know?

- China had repeatedly attempted to bring Kashmir issue during UNSC meetings.
 - The frequency of such attempts by China has prompted diplomats to highlight the unequal nature of the UN organ, where the agenda is set by the permanent members (P5) of the UNSC.
 - Kashmir issue had not been taken up at the council since it last figured in the world body before the India-Pakistan war of 1971.
-

On Pakistan's new map

Context: On August 4th 2020, Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan unveiled a new political map of his country inviting a sharp reaction from India.

What are the changes in Pakistan's new map?

- In New map, Pakistan lays claim to all of Jammu and Kashmir, thus far shown as disputed territory.
- The new map draws a line demarcating Gilgit-Baltistan separately from the part of Kashmir under its control (Pakistan occupied Kashmir)
- It renames Jammu and Kashmir as "Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir".
- The new map leaves the claim line with Ladakh unclear.
- It also lays claim to Siachen and [Sir Creek](#)
- A new and somewhat surprising claim was made over Junagadh (a part of coastal Gujarat)

What has been India's response on Pakistan's new map?

- India has dismissed the map as an "exercise in absurdity" that made "untenable claims" to territories in India.
- India stated that these ridiculous assertions have neither legal validity nor international credibility.
- India also added that the release of the new map confirms Pakistan's "obsession with territorial aggrandizement" supported by cross-border terrorism.

Implication of Pakistan's New Map on India

- Aimed at provocation: Pakistan's decision to issue the map is considered a tit-for-tat manoeuvre in return for India's decision to reorganise Jammu and Kashmir in 2019

- Erodes the Progress made over past decades: New claims will reset several agreements with India that have been concretised over the past 70 years
- Issue of Ladakh: Pakistan's claim to all of J&K but not Ladakh, goes against its own commitment to adjudicate the future of all six parts of the erstwhile royal state of J&K (Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, PoK and Aksai Chin) with India
- Regressive Step: While both sides had reached an impasse on Siachen, the Sir Creek agreement had made considerable progress, and was reportedly even resolved, pending a political announcement in 2007.
- Not Conducive for Future resolutions: Sir Creek & Siachen were without doubt disputed areas,
- and Pakistan's unilateral claim over them is not helpful or conducive to future resolution
- Opens up a whole new dispute: While Junagadh was in contention at the time of Partition, the issue was successfully resolved after a referendum was conducted there. Laying new claim of this settled matter opens up new frontiers of dispute.
- Internationalisation of dispute: Pakistan's new map is intended to provoke India, and
- internationalise the border disputes
- Three-pronged Cartographic Challenge: Pakistan's actions come in conjunction with map- related issues India faces today on two other fronts: with China at the Line of Actual Control on Ladakh, and with [Nepal at Kalapani](#) and Limpiyadhura

Way Ahead

- It is no coincidence that all three countries objected to the map New Delhi had issued in November 2019, post the abrogation of Article 370. India must be prepared to face them.

Connecting the dots:

- India-China border clashes
- Annexation of Hyderabad (Operation Polo)

Fishermen issue of India & Pakistan

Context: Fishermen along the Coastal area of Gujarat at times end up in Jails of Pakistan

Do you Know?

- As per list of prisoners exchanged between India & Pakistan, 270 Indian fishermen and 54
- civilian prisoners are in Pakistan's prisons
- Likewise, India has 97 Pakistani fishermen and 265 civilian prisoners in its jails

What is the issue?

- As fishermen do not get ample fish on the Gujarat side, they have no option but to go farther and farther out into the sea.
- As they fish in mid-sea, they end up in waters controlled by Pakistan and are arrested by Pakistani authorities for illegally entering into their territory.
- The problem is aggravated by the dispute over the Sir Creek in Kutch and the failure to officially determine the maritime boundary between the two nations.

What is Sir Creek dispute?

- Sir Creek is a 96 km (60 mi) tidal estuary in uninhabited marshlands of Indus river delta on the border of India and Pakistan

- The Creek opens up in the Arabian Sea and roughly divides the Kutch region of Gujarat from the Sindh Province of Pakistan
- It was originally named Ban Ganga, but was later renamed after a British representative
- Sir Creek dispute between India & Pakistan lies in the interpretation of the maritime boundary line between Kutch and Sindh
- India claims that the boundary lies mid-channel according to international law and the Thalweg principle, while Pakistan claims that the boundary lies to the east of the creek
- Thalweg Principle states that river boundaries between two Countries may be divided by the mid-channel if the water-body is navigable
- Consequences of Fishermen arrests
- Act of Innocence: Most of these are fishermen are those who unknowingly crossed the invisible line in the water between the countries.
- Impact on Livelihood: When fishermen are arrested, their boats are also confiscated. Even if they are released, their livelihoods are vulnerable till they get back possession of their boats from the other country.
- Burden on Women: When men are imprisoned in the other country, women bear the brunt of the load, while somehow holding their families together.
- Impact on Children of Fishermen: There are many examples across villages where the children of the arrested fishermen have lost their childhoods.
- Emotional Distress to Families: The families are barely aware of the status of jailed fishermen and left to fend for themselves until they return, which leads to emotional distress.
- Violation of Human Rights: On average, these arrested men would have spent one-and-a-half years in prisons. It has become an issue of survival for these arrested persons.

What would happen to jailed fishermen?

- In more friendly or less antagonistic circumstances, they would have been released after a formal procedure to check that they were really fishermen and not spies
- However, during the times of tension, the value of their lives lies at the mercy of the authorities. They often languish for years in detention centers even after completing their imprisonment.

Has there been any attempt by government to resolve this recurring issue?

- To address this issue, in 2008, India and Pakistan had formed a judicial committee consisting of four retired judges from each country.
- The committee used to visit prisons of the other country specifically to meet the prisoners, examine consular access, status of their health condition, and so on.
- It unanimously suggested release and repatriation of fishermen and a few women prisoners.
- The governments of both countries praised their work but did not implement the recommendations.
- The last meeting was held in October 2013. Five years later, there was a move to revive the panel. India nominated its four members but Pakistan did not.

Steps taken by the government to mitigate the problem

- The Indian government has undertaken a census of fishermen, preparing a database of information on fishermen and their boats to be used for more effective monitoring of fishing activities.
- The Indian Coast Guard has also begun installing tracking devices in fishing boats operating in the waters that has the ability to send out alerts disaster or when the boat is apprehended by another country

Way Ahead

- Both countries should treat it as a humanitarian issue and take necessary steps to release and repatriate fishermen along with their boats
- It is also time that the two countries now consider adopting a 'no-arrest policy' in the case of
- fishermen.

Connecting the dots:

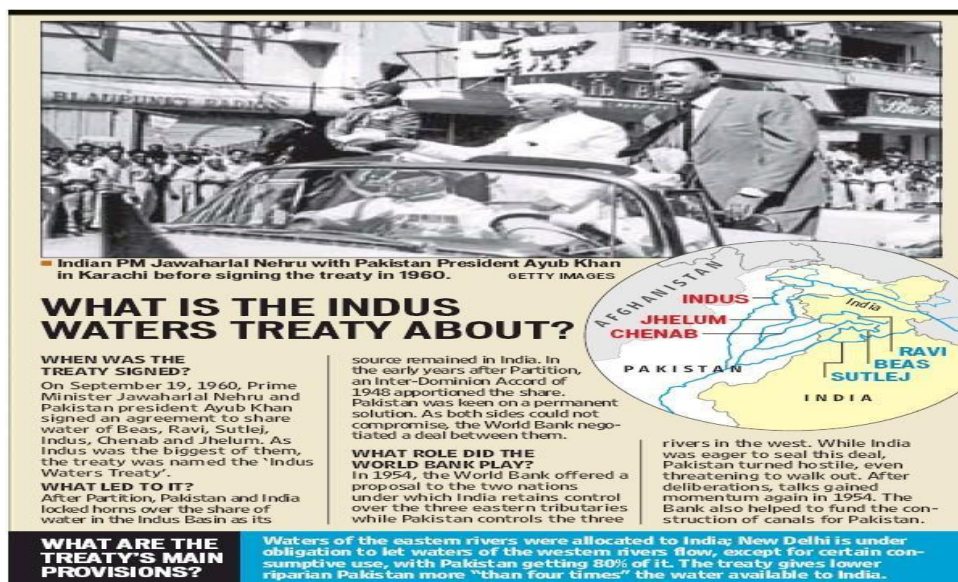
- Fishermen issue between India and Sri Lanka

Indus Waters Treaty

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – India and Pakistan relations

Context:

- Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) – Signed by India and Pakistan in 1960
- Under the treaty, India has full use of the three “eastern” rivers (Beas, Ravi, Sutlej), while Pakistan has control over the three “western” rivers (Indus, Chenab, Jhelum), although India is given rights to use these partially as well for certain purposes.



Pic: [IWT](#)

Do you know?

- According to the terms of the IWT, India has the right to build RoR projects on the three

- ‘western’ rivers — the Chenab, Jhelum and Indus — provided it does so without substantially impeding water flow in Pakistan downstream.
-

Isolating China, as proposition and the reality

Context: The latest round of talks, on 2nd August 2020, between the Military Commanders of India and China, did not produce any breakthrough.

For the background on the recent Indo-China border clashes : Click [here](#) and [here](#)

Why breakthrough in Diplomacy was not achieved?

- China reiterated that their troops “were on its side of the traditional customary boundary line”
- (that India opposes)
- China also criticised what is essentially India’s internal matter, viz., the changes effected to the status of Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019.
- India’s MEA has promulgated that “the state of the border and the future of India’s ties with China cannot be separated”.

What does this stalemate mean?

- The situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Ladakh sector thus remains essentially unchanged.
- A return to the *status quo ante* prior to May 2020, is nowhere in sight.
- The tensions along the border is going to continue for a longer period of time may be not at the intense level seen during the months of April-May 2020.

Do you know?

- In the 1970s, China grabbed control over the Paracel Islands from Vietnam.
- In the 1990s, it occupied Mischief Reef in the Spratly Islands, an area of the South China Sea that the Philippines had always considered its territory.

What has been global perception about recent Chinese actions?

- Chinese Intentions exposed: Beijing’s virtual takeover of Hong Kong, land grab in South China Sea and adventurism along India border exposed China’s ‘imperialist ambitions’ and President Xi Jinping’s authoritarian world view.
- Growing Voice about Chinese Unilateralism: China’s approach has been unilateralism rather than compromise, when dealing with its smaller neighbours. Taiwan, Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia and South Korea have all complained about China’s menacing postures in their vicinity
- Realignment in Global Geopolitics: After years of cooperating with one another, the U.S. and China are currently at the stage of confrontation, with both flexing its military muscle and seeking allies to join their camps (reminiscence of Cold war era)
- Alliance Vs Non-Alignment: A Cold war type politics places several countries, especially in Asia, in a difficult position as most of them do not wish to take sides — especially with a belligerent China as neighbour

Despite its predatory tactics why is China far from being isolated in world affairs?

Realisation of being the Prisoner of Geography:

- China was always known to be over-protective of the South China Sea considering it a natural shield against possible hostile intervention by outside forces inimical to it.

- Thus, China is compelled to be aggressive about protecting its frontier.
- This realpolitik of China is being understood by Asian neighbours and therefore not openly aligning with USA at this juncture.

Leveraging the Economic Advantage:

- China seems confident that its stranglehold on the global economy ensures that it does not face any real challenge
- A majority of ASEAN countries have grave concerns about China's predatory tactics but ASEAN having become one of China's biggest trading partners, it adopts a default position. viz., "not to take sides"
- Conclusion
- Geo-balancing is not happening to China's disadvantage. This lesson must be well understood, when
- countries like India plan their future strategy.

Connecting the dots:

- String of Pearls Strategy
 - Belt and Road Initiative
-

A self-reliant foreign policy

Context: Self-reliance is the theme of India's 74th Independence Day.

About

Self-reliance

- Economically: It means production of key goods and services within the country. In other words, the goal is to reduce import dependence of critical commodities, especially in the backdrop of global 'supply shock' caused by the pandemic.
- Foreign policy: The foreign policy corollary is to sustain the 'strategic autonomy' in international affairs i.e. not taking orders from or succumbing to pressure from great powers. It means not becoming subordinate to foreign hegemon.
- India's advocacy for autonomy (& non-alignment) in making foreign policy choices has remained constant, despite changes in world order over decades.
- Bipolar from 1947 to 1991- era of Cold War where world was divided in two camps one headed by USA and other headed by erstwhile USSR
- Unipolar from 1991 to 2008 – With disintegration of USSR, USA became the sole super power while China caught up with USA in overall power
- Multipolar at present times where there are big powers and several middle powers
- At the same time, India has shown flexibility in Foreign policy
- Strategic autonomy has often been adjusted in India's history as per the changing situations
- In moments of crisis, India has reinterpreted freedom and shown flexibility for survival. For example
- During the 1962 war with China, the greatest advocate of non-alignment, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, had to appeal to the U.S. for emergency military aid to stave off the Chinese aggression along Indian borders
- In the build-up to the 1971 war with Pakistan, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had to enter a Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union to ward off both China and the U.S
- In Kargil in 1999, India welcomed a direct intervention by the U.S. to force Pakistan to back down

Do above examples indicate that India abandoned autonomy (or non-alignment)?

- In all the above examples, India did not become any less autonomous when geopolitical circumstances compelled it to enter into *de facto* alliance-like cooperation with major powers.
- Rather, India secured its freedom, sovereignty and territorial integrity by manoeuvring the great power equations and playing the realpolitik game.

Is there a need for India to rethink its approach to Strategic autonomy?

- India is at an inflection point with regard to strategic autonomy. China and the U.S. are sliding into a new Cold War, with India's security and sovereignty being challenged primarily by the former
- Non-alignment 2.0 in a threat environment from nuclear neighbour (China) makes little sense, especially when US is looking for partners in region to contain China
- Thus, there is strong advocacy for an alliance like partnership with USA

What are fears associated with India's close proximity to the U.S.?

- Increasing Risk: For India, which values freedom, placing all its eggs in the U.S. basket to counterbalance China would be an error.
- Reduced Space for India: It would mean India coming under the pressure of US interests that can cost India its strategic autonomy.
- Impacts other interests: Stronger Indo-US alliance can constrict India's options in other theatres of national interest such as its ties with Iran and Russia
- Challenges to Domestic goals: It can also slowdown efforts of improving indigenous defence modernisation (US pressure to buy its weapons in exchange for its support to India to counter China)

Way Ahead

- India should stay as an independent power centre by means of intensified cooperation with middle powers in Asia and around the world.
- Diversification is the essence of self-reliance.
- A wide basket of strategic partners, including the U.S., with a sharper focus on constraining China, is a viable diplomatic way forward in the current emerging multipolar world order.

Connecting the dots:

- Disintegration of USSR – Reasons and impact on India
 - Interlinkage of Globalisation and Foreign Policy
-

India-Australia security cooperation

Part of: GS Mains II and III – India-Aus Bilateral ties; International Relations; Cyber Security

Context:

- India and Australia shared experiences on protecting critical infrastructure, including 5G networks.
- Both the countries are working on cybersecurity cooperation.
- Another area which the two countries were exploring was of regulatory space, including Australia's encryption legislation, and how that could be used to prevent cyber-enabled crime.

Do you know?

- In June, both the countries signed a cyber and cyber-enabled critical technology framework agreement along with the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP).
-

India-Maldives: mn package

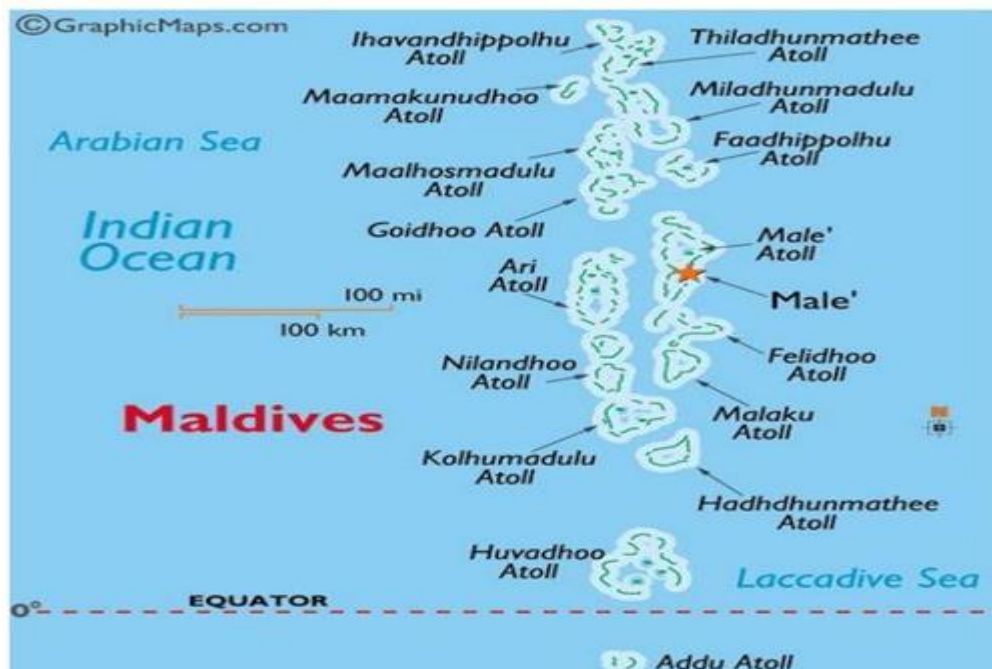
- Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – India-Maldives Bilateral ties; International Relations

Context:

- India announced a slew of new connectivity measures for the Maldives – which includes air, sea, intra-island and telecommunications.
- The above move is an effort to help the Indian Ocean Islands deal with the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Initiatives proposed:

- Air connectivity “bubble” for travel direct ferry service
- Submarine cable for telecom connectivity assistance for the Greater Male Connectivity project (GMCP)
- At present, India-assisted projects in the region include water and sewerage projects on 34 islands, reclamation project for the Addu island, a port on Gulhifalhu, airport redevelopment at Hanimadhoo, and a hospital and a cricket stadium in Hulhumale.
- Do you know?
 - India to fund the implementation of the Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP) in the Maldives with mn packages.
 - The GMCP will consist of a number of bridges and causeways to connect Male to Villingili, Thilafushi and Gulhifalhu islands that span 6.7 km.
 - It would ease much of the pressure of the main capital island of Male for commercial and residential purposes.



ECONOMY

Core sector output shrank further

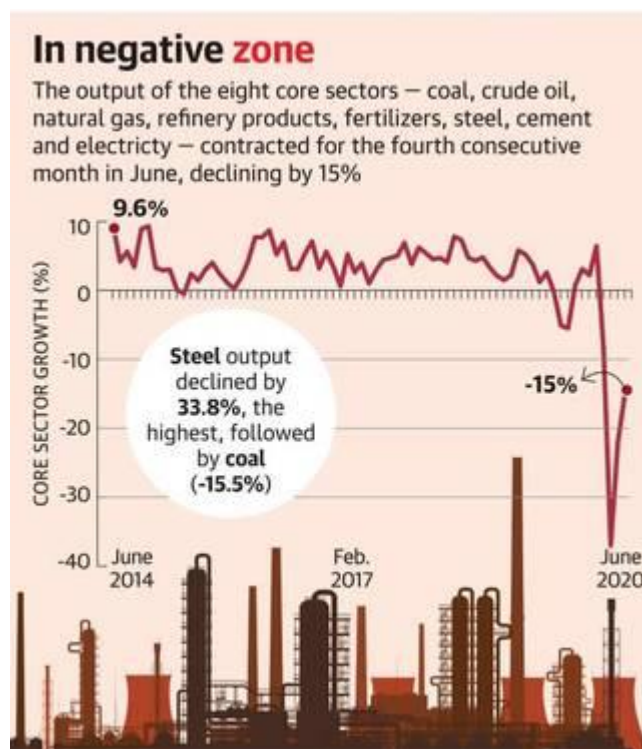
Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II – Economics – Growth and Development

Context:

- The output of eight core sector industries shrank further.
- Economists expect the negative trend to continue for at least two more months.
- During April--June 2020-21, the sector's output dipped by 24.6% as compared to a positive growth of 3.4% in the same period previous year.

Do you know?

- Of the eight core sectors, the fertilizer industry was the only one which saw actual growth.
- It reflects the positive outlook in the agriculture sector where a normal monsoon is leading to expectations of a bumper kharif crop.
- The remaining industries showed contraction, with the steel sector continuing to remain the worst performer.



Pic: The Hindu

Bharat Air Fibre Services: BSNL Launches service in Maharashtra

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Economy

Context:

- The Bharat Air Fibre services are introduced by BSNL as part of Digital India initiatives by the GoI.
 - The aim of these services is to provide wireless connectivity in the range of 20 km from the BSNL locations, which will benefit citizens residing in remote areas.
 - It provides high-speed broadband to subscribers of remote areas by bridging the gap of last-mile connectivity through radio waves.
 - The state-run telco will also offer free voice calling along with Bharat Air Fibre connectivity with data speeds of upto 100 Mbps.
 - BSNL will provide the Bharat Air Fibre Services through local business partners.
 - The service thus aims at giving a push to 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' Abhiyan as BSNL will provide monthly income of Rs 1 lakh to the local residents who enroll as Telecom Infrastructure Partners.
-

Covid and food security

Context: Covid-19 and the ensuing global economic crisis have demonstrated that the world is unprepared for food security.

Do you know?

- The UN's recent report 'The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020' projected that the SDG of Zero Hunger by 2030 will not be met.
- Almost 194.4 million people in India are undernourished, according to the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019 report by the FAO.

What are the four pillar of food security?

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) states that the four pillars of food security are

- Availability
- Access
- Stability
- Utilisation

What actions were taken by government to tackle the food insecurity in future?

- The Union government announced the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) will be extended till November.
- Free grain is being distributed under the scheme to ensure the poorest of the poor are not left hungry.
- The scheme is supposed to cost Rs 1.7 lakh crore to the exchequer.

Challenges w.r.t PMGKAY

- **Poor Distribution by States:** Almost 8 lakh tonnes of foodgrains had been allocated for distribution under the scheme in March, but the states were able to distribute only 1.07 lakh tonnes of that till May.
- **Inadequate focus on all four pillars of Food Security:** While the government is ensuring availability, access to foodgrains and utilisation are the areas that government has underperformed and needs immediate attention.

What will be the consequences if drawbacks in distribution is not addressed?

- **Bad Governance:** It will lead to wastage of resources primarily due to human & administrative inefficiency. This will further put people into stress during pandemic
- **Disproportionate impact on weak:** The food security and nutritional status of the most vulnerable population groups like SC/STs/poor is likely to deteriorate further
- **Gains will be lost:** A disruption in accessing foodgrains might also mean that the gains India has had in its fight against malnutrition among vulnerable groups like women and children might be lost

Way Ahead

- The FAO recommends improved information systems and collaborating with the private sector to solve distribution problems.
- Nutrition-centric programmes like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and mid-day meals need to keep going strong even though Anganwadi Centres and schools (nodal agencies for the schemes) might not open soon
- Inter-state collaboration and learning can be a viable solution in India's case. For ex: States like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Odisha have responded well even during lockdown times by providing dry ration, under these schemes, from door-to-door.
- Direct cash transfers into the accounts of eligible beneficiaries have worked in states like Rajasthan to reduce stunting, wasting and underweight among children and can be launched at the national level.

Conclusion

For ensuring zero hunger – resilient and strong systems are needed

Connecting the dots:

- National Food Security Act
- Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan

Handloom Sector

Context: Sixth edition of National Handloom Day was celebrated on 7th August 2020 which was marked by announcements by Ministry of Textiles

Some of the announcements were

- The termination of the handloom, powerloom, wool, jute and silk boards – **To reduce bureaucratic red tapes**
- The integration of plans for the sector with other ministries like Tourism, Culture, Women & Child development – **To synergise efforts of multiple ministries**
- National Institute of Fashion Technology students and faculty are to guide nine Weavers' Service Centres. This is a good move for their revival as many have potential – **Infusion of knowledge & skills into weavers**

Do You Know?

- August 7 was chosen as the National Handloom Day to commemorate the Swadeshi Movement which was launched on this day in 1905 in Calcutta Town Hall to protest against the partition of Bengal by the British government.

Importance of Handloom

- **A hallmark of Indian culture:** Almost every state of India has a unique handloom product to offer such as Phulkar from Punjab, Chanderi from Madhya Pradesh, Ikats from Andhra Pradesh, Daccai from West Bengal, Brocade from Benares
- **Global Recognition:** Indian handloom is rich in variety and is appreciated all over the world over for its craftsmanship and intricacy of designs and thus holds huge potential in global textile market
- **Employment Provider:** The handloom industry is one of the largest unorganized sectors of economic activity in India providing employment to 43.31 lakh weavers from rural and semi-urban areas
- **Rural Centred Industry:** According to the Fourth All India Handloom Census 2019-20, 31.45 lakh households are engaged in handloom, weaving and allied activities, out of which 87% are in rural areas and the remaining 13% are in urban areas
- **Large Female Workforce:** Most of the weavers are women and people from economically disadvantaged groups and 77% of the adult weavers are women.
- **Easy to Start** as it entails minimal use of capital and power
- **Aligned with Sustainable Development** due to environment friendly production processes
- **Flexibility to innovate** due to the specialty in the weave of the textiles in each region that is developed based on location, climate and cultural influences.
- **Livelihoods to weaker Sections of Society:** Nearly 68% of the handloom workers belong to SC, ST & OBC groups

Government Intervention for promotion of the sector

- The **National Handloom Development Programme** which provides concessional credit, support to several block level cluster projects, marketing assistance.
- The government also has yarn supply schemes, export promotions, Geographical Indication of goods, E-Dhaga app and several other schemes and initiatives.

Challenges with the Handloom Sector

- **State handloom boards** (wherever they exist) are not enough as their outreach and vision are limited to the state and responses often depend on vote shares.
- **Ineffective Implementation:** The Handloom Mark is emphasised, but methods for ensuring its purity are not clear.
- **Skill gaps to access IT infrastructure:** If weavers have to avail of all knowledge from a special handloom portal, they need connectivity, computers and digital knowledge, which is lacking for majority of weavers

- **Anti-Gandhian approach:** The declaration of intent of recent announcement is to sell handlooms at “the highest price at the highest level”. Selling expensive cloth to the wealthiest will shrink, not expand the market. The poor man’s cloth has been taken over by powerlooms.
- **Increasing Raw material costs:** From cotton, silk, and woollen yarn to dyes, costs have increased and so has the shortage.
- **Reduced Governmental Financial Support:** The Textile Association of India stated that the budget allocation for the textile sector came down to Rs 4,831 crore in (2019-2020) from Rs 6,943 in the previous fiscal.
- **Accessibility Issues:** Poor infrastructure, older looms and inaccessibility to reach prime markets have made lives of handloom weavers even more difficult.

Way Ahead

- Local production for local markets is a brilliant strategy and needs encouragement.
- Need to implement the recommendations of Satyam and Ajai Shankar committee reports

Connecting the dots

- Kasturirangan Report which formed the basis for the New Education Policy 2020.
-

National Strategy for Financial Education (NSFE): 2020-2025 released

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – Education; GS-III - RBI

In News:

- The National Strategy for Financial Education (NSFE): 2020-2025 document was released.
- **Released by:** RBI.

Key takeaways

- This NSFE is the second one after the 2013-18 NSFE.
 - **Prepared by:** The National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE)
 - **Consultation by:**
 - All the Financial Sector Regulators (RBI, SEBI, IRDAI and PFRDA),
 - Various Indian Central Ministries
 - Stakeholders under the aegis of the Technical Group on Financial Inclusion and Financial Literacy
 - **Recommendations:**
 - Development of relevant content in curriculum in schools, colleges and training establishments
 - Developing capacity among intermediaries involved in providing financial services
 - Leveraging the positive effect of community-led model for financial literacy through appropriate communication strategy
 - Enhancing collaboration among various stakeholders
-

Structured Finance and Partial Guarantee Programme to NBFC-MFIs launched

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

In News:

- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has introduced ‘Structured Finance and Partial Guarantee Programme to NBFC-MFIs.’
- The programme is for Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) and Microfinance Institutions (MFIs).

Key takeaways

- It is a dedicated debt and credit guarantee programme.
- **Objective:** To ensure uninterrupted flow of credit to the last mile in COVID-19-affected rural areas.

- NABARD will provide partial guarantee on loans given to small and mid-sized MFIs.
 - It will help facilitate ₹2,500 crore funding in the initial phase.
 - NABARD has recently signed agreements with Vivriti Capital and Ujjivan Small Finance Bank to roll out the initiative.
-

RBI's Annual Report for 2019-20 released

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

In News:

- RBI annual report for 2019-20 was recently released.

Key takeaways of the report

- Economic contraction triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic would extend into the second quarter.
 - The shock to consumption has been severe.
 - The government consumption would be key to the revival of demand.
 - High frequency indicators point to a reduction in spending that was never observed till now.
 - RBI's survey for July month indicated that consumer confidence fell to an all-time low.
 - Majority of respondents reported pessimism relating to the general economic situation, employment, inflation and income.
-

Magnets for manufacturing

Context: In the aftermath of the pandemic, several manufacturing companies operating from China are predicted to relocate their businesses to other destinations

Many American, Japanese, and South Korean companies based in China have initiated discussions with the Indian government to relocate their plants to India.

Why are companies expected to exit China?

- The first is the realisation that relying heavily on China for building capacities and sourcing manufacturing goods is not an ideal **business strategy** due to supply chain disruptions in the country caused by COVID-19.
- The second is the **fear of Chinese dominance** over the supply of essential industrial goods.
- The third is the growing risk and uncertainty involved in operating from or dealing with China in the light of **geopolitical and trade conflicts between China & USA**

India's Position in Manufacturing Sector

India lags far behind China in manufacturing prowess.

- **Ranking:** China ranks first in contribution to world manufacturing output, while India ranks sixth.
- **Possibility of missing Target:** Against India's target of pulling up the share of manufacturing in GDP to 25% by 2022, its share stood at 15% in 2018, only half of China's figure.
- **Slow Growth Rate:** Industry value added grew at an average annual rate of 10.68% since China opened up its economy in 1978. In contrast, against the target of 12%, the manufacturing sector has grown at 7% after India opened up its economy.
- **Share in World market:** Next to the European Union, China was the largest exporter of manufactured goods in 2018, with an 18% world share. India is not part of the top 10 exporters who accounted for 83% of world manufacturing exports in 2018.

What are the constraints that India faces while promoting manufacturing sector?

- Infrastructure constraints leading to high logistical costs
- A disadvantageous tax policy environment

- A non-conducive regulatory environment
- High cost of industrial credit
- Poor quality of the workforce
- Rigid labour laws
- Restrictive trade policies
- Low R&D expenditure
- Delays and constraints in land acquisition
- Inability to attract large-scale foreign direct investment into the manufacturing sector.

Way Ahead

- A lasting solution to these constraints cannot be possible without the **active participation of State governments** and effective policy coordination between the Centre and the States.
- **State-specific industrialisation strategies** need to be devised and implemented in a mission mode with active hand-holding by the Central government
- To promote electronic manufacturing, Minister of Electronics & IT suggested forming a **Strategy Group** consisting of representatives from the Central and State governments along with top industry executives.
- The purpose of this strategy group is to instil teamwork and leverage ideas through sharing the best practices of the Centre and States.
- A similar approach is needed for developing the whole manufacturing sector.

Connecting the dots

- Make in India Scheme
- [FDI rules for neighbourhood](#) (targeted at China) in the wake of Pandemic

[More details on RBI's annual report 2019-20](#)

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

In News:

- Recently, the [RBI has released its annual report](#) for 2019-2020.

Key takeaways

- Temporary prohibition on loan instalments, postponement of interest payments and restructuring initiatives taken by RBI during Covid-19 pandemic have prevented a big spike in NPAs till now.
- Bank credit growth has slowed significantly in 2020 despite the RBI's efforts to infuse liquidity into the banking system.
- Frauds reported by banks of Rs.1,00,000 and above value have more than doubled (28% increase) in FY 2019-20.
- The public sector banks accounted for most of these frauds (80%).
- The rural demand fared better than urban areas due to the increased pace of kharif sowing.
- In Hospitality, hotels and restaurants, airlines and tourism sectors, employment losses are more severe than in other areas.
- Inflation may remain high in the second quarter of 2020-21.
- Currency notes of ₹2,000 denomination were not printed in 2019-20 and the circulation of these notes have declined over the year.
- Compared to the previous year, there was an increase in counterfeit notes detected in the denominations of ₹10, ₹50, ₹200 and ₹500.
- Counterfeit notes detected in the denominations of ₹20, ₹100 and ₹ 2,000 declined.

Suggestions Made by RBI:

- Targeted public investment along with asset monetisation and privatisation of major ports.

- Apex authorities to drive structural reforms and speedier implementation of infra projects.
 - Recapitalisation of public sector banks,.
 - Deep-seated and wide-ranging reforms to regain losses.
-

RBI announces special OMO of Rs 20,000 crore

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

In News:

- The RBI will conduct simultaneous purchase and sale of government securities under Open Market Operations (OMO) for an aggregate amount of ₹20,000 crore in two tranches.
- It involves purchasing government securities of longer maturities and selling equal amount of securities of shorter maturities.

Important value additions

Open market operations

- It is the sale and purchase of government securities and treasury bills by RBI.
 - **Objective:** To regulate the money supply in the economy.
 - When the RBI wants to increase the money supply in the economy, it purchases the government securities from the market.
 - It sells government securities to suck out liquidity from the system.
 - Under OMO, RBI does not directly deal with the public.
-

Global tourism lost \$320 billion in five months: U.N.

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Economy; Employment

In News:

- According to the United Nations, the global tourism industry has lost \$320 billion in exports in the last five months and more than 120 million jobs are at risk.

Key takeaways

- Export revenues from tourism could fall by \$910 billion to \$1.2 trillion in 2020.
- It could reduce global GDP by 1.5% to 2.8%.
- Jobs in associated sectors, including food service, that provide employment for 144 million workers worldwide are also at risk.
- Tourism is the third-largest export sector of the global economy, behind fuels and chemicals.

It is an emergency situation particularly for many small island developing states and African countries.

Export Preparedness Index (EPI) 2020 released

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

In News:

- **Released by:** NITI Aayog and the Institute of Competitiveness.
- It is the first report to examine export preparedness and performance of Indian states.
- **Objective:** To identify challenges and opportunities; enhance the effectiveness of government policies; and encourage a facilitative regulatory framework.
- The structure of the EPI includes 4 pillars: Policy; Business Ecosystem; Export Ecosystem; Export Performance.

Key takeaways

- Indian states scored average 50% in sub-pillars of Exports Diversification, Transport Connectivity, and Infrastructure.
 - Overall, most of the Coastal States are the best performers.
 - **Top Coastal States:** Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu
 - **Top landlocked states:** Rajasthan, Telangana and Haryana.
 - **Top Himalayan states:** Uttarakhand, Tripura and Himachal Pradesh.
 - **Top Union Territories:** Delhi, Goa and Chandigarh.
-

Increased Investments through P-notes

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

In News:

- According to SEBI data, the value of participatory note (P-note) investments in Indian capital markets increased to Rs. 63,288 crore till July 2020-end.
- This is the fourth consecutive monthly rise in investments through P-notes.

Important value additions

Participatory Notes (P-notes)

- P-notes are Offshore Derivative Instruments (ODIs)
- They are issued by brokers and foreign institutional investors (FIIs) registered with SEBI.
- The investment is made on behalf of foreign investors by the already registered brokers in India who wish to be a part of the Indian stock markets without registering themselves directly.
- P-notes have Indian shares as their underlying assets.
- These instruments are used for making investments in the stock markets.

Do you know?

- P-notes are not used within the country.
 - They are used outside India for making investments in shares listed in the Indian stock market.
 - That is why they are called offshore derivative instruments.
 - For example, Indian-based brokerages buy India-based securities and then issue participatory notes to foreign investors.
 - Any dividends or capital gains collected from the underlying securities go back to the investors.
-

Assessment of Economic Impact of Covid-19 by DSGE Model

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

In News:

- RBI is using Dynamic Stochastic General Equilibrium (DSGE) model to assess the impact of Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown on the Indian economy.
 - DSGE modelling is a method in macroeconomics that attempts to explain economic phenomena (economic growth and business cycles) and the effects of economic policy, through econometric models based on applied general equilibrium theory and economic principles.
 - RBI has considered three main economic agents, viz., households, firms and the government for the assessment.
-

Bamboo Clusters to come up in Jammu and Kashmir

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Economy; Employment; Industrial Parks

In News:

- Three Bamboo Clusters will be developed in Jammu, Katra and Samba areas of Jammu & Kashmir.
 - **Ministry:** Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER)
 - **Objective:** To make Bamboo basketry, Agarbatti and Bamboo Charcol.
 - A Mega Bamboo Industrial Park at Ghati near Jammu and Bamboo Technology Training Centre will also come up in the region.
 - It will provide direct employment to nearly 25 thousand people.
-

Sustainable Finance Collaborative launched

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

In News:

- Sustainable Finance Collaborative was recently launched.
- **Launched by:** The Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme India.

Key takeaways

It included dialogues on:

- barriers to deploying new and innovative financing such as impact investing
 - Role of blended finance instruments
 - Green finance instruments for sustainable development
 - Need for taxonomy of environmentally sustainable activities
-

Tractor industry

Context: Tractor sales shooting up by 38.5% in July 2020 have triggered quite a buzz in the market.

Evolution of the tractor industry in India

- The history of tractors in Indian agriculture goes back to the introduction of steam tractors in 1914 for the **reclamation of wastelands in Punjab**.
- After Independence, the Central Tractor Organisation (CTO) was set up to promote the use of tractors in agriculture.
- In 1951, the tractor industry was included in the **“Core Sector”** of planned economic development, and was also placed under the **“licence raj”**.
- Interestingly, even until 1960, the demand for tractors was being met entirely through imports.
- It was only in 1961 that two companies, Eicher Tractors Ltd. (in collaboration with German Company) and Tractors and Farm Equipment Ltd. (TAFE) (in collaboration with UK Company) started manufacturing tractors in India.
- In 1965, **Mahindra and Mahindra** jumped in the fray in collaboration with the International Tractor Company of India.
- As a result, domestic production of tractors rose from 880 units in 1961-62 to 5,000 units in 1965-66

- **The Green Revolution** gave a **fillip** to the demand for tractors to meet the pressing need of completing timely operations in agriculture. So, the government decided to invite additional entrepreneurs into tractor manufacturing in 1968.
- In 1974, Punjab Tractors Ltd became the first public sector company to manufacture tractors with **indigenous technology**. In 1982, the indigenous Mahindra brand of tractors was also launched.
- However, it was only **in 1991** that tractor manufacturing was completely de-licenced in India. It increased competition, improved quality, and offered more choices to the farmers

Status of Tractor Industry

- India is the **largest manufacturer of tractors** (excluding sub 20 horsepower (hp) belt-driven tractors used in China), followed by the US and China.
- Tractor production in India shot up from 139 thousand in 1991 to almost 900 thousand units in 2018-19
- Indian Company Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) has emerged as the largest player with a 40 per cent share of the market (FY 2019)
- In 2018-19, India exported almost 90,000 tractors to various countries ranging from the US to African nations.
- This speaks of an **“atmanirbhar” and competitive industry**.

What contributed to this success of the tractor industry?

- First, the de-licencing of 1991 was a harbinger of major change in the industry.
- Second, the availability of bank credit for buying tractors helped the market to grow. Almost 95% of tractors are bought on bank credit.

Challenges with the sector

- **Inefficient Usage:** Tractors usage in most states hovers around 500-600 hours per year compared to a benchmark figure of 800-1,000 hours for efficient utilisation.
- This is leading to **“overcapitalisation of farms”** in some parts of India, especially Punjab/Haryana belt
- **Inaccessible by Small & Marginal Farmer:** Due to lack of economic assets, small & marginal farmers still depend on bullocks for farm activities.

Way Ahead – Innovation

- India has to undertake innovative solutions like **“Uberisation of tractor services”**.
- The “Uberisation model” could make tractor services perfectly divisible, accessible and affordable even by small holders without owning the machine.
- Individual farmers who own tractors can also avail of this platform to render tractor services to others and earn some money
- Agri start-ups and innovators of the digital world need to enter this field and promote efficient utilisation of farm machinery.
- The future of the tractor industry will soon include combining tractor services for ploughing and sowing seeds to using sensors, cloud computing and artificial intelligence for precision farming.

Conclusion

- Dovetailing the digital revolution with farm machinery has already started in the US and Europe, ushering in what Howarth Buffett (a farmer and brother of billionaire Warren Buffett) calls the **“Brown Revolution”**.
- The **booming digital economy of India** offers an opportunity to cut costs, increase profitability of cultivation, and thus not only expand the tractor market but also reduce drudgery in farm work

Connecting the dots

- Economic Reforms of 1991
- Green Revolution 2.0

Kerala’s gold smuggling case

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Parallel economy; Economy and issues related to it
About:

- National Investigation Agency (NIA) probe revealed that the initial funds for obtaining gold was raised by persons with dubious antecedents and the funds were sent abroad through hawala channel.

Money laundering

- Money laundering is the processes by which large amounts that are illegally obtained is given the appearance of having originated from a legitimate source.
- Some crimes such as illegal arms sales, terror funding, smuggling, corruption, drug trafficking and the activities of organized crime including tax evasion produce huge money which is required to be ‘laundered’ to make it look clean.

Common avenues for money laundering in India:

- **Hawala:** Hawala is an alternative or parallel remittance system. In Hawala networks the money is not moved physically. For ex: A typical Hawala transaction would be like a resident in USA of Indian origin doing some business wants to send some money to his relatives in India. The person has option either to send the money through formal channel of banking system or through the Hawala system. The commission in Hawala is less than the bank charges and is without any complications for opening account or visit the bank, etc. The money reaches in to the doorstep of the person’s relative and the process is speedier and cheaper.
- **Shell companies:** These are fake companies that exist for no other reason than to launder money. They take in dirty money as “payment” for supposed goods or services but actually provide no goods or services; they simply create the appearance of legitimate transactions through fake invoices and balance sheets.
- **Structuring Deposits:** Also known as smurfing, this method entails breaking up large amounts of money into smaller, less-suspicious amounts. The money is then deposited into one or more bank accounts either by multiple people (smurfs) or by a single person over an extended period of time
- **Third-Party Cheques:** Utilizing counter cheques or banker’s drafts drawn on different institutions and clearing them via various third-party accounts. Since these are negotiable in many countries, the nexus with the source money is difficult to establish.
- **Credit Cards:** Clearing credit and charge card balances at the counters of different banks.
- **Insurance Sector:** The internal channels of laundering money are agent/broker premium diversion, reinsurance fraud and rented asset schemes etc. Phony insurance companies,

offshore/unlicensed Internet companies, staged auto accidents, vertical and senior settlement fraud are external channels of money laundering.

- **Open Securities Market:** the securities markets, which are known for their liquidity, may also be targeted by criminals seeking to hide and obscure illicit funds.
- **Cyber-crimes:** identity theft, illegal access to e-mail, and credit card fraud are coming together with money laundering and terrorist activities. Large amounts of money is now stored in digital form.
- **Illicit stock options:** Example: Consider an investor 'A' who has incurred significant capital gains in a year. In order to offset these gains, they use illiquid stock options to book losses. The counterparty to these contracts, say investor 'B', books profit in these options. B already has an arrangement with A wherein he retains around 10-15 per cent of the profits made and transfers rest of the money to 'A' through non-banking channels.

Measures taken by the government to plug in the legal loopholes:

- The Income Tax Act, 1961
- The Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act, 1974 (COFEPOSA)
- The smugglers and Foreign Exchange Manipulators Act, 1976 (SAFEMA)
- The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPSA)
- The Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act, 1988
- The Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1988.
- The Foreign Exchange Management Act, 2000, (FEMA)
- Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002
- The Financial Intelligence Unit – India (FIUIND)
- India is also a full time member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) which is responsible for setting global standards on anti-money laundering and combating the financing of illegal activities.
- The KYC policies followed by banks.

Alcohol cess

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Economy and taxation

About:

- The 'unscientific' introduction of the COVID-19 cess on wine, beer and spirits had impacted all stakeholders.
- Steep rise in the consumer price led many consumers shift to low-priced, low-quality products, and even moonshine, all of which have huge health and socio-economic ramifications.
- The pandemic cess has adversely impacted the States revenue too as the cess had hit sales volumes.

Covid & milk sector

Context: The economic crisis unleashed by COVID-19 had also impacted the milk sector.

How Milk Sector is unique?

- Regular income: Milk is a unique "crop" that farmers harvest daily.
- Balancing Demand: Since it is consumed daily, supply-demand balancing isn't as difficult as in, say, wheat that is harvested over 2-3 months

- Institutional Capabilities built: While production of milk is subject to seasonal fluctuations — animals, particularly buffaloes, produce more during winter-spring and less in the summer — dairies know to manage it
- Balanced Model: Surplus milk of the “flush” season is usually converted into skimmed milk powder (SMP) and ghee/butter for reconstitution in the “lean” months, when demand for curd, lassi and ice-cream also goes up
- Fast Consumption: Dairies don’t face the problem of unsold inventories, unlike sugar mills or the Food Corporation of India. This is because India’s milk output has more than doubled in the last 15 years, so too has consumption due to rising incomes.

What are the Challenges faced by Sector due to COVID-19?

- Disruption of Existing Model: The above balancing model is being rendered dysfunctional by the demand destruction wrought by the post-COVID shutdown of hotels, restaurants etc
- Accumulation of Produce: With institutional sales collapsing — these make up a quarter of the country’s market for milk and milk products — dairies have been accumulating powder and fat stocks through the summer & monsoon months.
- Future Dangers: Not only is the drop in demand unprecedented, the situation will worsen once production increases in the coming months with improved fodder availability, calving of buffaloes and drop in temperatures
- Drop in Prices: Dairies selling only commodities (SMP and ghee) have already, since the March 25 lockdown, slashed milk prices by Rs 10-13 per litre. Even those largely into liquid milk marketing have cut by Rs3-5/litre.

Way Ahead – Creation of Buffer Stock

- The government should direct the National Dairy Development Board to create a buffer stock of about 60,000 tonnes of SMP and 30,000 tonnes of butter
- The cost of this — at Rs 200/kg for SMP and Rs 300/kg for butter, corresponding to a Rs 25/litre cow milk procurement price — may come to around Rs 2,100 crore, which can be managed
- The funds for buffer stock can be recouped in the next “lean” summer season, when some
- demand normalcy would also have returned

Conclusion

- Not intervening now will hurt farmers.

Connecting the dots

- White Revolution
- Dangers to Dairy Sector from Multilateral Trade Treaties like [RCEP](#)

RBI Monetary Policy Highlights

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Indian Economy – Monetary policy; RBI and Banking

Context:

- RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das announced key policy decisions during the third review of the monetary policy since the COVID-19 pandemic spread in the country.








Do you know?

- Monetary policy is the process by which the RBI controls the supply of money, often targeting an inflation rate or interest rate to ensure price stability.
- RBI reviews its monetary policy every two months.


Key highlights:

- Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the RBI decided to
 - keep the repo rate unchanged at 4 per cent (lowest since it was introduced in 2000)
 - continue accommodative stance of the monetary policy as long as it is necessary to revive growth and mitigate the impact of the pandemic
- RBI Governor announced stimulus measures, which included additional special liquidity of Rs 10,000 crore at repo rate to NABARD and NHB.
- To enhance safety of cheque payments, it has been decided to introduce a mechanism of Positive Pay
 - for all cheques of value ₹50,000 and above.
- RBI to set up an innovation hub
- Priority sector lending to be given to startups also
- Stressed MSME borrowers will be eligible for debt restructuring
- RBI to announce additional measures to enhance liquidity support, ease financial stress, improve flow of credit and deepen digital payment system.

Policy prescription
Some key policy decisions of the Reserve Bank of India

 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Banks allowed to restructure stressed corporate and MSME loans 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Borrowing limits against gold relaxed
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relief to individual borrowers at banks' discretion 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tenure can be extended up to two years for personal loans
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No extension announced on loan moratorium beyond August 31 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ₹10,000 crore support for NHB, NABARD
	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Start-ups included in priority sector lending norms

While space for further monetary policy action is available, it is important to use it judiciously to maximise the beneficial effects for underlying economic activity
SHAKTIKANTA DAS, RBI Governor



Link: [The Hindu](#)

Status of economy, according to RBI:

- Mutual funds have stabilised since the Franklin Templeton episode
 - Supply chain disruptions persist; inflation pressures evident across segments
 - Economic activity had started to recover, but surge in infection has forced imposition of lockdowns
 - Real GDP growth is estimated to be negative for 2020-21
 - Recovery in rural economy expected to be robust
 - Global economic activity has remained fragile.
-

How to Finance the Stimulus: Debt Financing Vs Monetisation of Deficit

Context: Economic Slowdown aggravated by the onslaught of COVID-19 pandemic

What should government do at this juncture of slowdown?

- Government should intervene to revive the economy (Keynesian Economics)
- For this, a greater public spending by government is considered as the *sine qua non* of such a revival

What is the challenge of increased govt spending?

- Greater public spending will increase the fiscal deficit and this expansion has to be financed.
- Fiscal deficit is the total amount of borrowings required to bridge the gap between
- government's spending and revenues.
- There are different ways of financing the expansion
- Raising Revenue: Theoretically fiscal deficit can be financed by higher taxes, but when the economy is slowing it is unpopular & prevents further spending by people
- Debt Financing: This involves borrowing from public (issuing bonds), borrowing external sources like World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- Direct Monetization of Deficit: This involves government selling treasuries to Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

What are the challenges with Debt Financing?

- Imposition of Changes: Borrowing from World Bank & IMF usually comes with conditionality on Economic restructuring (recall 1991 reforms that was part of bailout package)
- Disturbs Inter-Generational Equity: Increased borrowings now means increase in interest payment for future generation and reduced scope for borrowing
- Burden of repayment: Not only have the moneys to be repaid, they will have to be paid back in hard currency.
- This would involve India having to earn hard currency by stepping up exports which is herculean task under present global mood of protectionism.
- For ex: If a stimulus of approximately 10% of the GDP is envisaged, with exports at 25% of GDP, it would imply stepping up exports by close to 50%.
- Takes Attention from Govt's fight against COVID-19: A loan is bound to take some time to be negotiated, taxing the energies of a government that ought to be engaged in the day to day battle with COVID-19.

What is direct monetisation or money financing?

- In layman's language, monetisation of deficit means printing more money.
- In direct monetisation, the government asks RBI to print new currency in return for new bonds that the government gives to the RBI.
- In lieu of printing new cash, which is a liability for the RBI (since, every currency note has the RBI Governor promising to pay the bearer the designated sum of rupees), RBI gets government bonds, which are an asset for the RBI
- Government bonds are asset to RBI because they carry the government's promise to pay back the designated sum at a specified date.
- Now, the government would have the cash to spend and alleviate the stress in the economy
- Note that this is different from the "indirect monetisation" that RBI does when it conducts the Open Market Operations (OMOs) and purchases bonds in the secondary market.

Is direct monetisation practised in India?

- Monetisation of deficit was in practice in India till 1997, whereby the central bank automatically monetised government deficit through the issuance of ad-hoc treasury bills.
- Two agreements were signed between the government and RBI in 1994 and 1997 to completely phase out funding through ad-hoc treasury bills.
- And later on, with the enactment of FRBM Act, 2003, RBI was completely barred from subscribing to the primary issuances of the government from April 1, 2006
- It was agreed that henceforth, the RBI would operate only in the secondary market through the OMO (open market operations) route i.e. Indirect Monetisation
- OMOs involve the sale and purchase of government securities to and from the secondary market by the RBI to adjust the rupee liquidity conditions
- The implied understanding was that the RBI would use the OMO route not so much to support government borrowing but it would be used as a liquidity instrument.

What are the disadvantages of Direct Monetisation which lead to its discontinuation?

- High Inflation: Monetisation involve expansion of money supply that can potentially result in inflation
- Reduces incentive for efficient Spending: Availability of direct monetization route means reduced incentive for government to be fiscally disciplined.
- Promotes Populism: Governments would usually spend on populist measures rather than long-term structural measures knowing fully well that they have a way out for increased fiscal deficit.
- Past Lessons: The usage of direct monetisation route recklessly caused fiscal indiscipline that ultimately led to the balance of payments crisis in 1991.
- Rupee Depreciation: When there is excess supply of the currency due to printing of new currency, it could lead to a fall in rupee value, leading to its depreciation.
- Lowers Investor Confidence: Markets/Investors will fear that the constraints on fiscal policy are being abandoned, when direct monetisation path is adopted. They may see the government as planning to solve its fiscal problems by inflating away its debt.

Won't indirect monetisation (through OMO) lead to Inflation?

- Both monetisation and OMOs involve expansion of money supply that can potentially result in inflation.

- However, the inflation risk that both carry is different.
- OMOs are a monetary policy tool with the RBI deciding on the amount of liquidity to be injected in and when to.
- In contrast, in direct monetisation, the quantum and timing of money supply is determined by the government's borrowing rather than the RBI's monetary policy, to fund the fiscal deficit.
- If RBI is seen as losing control over monetary policy, it will raise concerns about inflation and RBI's credibility to manage money supply.
- Therefore, forsaking RBI credibility can be costly, with wider implications for the economy both in the short- and long-terms.

Can Direct monetisation be used to finance the deficit in post-COVID period?

- Change in economic situation calls for change in policies.
- Inflationary impact of direct monetisation may not be very high at this juncture of Indian economy due to the demand slowdown the economy is experiencing.
- Increased money supply will revive the depressed demand and kickstart production reviving the economy.
- However, when the economy enters the recovery path, increased money supply could proportionately lead to a higher inflation rate.
- Conclusion
- Money financing is a viable route to take us back to pre-COVID-19 levels of output

Connecting the dots:

- Balance of Payment Crisis of 1991
-

The govt and RBI face a trilemma regarding PSBs

Context: Former RBI governor Urjit Patel in his new book *Overdraft—Saving the Indian Saver*, talks about a trilemma facing the Indian central bank and the government with regards to Public Sector Banking.

What is the trilemma?

- The government along with RBI cannot hope to achieve below three points at the same time:
- Have dominance of government banks (public sector banks) in the banking sector
- Retain independent regulation
- Adhere to public debt-gross domestic product (GDP) targets." Only two out of the three can be achieved.
- For Example: *The government wants the public sector banks (PSBs) to dominate the banking system and*
- *at the same time ensure that the public debt doesn't go up.*

What will happen in such a circumstance?

- In this scenario, RBI will have to compromise on independent regulation.
- To dominate the banking system, PSBs will have to increase lending at a fast pace.
- Eventually, this increased lending will lead to accumulation of bad loans or loans that haven't been repaid for 90 days or more.
- Given that the recoveries of bad loans are minimal, the government, as the owner, will have to invest more money into the PSBs to keep them going.
- If the government puts more money into the PSBs, its expenditure will go up.
- It will have to borrow more money and the public debt to GDP ratio will substantially rise

How can public debt to GDP ratio be saved from rising?

- The central bank will have to dilute some regulations to help the PSBs in not recognizing bad loans. In such a case, the government need not invest in the PSBs immediately.
- PSBs will have a greater market share and the public debt to GDP ratio will not rise right away.

However, the RBI will have to dilute banking regulations. What is the issue with RBI diluting norms?

- When RBI dilutes regulations, banks end up kicking the bad loans can down the road. This postponement leads to a bigger problem, which hits the banks, not immediately, but a few years later.
- This is precisely how PSBs accumulated peak bad loans of ₹8.96 trillion, as of March 2018.
- The government then has to recapitalize the banks in the years to come. In the process, it pushes the public debt to GDP ratio up.
- This is one situation that the government has been trying hard to avoid.

What is the eventual way out for RBI, govt?

- The decline in the share of government banks in the banking sector should not be resisted (reduced dominance of PSBs)
- Current trends broadly suggest that the banking sector is increasingly privatized, by stealth, much like the telecom sector. For Ex: In the last decade, the share of PSBs in overall lending has dropped sharply from 75.1% to 57.5% at present.

- As PSBs keep losing share, they will cause fewer headaches for the government and the central bank in the decades to come.

Connecting the dots:

- Liquidity Push and its issues: Click [here](#)
 - Twin Balance Sheet Problem
-

Three Steps to Economic Recovery by former PM Manmohan Singh

Context: The slowing Indian economy (GDP grew at 4.2% in the 2019-20) was further devastated by the Pandemic.

- Present Economic Scenario in India
- The lockdowns and rising public anxiety about the virus led to a sharp deterioration in economic activity in India.
- Post lifting the lockdown, different parts of the economy are likely to recover from the hit at different speeds.
- Industrial activity could possibly normalise, especially in manufacturing where controlling the virus might be easier.
- However, industries in which it is harder — travel or entertainment for example — will still be in a gradual normalisation process, and probably won't rebound completely until a vaccine is available

Do You Know?

- Some economists project India's real GDP to contract by 4.4% in FY21; this would be the deepest recession India has witnessed since 1980.
- The global GDP to projected to contract by 3.5% in 2020, which can be considered as deepest recession since at least the Second World War

How is the present economic shock different from previous crisis (like 1991)?

- Impacted Whole World: The 1991 crisis was a domestic crisis induced by global factors, but today's economic situation is unprecedented in its ubiquity, scale and depth
- Impacts Behavioural Mindset: The fear and scare factor among citizens was not prevalent during any of the previous recessions.
- Unparalleled Response: The COVID-19 shock also has this unique feature which is the response to the shock itself, that is, the virus control and social distancing measures represent a physical constraint on economic activity.
- Domestic & Global Economic Recover interlinked: India is much more integrated with the rest of the world now. In this pandemic, the global economy is severely dented and that will be a big cause of concern for India

What Steps need to be taken to arrest economic crisis?

- Former PM Manmohan Singh provides for 'three steps' to stem India's economic crisis
- First, the government should ensure people's livelihoods are protected and they have spending power through a significant direct cash assistance.
- Second, it should make adequate capital available for businesses through government-backed credit guarantee programmes.

- Third, it should fix the financial sector through institutional autonomy and processes

What are the Challenges with the above steps?

- With tax receipts plummeting, it will be difficult for a cash-strapped government to be able to get the money to fund direct transfers and provide more capital to ailing banks and credit to businesses.
- In order to overcome the challenge, Former PM Manmohan Singh advises Higher borrowing (from external sources like World Bank & IMF)
- He says that even if India has to spend an additional 10% of the GDP to cater to the military, health and economic challenges, it must be done.
- The problem with higher borrowing is it will increase India's debt to GDP ratio. Since this is crisis period, former PM says that increase in this ratio will be worth it as it can save lives & boost economic growth

Is taking loans from global institutions considered a sign of India's economic weaknesses?

- In the past (1991 BoP Crisis), taking loans from multilateral institutions like the IMF and World Bank have been taken as signs of India's economic weaknesses.
- But now India could borrow from a position of strength, compared to other developing nations
- This is because India's track record as a borrower from multilateral institutions is impeccable. Hence borrowing is not a sign of weakness
- Therefore, Indian government must not be shy of borrowing but it must be prudent on how to use that borrowing

Conclusion

- The previous crises were macroeconomic crises for which there were proven economic tools. The present crisis has induced fear and uncertainty in society, and monetary policy alone as an economic tool to counter this crisis is proving to be blunt.

Connecting the dots:

- Direct Monetization of Deficit: Merits & Demerits
-

RBI's Loan Recast Scheme

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Economy and related issues; Banking

In news:

- RBI cleared a loan restructuring scheme for borrowers who are under stress because of the pandemic.
- Key sectors, such as micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), hospitality, aviation, retail, real estate and auto, which are facing a liquidity crunch, will benefit from this scheme.

Do you know?

- One time loan restructuring will help soften the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on banks' asset quality
 - RBI's relaxations under the Prudential Framework on Resolution of Stressed Assets will benefit borrowers in most categories
-

“Transparent Taxation — Honouring the Honest” platform

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III - Govt policies and initiatives; Economy - Taxation

In news:

- “Transparent Taxation — Honouring the Honest” platform was launched recently.
- The platform provides faceless assessment, faceless appeal and a taxpayers’ charter.

Faceless Assessment:

- Under faceless assessment, the scrutiny of returns of a taxpayer will be done by a tax officer selected at random and not necessarily from the same jurisdiction.
- This will do away the need for any face-to-face contact between the taxpayer and tax official, thereby reducing the chances of coercion and rent-seeking.
- The move is expected to ease the compliance burden for assesses and reward the "honest taxpayer", who plays a big role in nation-building.
- A faceless tax system would give the taxpayer confidence on fairness and fearlessness.
- It helps to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of income taxpayers.
- The assessment system seeks to eliminate corrupt practices by doing away with the territorial jurisdiction of income-tax offices.

WHAT THE CHARTER SAYS

- **I-T dept will treat every taxpayer as honest unless there is a reason to believe otherwise**
- **Will provide fair and impartial appeal and review mechanism**
- **Will collect only the amount due in accordance with the law**
- **Will provide a mechanism for lodging a complaint and prompt disposal thereof**

EXPECTATIONS FROM TAXPAYERS

- **They will be honest and compliant**
- **Will respond in time, pay in time**
- **Can approach the Taxpayers’ Charter Cell in their zone for compliance to this charter**

Faceless appeal facility:

- This facility would be available to all citizens from September 25 (Deen Dayal Upadhyaya's birth anniversary)

- A faceless appeal system would allow the taxpayer to appeal against a tax official's decision without the need of making a physical representation.

Taxpayers' charter

- The taxpayers' charter was announced in the Union Budget for fiscal year 2020-21 by the Finance Minister.
- The charter outlines the rights and duties of an honest taxpayer.
- It also defines the commitment of the tax department and the expectations from the taxpayers.
- It is a step towards bringing together rights and duties of the taxpayer and fixing the government's responsibilities towards the taxpayer

Do you know?

- All these above reforms are likely to empower citizens by ensuring time-bound services by the Income Tax Department.
 - PM appealed to those not paying taxes, despite having the ability, to come forward and commit themselves to the cause of making the country self-reliant.
-

COVID-19 impact on MSMEs

Part of: GS Mains III – Indian Economy and issues related to it; Growth and Development

About:

- According to a report from a group of experts on the post-COVID-19 economic and industrial revival -
- Around 20-40% MSMEs facing closure
- Smaller units in the MSME sector suffered from the effects of demonetisation in 2016 and also from the introduction of GST in 2017
- MSMEs have been hit again by the three-month lockdown and due to the uncertainty about the pace of recovery

Do you know?

- Closure of MSMEs could create a serious employment problem, which could further lead into a social crisis.

Measures:

- National report for MSMEs by Global Alliance for Mass Entrepreneurship (GAME) outlines a three-stage approach consisting of 'survive, revive and thrive'.
 - Survival is the first priority and the aim should be to ensure that large numbers of MSMEs are not immediately wiped out.
 - However, those that survive will need to be helped to revive as the economy gets back to normal.
 - There is a need to address the long-term objective of how MSMEs can actually thrive and support a faster growth rate for industry.
-

Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme 2.0

Part of: GS Paper – II GS Paper – III Government Policies & Interventions Growth & Development Banking Sector & NBFCs

Context: The government has extended the scope of the Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme (PCGS) 2.0 to provide greater flexibility to state-owned banks in purchasing bonds and Commercial Papers (CPs) of Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs).

Background:

- The PCGS was announced in July 2019, allowing public sector banks to purchase high-rated (BBB+ or above) pooled assets from financially sound NBFCs and Housing Finance Companies (HFCs).
- A pool of assets is basically a securitisation of loan portfolio i.e. conversion of a loan into a marketable security, typically for the purpose of raising cash by selling them to other investors.
- These are sold by NBFCs/HFCs to banks in return for an advance payment. NBFCs/HFCs get the much needed money and banks get the interest paying assets.
- Credit ratings is an analysis of the credit risk associated with a financial instrument or a financial entity. These range from AAA to C and D.
- As a part of the Aatmanirbhar initiative, the scheme was extended in May 2020 (PCGS 2.0) to cover primary market issuance of bonds/CPs by NBFCs, HFCs and Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) with low credit ratings.
- The Centre provided 20% first loss sovereign guarantee to public sector banks for purchase of bonds/CPs, resulting in liquidity infusion of Rs. 45,000 crore into the system.
- The scheme covered papers with ratings of AA and below, including unrated papers, aimed at providing access to fresh liquidity support to non-bank lenders.

Recent Extension:

- The Scheme has been extended for three months, giving public sector banks time till 19th November 2020 to build their portfolios of bonds and CPs from non-banking financial institutions.
- Further, the government has allowed banks to invest upto 50% of total investments under the Scheme in AA and AA- rated bonds.
- This decision was taken as the earlier limit for such investments at 25% was almost met.

Prelims busters:

- Bonds: Borrowers issue bonds to raise money from investors willing to lend them money.
- Commercial Paper: It is a commonly used type of unsecured, short-term debt instrument issued by corporations, typically used for meeting the short-term liabilities.
- Primary Market: The primary market is where companies issue a new security, not previously traded on any stock exchange. Securities issued through a primary market can include stocks, corporate or government bonds, notes and bills.
- The secondary market is where investors buy and sell securities they already own.

Covid-19 crisis: 5 million salaried Indians lost their jobs in July

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Employment

In News:

- Recently, the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) has released data related to jobs gained or lost during the Covid-19 lockdown period (April-July 2020).

Key takeaways

- Salaried Jobs:
 - They suffered a total loss estimated to be **18.9 million** during April-July 2020.

- After gaining 3.9 million jobs in June, 5 million jobs were again lost in July.
 - Such jobs **more resilient to economic shocks**. However, once lost they are far more difficult to retrieve.
 - Only 21% of all employment in India is in the form of a salaried employment.
 - Loss of urban salaried jobs is likely to have a particular **debilitating impact on the economy**, besides causing **immediate hardship to middle-class households**.
 - Informal and Non-Salaried Jobs:
 - This category of job has **shown improvement** during the April-July 2020 increasing to 325.6 million in July 2020 from 317.6 million in 2019, **an increase of 2.5%**.
 - This is because of the opening of the country in a phased manner.
 - Small traders, hawkers and daily wage labourers were the worst hit by the lockdown.
 - Farm Jobs:
 - The jobs lost in the non-farm sectors have resulted in people moving towards farm employment.
 - The farm sector gained 14.9 million jobs in the April-July 2020 period.
 - In 2019, 42.39% of the workforce in India was employed in agriculture
-

AGRICULTURE

Making agricultural market reforms successful

Context: The recent [reforms in agriculture](#) and [agri-marketing](#) has potential to boost agricultural sector.

Major Policy Changes include

- The removal of restrictions under the Essential Commodities Act (ECA) should help attract private investment in agriculture
- The two new ordinances are expected to enable inter-State trade and promote contract farming, thereby providing a large number of options to farmers

However, there are several difficulties that need to be addressed before the full benefits of these policies are realised. Some of these are

- **‘Time-inconsistency’** problem, or in simple terms, the policy credibility problem.
- This situation arises when a decision maker’s preferences change over time in such a way that the preferences are inconsistent at different points in time.
- This is relevant in present context because the **policy signals are not very clear** in the last few years as relates to agricultural marketing, as we will see below.

How has agri-marketing policy changed over years?

1. In 2016, the electronic national agricultural market (e-NAM) was launched

- The e-NAM was intended to be a market-based mechanism for efficient price discovery by the farmers.
- In the first phase, 585 markets across 16 States and 2 Union Territories were covered.
- States needed to amend their respective Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Acts to put in place three prerequisites for the success of this programme —
 - a single licence across the State;
 - a single-point levy of the market fee;
 - electronic auctioning in all the markets.
- **Reason for failure of e-Nam:** Several States could not or did not carry out these amendments and the e-NAM proved to be far less effective than desired.

2. In September 2018, government launched PM-AASHA

- Since e-NAM did not yield expected results, the government reverted back to public price support measures through PM-AASHA
- The main objective of this programme was to provide an assured price to farmers that ensured a return of at least 50% more than the cost of cultivation.
- The programme was confined to pulses and oilseeds to limit the fiscal costs, although many other crops, which did not receive the benefits of the MSP-procurement system, also needed this coverage.
- Public procurement, deficiency payments and private procurement were the main planks of this programme
- **Reason for uninspiring performance of PM-AASHA**
 - Only public procurement was carried out in a meaningful way.
 - Deficiency payments were only implemented on a pilot basis in Madhya Pradesh

- Private procurement was not initiated, even on a pilot basis, in any State.
- Budgetary allocation was meagre: only ₹500 crore have been earmarked in 2020-2021.

3. In 2019, PM-KISAN Yojana

- The uninspiring performance of PM-AASHA necessitated a more radical and direct approach which evolved in PM-KISAN scheme
- This programme involved a fixed payment of ₹6,000 per annum to each farm household with a budgetary outlay of ₹75,000 crore.
- This programme has worked reasonably well so far with many States topping up the amount at their end.

Conclusion/ Way Ahead

- **The frequent flip-flops in farm policy** — from a market-based e-NAM to a public funded PM-AASHA and now back to market-based measures — needs to be avoided as it does not inspire much confidence in the minds of private investor
- **Coordination between the Central & State governments**, and also among various States becomes crucial for the success of any policy reforms
- **Absence or failure of credit and insurancemarkets** may lead a farmer to depend upon the local input dealer or the middleman to meet his/her farming needs. This, in turn, may tie him to these intermediaries and constrain his choice of output markets.
- **Restrictions on land leasing** in many States leads to inefficient scale of production. Reforms in the output market alone are not sufficient and must be supplemented and complemented with liberalisation of the lease market

Connecting the dots

- Contract Farming
 - Organic Farming
-

Basmati Rice

Context: GI tag for Basmati

- Madhya Pradesh has sought GI tag for Basmati produced in 13 districts of MP.
- However, All India Rice Exporters' Association (AIREA) argues that if MP is included in the GI list of Basmati crop then it will not only harm the reputation of Indian Basmati as a whole, but also the national interest.

Do you know?

- India stands tall in the global arena as the only producer of premium Basmati.
- No other country (other than 18 districts of Pakistan) can call any of its rice as 'Basmati'.
- In May 2010, Basmati rice got GI certification for the region located in Indo-Gangetic Plains (IGP) below the foothills of the Himalayas, spread across seven states — Himachal Pradesh, J&K, Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Western UP (26 districts) and Delhi.

Concern:

- GI tag is basically an assurance that the product is coming from that specific area. It's kind of
- trademark in the international market.

- AIREA said that under WTO's TRIPS (trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights) agreement, physical attributes are not enough for a product to earn GI tag and that reputation linked to the geographical region is essential and imperative.
 - As per GI of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act in 2003, 'reputation' to a geographical area is central to the recognition of a GI product and only seven states have that reputation.
 - Even if the rice grown in MP has all the required characteristics (or maybe even better than Basmati rice grown in the traditional growing areas), the same would not still entitle such rice to qualify as Basmati.
 - According to APEDA, the origin and reputation of Basmati rice as a 'long grain, aromatic rice' from the IGP is found in tradition, folklore, scientific and culinary literature and political and historical records.
 - Exporters say that with the inclusion of MP, the ramifications will be disastrous. It had been a tough battle for the country to protect Basmati name from the encroachment of various nations which all came out with their own versions of Basmati.
 - If MP is allowed to be included, it will nullify APEDA's efforts made earlier to secure and protect Indian Basmati since 1995 by taking up over a 1,000 legal actions in nearly 50 countries, spread across all the continents.
-

Pokkali rice

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Agriculture; Science and Tech; Research

About:

- The pokkali variety is known for its saltwater resistance and ability to flourish in the paddy fields of coastal districts of Kerala.
- The uniqueness of the rice has brought it the Geographical Indication (GI) tag and is the subject of continuing research.
- Now, Sundarbans farmers are planning to use pokkali seeds as about 80% of the rice paddies in the Sundarbans faced the problem of saltwater incursion.
- If Pokkali rice seedlings succeeds, it would be a good step to turn around the fortunes of the farmers.

Vytilla-11 variety

- Five kilos of Vytilla•11 variety of pokkali seedlings were sent to Sunderbans.
 - Vytilla•11 is the latest variety to come out of Kerala Agricultural University.
 - Vytilla•11 promises better yield of about 5 tonnes per hectare than the previous varieties, and is crossed with the Jyoti variety of rice popular in Kerala. The crop duration is about 110 days.
-

Kisan Rail

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Farmers/Agriculture; Infrastructure

About:

- Indian Railways said it will begin running Kisan Rail.
- The first such train will run weekly between Devlali (Maharashtra) to Danapur (Bihar).

About Kisan Rail

- It was announced in the Union Budget 2020•21

- This train will help in bringing perishable agricultural produce like vegetables and fruits to the market in a short period of time
- The train with frozen containers is expected to build a seamless national cold supply chain for perishables
- This train is a step towards realising the goal of doubling farmers' incomes by 2022 (Ashok Dalwai committee on Doubling of Farmers' Income.)

Financial facility under Agriculture Infrastructure Fund

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Govt schemes and initiatives; Agriculture; Infrastructure

Context:

- PM Modi launched a new Central Sector Scheme of financing facility under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund of Rs. 1 Lakh Crore.

Key pointers:

- The first sanction of over Rs. 1000 Crore was made to over 2,280 farmer societies.
- The scheme will support farmers, Primary Agricultural Credit Society (PACS), Farmer Producer Organisation (FPOs), Agri-entrepreneurs, etc. to build community farming assets and post-harvest agriculture infrastructure.
- It will enable farmers to get greater value for their produce.
- They will be able to store and sell at higher prices, reduce wastage, and increase processing and value addition.

Important Value Additions

About Agriculture Infrastructure Fund:

- The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund is a medium – long term debt financing facility.
- It is a facility for investment for post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and credit guarantee.
- The duration of the scheme shall be from FY2020 to FY2029 (10 years).
- Under the scheme, Rs. 1 Lakh Crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans.
- The loans will have an interest subvention of 3% per annum and credit guarantee coverage under the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) scheme for loans up to Rs. 2 Crore.

Target Beneficiaries:

- Farmers, PACS, Marketing Cooperative Societies, FPOs, SHGs, Joint Liability Groups (JLG), Multipurpose Cooperative Societies, Agri-entrepreneurs, Startups, and Central/State agency or Local Body sponsored Public-Private Partnership Projects.

About PM-KISAN:

- The scheme was launched in December 2018 to provide income support by way of a cash benefit to all landholding farmers (subject to certain exclusion criteria).
- The cash incentive was aimed to enable them to fulfil their agricultural requirements and support their families.
- Under the scheme, the financial benefit of Rs.6000/- per year is provided to eligible beneficiary farmers in three equal instalments.

- The amount is directly transferred into the bank accounts of the beneficiaries through direct benefit transfer (DBT) mode.
- As of July 2019, ₹17,000 crore released to about 8.5 crore farmers under PM-•KISAN plan.

New Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (NAIF)

Context: Agricultural distress that preceded Pandemic and government's vision of doubling Farmer's income (Ahok Dalwai Committee)

- Previous Government measures to Improve Farm Infrastructure
- National Horticultural Board provides credit-linked subsidy on capital investments in pre-cooling units, controlled/modified atmosphere cold stores, reefer vans, ripening/curing chambers and other such post-harvest infrastructure.
- A lot of storage capacity, including low-cost scientifically-built on-farm structures, has been created for onions under the Rashtriya KrishiVikas Yojana.

About NAI Fund

- It is financing facility for setting up warehousing, cold chain, processing and other post-harvest management infrastructure
- It provides an interest subvention of 3 per cent on loans of up to Rs 2 crore for a maximum seven- year period.
- To implement the fund effectively and in order to make it attractive for banks, the loans would also have government-backed credit coverage against defaults
- The borrowers are mainly to be FPOs (farmer producer organisations) and primary agricultural cooperative societies
- It has a targeted disbursement of Rs 1 lakh crore over the current and next three fiscals.

Significance of NAI Fund

- Promotes Agro-processing: NAI Fund means increased investments in produce shelf life extension and value addition (indirectly encourages food processing sector)
- Reduces Wastage: 16% of fruits and vegetables and up to 10% of cereals, oil seeds and pulses are wasted in the country due to inadequate post-harvest infrastructure.
- Complementing the recent reforms: Government had issued ordinances removing stockholding restrictions on major foodstuffs and dismantling the monopoly of regulated mandis in the trading of farm produce.
- Phased Disposal of Produce empowers farmer: Being able to store their produce, enables farmers to harvest their crop, say, in March and make staggered sales till November to take advantage of higher off-season rates

Criticisms

- Additional Scheme: It would have made sense to merge all existing schemes with the new fund so as to better leverage government money.
- Its benefits will only accrue in the medium- to long-term. The government must not lose sight of the immediate economic challenge of boosting growth and incomes.
- Not a panacea: Cold chains and agro-processing cannot solve all of agricultural problems for ex: three-fourths of India's sugarcane crop is "processed" by mills and issue of cane arrears still persist

Value Addition

Do You Know How Policy focus on agriculture has changed since Independence?

- The focus of policymakers during the first 40 years after Independence was raising farm production.
- In the subsequent two decades, they started paying more attention to agri-infrastructure and agro-processing.
- In today's age of self-sufficiency & surplus produce, focus should be in crop planning and information dissemination (leveraging Data Analytics) to help farmers better align their production decisions to market demand.

Connecting the dots:

- Ashok Dalwai Committee of doubling farm income
 - Essential Commodities Act
-

ENVIRONMENT/POLLUTION

EIA Notification 2020: What are the key changes?

Context: The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has published the draft EIA Notification 2020, with the intention of replacing the existing 2006 EIA Notification, under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

What is significance of EIA?

- Sustainable Development: An EIA makes a scientific estimate of the likely impacts of a project, such as a mine, irrigation dam, industrial unit or waste treatment plant.
- Public Participation: There is also a provision for a public hearing at which the local community and interested persons can give opinions and raise objections, based on the draft EIA report prepared by experts for the project.

How does the draft EIA Notification differ from the one now in force?

1. Removal of several activities from the purview of public consultation:
 - A list of projects has been included under Category B2, expressly exempted from the requirement of an EIA
 - The projects under this category include offshore and onshore oil, gas and shale exploration, hydroelectric projects up to 25 MW, irrigation projects between 2,000 and 10,000 hectares of command area, small and medium mineral beneficiation units, MSMEs in dye industry etc.
 - Also, coal and non-coal mineral prospecting and solar photovoltaic projects do not need prior environmental clearance or permission in the new scheme.
2. Subverts Public Consultation: The notice period for public hearing has been cut from 30 days to 20 days. This will make it difficult to study the draft EIA report, more so when it is not widely available or provided in the regional language.
3. New provision for post-facto environmental clearance: It means that the clearances for projects can be awarded even if they have started construction without securing environmental clearances.
4. Promotes Expansion: For project modernisation and expansion, the norms in Notification 2020 are liberal, with only those involving more than 25% increase requiring EIA, and over 50% attracting public consultation.
5. Diluted Compliance Mechanism: Project proponents need to submit only one annual report on compliance with conditions, compared to the existing two

What are the apprehensions?

- Exemptions will seriously affect the environment, since these will be carried out without oversight
- The move is seen as retrograde, because the CAG found in 2016 that the deficiency in semi-annual compliance reporting was between 43% and 78%, while failure to comply with conditions ranged from 5% to 57%
- After the gas leak at LG Polymers in Visakhapatnam in May 2020, the Environment Ministry told the National Green Tribunal that the unit lacked environment clearance, exposing the low effectiveness of rules.

How does the draft notification compare with global norms?

- The EU Directive on EIA includes climate change and biodiversity concerns.
- EU has also modified its processes in accordance with the Aarhus Convention, 1998, which stipulates that
- Environmental rights and human rights are linked
- The present generation owes an obligation to future generations

- Sustainable development can be achieved only through the involvement of all stakeholders
- Government accountability and environmental protection are connected
- Interactions between the public and public authorities must take place in a democratic context.

Conclusion

- The EIA rules in India privileges the interests of the project proponents over that of safeguarding environment

Connecting the dots:

- Polluter Pay principle
 - Sustainable Development Goals
-

'No -Go' forests approved for mining: CSE probe

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

In News:

- Recently, the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) probe has found that software was tweaked to clear blocks in dense forests for cold blocks auction.
- These dense forests are known as 'No-Go' areas or forests.

Key takeaways

- Investigation details:
 - Since 2015, 9 out of 49 blocks cleared for coal mining were in 'No-Go' areas, or regions that were once classified by the Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change as containing very dense forests and hence closed to coal mining.
 - In 2020, of the 41 blocks put up for auction, 21 feature in the original No-Go list.
 - A two stage e-auction is being adopted for the allocation of these mines.
 - It is a part of the AtmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
 - It was also revealed through RTI that 67% of the mines auctioned since 2015 were not operational yet.
 - From 2015-2020, the government tried to auction 112 mines, but succeeded in only 42 cases.
 - Several potential coal reserves are located in dense forests particularly in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh.
 - The government **determined** which of them were too ecologically important to touch, and which were amenable to be opened up using 'decision support system software'.
 - In some cases, results of the software evaluation were tweaked to make 'No-Go' land into 'Go-forests'.
-

Million tons of Microplastic pollution in the Atlantic Ocean

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

In News:

- A study was published in 'Nature Communications' about micro plastic pollution in the Atlantic Ocean.
- The pollution is put at 11.6-21.1 million tonnes.

Key takeaways

- Top 200 meters of the Atlantic was measured.
- Pollution caused by three types of plastics was studied - polyethylene, polypropylene, and polystyrene.

- These are most commonly used for packaging.
- Both inputs and stocks of ocean plastics may be much higher than determined.
- Assessment across all sizes and polymer groups is important to determine the danger of plastic pollution.

Important value additions

Plastic

- It is a synthetic organic polymer made from petroleum.
- **Applications:**
 - Packaging
 - Building and construction
 - Household and sports equipment
 - Vehicles
 - Electronics
 - Agriculture
- It is cheap, lightweight, strong and malleable.
- **Sources of Marine Plastic:**
 - Land-based and storm runoff
 - Sewer overflows
 - Beach visitors
 - Inadequate waste disposal
- **Impact of Plastic Pollution**
 - Ingestion, suffocation and entanglement of hundreds of marine species.
 - The transfer of contaminants between marine species and humans through seafood consumption.
 - Contribution to global warming

Comprehensive Manser Rejuvenation and Development Plan reviewed

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

In News:

- The 'Comprehensive Manser Rejuvenation and Development Plan' was recently reviewed.
- **Objective:** To initiate the process for development, rejuvenation and beautification of Manser Wetlands, Jammu and Kashmir.



Image source: [Click here](#)

Key takeaways

- The plan aims at increasing tourist footfall and boosting the social economic development of Jammu region.
 - Surinsar-Manser Lakes were designated as Ramsar Convention in November 2005.
-

Barn Owls being used for controlling damage to coconut yield

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Biodiversity

In News:

- Pilot project has started on Biological Control of Rodents (Rats) by Using Barn Owls in Kavaratti Island, Lakshadweep.
 - Recent studies revealed the widespread damage caused by rats to the island's coconut yield and economy.
 - Coconut is an important cash crop for the islands, but the rodents account for 30 to 40% of the yield loss.
 - Total production stood at 8.76 crore nuts in 2017-18.
-

Delhi's E-Vehicle Policy

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Environment and Pollution; Green initiatives; Sustainable development

Context:

- Delhi government launched Electric Vehicle Policy
- It aims to ensure 25% of the newly registered vehicles in Delhi by the year 2024 be e-vehicles
- Benefits:
- Boost the city's economy
- Reduces pollution levels
- Generates employment in the transport sector

Measures taken -

- Various incentives to promote the purchase of e-Vehicles
- Low interest rates for the purchase of e-Vehicles
- To waive off registration fees and road tax on newly registered e-vehicles
- Creation of network of charging stations
- Policy Push by government for e-vehicles (reduction of GST rates from 12% to 5% for vehicles, and from 18% to 5% for vehicle chargers)
- Push by State governments to adopt e-vehicles (Eg. Delhi, Kerala)
- Dedicated schemes like FAME; local manufacturing and the growth of domestic technology.

Think!

- [FAME India](#) - Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India Scheme
-

Sonneratia alba

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Environment and Biodiversity; Conservation; Endangered species

Context:

- Maharashtra first Indian state to declare state mangrove tree as symbol of conservation

- Maharashtra State Board for Wildlife (SBWL) cleared a proposal to declare *Sonneratia alba* as the State mangrove tree and approved a recovery programme for the Arabian Sea Humpback Whale.

Benefits:

- The move helps to enhance conservation of the salt-tolerant vegetation
- Ecological importance of mangroves and biodiversity it hosts
- Adds aesthetic value to the mangrove ecosystem

About *Sonneratia alba*

- *Sonneratia alba* or mangrove apple is an evergreen mangrove species found along the
- Maharashtra's coastline
- *Sonneratia alba* grow up to five feet and bear white flowers with a pink base as well as green fruits, that resemble apple and are used to make pickles.
- The flowers, which bloom at night, are pollinated by nocturnal creatures like bats.
- The species was introduced in Maharashtra and is native to Andaman Islands.

Distribution

- They often grow on newly-formed mudflats and play an important role in combating land erosion.
- They are confined to the west coast and some parts of Orissa.
- It is found along wetlands in Thane creek, Bhandup, Vasai and Dombivli along major mudflats.
- *Sonneratia alba* grows naturally in many tropical and subtropical areas from East Africa to the Indian subcontinent, southern China, the Ryukyu Islands, Indochina, Malesia, Papuasias, Australia and the Western Pacific region.

Do you know?

- Maharashtra already has the state tree (mango), state animal (giant squirrel), state bird (green pigeon), state butterfly (Blue Mormon), and state flower (jarul).



- Pic: [Sonneratia alba](#)

Scientists find 77 new butterfly species in Matheran

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Environment and Biodiversity; Conservation; Endangered species

Context:

- After a long gap of 125 years, scientists have found 140 are species of butterflies, including 77 new ones, in Matheran.
 - Matheran is an eco-sensitive zone, located in Maharashtra.
 - The Matheran hill railway, also known as Matheran Light Railway (MLR), was inspected by UNESCO world heritage site officials but failed to make it to the list as a World Heritage Site.
-

Ban of use and sale of nine agro-chemicals

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III - Pollution

- Punjab government ordered a ban on the sale and use of nine agro-chemicals, after the agriculture department found that these were still being used by farmers though they adversely impacted the quality of rice.
- The ban is aimed at protecting the paddy quality, which is critical to its export and remunerative pricing in the international market.
- Agro-chemicals which are banned include - Acephate, Triazophos, Thiamethoxam, Carbendazim, Tricyclazole, Buprofezin, Carbofuran, Propiconazole and Thiophanate Methyl.

Insecticides Act, 1968

- It was brought into force with effect from August 1971
 - The Act regulates the import, manufacture, sale, transport, distribution and use of insecticides in order to prevent risk to human beings and animals.
 - Central Insecticides Board was established under Section 4 of the Act and it works under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.
 - The board advises the central government and state governments on technical matters arising out of the administration of the act and to carry out the other functions assigned to it.
-

Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI)

Part of: GS Prelims and GS-III – Environment

Context: The Delhi High Court has asked the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) to conduct physical survey of all circuses in the country to verify the condition of animals being kept there.

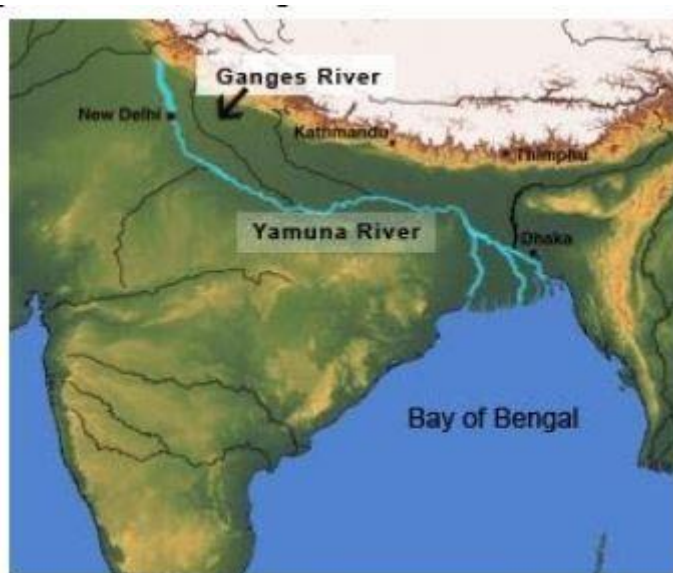
Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI)

- It is a statutory body
- It is an advisory body advising the Government of India on animal welfare laws, and promotes animal welfare in the country of India.
- The Animal Welfare Board of India was established in 1962 under Section 4 of The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.
- The Board consists of 28 Members, who serve for a period of 3 years.
- It works to ensure that animal welfare laws in the country are followed and provides grants to Animal Welfare Organisations.

- The Board was initially within the jurisdiction of the Government of India's Ministry of Food and Agriculture. In 1990, the subject of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was transferred to the Ministry of Environment and Forests, where it now resides.
- It frames a range of rules on how animals ought to be humanely treated everywhere. It has also frequently litigated to have stricter laws to ensure animals were not unduly harassed or tortured.
- HQ shifted to Ballabgarh in Faridabad District of Haryana from Chennai, Tamil Nadu

Yamuna River

- Yamuna River is largest tributary of Ganga River, while Bangladesh's Jamuna River is largest distributary channel of the Brahmaputra River. Yamuna is another sacred river of India that originates from Yamunotri
- From Uttarakhand, Yamuna River flows for some 200 kilometers in Lower Himalayas and Shivalik Ranges.
- Its largest tributary Tons River flows through Garhwal region in Uttarakhand, and meets Yamuna near Dehradun.
- Along with Ganga to which it runs almost parallel after it touches the Indo-Gangetic plain and creates the Ganga-Yamuna Doab region.



- Image source: [Here](#)

World Solar Technology Summit: ISA

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

Context: The International Solar Alliance (ISA) to organise the First World Solar Technology Summit on 8th September, 2020 on a virtual platform.

About World Solar technology summit

- The objective of the event is to bring the spotlight on state-of-the-art technologies as well as next-generation technologies which will provide impetus to the efforts towards harnessing solar energy more efficiently.

- Four Sessions: The event will hold four technical sessions that would be available to the participants in different languages namely English, Spanish, French & Arabic.

I JOSE:

- ISA would also launch the ISA Journal on Solar Energy (I JOSE) that would help authors from across the globe to publish their articles on solar energy, during the event.

International Solar Alliance

- The launch of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) was announced by the Prime Minister of India (Narendra Modi) and former President of France (Francois Hollande) on 30th November 2015, at the 21st session of United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP-21) in Paris, France.
- It was conceived as a coalition of solar-resource-rich countries (which lie either completely or partly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn) to address their special energy needs.
- 67 countries have signed and ratified the ISA framework agreement.
- The Assembly of the ISA is the apex decision-making body which comprises representatives from each Member Country.
- It aims at lowering the cost of technology and finance and thereby facilitate deployment of over 1,000 GW of solar energy and mobilize more than USD 1,000 billion into solar power by 2030 in Member countries.
- Solar is a key source of affordable and reliable energy, thus it could play a significant role in achieving the universal energy access goal (SDG 7).
- The Government of India has allotted 5 acres of land to the ISA in National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE) campus, Gurugram and has released a sum of Rs. 160 crore for creating a corpus fund, building infrastructure and meeting day to day recurring expenditure of the ISA up to the year 2021-22.

Bioethanol Blending of Petrol

Part of: GS Paper – III Growth & Development; Conservation Environmental Pollution & Degradation

Context:

- The government has set targets of 10% bioethanol blending of petrol by 2022 and to raise it to 20% by 2030 under the Ethanol Blended Programme (EBP).
- The EBP was launched in line with the National Biofuels Policy, 2018.

Reasons for Ethanol Blending:

- It is estimated that a 5% blending can result in replacement of around 1.8 million Barrels of crude oil.
- As the ethanol molecule contains oxygen, it allows the engine to more completely combust the fuel, resulting in fewer emissions and thereby reducing the occurrence of environmental pollution.
- The renewable ethanol content, which is a by-product of the sugar industry, is expected to result in a net reduction in the emission of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide (CO) and hydrocarbons (HC).

Challenges in Ethanol Blending:

- Less Production: Currently, domestic production of bioethanol is not sufficient to meet the demand for bio-ethanol for blending with petrol at Indian OMCs.
- Sugar mills, which are the key domestic suppliers of bio-ethanol to OMCs, were able to supply only 57.6% of the total demand.
- Sugar mills do not have the financial stability to invest in biofuel plants.

- There are also concerns among investors on the uncertainty on the price of bioethanol in the future as the prices of both sugarcane and bio-ethanol are set by the central government.
- Water Footprint: While India has become one of the top producers of ethanol but it lags top producers, the USA and Brazil, by a huge margin and remains inefficient in terms of water usage.
- India's water requirements for producing ethanol are not met through rainwater and the groundwater is used for drinking and other purposes.
- Water footprint, that is water required to produce a litre of ethanol, includes rainwater at the root zone used by ethanol-producing plants such as sugarcane, and surface, ground water, and fresh water required to wash away pollutants.
- Limited Sugarcane Availability: Sugarcane is another limited resource that affects the ethanol blending in the country.
- In order to achieve a 20% blend rate, almost one-tenth of the existing net sown area will have to be diverted for sugarcane production. Any such land requirement is likely to put a stress on other crops and has the potential to increase food prices.
- India's biofuel policy stipulates that fuel requirements must not compete with food requirements and that only surplus food crops should be used for fuel production, if at all.
- Lack of Alternatives: Producing ethanol from crop residue can be a good alternative but the annual capacity of biorefinery is still not enough to meet the 5% petrol-ethanol blending requirement.
- Other biofuels such as Jatropha have often proven to be commercially unviable.

Ganga Rejuvenation Monitoring

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

Context: Recently, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has observed that the pollutants are still being discharged into the river Ganga, despite several directions of various courts.

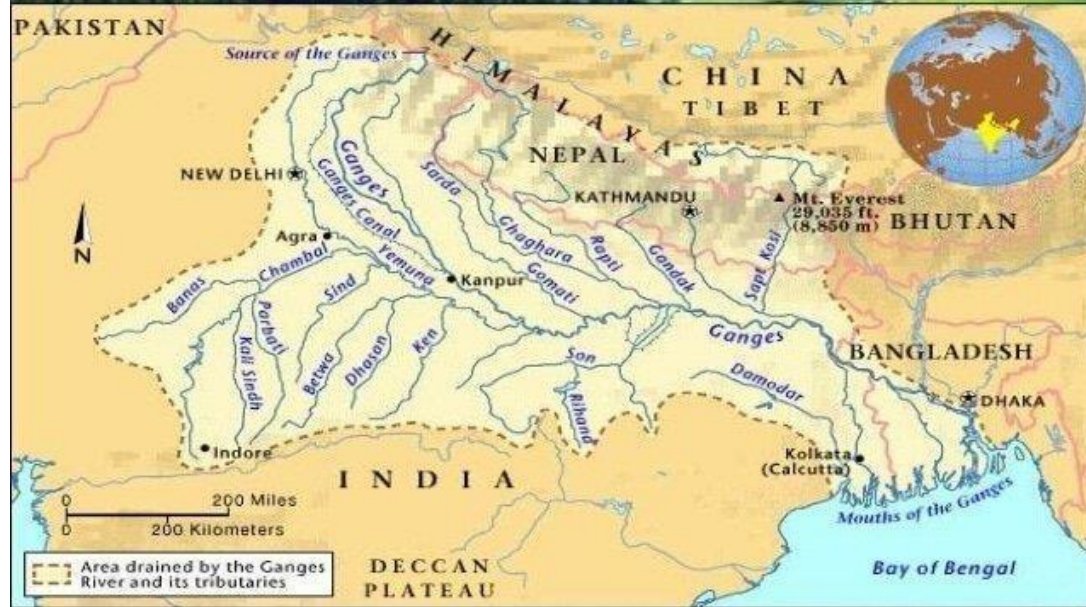
Key takeaway:

- Constitutional Right: Pollution-free environment is the constitutional right of every citizen and constitutional obligation of States. However, the states of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar and West Bengal are certainly failing in providing pollution free Ganga.
- Monitoring: The NGT has directed the above states to periodically monitor the rejuvenation of the Ganga.
- Joint Meetings: It has also called for periodic joint meetings of the above states to consider vital issues like pooling of human resources and sharing best practices for rejuvenation of Ganga.
- The meetings shall be focussed on preventing discharge of sewage and other pollutants in Ganga directly or through its tributaries or drains connected thereto.

Initiatives Taken to Clean Ganga:

- Ganga Action Plan: It was the first River Action Plan that was taken up by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in 1985, to improve the water quality by the interception, diversion, and treatment of domestic sewage.
- The National River Conservation Plan is an extension to the Ganga Action Plan. It aims at cleaning the Ganga river under Ganga Action Plan phase-2.
- National River Ganga Basin Authority (NRGBA): It was formed by the Government of India in the year 2009 under Section-3 of the Environment Protection Act, 1986.

THE GANGA RIVER MAP



ANIMALS/NATIONAL PARKS IN NEWS

Dhole (Asiatic Wild Dog)

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Environment

In News: Karnataka, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh rank high in the conservation of dhole in India, according to a new study.

Dhole

- The dhole is a canid native to Central, South, East Asia, and Southeast Asia.
- India perhaps supports the largest number of dholes, with key populations found in three landscapes — Western Ghats, Central India and Northeast India.
- IUCN Status: Endangered
- Dholes play an important role as apex predators in forest ecosystems.
- Besides the tiger, the dhole is the only large carnivore in India that is under IUCN's 'endangered' category.
- Factors contributing to this decline include habitat loss, loss of prey, competition with other species, persecution due to livestock predation and disease transfer from domestic dogs.

Do You Know?

- In 2014, the Indian government sanctioned its first dhole conservation breeding centre at the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park (IGZP) in Visakhapatnam.
- In India, the dhole is protected under Schedule 2 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Barn Owl

- **Scientific name:** Tyto alba.
- **Distribution:** It is the most widely distributed species of owl except in Polar and desert regions, north of the Himalayas, most of Indonesia, and some Pacific islands.
- Nearly all of their food consists of small mammals which they locate by sound.
- .



Image source: [Click here](#)

- **IUCN status:** Least Concern.

- **Cultural significance:** The Barn Owl is respected as the acolyte of the Goddess Chamunda in Karnataka. In Bengal, it is revered as the carrier of Lakshmi, the deity of wealth.
- Barn owls have been recruited instead of cats or rat snakes because the rats in the Lakshadweep Islands practically live on treetops.

Using chemical agents is impossible since Lakshadweep practises organic agriculture

Indian pangolin

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Conservation; Endangered Species

In news:

- Telangana Forest Department has exposed the rampant poaching of pangolins in the forests of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- Three to four kilograms of pangolin scales were seized, for seized from the gang, for which three to five animals might have been killed.

Do you know?

- Recently, China is reported to have imposed a ban on wildlife meat and removed pangolin scales from its list of approved traditional medicine, in the context of the COVID-19 spread.
- Pangolins are among the world's most trafficked mammals.

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 Schedule I Part I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
 - IUCN Red List
 - Indian Pangolin: Endangered
 - Chinese Pangolin: Critically Endangered
-

Leopard poaching

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Environment and Biodiversity; Conservation; Endangered species

Basic info:

- According to study by TRAFFIC India -
- Out of the total of 747 leopard deaths between 2015-2019 in India, 596 were linked to illegal wildlife trade and activities related to poaching.
- Leopard poaching highest in Uttarakhand, Maharashtra

About TRAFFIC

- It is a leading wildlife trade monitoring network across the world.
- The NGO is working globally on trade in wild animals and plants in the context of both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.
- TRAFFIC was established in 1976 by IUCN and WWF to respond to the growing threats posed by illegal wildlife trade and overexploitation.

- India became a member of the programme in 1991.

Arabian Sea Humpback Whale

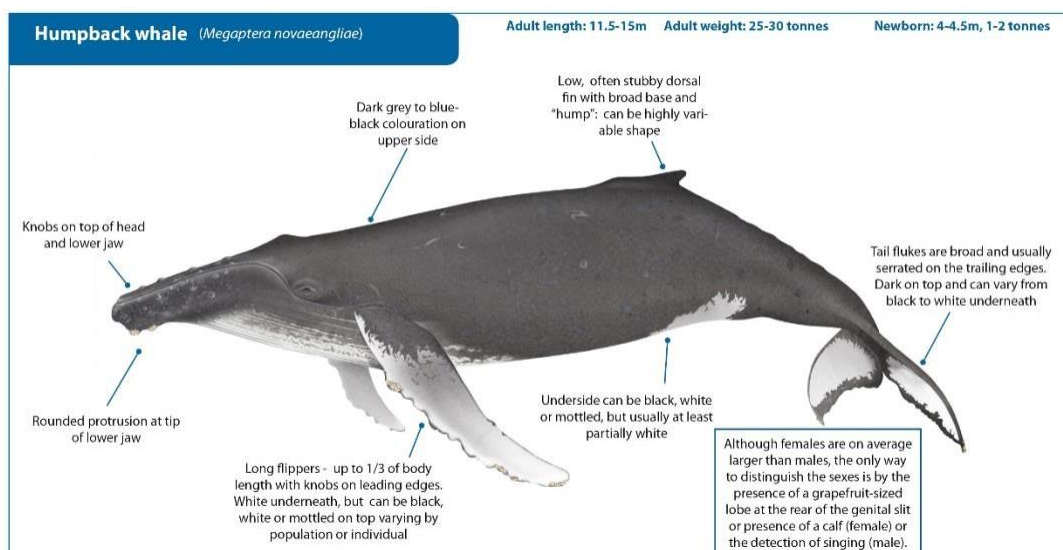
Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Environment and Biodiversity; Conservation; Endangered species

Basic info:

- IUCN status – Least Concern
- Found – Around the world
- The humpback whale is one of the four species of baleen whales occurring in Indian waters and it is one of the least studied species in India.

Do you know?

- Humpback whales are sexually dimorphic, with females tending to be slightly longer than males.
- Their flippers are extremely long, about one-third of their total body length.
- These whales have a small dorsal fin that can be shaped like a small hump or a triangular shaped fin.
- Humpback whale flukes have a variable colour and have a serrated or a toothed edge.
- They have bumps on their heads and lower jaws that have small stiff hairs.



Pic: [Humpback Whale](#)

Endangered Species in news: Hornbills

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Conservation; Endangered species; Protected areas

Context:

- A study based on satellite data has shown a high rate of deforestation in a major hornbill habitat in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Satellite data revealed changes in forest cover of the 1,064 sq.km. Papum Reserve Forest (RF) adjoining [Pakke Tiger Reserve](#) and part of Assam affected by illegal felling and ethnic conflict.

Do you know?

- Papum RF is a nesting habitat of three species of the large, colorful fruit-eating hornbills: Great, Wreathed and Oriental Pied.
- The 862 sq.km. [Pakke reserve](#) houses a fourth species, the Rufous-Necked.

Important value additions:

Hornbills:

- India is home to nine species of hornbills: three of them, the wreathed hornbill (*Aceros undulatus*), the brown hornbill (*Anorrhinus austeni*) and the Rufous-necked hornbill (*Aceros nipalensis*) great hornbill is the state bird of Arunachal Pradesh and Kerala. India also has Narcondam Hornbill, found only on the island of Narcondam.
- Hornbill festival celebrated in Nagaland is named after the bird – Hornbill which is the most revered and admired bird for the Nagas.

Do you know?

- Hornbills used to be hunted for their casques — upper beak — and feathers for headgear despite being cultural symbols of some ethnic communities in the northeast, specifically the Nyishi of Arunachal Pradesh.
- But a 20-year-old conservation programme entailing the use of fibre-glass beaks reduced the threat to the birds to a large extent.

Hornbill species:

Great Hornbill:

- IUCN Red List: Near threatened.
- Largest of all hornbills in India.
- Found in a few forest areas in Western Ghats and the forests along Himalayas.

Rufous-necked Hornbill:

- IUCN Red List: Vulnerable
- Has Northern-most extent, ranging from North-eastern India to Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary in West Bengal.

Wreathed Hornbill:

- IUCN Red List: Least Concern
- Found in forests from far North-eastern India.

Narcondam Hornbill:

- IUCN Red List: Endangered
- Endemic to Indian island of Narcondam in Andamans.
- Smallest home range out of all species of Asian hornbills.

Malabar Pied Hornbill:

- IUCN Red List: Near Threatened
- Common resident breeder in India and Sri Lanka.
- Habitat: Evergreen and moist deciduous forests often near human settlements.

Oriental Pied Hornbill:

- IUCN Red List: Least Concern
- Largest distribution, found in the Indian Subcontinent and throughout Southeast Asia.
- Habitat: Subtropical or tropical moist lowland forests.

White-throated Brown Hornbill:

- IUCN Red List: NearThreatened
- Found in forests from North-eastern India.
- Common habitat: Namdapha National Park, Changlang District, Arunachal Pradesh.

Malabar Grey Hornbill:

- IUCN Red List: LeastConcern
- Common in the Western Ghats and associated hills of southern India.

Indian Grey Hornbill:

- IUCN Red List: LeastConcern
- Habitat: Mainly on the plains up to about 2000 feet, foothills of Himalayas southwards, bounded to west by Indus system and to east by Ganges Delta.

Endangered Species: 'Fishing Cat'

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Conservation; Endangered Species; Biodiversity

Context:

- Efforts are being made to begin the country's maiden exercise of collaring 10 fishing cats in the
- Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary, situated in Andhra Pradesh.
- Experts to study the species' ecology, home range, behaviour in different seasons, feeding habits, threats, movements and use of space.

Important Value Additions:

Fishing cat

- Fish cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*) is mammal double the size of domestic cat which is a native to wetlands, swamps and marshy areas.
- Rapid depletion of wetland is posing a threat to the animal on a global scale and India is no exception.
- Fish cat has been designated as 'vulnerable' in the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary:

- It is a wildlife sanctuary and estuary situated in Andhra Pradesh.
- The sanctuary is a part of the Godavari estuary and has extensive mangrove and dry deciduous tropical forest.
- It is the second largest stretch of mangrove forests in India (after Sundarbans).
- It is home to the critically endangered white-backed vulture and the long-billed vulture.
- Its main wildlife attractions are Golden Jackal, Sea turtle, Fishing cat, Estuarine Crocodile, Small Blue Kingfisher, Cattle Egret.
- Hope Island and Sacramento Island located in the mangrove region are two important nesting sites for the endangered Olive Ridley turtles.

Do you know?

- The Andhra Pradesh government has begun the process to get UNESCO world heritage status for Godavari Mangroves at Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary.

African Cheetahs from South Africa brought to India

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Biodiversity; Environment

In News:

- Recently, Mysuru zoo has become the second Indian zoo to house the African cheetah.
- One male and two females from a cheetah conservation centre in South Africa under an animal-exchange programme were brought to India.
- It was the country's first international animal exchange post-COVID-19.

Important value additions

Cheetah

- It is the fastest land animal.
 - The Southeast African cheetah is native to East and Southern Africa.
 - It lives mainly in the lowland areas and deserts of the Kalahari, the savannahs of Okavango Delta, and the grasslands of the Transvaal region in South Africa.
 - In Namibia, cheetahs are mostly found in farmlands.
 - It is a vulnerable subspecies (IUCN status), due to poaching, habitat loss, and lack of prey.
-

INFRASTRUCTURE/ENERGY

Shortcomings of Indian Chemical Industry: TIFAC

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Industries

In News:

- Recently, a report by the Technology Information Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC) was released.
- TIFAC is an autonomous organisation and think-tank of the Department of Science and Technology.
- It has highlighted the shortcomings of the Indian chemical industry which prove to be barriers in competing with China.

Key takeaways

- India lacks enough technology, plants and infrastructure to manufacture key chemicals in a cost-effective and less polluting manner.
- Manufacturing of several key Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API) are nearly stopped.
- India depends on China for 67% of chemical intermediates and API and almost entirely for chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine (HCQ).
- Manufacturers are unable to meet the price at which chemicals are produced by China.

Important value additions

Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients

- These are significant ingredients in the manufacturing of drugs and are also called bulk drugs.
 - The Hubei province of China is the hub of the API manufacturing industry.
-

Mobile App called HARIT PATH developed

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Infrastructure: Roadways; Environment; Sustainable Development

In News:

- A mobile App called 'Harit Path' is recently developed.
 - **Developed by:** The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).
 - **Objective:** To monitor:
 - location,
 - growth,
 - species details,
 - maintenance activities,
 - targets and achievements
 - It shall include each field units for each and every plant under all plantation projects.
 - The launch will further facilitate creation of Green Highways across India.
 - NHAI has also recently undertaken 'Harit Bharat Sankalp'.
 - It is a nation-wide plantation drive to promote environment protection and sustainability.
 - Under this initiative, NHAI planted over 25 lakh plants in 25 days along the stretches of the National Highways between 21st July to 15th August 2020.
-

BIS Draft Standard for Drinking Water

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Infrastructure: Resources

In News:

- Recently, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has prepared a draft standard for the supply system of piped drinking water.

- **Title:** 'Drinking water supply quality management system — requirements for piped drinking water supply service'.

Key takeaways

- It outlines the process of water supply, from raw water sources to household taps.
- The draft standard is expected to make the process of piped water supply more uniform.
- It has been developed keeping in view the Centre's JalJeevan Mission.

Important value additions

JalJeevan Mission

- It aims for providing safe and adequate drinking water to all rural households by 2024 through tap connections.
- **Ministry:** Jal Shakti Ministry

The Bureau of Indian Standards

- It is the national Standards Body of India.
 - **Ministry:** Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution
 - **Act:** Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 1986
-

Andaman and Nicobar to be a maritime hub

Part of: GS Mains III – Infrastructure; Defence; Security

Context:

- PM said that Andaman and Nicobar islands region was going to be developed as a “maritime and start-up hub” and highlighted his government's development initiatives for it.
- PM to inaugurate a submarine optical fibre cable between Chennai and islands

Benefits:

- It helps to turn the islands “digitally independent”.
 - 12 islands of the archipelago have been selected for high-impact projects with an emphasis on boosting trade of sea-based, organic and coconut-based products of the region.
 - It helps the group of islands become an important centre of blue economy.
-

Submarine cable connectivity to Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Govt policies and initiatives; Infrastructure;

Context:

- PM launched submarine Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) which connects Andaman & Nicobar Islands to the mainland.
- The project will lay 2300 Kms submarine cable, connects major chunk of the islands from Chennai to Port Blair, Port Blair to Little Andaman and Port Blair to Swaraj Island.

Benefits:

- The connectivity would now enable endless opportunities in the islands
- Provide modern facilities to every citizen and every sector
- Ease of living to improve
- Speedy development of national security
- Cheaper & better connectivity

- Enjoy all benefits of Digital India - improving online education, tele-medicine, banking system, online trading and in boosting tourism
- Would boost Act-East policy and India's Economic-Strategic Cooperation
- Map activity -
- Locate important places - Car Nicobar; Campbell - Bay; Port Blair; Swaraj Island; Swaraj Dweep, Shaheed Dweep and Long Island etc.

Other measures:

- Apart from providing for better internet & mobile connectivity, efforts are being made to improve physical connectivity through road, air and water.
- Enhancing capacity of Port Blair Airport
- Water Aerodrome Infrastructure
- 4 Ships being built at Kochi Shipyard to improve the Water connectivity
- Port Led Development
- Speedy construction of the deep draft inner harbor and the proposal to construct Transshipment Port in Great Nicobar
- Development of modern infrastructure to accelerate blue economy like Fisheries, Aquaculture and SeaWeed farming

Railways deploys 'Ninjas' for surveillance

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Infrastructure - Railways

In News: Recently, drone-based surveillance system has been installed to enhance security at railway stations, tracks and workshops.

Key takeaways

Indian Railways recently procured Ninja Unmanned Aerial Vehicles [UAV].

Features:

- Real-time tracking
- Video streaming
- Automatic fail safe mode,

Advantages:

- Enhanced monitoring of the railway assets
- Additional safety for passengers.

Uses:

- To launch surveillance on criminal and anti-social activities like gambling, throwing of garbage, hawking etc in Railway premises.
 - Analysis of data collected which will be useful in vulnerable sections
 - Rescue, recovery, restoration and coordinating efforts of various agencies and mapping of railway assets to assess encroachments at disaster sites.
 - A drone camera can cover a large area which requires 8-10 RPF personnel
-

Bhadbhut Project

Part of: GS Paper – I and II Water Resources and Government Policies

Context: Recently, the Gujarat government has awarded the contract for the Bhadbhut project in Bharuch.

Features of the Bhadbhut project:

- It is located across the river Narmada, 5 km from Bhadbhut village and 25 km from the mouth of the river, where it flows into the Gulf of Khambhat.
- The project is part of the larger Kalpasar Project, which entails the construction of a 30-km dam across the Gulf of Khambhat between Bharuch and Bhavnagar districts.
- Kalpasar Project aims to store Gujarat's 25% average annual surface water resources.
- This reservoir will store about 8,000 million cubic metres (MCM) of surface water and will be one of the world's largest freshwater reservoirs in the sea.



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

SpaceX with NASA crew is back home

Part of: GS Prelims – Science and Technology – Space missions

In news:

- Two NASA astronauts returned to Earth in their SpaceX Dragon capsule named Endeavour after successful two-month mission.
- It was the first splashdown by U.S. astronauts in 45 years, with the first commercially built and operated spacecraft to carry people to and from orbit.

Do you know?

SpaceX's Crew Dragon craft had delivered Nasa astronauts to the International Space Station (ISS) and became the first human spaceflight with private collaboration.

Invisible Shield against Electromagnetic Interference designed

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – scientific innovations and discoveries

In News:

- Recently, scientists from the Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences (CeNS), Bengaluru, have designed a **metal mesh structure** to construct an **invisible shield against Electromagnetic Interference (EMI)**.

Key takeaways

- Metal Mesh Structure:
 - A copper metal mesh is developed on **polyethylene terephthalate (PET) sheet** which exhibits a visible transmittance of about 85%.
 - Transmittance describes how much light passes through a sample.
 - Metal mesh provides better electromagnetic shielding compared to the same thickness of continuous metal film where transparency can be compromised.
- Benefits:
 - It will **isolate a device's energy** so it doesn't affect anything else and blocks external energy from getting in.
 - This 'invisible' shield can be used in various **military stealth applications**.
 - It can **cover electromagnetic wave emitter** or absorber devices without compromising aesthetics.
 - It is an important element for **enhancing the stealth capability of a weapon platform**

Important value additions

Electromagnetic Interference

- It is an **electromagnetic emission** that **causes a disturbance** in another piece of electrical equipment.
 - Any device that has an electronic circuit can be susceptible to EMI.
 - It compromises the performance of electrical equipment by obstructing and degrading data, sometimes even losing data completely.
 - EMI can be attributed to a wide span of the electromagnetic spectrum including radio and microwave frequencies.
-

Helium-enhanced cool bright stars among Omega Centauri discovered

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Space

In News:

- Helium-enhanced cool bright stars among the metal-rich parts of Omega Centauri globular cluster have been recently discovered.
- This is the first-ever spectroscopic determination of Helium-abundance in Omega Centauri.
- **Omega Centauri:** The brightest and the largest globular cluster in the Milky Way Galaxy.

Important value additions

Global clusters

- These are the stellar systems with millions of stars formed from the same gaseous cloud.
 - The stars formed will be homogeneous in their chemical composition.
 - However, the different stars of Omega Centauri do not show the same metal content
-

Magnetic Hyperthermia-Mediated Cancer Therapy (MHCT)

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Science and Technology

In News:

- Efforts are being made to make magnetic hyperthermia-mediated cancer therapy as desired therapy for inoperable tumours.

Important value additions

Magnetic hyperthermia-mediated cancer therapy (MHCT)

- It is a non-invasive cancer treatment.
 - **The technique:** Delivery and localisation of magnetic materials within the targeted tumour site followed by subsequent application of an alternating magnetic field (AMF), thereby generating heat at the tumour site.
 - It can efficiently act against deep-seated inaccessible solid tumours like glioblastoma (aggressive type of cancer that can occur in the brain or spinal cord)
 - It is highly thermo-sensitive towards normal cells with minimal toxicity against healthy counterparts.
 - Scientists are on the lookout for new materials which can make this treatment more efficient.
-

DNA Bill can be misused: Draft report

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – Legislations; GS-III – Science and Technology

In News:

- A draft report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology has flagged the DNA bill.
- **Headed by:** Jairam Ramesh
- The report is yet to be finalized.

Key takeaways

- According to the Committee:
 - The bill could be misused for caste or community-based profiling.
 - DNA profiles can reveal extremely sensitive information of an individual such as pedigree, skin colour, health status and susceptibility to diseases.
 - Disregard to an individual's privacy and other safeguards is another concern.
 - Consenting provision can be easily overridden by a magistrate, thereby, making consent perfunctory (no real effort).
 - No guidance in the Bill as to when the magistrate can override consent.

Important value additions

DNA Bill

- It proposes DNA sampling and profiling of Indian citizens accused of crime or reported missing.
 - It shall store their unique genetic information for administrative purposes.
 - Nearly 60 countries have enacted similar legislation, with the U.S. bringing in a law in 1994.
-

Tata Group plans to launch Super App

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Technology

In News:

- Tata Group is planning to launch an all-in-one super app by early 2021.

Key takeaways

- The digital platform is expected to bring together all the consumer-facing businesses of the group.
- It is likely to be developed by the newly formed entity Tata Digital.

Important value additions

Super app

- It is a platform developed by a company offering various services under one umbrella.
 - For example, China's WeChat. It started as a messaging app and later expanded into payments, cabs, shopping, food ordering, and cab services to become a super app.
 - Super app can be compared to a mall in the physical world.
-

BRICS 5G Innovation Base

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – International Relations & GS-III – Science and Technology; Artificial Intelligence

In News:

- BRICS 5G innovation base has been proposed by China.
- **Objective:** To take forward 5G and Artificial Intelligence (AI) cooperation BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).

Key takeaways

- Due to ongoing [tensions between India and China](#), India is reluctant to join the programme while other countries are willing to allow China's participation in their 5G networks.
 - India has made clear that a return to normalcy cannot be possible while tensions along the Line of Actual Control remain unresolved.
 - India has also recently joined the '[Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence](#) (GPAI)' as a founding member.
- Russia has agreed to work with China on 5G.
- In South Africa, Huawei is providing services to provide 5G networks.
- Brazil has allowed participation of Huawei in 5G trials.

Important value additions

About BRICS

- BRICS is an association of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- All are members of G20.
- Represent over 3.1 billion people, 41% of the world population.
- As of 2018, BRICS have US \$40.55 trillion (32% of World's GDP PPP).

- Bilateral relations among BRICS nations are conducted on the basis of non-interference, equality, and mutual benefit.
 - There are two components that make up the financial architecture of BRICS:
 - New Development Bank (NDB) (BRICS Development Bank)
 - Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA).
-

The uncharted territory of outer space

Context: Today, outer space no longer captures our mind space in the way cyberspace does.

Did COVID-19 impact the planned Space activities?

Several space events planned well in advance proceeded even amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, some of which are:

- The launch of missions to Mars by China and the U.S. and UAE's Mars orbiter mission
- The first astronaut trip to orbit on a commercial enterprise built by Space X
- The completion of the Chinese 'BeiDou' satellite navigation system
- The U.S. Space Command
- Russia conducted a "non-destructive test of a space-based anti-satellite weapon"

How has Space Industry evolved over the years?

- **Technology has brought down the Cost:** The price tag for reaching low Earth orbit has declined by a factor of 20 in a decade. NASA's space shuttle cost about \$54,500 per kg; now, SpaceX's Falcon 9 advertises a cost of \$2,720 per kg.
- **Increased Market:** According to a Bank of America Report, the \$350 billion space market today will touch \$2.7 trillion by 2050. In a decade, 80,000 such satellites could be in space compared to less than 3,000 at present
- **Increased Participation by Private Players leading to fast paced innovation**
 - Starlink, the constellation being constructed by SpaceX to provide global Internet access, plans more than 10,000 mass-produced small satellites in low Earth orbit.
 - Amazon's Project Kuiper received U.S. Federal Communications Commission approvals for more than 3,000 micro-satellites.
 - These missions hope to transcend the digital divide and provide everyone, everywhere access to services such as distance education and telemedicine.
 - Companies such as Planet, Spire Global and Iceye are using orbital vantage points to collect and analyse data to deliver fresh insights in weather forecasting, global logistics, crop harvesting and disaster response.

What are the challenges to fulfilling the potential of space?

1. Multilateral framework for Space governance is becoming outdated for present context

- The Outer Space Treaty of 1967 enshrines the idea that space should be "the province of all mankind" and "not subject to national appropriation by claims of sovereignty".
- The Rescue Agreement, Space Liability Convention, and the Space Registration Convention expanded provisions of the Outer Space Treaty.
- Gaps in the Space laws include
 - The Moon Treaty of 1979 was not ratified by major space-faring nations.
 - Space law does not have a dispute settlement mechanism
 - Space law is silent on collisions and debris
 - They offer insufficient guidance on interference with others' space assets.

2. The legal framework of Space laws is state-centric, placing responsibility on states alone

- However, non-state entities are now in the fray for commercial space exploration and utilisation.
- Some states like US are providing frameworks for resource recovery through private enterprises based on the notion that this is not expressly forbidden for non-state actors.
- Some scholars and governments view this as skirting the principle of national non-appropriation, violating the spirit if not the letter of the existing space law.
- The **lack of alignment of domestic and international normative frameworks** risks a damaging free-for-all competition for celestial resources involving actors outside the space framework.

3. Space Arms race and Growing Militarisation

- States are investing in military space systems for communications, navigation, and reconnaissance purposes, so as to ensure operability of a range of capabilities.
- Reliance of militaries on satellite systems means that space assets become potential targets. So investment in technologies that can disrupt or destroy space-based capabilities is under way.
- The space arms race is difficult to curb, especially since almost all space technologies have military applications

Way Ahead

- Space legislation is needed for enabling coherence across technical, legal, commercial, diplomatic and defence goals.
- India's space vision also needs to address global governance, regulatory and arms control issues.

Connecting the dots

- [IN-SPACE](#) (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre)
- India's future space plans - Landing on the Moon; solar observatory; crewed orbital spaceflight mission; and installation of a modular space station in 2030.

DoPPW to integrate e- Pension Payment order with Digi Locker

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-II – Policies and Interventions; GS-III – Technology; IT

In News:

- The Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW), Ministry of Personnel Public Grievances and Pension, has decided to integrate the electronic Pension Payment Order (e-PPO) with Digi Locker.
- **Objective:** To enhance Ease of Living of Central Government Civil Pensioners.

Keytakeaways

- It will enable any Pensioner to obtain an instant print-out of the latest copy of their PPO from their Digi Locker account.
- A permanent record of their respective PPO in their Digi Locker shall be created.
- Delays in reaching the PPO to new pensioners and the necessity of handing over a physical copy will be eliminated.
- 'Bhavishya' software was used to create the facility.
- It is a single window platform for Pensioners right from the start to the end of their Pension processing.

Important value additions

DigiLocker

- It is a secured online locker repository.
 - It provides a platform to accumulate all important documents at one place.
 - It is a Government website.
 - Aadhar card, PAN card, Passport, Driving License and school and college certificates can be stored.
-

Development of Synthetic Flavonoids

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Science and Technology; Achievements of Indians in Science and Technology

In News:

- Recently, scientists from Agharkar Research Institute (ARI), Pune have found the first synthetic route for producing flavonoids molecules related to the treatment of tuberculosis and chikungunya.

Keytakeaways

- It is for the first time that the flavonoid molecules such as rugosa flavonoids, podocare flavone and isoflavone have been synthesised in a lab.
- These three molecules have so far been isolated from plants only.

Important value additions

Flavonoids

- These are part of the polyphenol class of phytonutrients (plant chemicals) found in almost all fruits and vegetables.
 - They are responsible for organic pigments and the vivid colours in fruits and vegetables.
 - These are powerful antioxidants with anti-inflammatory and immune system benefits.
 - A diet rich in flavonoids can protect from diseases related to heart, liver, kidney, brain and other infectious diseases.
-

Open API Service in AarogyaSetu

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Technology

In News:

- The government has announced a new feature 'Open API Service' for [AarogyaSetu app](#).

Key takeaways

- Through the new feature, organizations can take informed decisions regarding the presence of employees in office and the need to explore work from home.
- Thus, risk of contracting is reduced.
- Entities which are registered in India and have more than 50 employees can avail this feature.
- No other personal data except the user's name and status shall be provided through the API.

Important value additions

Application Programming Interface (API)

- It is an interface that can be used to program software that interacts with an existing application.
- Open Source API is made publicly available to software developers.

APIs Vs. Web Services

- Every web service is an API but not every API is a web service.
- While APIs can be online or offline, web services must use a network.
- While APIs can use any protocols or design styles, web services usually use specific protocols.

- Web services are less prone to hacking than API.
-

Private firms employ more women in R&D: STI

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Science and Technology

In News:

- Science and Technology Indicators (STI), 2018, a periodic compendium of the state of scientific research in India was recently released.
 - **Prepared by:** The National Science and Technology Management Information System (division of the Department of Science Technology).
 - **Based on:** Data provided by a range of scientific establishments across India.
 - **Findings:**
 - India's private sector research companies appear to employ a larger proportion of women in core research and development activities as compared to government-funded major scientific agencies.
 - The large drop in the number of women between the doctoral and professional stages may be due to:
 - Social pressure on women to have a family and sacrifice professional career.
 - Patriarchal attitudes in hiring practices.
-

'Mega labs' to boost COVID-19 testing

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III - Govt policies and initiatives; Social/Health issue; Science and Technology
Context:

- Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) to develop "mega labs" to ramp up testing for COVID-19
- The labs will use repurposing large machines, called Next Generation Sequencing machines (NGS).

About Next Generation Sequencing machines (NGS)

- They are normally used for sequencing human genomes or DNA sequencing.
- Next-generation sequencing machines or instruments are as mentioned as DNA microarrays, real-time PCR and DNA chips and reagents.
- These machines can substantially detect the presence of the COVID virus even in several instances where the traditional RT-PCR (reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction) tests fail.

Do you know?

- Next-generation sequencing, also known as high-throughput sequencing, is the term used to describe a number of different modern sequencing technologies including Illumina (Solexa) sequencing, Roche 454 sequencing, Ion torrent: Proton / PGM sequencing, solid sequencing.

Important Value Additions:

About Genome sequencing:

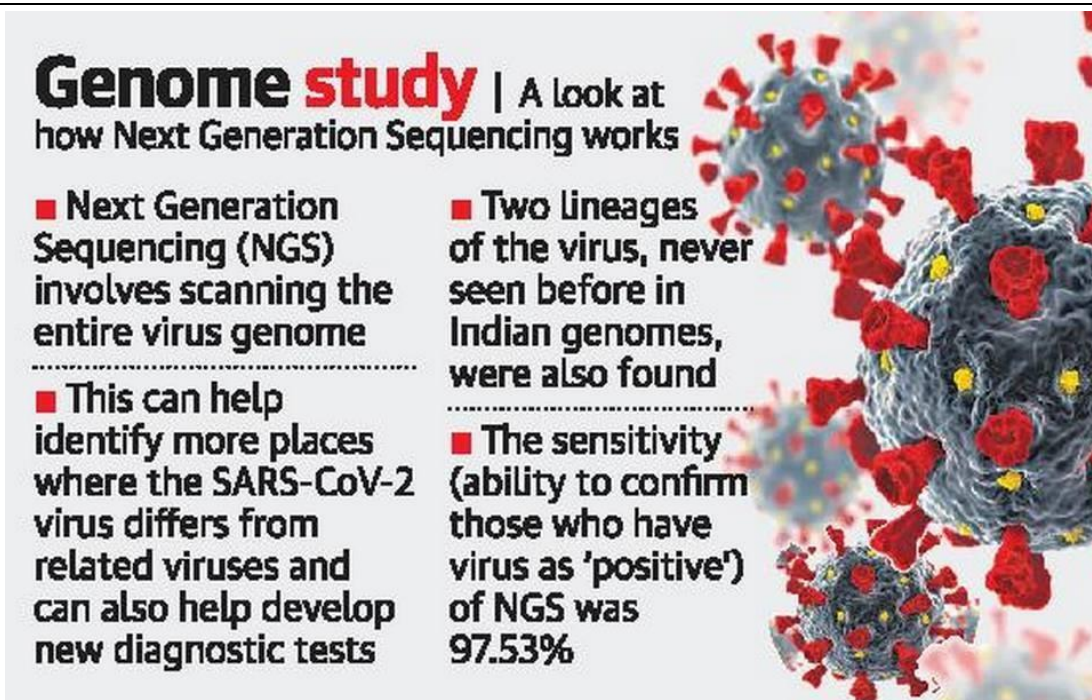
- Genome sequencing is a process to figure out order of DNA nucleotides or bases in a genome.
- This means the order of As, Cs, Gs, and Ts, a unique combination of which makes up an organism's DNA.

- After the genome is sequenced, the data is analysed to understand the genetic information of an entire species.

Difference between Next Generation Sequencing machines (NGS) and RT-PCR test

- RT-PCR test identifies the SARS-CoV-2 virus by exploring only specific sections, whereas the genome method can read a bigger chunk of virus genome and thereby provide more certainty that the virus in question is indeed the particular coronavirus of interest.
- NGS test can also trace the evolutionary history of the virus and track mutations more reliably.
- Unlike the RT-PCR that needs primers and probes — a key hurdle in operationalising such tests on a mass scale early on in the pandemic — the NGS only needs custom reagents.

Source: [The Hindu](#)



Genome study | A look at how Next Generation Sequencing works

- Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) involves scanning the entire virus genome
- This can help identify more places where the SARS-CoV-2 virus differs from related viruses and can also help develop new diagnostic tests
- Two lineages of the virus, never seen before in Indian genomes, were also found
- The sensitivity (ability to confirm those who have virus as 'positive') of NGS was 97.53%

Absciscic Acid (ABA)

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Science and Technology; Biology; Agriculture Research

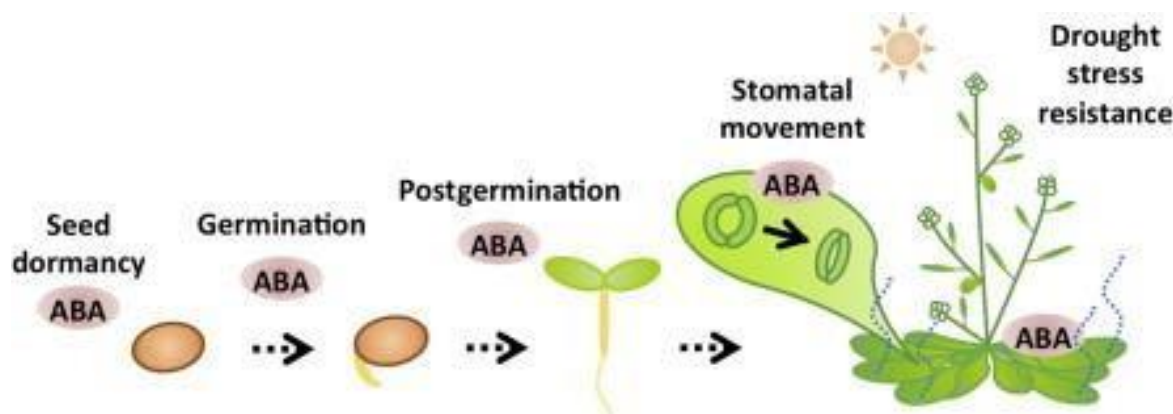
What is Absciscic Acid?

- Humans have glands that secrete hormones at different times to stimulate body processes such as growth, development, and the breaking down of sugars.
- Plants also have hormones that stimulate processes that are necessary for them to live.
- Absciscic acid is a plant hormone involved in many developmental plant processes, such as dormancy and environmental stress response.
- Absciscic acid is produced in the roots of the plant as well as the terminal buds at the top of the plant.

Function of Absciscic Acid

- Absciscic acid is involved in several plant functions.

- Plants have openings on the bottom side of their leaves, known as stomata. Stomata take in carbon dioxide and regulate water content. Abscissic acid has been found to function in the closing of these stomata during times when the plant does not require as much carbon dioxide or during times of drought when the plant cannot afford to lose much water through transpiration.
- One of the crucial functions of abscissic acid is to inhibit seed germination. Abscissic acid has been found to stop a seed from immediately germinating once it has been placed in the soil. It actually causes the seed to enter a period of dormancy.
- This is of great benefit to the plants because most seeds are formed at the end of the growing season, when conditions would not be favorable for a new plant to sprout. The abscissic acid causes the seed to wait until the time when conditions are more favorable to grow. This ensures greater success in the plant's ability to grow and reproduce successfully.
- ABA functions in many plant developmental processes, including seed and bud dormancy, the control of organ size and stomatal closure. It is especially important for plants in the response to environmental stresses, including drought, soil salinity, cold tolerance, freezing tolerance, heat stress and heavy metal ion tolerance.



Why ABA in news?

- IISER Bhopal scientists are studying the critical role of ABA in seed germination, which can lead to crop improvement.
- Their study proved that the inhibition of seedling growth by ABA is much stronger in darkness as compared to light conditions

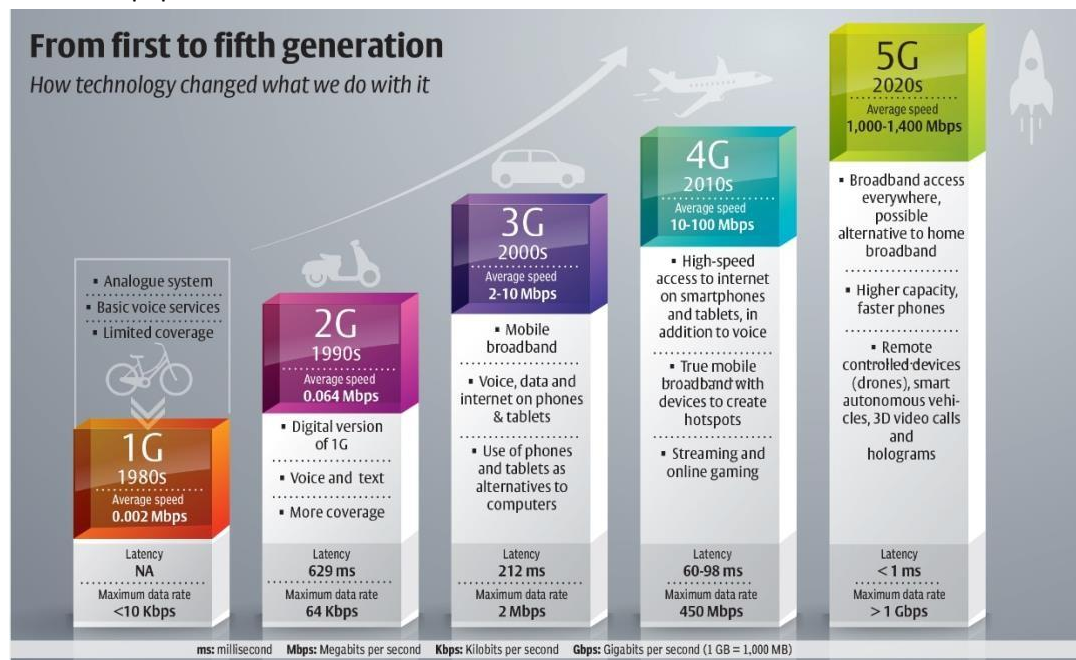
Shutting the door on Huawei

- Context: U.K's decision to ban the Chinese company Huawei that entails banning its mobile providers from buying new Huawei 5G equipment after 2020 as well as removing all of Huawei's 5G kit from their networks by 2027

What is 5G?

- 5G is the fifth generation cellular technology that apart from increasing the downloading and uploading speeds (speed of 1 Gbps) over the mobile network, also reduces the latency i.e. the time taken by a network to respond.
- It also increases energy efficiency and offers more stable network connections.
- 5G is also designed to deliver signals more reliably than earlier cellular networks

- 5G will have a wider area in the frequency spectrum (range of frequencies) that will ensure no network congestion.
- In addition, it will also ensure connectivity to a full circle i.e. everything is connected to every other thing.
- 5G will help facilitate the ecosystem for the Internet of Things (IoT) and to incorporate Artificial Intelligence (AI) in our daily lives and
- To get the benefits of 5G, users will have to buy new phones, while carriers will need to install new transmission equipment to offer the faster service.



- Source: [The Hindu](#)

What made UK to ban Huawei?

- It was primarily due to pressure mounted by USA
- US views technological progress made by Chinese company as threat to its own dominance in the field of technology & trade
- On the grounds of cyber security and data privacy, US had banned Huawei company from its economy in 2019
- US also imposed sanctions on Huawei that created uncertainties around Huawei's supply chain
- impacting its global business.
- The U.S.-China relationship is entering a phase of Cold War 2.0, the Trump administration had made it clear that the U.K.'s "special relationship" with the U.S. will be jeopardised if UK doesn't ban Huawei.

What has been the response of China?

- China strongly opposed the U.K.'s ban and warned that it would take measures to safeguard the legitimate interests of Chinese companies

Consequence of UK's decision

- Win for USA: The U.K.'s change of stance is a major diplomatic win for USA as it might also convince fence sitters to make a final decision.

- A domino effect: Other countries in Europe will also come under pressure to take similar decisions
- France also decided to limit the use of Huawei's 5G kit by issuing limited term licences.
- Germany too is reducing its reliance on Huawei as the mood against China has soured across Europe.
- Geopolitical Changes: After years of close relation with the Chinese, the European Union is becoming more explicit than ever in challenging China.
- Perception of China: The response of China has made countries to view China as a "systemic rival" that is hell bent on challenging the extant global order
- Political Battle: What once looked like a battle which the U.S. was waging on its own has suddenly been joined by a number of other players. The decision on Huawei is not merely a technological or economic decision but a fundamentally political decision for most countries.

India and Huawei

- India had allowed Huawei to participate in 5G trials which could not happen because of the disruptions caused by the pandemic.
- Today, India-China ties have altered due to the border crisis and Chinese insensitivity to Indian concerns.
- With New Delhi toughening its posture against China, it looks rather unlikely that Huawei would get to participate in the 5G network roll-out in India.
- India is signalling that it is willing to bear economic and technological costs on limiting Chinese involvement in critical infrastructure.

Conclusion

- China's decision to weaponise trade and technology ties might now come back to haunt it as other nations begin to pay back in the same coin

Connecting the dots:

- Steering Committee on 5G under the chairmanship of AJ Paulraj
- AI – its merits and challenges

Democracy needs an Internet ombudsman

Context: The increasing interplay between government, companies and citizens for big data.

What are some of the Criticism of the present day Internet Structure?

- Information asymmetry has become so huge that it has eroded the very spirit of democracy by limiting the unbiased communication of ideas
- Data is used as means of control and surveillance, whereby powers of government for National Security and fraud detection is being misused for political surveillance
- Increased Uncertainty: Citizens receive a flood of unfiltered information which is re-circulated into the network of social media causing much greater chaos
- Increasing Conservatism: Information Superhighways in democracy are leading to "re-tribalisation" of politics as Politicians are able to misuse internet for arousing passions & fragmenting society for political gains
- Increasing Private Players in Political Messaging: While the customisation of political messaging is not *per se* illegal, it certainly is unlawful to indulge in unauthorised data mining and collection by the industry

- New Interests to be balanced: There is a Triangular interplay between data protection, privacy and a flow of information, which are 21st century public policy concerns, where governments don't have much experience in dealing with them
- Reactive Government Policies: Indian Government [banned 59 Chinese apps](#) in the backdrop of border tensions. However, its stance on Facebook & Amazon is unclear where they are facing scrutiny on their own soil for their data mining policies
- Governance tools under Criticism: The Aadhar Act is alleged as dilution of 'privacy' and the standard of proportionality test set up by the Supreme Court. Similar concerns are also raised by [Arogya Setu App](#)
- A national policy on data privacy of individuals is still a non-starter. The Personal Data Protection Bill, struggling to be born in Parliament despite conception in 2018
- Increasing Data Theft: India's cybersecurity watchdog, CERT-In, last year reported huge data theft of Facebook and Twitter users by malicious third party apps
 - Reportedly, more than 1.3 million credit and debit card details from Indian banks and the data of 6.8 million users from an Indian health-care website were stolen in the same year.
- New Form of War: There are dedicated IT cells of organisations, governments which carry out a digital form of warfare with propaganda and fake news

Way Ahead - Should there be Regulation of Internet?

- There should be a gatekeeper(regulator) to balance appetites for technology, security and privacy. The gate keeper is for regulation, not surveillance
- Such a regulator has to be completely and genuinely independent. Otherwise it will perform an unacceptable legitimisation function.

[Connecting the dots:](#)

- Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) vs Union Of India case
- Justice B N Srikrishna Committee report of data protection

Swadeshi Microprocessor Challenge launched

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Innovation

In News: Recently, "Swadeshi Microprocessor Challenge- Innovate Solutions for #Aatmanirbhar Bharat" was launched

Key takeaways

- Launched by: Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY)
- Aim: To provide further impetus to the strong ecosystem of Start-up, innovation and research in the country.
- To realize the ambition of self-reliance.
- Indigenously developed microprocessors SHAKTI and VEGA have also been rolled out under the
- Microprocessor Development Programme.

[Important value additions](#)

Microprocessor Development Programme

- Aim: Meeting India's future requirements of strategic and industrial sectors.

- To mitigate the issues of security, licensing, technology obsolescence and cutting dependency on imports.
 - It is a successful step to achieve the goal of vibrant ecosystem of Electronic System Design & Manufacturing in India.
-

[Umbrella Entity for Retail Payments unveiled by RBI](#)

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

In News: Umbrella Entity for Retail Payments has been recently unveiled by RBI.

Key takeaways

- Eligibility: The companies with a net worth of over 500 crore rupees.
 - Such companies will set up an umbrella entity through which new payment systems in the retail space comprising ATMs, White Label PoS, Aadhaar-based payments shall be set up and managed.
 - The entity will monitor national and international developments to avoid shocks and frauds.
 - The promoter group of the umbrella entity shall be owned and controlled by resident Indian citizens.
-

[Data, AI may add up to \\$500 bn to GDP by 2025](#)

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Artificial Intelligence; Technology

In News: Recently, Nasscom report titled 'Unlock Value from Data and AI: The Indian Opportunity' was released.

- Ministry associated: Ministry of Electronics and IT.
 - According to the report, Data and Artificial Intelligence (AI) could add \$450-\$500 billion to India's GDP by 2025 and contribute to the country's economic recovery and growth.
 - Over the years, AI has become a strategic lever for economic growth across nations and will continue to be one of the most crucial technologies of the future.
-

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Red alert issued in Maharashtra

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains I and III – Climate; Disaster and natural Hazards; Disaster Management

In news:

Mumbai witnessed heavy rain leading to widespread damage.

IMD has issued a 'red' alert for 'extremely heavy' rainfall in Mumbai and several parts of the State.

There was heavy flooding in the low-lying areas of the city and suburbs.

Reasons:

Mumbai has already received 50 percent of its August average rainfall owing to incessant downpour over the past 16 hours.

According to IMD, the influence of a low-pressure weather system developing over the north Bay of Bengal has led to the downpour.

Active monsoon conditions over the Arabian Sea, led to high convection and localised circulation that enhanced rain activity, thunderstorms and overnight gusty winds.

Idukki landslide

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Natural hazards and disaster; Disaster Management

Context:

- Kerala faces floods for third consecutive year.
- Incessant rain and strong winds swept across several parts of Kerala amid predictions of heavy or very heavy rain in many others.

Note: Try to know and locate places such as Eravikulam National Park, Nayamakkad tea estate, rivers and major dams present in Kerala.

Key facts:

- In India, about 0.42 million sq. km or 12.6% of land area, excluding snow covered area, is prone to landslide hazard.
 - Out of this, 0.18 million sq. km falls in North East Himalaya, including Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalaya; 0.14 million sq. km falls in North West Himalaya (Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir); 0.09 million sq. km in Western Ghats and Konkan hills (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra) and 0.01 million sq. km in Eastern Ghats of Aruku area in Andhra Pradesh.
-

Beirut explosion

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Science; Disaster and Hazards

In news:

- At least 100 people were killed and nearly 4,000 injured in a massive explosion at Lebanon's capital Beirut.
- The explosion was of over 2700 tonnes of ammonium nitrate stored for six years in a warehouse in the port.

Do you know?

- Incident comes at one of the worst times for the country.

- The Western Asian country in the recent past has been crippled by serious economic crisis.
- It had led to large-scale closure of businesses and soaring prices of basic commodities resulting in social unrest.
- The country is also grappled by age-old Shia-Sunni rift.

Ammonium nitrate

- In its pure form, ammonium nitrate (NH_4NO_3) is a white, crystalline chemical which is soluble in water.
- It is the main ingredient in the manufacture of commercial explosives used in mining and construction.

Regulations:

- In India, The Ammonium Nitrate Rules, 2012, under The Explosives Act, 1884, define ammonium nitrate as the “compound with formula NH_4NO_3 including any mixture or compound having more than 45 per cent ammonium nitrate by weight including emulsions, suspensions, melts or gels but excluding emulsion or slurry explosives and non explosives emulsion matrix and
- fertilizers from which the ammonium nitrate cannot be separated”.
- Pure ammonium nitrate is not an explosive on its own. It is classified as an oxidiser (Grade 5.1) under the United Nations classification of dangerous goods. If mixed with ingredients like fuel or some other contaminants, or because of some other external factors, it can be very explosive.

Stored ammonium nitrate is a major fire hazard

- Large quantities of stored ammonium nitrate are regarded as a major fire hazard, with multiple reported cases across the world.
- Big stockpiles of ammonium nitrate can explode in two possible ways.
- One is by some type of detonation or initiation because the storage comes in contact with explosive mixture or an outside source of energy.
- Second, the blast can result due to a fire which starts into the ammonium nitrate storage because of the heat generated due to the oxidation process at large scale.
- There are several documented examples of deadly ammonium nitrate fire and explosion incidents in the past, some with large numbers of fatalities like in China in 2015 and in Texas in 1947.
- Experts say that the world over, the main obstacles in regulating ammonium nitrate is its widespread use in industry and agriculture.
- While a legislative framework exists, repeated examples of misuse and mishaps show that a lot more needs to be done.

National Landslide Susceptibility Mapping (NLSM) programme

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains II and III – Natural hazards and disaster; Disaster Management

About NLSM

- Geological Survey of India has launched and undertook a national programme on landslide susceptibility mapping - Macro scale (1:50,000) National Landslide Susceptibility Mapping (NLSM) with an aim to cover the 0.42 million sq. km landslide prone areas of the country. This national programme was formally launched in 2014.

Aims and Objectives

- To create a dynamic National Landslide Susceptibility Geodatabase for India
- To prepare GIS - based seamless Landslide Susceptibility Maps of India on 1:50,000 scale

- To prepare a nation-wide repository on GIS-based Landslide Inventory
-

Indian copters help fight oil spill in Mauritius

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Environmental Degradation

In News:

- The indigenously developed helicopters - **Dhruv Advanced Light helicopter** (ALH) and **Chetak helicopters** are being used extensively in Mauritius for salvage and rescue missions to clear the oil spill
- The spill occurred after a Japanese owned cargo ship MV Wakasio ran aground 40 km off the capital Port Louis.

Key takeaways

- MV Wakasio which was on its way from China to Brazil ran aground on the reef at **Pointe d'Esny**,
- It is an **ecologically sensitive zone on Mauritius South Eastern coastline**.
- The Pointe d'Esny Wetlands are **designated as a site of international importance under the Convention on Wetlands**.
- The carrier held tonnes of **low-sulfur fuel oil, diesel and lubricant oil**.
- Effects of the spill:
 - It **threatens** the ecology of the coastline of Mauritius and marine life in the Indian Ocean.
 - It **endangers** the already endangered coral reefs, seagrasses in the shallow waters, mangroves, the fishes and other aquatic fauna.
 - Giant tortoises, endangered green turtles, and the critically endangered Pink Pigeon are at risk.

Given the magnitude of the oil spill, Mauritius had declared a state of environmental emergency.

DEFENCE/INTERNAL SECURITY/SECURITY

Draft 'Defence Production & Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP) 2020

Part of: GS Mains II and III – Govt policies and schemes; Defence

About:

- In order to provide impetus to self-reliance in defence manufacturing, multiple announcements were made under 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Package'.
- In implementing such framework and to position India amongst the leading countries of the world in defence and aerospace sectors, Ministry of Defence (MoD) has formulated a draft Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy 2020 (DPEPP 2020).

The policy has laid out following goals and objectives:

- To achieve a turnover of Rs 1,75,000 Crores (US\$ 25Bn) including export of Rs 35,000 Crore (US\$ 5 Billion) in Aerospace and Defence goods and services by 2025.
- To develop a dynamic, robust and competitive Defence industry, including Aerospace and Naval Shipbuilding industry to cater to the needs of Armed forces with quality products.
- To reduce dependence on imports and take forward "Make in India" initiatives through domestic design and development.
- To promote export of defence products and become part of the global defence value chains.
- To create an environment that encourages R&D, rewards innovation, creates Indian IP ownership and promotes a robust and self-reliant defence industry.

The Policy brings out multiple strategies under the following focus areas:

- Procurement Reforms
- Indigenization & Support to MSMEs/Startups
- Optimize Resource Allocation
- Investment Promotion, FDI & Ease of Doing Business
- Innovation and R&D
- DPSUs and OFB
- Quality Assurance & Testing Infrastructure
- Export Promotion

Militarising Andamans: The costs and the benefits

Context: The Ladakh stand-off with China has catalysed India's efforts to strengthen its military presence at the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANI)

- The idea of militarising the Andaman Islands isn't new.
- Since the 1980s, Indian commentators & policy makers have advocated building strategic muscle at the ANI to fully exploit the strategic position of ANI

Recent Steps taken by India in ANI

- New Delhi has moved to expedite plans for basing additional military forces, including facilities for additional warships, aircraft, and infantry soldiers at the strategically-located Andaman Islands.
- Naval air stations INS Kohassa in Shibpur and INS Baaz in Campbell Bay are having their runways extended to support operations by large aircrafts
- A 10-year infrastructure development "roll-on" plan — pegged at Rs 5,000 crores — is on the fast-track.

What is the Strategic significance of ANI?

- Close to Malacca Strait: ANI spans 450 nautical miles in a roughly north-south configuration and is adjacent to the western entrance to the Malacca Strait, which is a major Indian Ocean choke point
- Links Two Subcontinents: Geopolitically, the ANI connects South Asia with South-East Asia. While the northernmost point of the archipelago is only 22 nautical miles from Myanmar, the southernmost point, Indira Point, is a mere 90 nautical miles from Indonesia.
- Dominating Position: The islands dominate the Bay of Bengal, the Six Degree and the Ten Degree Channels that more than sixty thousand commercial vessels traverse each year.
- Access to EEZ: ANI constitute just 0.2% of India's landmass but provide near 30% of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- Important Pillar of Foreign Policy: ANI could also become an important element of India's "Act East Policy" of engaging with countries in the region east of India.
- Commercial Potential: The trans-shipment hub at Car Nicobar, could potentially be a strategic game-changer, rivalling the ports of Singapore or Colombo.
- Tri-Service Security Strategy: As Andaman and Nicobar is the only Tri-Command structure in India, development of military infrastructure at ANI is a key requirement in India's security strategy
- Tackling China: With China's growing presence in Indian Ocean region, militarising the islands will provide India a first mover advantage in dominating the region

What are the Challenges in Militarising ANI?

1. Fear of antagonise India's neighbours

- A section of India's diplomatic community has opposed militarising the ANI would disrupt Indian Ocean as zone of peace.
- They argued that militarising A&N islands would in turn militarise the littorals — an outcome that would not sit well with countries in South and Southeast Asia.
- When India first began developing the ANI in the mid-1980s, observers say Malaysia and Indonesia feared that India would use its military facilities in the ANI to dominate its region, and project power east of Malacca

2. Ecological aspect to militarising the ANI

- The flurry of recent infrastructure projects (including any military projects), environmentalists warn, could devastate the fragile ecology of islands.
- Many islands are facing significant damage from the climate crisis, which will get exacerbated due to military activities

3. Lack of reciprocity in India's bilateral logistics agreements

- The Indian navy's plans to offer logistical support to partner navies does not include its ANI facilities.
- Four years after signing a logistics pact with the US its navy ships still have no access the ANI. France, Singapore and Australia — India's other logistics partners — too haven't had their warships repaired or replenished at Indian island facilities
- As a result, there hasn't been much enthusiasm from friendly foreign countries to build strategic capabilities at the ANI.

4. Counterproductive to tackle China

- While China's presence in the Indian Ocean is growing, it hasn't so far militarised key Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) outposts in the Bay of Bengal (Hambantota, Chittagong and Kyaukpyu).
- If India pushes for greater military presence in the ANI, China could well seek military access in its friendly countries in Indian ocean.

Way Ahead

- Militarising ANI will aid India's strategic capabilities, but such development should not come at the cost the ruthless exploitation of Biodiversity hotspot
- In order to counter China's expanding footprint in Indian Ocean region, India may consider permitting friendly foreign navies (QUAD members, France etc.) access to the ANI's military bases.

Connecting the dots:

- String of Pearl Strategy
 - South China Sea Dispute
-

Three-day Naval Commanders Conference (NCC) recently held

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Security

In News:

- A three-day Naval Commanders Conference (NCC) was recently held.

Key takeaways

- According to the Indian Defence Minister, the Navy has effectively carried out Mission Based Deployments (MBD).
 - They were carried out to protect maritime interests.
 - Under MBD, ships and aircraft at major and sensitive locations were deployed.
 - Under MBD concept, Indian ships were Mission Deployed for:
 - Anti-piracy
 - Operation 'GULFDEP' in the Persian Gulf
 - Operation 'CENTDEP' in the central Indian Ocean Region
 - Operation 'NORDEP' in the northern Bay of Bengal
 - Operation 'MALDEP' in the Andaman Sea and approaches to the Malacca Strait.
-

V. Ramagopal Rao Committee constituted

Part of: GS-Prelims and GS-III – Defence

In News:

- A five-member expert committee has been constituted by the Chairman of DRDO.
 - **Objective:** To review and redefine the charter of duties for all laboratories of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
 - **Focus:** Indigenous development of futuristic technologies.
 - **Head of the committee:** Professor V. Ramagopal Rao, Director, IIT, Delhi.
-

Taking nuclear vulnerabilities seriously

Context: Seventy-five years ago on 5th Aug 1945, the Japanese city of Hiroshima was destroyed by one single atomic bomb. Three days later, a second bomb destroyed Nagasaki.

Do You Know?

- Those two bombs killed over 2,00,000 people, some of them instantaneously, and others within five months.
- Another 2,00,000 people or more who survived the bombings of these two cities, were injured because of the long-lasting effects of radiation exposure.
- Increasing Vulnerability of Nuclear Weapons

- Rising Nuclear arms: Over 1,26,000 nuclear weapons have been built since the beginning of the atomic age.
- Increasing Number of Countries adopting Nuclear arms path: Since 1945 US, UK, Russia, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan, & North Korea have armed themselves with nuclear weapons that have much more destructive power in comparison to those that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- Damage to Environment due to Testing: Over 2,000 of nuclear weapons have been used in nuclear tests, above and below the ground, to demonstrate their explosive power, causing long- lasting damage to the environment and public health.
- The invention of ballistic missiles at the end of the 1950s has made it impossible to intercept nuclear weapons once they are launched. Neither fallout shelters nor ballistic missile defence systems have succeeded in negating this vulnerability.
- No protection: There is no realistic way to protect against nuclear weapons, whether they are used deliberately, inadvertently, or accidentally.

What has prevented the nuclear war?

- Nuclear weapons are so destructive that no country would use them, because such use would invite retaliation in kind.
- Also, no political leader would be willing to risk the possible death of millions of their citizens. That was the idea of deterrence.
- Mutual assured destruction is a strategic military doctrine in which the use of nuclear weapons on a full scale would theoretically result in the destruction of both the attacker and the defender.
- Therefore, the use of nuclear weapons is impossible because of deterrence it causes and this has prevented the nuclear war
- Deterrence enthusiasts claim that nuclear weapons do not just protect countries against use of nuclear weapons by others, but even prevent war and promote stability.

What are the Problem of Deterrence?

- Deterrence has not worked every time
- Nuclear threats have not always produced fear and, in turn, fear has not always induced caution.
- To the contrary, nuclear threats in some cases have produced anger, and anger can trigger a drive to escalate, as was the case during Cuban missile crisis of 1962
- Promotes War Mentality
- All nuclear weapon states have admitted to the possibility that deterrence could fail and have made plans for using nuclear weapons, in effect, preparing to fight nuclear war.
- Promotes Overconfidence that is dangerous
- In the real world, it is not possible for planners to have complete control.
- The desire to believe in the perfect controllability and safety of nuclear weapons creates overconfidence, which is dangerous
- Overconfidence, as many scholars studying safety say, is more likely to lead to accidents and possibly to the use of nuclear weapons.

Conclusion

In several historical instances, what prevented the use of nuclear weapons was not control practices but either their failure or factors outside institutional control (Ex: Cuban Missile Crisis). Thus, one needs to relook at the idea of deterrence created by Nuclear weapons.

Connecting the dots

- India's Nuclear Doctrine and No First Use Policy
-

Kavkaz 2020

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III – Defence; bilateral and multilateral military exercises

About:

- India to take part in Russian Kavkaz 2020 strategic command •-post exercise.
 - The invitees include China and Pakistan, apart from other member •states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
 - Kavkaz 2020 to be held in Astrakhan (Russia)
-

Indian Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation (NIIO)

Part of: GS Prelims and Mains III - Defence

About:

- Defence Minister launched the Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation (NIIO).
- The NIIO puts in place dedicated structures for the end users to interact with academia and industry towards fostering innovation and indigenisation for self-reliance in defence.
- The NIIO is a three-•tiered organisation.
- The Naval Technology Acceleration Council (N•TAC) will bring together the twin aspects of innovation and indigenisation and provide apex level directives.

Do you know?

- The Draft Defence Acquisition Policy 2020 (DAP 20) rolled out by the Defence Ministry last month envisaged establishment of Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation by the Service Headquarters.
 - Indian Navy already has a functional Directorate of Indigenisation and the new structures created will build upon the ongoing indigenisation initiatives, as well as focus on innovation.
 - A compendium of Indian Navy's Indigenisation perspective plans titled 'SWAVLAMBAN' was also released.
 - A Technology Development Acceleration Cell (TDAC) has also been created for induction of emerging disruptive technology in an accelerated time frame.
-

PERSON IN NEWS

Person in news	Description
1. Mahatma Ayyankali: Birth anniversary celebrated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ayyankali (1863 – 1941) He was a social reformer. He worked for the advancement of deprived untouchable people in the princely state of Travancore, British India. He belonged to the Pulayar community of untouchable people. He founded the Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham (SJPS) (Association for the Protection of the Poor) The Association campaigned for access to schools and raised funds to set up Pulayar-operated schools in the interim.
2. Manoj Sinha and Murmu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Former Minister of State for Railways, Manoj Sinha was appointed as the Lieutenant-Governor of Jammu and Kashmir after G.C. Murmu, a former IAS officer, resigned. Murmu was appointed the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.
3. Rahat Indori	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted Urdu poet Rahat Indori, who tested positive for coronavirus, passed away. He kept the 'mushaira' (poetry symposiums) alive for generations. He was well known as a "rockstar of the Indian literary world", a "people's poet" and prince of the "mushaira" tradition. Among the poet's most powerful lines are "<i>Sabhi ka khoon hai shamil yahan ki mitti mein; Kisi ke baap ka Hindustan thodi hai (Everybody's blood mingles in the soil; Hindustan does not belong solely to one)</i>". About Mushaira Mushaira is a poetic symposium. It is an event where poets gather to perform their works. A mushaira is a beloved part of the Culture of North India, Pakistan and the Deccan, particularly among the Hyderabad Muslims, and it is greatly admired by participants as a forum for free self-expression.
4. Kamala Harris	<p>Why in news?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kamala Harris has been named running mate of presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden. Ms. Harris is the first woman of Indian descent and black woman to be on the presidential ticket of a major political party in the U.S. The move puts Ms. Harris in a powerful position to lead the Democratic party in the near future and with a shot at the presidency in four to eight years
5. IAS ASHISH CHAUHAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spain mountain peak named after uttarakhand's ias officer dr ashish – virgin mountain peak of Spain named after uttarakhand ias officer dr ashish

	<p>chauhan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spanish mountaineer Antonio has named the virgin peak in Spain as 'Magistrate's Point' after the Spanish mountaineer summits Antonio has dedicated the achievement to the former Uttarkashi collector for his humane gesture for helping him during his summit to Mt Satopanth in 2018, where he had stuck amid climbing the peak
6. Pandith Jasraj	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Context: Recently Pandit Jasraj, one of the world's most prominent Indian classical vocalists, passed away. Key takeaways: Pandit Jasraj was associated with Mewati gharana of music. He is known for his unconventional mixing of khayal with elements of bhakti rasa, employing harkats and murkis that were traditionally used in light classical music. Khayal is a musical form based on the elaboration of a Raga with lyrical composition consisting of two stanzas. He also performed semi-classical old musical forms such as the Haveli sangeet. Haveli Sangeet are performances are held in temples and the compositions are sung in praise of Lord Krishna. He is the recipient of numerous awards, honours, and titles, including the prestigious Padma Vibhushan and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award. Recently, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) named an asteroid after him, formally known as 2006 VP32, as Panditjasraj. He was the first Indian musician to receive this honour.

MISCELLANEOUS

In News	Description
1. Kariye Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turkey has decided to convert another church into a mosque after Hagia Sophia It was an ancient Orthodox church that became a mosque and then a popular Istanbul museum.
7. Srisailem Dam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nine people were killed after a massive fire at the Srisailem hydroelectric plant, Andhra Pradesh. The Dam is constructed across the Krishna River, Andhra Pradesh near Srisailem temple town. It is the 2nd largest capacity working hydroelectric station in India. It is constructed in a deep gorge in the Nallamala Hills in between Kurnool and Mahabubnagar districts.
8. Perseids Meteor Shower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The shower is active from August 17-26. The Perseids are one of the brighter meteor showers of the year. They occur every year between July and August. They are made of tiny space debris from the comet Swift-Tuttle. They are named after the constellation Perseus. They are visible in the Northern Hemisphere and can be viewed in skies all across.
9. Thumbimahotsavam 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First-ever State Dragonfly Festival, named Thumbimahotsavam 2020, shall be held in Kerala. 'Pantalu' is the official mascot for the festival. Organised by: WWF-India (Kerala unit), the Society for Odonate Studies (SOS) and Thumbipuram A dragonfly is an insect belonging to the order Odonata.
10. 2018VP1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is an asteroid that is on a collision course with Earth according to NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. It was first discovered at the Palomar Observatory in California's San Diego County two years ago. NASA has said there is a 0.41 per cent, or 1 in 240 chance that 2018VP1 would impact the Earth. If the asteroid does enter our planet's atmosphere, it is unlikely to cause any harm. It is likely to burn up into an impressive fireball after entering the Earth's atmosphere before reaching the ground. Such an event happens about once every year. Asteroids that are 140 metres or larger are of "the greatest concern" due to the level of devastation their impact may cause.
11. WHO declares Africa free of polio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WHO has declared Africa free of polio recently. A WHO commission has certified that no cases had occurred on the continent for the past four years, the threshold for eradication of poliovirus. Poliovirus now joins smallpox in the list of viruses that have been

	wiped out in Africa.
12. New circles of Archaeological survey of India announced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 new circles of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) have been announced. • Ministry: Ministry of Culture. • New circles: Trichy (Tamil Nadu), Raiganj (West Bengal), Rajkot (Gujarat), Jabalpur (Madhya Pradesh), Jhansi (Uttar Pradesh) & Meerut (Uttar Pradesh). • Hampi Mini Circle has been converted into a full-fledged circle. • Earlier there were 29 ASI circles across the country.
13. Chunauti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Chunauti”- Next Generation Start-up Challenge Contest has been launched. • Ministry: Ministry for Electronics and Information Technology. • Aim: To identify around 300 start-ups working in identified areas and providing them seed funds of up to 25 lakh rupees. • Objective: To further boost start-ups and software products with special focus on Tier-II towns in India. • A budget of over 95 crore rupees has been earmarked over a period of three years for this programme.
14. World Urdu Conference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Urdu Conference was recently inaugurated by Union Education Minister. • Organised by: National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL) • Place: New Delhi.
15. DGNCC Mobile Training App launched	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Directorate General National Cadet Corps (DGNCC) Mobile Training App was recently launched. • Ministry: Defence Ministry • The App will assist in conducting countrywide online training of NCC cadets. • Aim: Providing NCC cadets entire training material on one platform.
16. Hezbollah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hezbollah is a Shiite Muslim political party and militant group based in Lebanon. • Hezbollah emerged during Lebanon’s fifteen-year civil war, which broke out in 1975 when long- simmering discontent over the large, armed Palestinian presence in the country reached a boiling point. • The Iran-backed group is driven by its opposition to Israel and its resistance to Western influence in the Middle East. • With its history of carrying out global terrorist attacks, Hezbollah have been designated as a terrorist group by the United States and many other countries.
17. Atomic Bomb Dome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is part of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, Japan and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996, to call for a non-nuclear world. • The ruin of the hall serves as a memorial to the over 140,000 people

	who were killed in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on 6 August 1945.
18. Global hunger Index	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India ranked 102nd on the Global Hunger Index, despite high food production. Nutritional security requires measures to improve protein and vitamin deficiencies. 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) 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.
19. U.S. to ban transactions with TikTok, WeChat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. President signed executive orders (EOs) barring transactions with Chinese video sharing app TikTok and messaging service WeChat. US cited concerns that the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) could retrieve private data on Americans from these apps and CPC censorship on the apps A proposal to de-list Chinese companies from American stock exchanges if they did not comply with American accounting standards was announced.
20. Loya Jirga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Loya Jirga is a highly respected traditional consultative body of Afghanistan and this meeting is an issue internal to Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, loya jirgas have been reportedly organized since at least the early 18th century when the Hotaki and Durrani dynasties rose to power.
21. Kamath panel for stressed loans resolution norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RBI constituted expert committee under the chairmanship of veteran banker K.V. Kamath to make recommendations on norms for the resolution of COVID-19 related stressed loans.
22. Impact of COVID-19 Lockdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lockdown hit treatment under PMJAY scheme Claim volume fell by 50% under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) Significant declines in admissions for child delivery and oncology PMJAY beneficiaries delayed or postponed treatment due to the fear of infection at hospitals 78% of rural India stopped work

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost 80% of rural Indians saw their work coming to a standstill during the COVID-19 lockdown • Only 20% got work under the Centre's employment guarantee scheme • More than 68% of respondents faced "high" to "very high" monetary difficulties, with 23% • forced to borrow money during the lockdown • 71% of ration card holders got grains from the government • Over 60% of skilled workers and manual labourers faced a complete shutdown. (Employment was hit)
23. Human Context	ATM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postal department's new service of delivering money home - where postman acted as a human ATM - has turned out to be biggest hit countrywide. • More than one lakh transactions being recorded across India on a daily basis. • How does it work? • The free service allows people to withdraw — through the postman — up to ₹10,000 at a time • from any of their Aadhaar-linked bank accounts. • The postman carries a portable biometric device to match fingerprints. • All a person needs to do is to use the Postinfo app or simply call the local post office or spot the postman. • Benefits: • Helped stranded people during COVID-19 •forced lockdown • Helps elderly and people living in rural areas • Deliver monthly pensions
24. Russia becomes first country to grant regulatory approval to a COVID-19 vaccine, Sputnik V		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russia became the first country to grant regulatory approval to a COVID-19 vaccine after less than two months of human testing. • The vaccine is named - 'Sputnik V' - in homage to the world's first satellite launched by the • Soviet Union. • Sputnik V yet to complete its final trials. • Russia expects the vaccine into mass production by the end of the year.
25. Smart Scheme	Connect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punjab government launched this scheme • It aims to distribute smartphones to students of Class XII in government schools across the State • To boost education, connectivity and empower the poor youth in the present pandemic situation
26. International Youth Day About		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United Nations General Assembly in 1999 accepted the recommendation of the World Conference of Ministers of Youth to designate August 12 as International Youth Day.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is celebrated to raise awareness about the challenges and problems faced by the world's youth at this age. • It focuses on the engagement of youth at the local, national and international levels. • The theme for this year's International Youth Day is 'Youth Engagement for Global Action'.
27. UAE, Israel agrees to establish diplomatic ties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Arab Emirates and Israel have agreed to establish full diplomatic ties. • The above move is part of a deal to halt the annexation of occupied land sought by the Palestinians for their future state. • The announcement makes the UAE the first Gulf Arab state to do so and only the third Arab nation to have active diplomatic ties to Israel, after Egypt and Jordan.
28. "Majoritarianism is not nationalism" - Romila Thapar About:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to renowned historian of ancient India Professor Romila Thapar - • "Nationalism is the reflection of how people in a society think about their collective self. The collective means that everyone that constitutes the nation should be included as equal citizens. But when nationalism is defined by a single identity, which can either be language or religion or even ethnicity, then nationalism gets derailed into majoritarianism. And majoritarianism is not nationalism." • According to Thapar - struggle for Independence had an "all-inclusive nationalism of Indians opposed to British rule", however, the insistence on two nations by the British led to a nationalism defined by religion that found acceptance among some Indians.
29. Wagah Border	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is located on the historic Grand Trunk Road • It was established nearly two months after Partition by Brigadier Mohindar Singh Chopra on October 11, 1947.
30. Money lost from fraudulent transactions can be recovered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the Interpol (international criminal police organisation) - • Money lost to online scams can be intercepted and recovered, provided the victims react in time and alert the banks involved in the transactions. • It is possible to intercept the funds and recover it.
31. Cobotics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Science of Technology has sanctioned ₹170 crore under the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber Physical Systems to set up a Technology Innovation Hub on Cobotics at the institute. • The focus will be the technologies where robots should be able to work together with humans for maximising the benefit of human intelligence with robots' precision and ability to work tirelessly in an environment where the humans cannot work.

	<p>Cobotics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cobots, or collaborative robots, are robots intended for direct human robot interaction within a shared space, or where humans and robots are in close proximity. • Cobot applications contrast with traditional industrial robot applications in which robots are isolated from human contact.
32. Arakunomics model	<p>About:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyderabad non-profit Naandi Foundation has been selected for Food Vision 2050 Prize • The recognition fetches Naandi a prize money of \$200,000 <p>Do you know?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Food System Vision Prize is an invitation for organizations across the globe to develop a Vision of the regenerative and nourishing food system that they aspire to create by the year 2050. • Arakunomics model • The Rockefeller Foundation award recognised the application of the "Arakunomics" model in the regions of Araku, Wardha and New Delhi. • Naandis vision titled "Arakunomics" was based on work with tribal farmers in Araku, Andhra Pradesh, for nearly 20years. • Arakunomics is a new integrated economic model that ensures profits for farmers, quality for consumers through regenerative agriculture • The model follows an "ABCDEFGH" framework centering on: Agriculture, Biology, Compost, Decentralised decision-making, Entrepreneurs, Families, Global Markets, and "Headstands" or turning current approaches on their head. • The economic model is a tribute to the tribal farmers of Araku region for the world-class coffee produced and launched in Paris in 2017 as well as for the high carbon landscape transformation they did in over 955 villages there by planting 25 million trees.



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Model questions: (Answers are provided at the end)

Q.1) Which among the following are a part of core industries?

1. Fertilizers
2. Refinery Products
3. Natural Gas
4. Cement
5. Iron
6. Electricity

Select the correct statements

- a) 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6
- b) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6
- c) 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6
- d) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6

Q.2) Consider the following statements regarding National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013

1. NFSA marks a shift from rights based approach to welfare based approach.
2. The act legally entitles up to 75% of the rural population and 50% of urban population to receive subsidized food grain under TPDS.
3. NFSA is established as per the explicit provision of right to food under the Constitution of India.

Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?

- a) 2 only
- b) 1 and 2
- c) 2 and 3
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.3) The provision which says – “to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women” in Indian Constitution is provided in

- a) Preamble
- b) Fundamental Rights
- c) Fundamental Duties
- d) DPSPs

Q.4) On World Food Day India initiated its ambitious program – ‘Zero Hunger’. Consider the following statements regarding the program?

1. The program has been launched in all North Eastern States.
2. This is a dedicated farm based program in sync with India’s SDG to end hunger by 2030.
3. The program includes setting up of genetic gardens for biofortified plants/crops.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.5) Which of the following is/are the aim/aims of “Digital India” plan of the Government of India?

1. Formation of India’s own Internet companies like china did.
2. Established a policy framework to encourage overseas multinational corporations that collect big data to build their large data centres within our national geographical boundaries.
3. Connect many of our villages to the internet and bring WiFi to many of our schools, public places and major tourist centres.

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.6) Which one of the following can one comes across if one travels through the Strait of Malacca?

- a) Bali
- b) Brunei
- c) Java
- d) Singapore

Q.7) Consider the following Statements about Dhole

1. In India, they are primarily found in Western Ghats, Central India and Northeast India
2. Besides the tiger, the dhole is the only large carnivore in India that is under IUCN's 'endangered' category.

Which of the above Statement(s) is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.8) Consider the following Statements about Bharat Air Fibre Services

1. The aim is to provide BSNL fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) wireless connectivity up to a range of 20 km from the BSNL points of presence.
2. It is introduced by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) as a part of the Digital India programme

Which of the above Statement(s) is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.9) Dragon capsule was developed by

- a) Space X

b) Mishaal Aerospace

c) Virgin Galactic

d) PLD Space

Q.10) Indian planning has shifted from Allocation based schemes to demand driven Right based schemes like MGNREGA, Food Security Act etc. Which of the following statements are correct regarding Demand Driven Schemes?

1. The implementation of schemes is highly centralized.
2. States do not have the flexibility to develop their own perspective plans.
3. It is a bottom – top approach.

Select the code from following:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.11) Which of the following are the typical characteristics of the unorganized sector of the Indian economy?

1. Higher productivity than the organized sector.
2. Contractual jobs.
3. Little or no social security.

Choose the correct answer using the codes below:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.12) Recently the digital quality of life index 2020 was released. Consider the following statements with regard to the India's position:

1. India ranks among the highest in the world in terms of internet quality.
2. It outperforms countries like USA and China in terms of internet affordability.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.13) Which of the following are Indian Government's initiatives related to internet?

1. Digilockers
2. BHIM app
3. PradhanMantriGramin digital SakshartaAbhiyan
4. E-Kranti

Select the correct code:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 only
- c) 3 and 4
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q.14) Recently invisible Shield against electromagnetic interference was designed. Consider the benefits of the design:

1. It will isolate device's energy so that it doesn't affect anything else.
2. The shield can be used in military stealth applications.
3. It can cover electromagnetic wave emitter without compromising aesthetics.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 1 and 3
- c) 2 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.15) Consider the following statements regarding the recently announced National recruitment Agency:

1. Common Eligibility Test will be conducted for various government jobs.
2. The result of the test will be valid for a period of five years from the date of declaration of the result.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.16) Pointe d'Esny, seen recently in news, is an ecologically sensitive zone in which of the following country?

- a) Mauritius
- b) Maldives
- c) Malaysia
- d) Sri Lanka

Q.17) Which of the following are main sources of marine plastic pollution?

1. Storm runoff
2. Sewer overflows
3. Beach visitors
4. Inadequate waste disposal

Select the correct code:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 4
- c) 1 only
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q.18) Consider the following statements:

1. APIs are important ingredients in the manufacturing of drugs.
2. India exports large amount of APIs to China.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.19) Lingaraja Temple is situated in which of the following state of India?

- a) Odisha
- b) West Bengal
- c) Gujarat
- d) Kerala

Q.20) NuakhaiJuhar is an agricultural festival of which of the following state of India?

- a) Odisha
- b) Jharkhand
- c) Chhattisgarh
- d) Both (a) and (b)

Q.21) Consider the following statements regarding Magnetic Hyperthermia-Mediated Cancer Therapy:

1. It cannot act against deep-seated inaccessible solid tumours.
2. Heat is generated at the tumour side by applying alternative magnetic field.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.22) Srisailem Dam, seen recently in news, is the second largest capacity working hydroelectric station in the country. Where is it situated?

- a) Andhra Pradesh
- b) Karnataka
- c) Kerala
- d) Tamil Nadu

Q.23) First-ever State dragonfly festival is going to be held in which of the following state of India?

- a) Kerala
- b) Himachal Pradesh
- c) Rajasthan
- d) Delhi

Q.24) Consider the following statements regarding National Strategy for Financial Education (2020-2025):

1. It is released by NCERT.
2. It is prepared by RBI.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.25) Under Mission Based Deployment by Indian Navy, Indian ships were mission deployed for which of the following?

1. Operation GULFDEP for Persian Gulf.
2. Operation CENTDEP for Central Pacific region
3. Operation MALDEP for Maldives.

Select the correct code:

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.26) Consider the following statements regarding National Council for Transgender Persons:

1. The Social Justice Minister will be its Chairman.
2. The Council is formed under Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019.
3. It shall advise the Government on the formulation of policies related to the transgender community.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 3 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.27) Bondas tribal community, recently seen in news, belongs to which of the following state of India?

- a) Odisha
- b) West Bengal
- c) Chhattisgarh
- d) Jharkhand

Q.28) Recently NABARD has introduced Structured Finance and Partial Guarantee

Programme to NBFC-MFIs. Consider the following statements regarding the same:

1. It is a dedicated debt guarantee programme only.
2. NABARD will provide complete guarantee on loans.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.29) Recently the longest river ropeway was constructed on which of the following rivers?

- a) Indus
- b) Brahmaputra
- c) Ganga
- d) Narmada

Q.30) Consider the following statements regarding Open Market Operations:

1. It includes purchase of government securities and treasury bills only.
2. It is an operation taken up by commercial banks independently.
3. The objective of the operation is to regulate the money supply in the economy.

Which of the above are correct?

- a) 1 and 3
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 2
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.31) Where is Edakkal Caves situated?

- a) Cardamom Hills
- b) Palni Hills
- c) Nilgiri mountains
- d) Ambukuthi Hills

Q.32) Consider the following statements regarding Namath Basai:

1. The program is being implemented by the SamagraShiksha Kerala.
2. Under the program the tribal children are taught in their mother tongue.

3. The languages belong to Irula, Muduka and Kurumba tribes.

Which of the above are correct?

- a) 1 and 3
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 2
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.33) Pulikali will be an online only affair due to Covid-19. Consider the following regarding the same:

1. It is a part of Onam festival.
2. It revolves around the theme of tiger hunting.
3. Onam is an annual harvest festival celebrated in Tamilnadu.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) 2 only

Q.34) Recently Electronic Pension Payment order was integrated with Digilocker. Consider the following:

1. Bhavishya software was used to create the facility.
2. Direct print out of the pension order can be easily taken out through the integration.
3. Digilocker is a platform to store all important documents at one place.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) 2 only

Q.35) Consider the following statements regarding Export Preparedness Index 2020:

1. It was recently released by NITI Aayog.
2. To enhance the effectiveness of government policies is one of the objectives of the Index.

3. Tamil Nadu is the top coastal state in the index.

Which of the above is or are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) 2 only

Q.36) Which of the following is not a part of the new circles recently announced by Archaeological Survey of India?

- a) Rajkot
- b) Jabalpur
- c) Meerut
- d) Nashik

Q.37) Consider the following statements:

1. Recently flavonoid molecules related to the treatment of tuberculosis were synthesized in India.
2. Flavonoids are found in almost all fruits and vegetables.
3. They provide vivid colours to fruits and vegetables.

Which of the above is or are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) 2 only

Q.38) According to SEBI data, the value of participatory note (P-note) investments in Indian capital markets increased till July-2020 end. Consider the following statements regarding P notes:

1. P-notes are instruments issued by FIIs to Overseas investors.
2. These instruments are used for making investments in the Indian stock markets.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.39) Consider the following statements regarding Behrupiyas which were recently seen in news:

1. They are impersonators who perform in villages and markets all over India.
2. Behrupiya festival is a traditional Indian style of street theatre.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.40) Dynamic Stochastic General Equilibrium (DGSE) model recently seen in news is related to which of the following:

- a) Assessment of the economic impact of covid-19 by RBI
- b) To study the phenomenon of magnetic field in Earth's magnetosphere
- c) To study the star formation of dwarf galaxies
- d) To assess the causes Migration within India

Q.41) Consider the following differences between API and web services:

1. Every API is a web service but not every web service is an API.
2. While APIs can be online or offline, web services must use a network.
3. While APIs can use any protocols or design styles, web services usually use specific protocols.
4. Web services are less prone to hacking than API.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1,3 and 4 only
- d) 2, 3 and 4 only

Q.42) Which of the following is the concerned Ministry for Bureau of Indian Standards?

- a) Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
- b) Ministry of Chemicals and fertilizers
- c) Ministry of Commerce and industry

d) Ministry Of Jal Shakti

Q.43) Sustainable Finance Collaborative was recently launched by which of the following?

- a) Indian Finance Ministry
- b) United Nations Development Programme
- c) United Nations Environment Programme
- d) Both (a) and (b)

Q.44) Consider the following tribes residing in Andaman:

- 1. Great Andamanese
- 2. Jarawas
- 3. Onges
- 4. Shompens
- 5. North sentinelese

Which of the above are Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups?

- a) 1 2 and 3 only
- b) 3 and 4 only
- c) 3 and 5 only
- d) 1 2 3 4 and 5

Q.45) Turkey is located between:

- a) Black Sea and Caspian Sea
- b) Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea
- c) Gulf of Suez and Mediterranean Sea
- d) Gulf of Aqaba and Dead Sea

Q.46) The suo motu contempt powers are drawn from which of the following Article of the Constitution?

- a) Article 120
- b) Article 127
- c) Article 128
- d) Article 129

Q.47) Barakah nuclear power plant recently seen in news is situated in which of the following country?

- a) Saudi Arabia
- b) Iran
- c) Iraq
- d) United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Q.48) Govind Sagar Lake is a Reservoir situated on which of the following rivers?

- a) Sutlej
- b) Indus
- c) Beas
- d) Jhelum

Q.49) Consider the following statements:

- 1. Alcohol is a subject under 'State List'
- 2. It is under Eight Schedule of Constitution of India
- 3. Alcohol consumption and its affects comes in direct conflict with articles 21 and 47 of Indian Constitution

Select the correct code

- a) 3 only
- b) 1 and 3
- c) 2 and 3
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.50) India is a member of which of the following?

- 1. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- 2. Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering
- 3. International Transport Forum
- 4. Nuclear Energy Agency

Select the correct statements

- a) 2 only
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 2, 3 and 4
- d) 1, 2 and 4

Q.51) Operation Gibraltar is associated with

- a) Initiative to turn all major airports of country carbon neutral.
- b) Initiative to set up solar panels on Major River routes to conserve water from evaporation and also generate electricity.

- c) India's massive repatriation operation to bring back stranded Indians from different parts of the world.
- d) Strategy of Pakistan to infiltrate Jammu and Kashmir.

Q.52) Hawala transactions relate to payments

- a) received in rupees against overseas currencies and vice versa without going through the official channels
- b) received for sale/transfer of shares without going through the established stock exchanges
- c) received as commission for services rendered to overseas investors/buyers/sellers in assisting them to get over the red tape and/or in getting preferential treatment
- d) made to political parties or to individuals for meeting election expenses

Q.53 Given below are the statements regarding Financial Action Task Force (FATF), select the INCORRECT statements among them.

- 1. It is a body governed by UN which is involved in setting standards for anti-money laundering and combating financing of terrorism.
- 2. India is a member party to FATF.

Choose the correct answer using the codes below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.54) Consider the following statements about Ammonium nitrate:

- 1. It is a white, crystalline chemical which is soluble in water.

- 2. It is the main ingredient in the manufacture of commercial explosives used in mining and construction.
- 3. Pure ammonium nitrate is classified as an oxidiser under the United Nations classification of dangerous goods.

Select the correct code

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 and 3
- c) 2 and 3
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.55) Which of the following Fundamental Rights are available only to Indian Citizens?

- 1. Equal opportunity in Public employment.
- 2. No discrimination on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- 3. Protection of language and script
- 4. Right to establish and administer educational institutions

Select the correct answer

- a) 1, 2 and 3
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 2, 3 and 4
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q.56) To promote the educational and economic interests of SCs, STs, and other weaker sections of the society and to protect them from social injustice and exploitation is a provision under -

- a) FRs
- b) FDs
- c) DPSPs
- d) None of the above

Q.57) Which of the following is correct about 'Repo Rate'?

- a) It is the rate charged by the central bank for lending funds to commercial banks.
- b) It is the rate at which scheduled banks can borrow funds overnight from RBI against government securities.
- c) It is the rate at which banks lend funds to RBI.
- d) It is the rate at which RBI borrows from its clients generally against government securities.

Q.58) Consider the following statements Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

- 1. The MPC determines the policy interest rate required to achieve the inflation target
- 2. It consists of 5 members out of which three are from RBI and the remaining two are nominated by the Central Government

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.59) Ashok Dalwai Committee is associated with

- a) Doubling Farmers' Income
- b) Farmers Suicide
- c) Irrigation and Drainage
- d) Urban Floods

Q.60) Despite strict laws, the illegal trade of 'Pangolin' is threatening the very existence of the species. What is the status of India Pangolin under IUCN?

- a) Near Threatened
- b) Least Concern
- c) Endangered

- d) Extinct in the Wild

Q.61) Consider the following statements about Global Hunger Index (GHI)

- 1. It is jointly published by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and World Health Organisation (WHO).
- 2. According to the recent index, India has a child-wasting prevalence over 20%.

Select the correct statements

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.62) Which of the following statements is/are correct with regard to TRAFFIC network?

- 1. It is a non-governmental organization working in monitoring global wildlife trade.
- 2. It was jointly established by IUCN and UNEP.
- 3. India has become a member of the programme in 2016.

Select the correct answer using the code given below

- a) only
- b) 1 and 2
- c) 2 and 3
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.63) FAME India Scheme is related to

- a) Automobile Industry
- b) Textile Industry
- c) Food Industry
- d) Tourism Industry

Q.64) Which of the following statements is/are correct about Humpback Whale?

- 1. Humpback whales are one of the species of baleen whales.

2. All Humpback whales make extensive seasonal migrations between high latitude summer feeding grounds and low latitude wintering grounds.
3. They are listed as 'Critically Endangered' on the IUCN Red list of threatened species.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 1 and 3
- c) 2 and 3
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.65) Araku Valley is located in which of the following states?

- a) Telangana
- b) Andhra Pradesh
- c) Tamil Nadu
- d) Karnataka

Q.66) Which of the following statements regarding Landslides is/are INCORRECT?

1. The size and shape of the detached mass in landslides depends only on the degree of weathering.
2. The materials involved in landslides are relatively dry.

Select the correct code:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.67) Eravikulam National Park is located in

- a) Tamil Nadu
- b) Kerala
- c) Telangana
- d) Puducherry

Q.68) Which of the following is/are the part of categories of Priority Sector Lending?

1. Agriculture infrastructure.
2. Remote village electrification.
3. Renewable Energy.

Codes:

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.69) Indus Water Treaty is considered to be one of the most successful river water sharing treaties of the World. Which of the following are correct provisions of IWT?

1. The water of Jhelum and Chenab is allocated to Pakistan and water of Ravi, Beas and Satluj is allocated to India.
2. India is allowed to use 20% water of Indus.
3. The Disputes regarding water sharing and breaching of treaty are World Bank.

Select the code from below:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) All of the above

Q.70) Consider the following statements:

1. Article 340 in the Constitution of India deals with Appointment of a Commission to investigate the conditions of backward classes
2. The President of India has appointed a Commission to examine the sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes

Which of the following statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.71) India is a member of

- a) ASEAN
- b) East Asia Summit
- c) Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)
- d) None of the above

Q.72) Oslo Peace Accord deals with -

- a) international copyright treaties administered by WIPO.
- b) series of agreements between Israel and the Palestinians signed in the 1990s.
- c) recognising the sovereignty of Norway over the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard.
- d) principles governing the activities of States in the exploration and peaceful use of Outer Space.

Q.73) Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act was passed in India in 2016. Which of the following statements are correct regarding the Act?

- 1. It fulfills the obligations to the United National Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), to which India is a signatory.
- 2. The Act recognises 21 kinds of disabilities compared to the previous seven.
- 3. The Act also increased the quota for disability reservation in higher educational institutions from 3% to 5% and in government jobs from 3% to 4%.

Select the code from below:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) All of the above

Q.74) Consider the following regarding National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)

- 1. National Disaster Response Force consist of 12 battalions

- 2. Assam Rifles and CISF are the two most specialized battalions of NDRF
- 3. NDRF is under the control of Ministry of Home Affairs

Which of the following statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 3
- b) 3 only
- c) 2 and 3
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.75) Mitakshara and Dayabhaga is associated with

- a) A work on astronomy
- b) A treatise on ancient Hindu law of inheritance
- c) An Agamic text
- d) A compendium on medicine

Q.76) India is a secular state. Which of the following statements regarding Indian Secularism are correct?

- 1. There is no official religion of Indian state.
- 2. State does not discriminate against any citizen on the grounds of religion.
- 3. There is complete separation of the religion and the State.

Select the code from following:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.77) Terms such as Illumina (Solexa); Roche 454; Ion torrent: Proton / PGM are associated with -

- a) Different modern sequencing technologies
- b) Different variants of supercomputers
- c) Different variants of quantum computers

- d) Names of exoplanets, the ones that could support alien life

Q.78) Which of the following commodities are not covered under GST?

1. Aviation Fuel
2. Alcoholic liquor
3. Tobacco and tobacco products

Select the code from following:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 3 only
- c) 2 and 3
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.79) World No Tobacco Day is observed around the world every year on -

- a) 31 May
- b) 31 July
- c) 10 August
- d) 13 August

Q.80) Which among the following statements is/are correct about Absciscic acid?

1. Absciscic acid is a plant hormone involved in many developmental plant processes, such as dormancy and environmental stress response.
2. Absciscic acid is not produced in the roots of the plant but only the terminal buds at the top of the plant.

Choose correct answer:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.81) Consider the following statements about The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act

1. It does not allow abortions above the gestational age of 24 weeks.

2. It provides that "the length of pregnancy shall not apply" in a decision to abort a foetus diagnosed with "substantial foetal abnormalities" or if it is "alleged by the pregnant woman to have been caused by rape".

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.82) Which of the following states celebrates the famous 'Hornbill festival'?

- a) Arunachal Pradesh
- b) Sikkim
- c) Nagaland
- d) Andaman and Nicobar

Q.83) Narcondam Hornbill is found in which of the following?

1. Western Ghats
2. Andamans
3. Lakshadweep

Select the correct code:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 3
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.84) Which one of the following statements regarding the levying, collecting and distribution of Income Tax is correct?

- a) The Union levies, collects and distributes the proceeds of income tax between itself and states.
- b) The Union levies, collects and keeps all the proceeds of income tax to itself
- c) The Union levies and collects the tax but all the proceeds are distributed among the states

- d) Only the surcharge levied on income tax is shared between the Union and the states

Q.85) Income tax in India is

- a) progressive
- b) regressive
- c) proportional
- d) based on benefit principle

Q.86) The Sixth Schedule is related to the administration of the states of

- 1. Assam
- 2. Meghalaya
- 3. Arunachal Pradesh
- 4. Tripura
- 5. Mizoram

Select the correct statements

- a) 1, 2, 3 and 4
- b) 1, 2, 4 and 5, 3, 4 and 5
- c) 1, 2, 3 and 5

Q.87) Which of the followings is/are related to Scheduled Areas and Tribal Areas?

- 1. Article 244
- 2. 91st Constitutional Amendment
- 3. Article 339
- 4. Article 332

Select the correct code

- a) 1 and 3
- b) 1 only
- c) 1, 3 and 4
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q.88) The Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour:

- a) ILO Convention number 182
- b) ILO Convention number 138
- c) ILO Convention number 192
- d) ILO Convention number 148

Q.89) Consider the following statement about 'Fishing Cat'

- 1. It is listed as 'critically endangered' under the IUCN Red List
- 2. It is the state animal of West Bengal and Odisha

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.90) Hope Island is a part of which of the following sanctuaries?

- a) Pulicat Wildlife Sanctuary
- b) Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary
- c) Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary
- d) Chilika Wildlife Sanctuary

Q.91) Consider the following statements with respect to 'Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary'

- 1. The sanctuary is a part of the Cauvery estuary
- 2. It has extensive mangrove and dry deciduous tropical forest
- 3. It is home to the critically endangered white-backed vulture and the long billed vulture

Select the correct statements

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) All of the above

Q.92) Consider the following statements with respect to Animal Welfare Board of India:

- 1. It is a statutory body
- 2. The Animal Welfare Board of India was established in 1982

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only

- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.93) Which among the following is not a composite of PM-CARE?

- a) Prime minister
- b) Defence minister
- c) Health minister
- d) Finance minister

Q.94) Which of the following country does not share border with Mediterranean Sea?

- a) Egypt
- b) Syria
- c) Israel
- d) Oman

Q.95) Recently which country mountain peak is named after Uttarkhand's IAS officer?

- a) Spain
- b) France
- c) Italy
- d) Germany

Q.96) Which of the following with reference to process of removal of Supreme Court judges are correct?

1. The process for removal of other Supreme Court judges and Chief Justice of India is different.
2. A judge can only be removed on the grounds of proved misbehavior or incapacity.
3. The motion for removal must be supported by a special majority of each House of Parliament.

Select the correct answer using code below

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.97) Which of the following about Contempt of Court is/are correct?

1. The power of contempt is derived from the Contempt of Courts Act of 1971.
2. The power is meant for all courts operating in the country.

Select the correct answer using code below

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.98) Which of the following are valid grounds to impose reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the freedom of speech and expression?

1. Security of state
2. Contempt of court
3. Morality
4. Defamation

Choose the appropriate option from code given below:

- a) 1, 2 and 3
- b) 1, 3 and 4
- c) 2, 3 and 4
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q.99) Which of the following statements with reference to Green Corridor is/are true?

1. It refers to setting up renewable energy projects along railway lines.
2. Loan for its implementation will be provided by Germany.

Select the correct code

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) 1 and 2
- d) None

Q.100) Which of the following are examples of Indo-Saracenic Architecture

1. Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Mumbai
2. Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi
3. Madras High Court, Chennai

Select the correct statements

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) All of the above

Q.101) Which of the following statements are correct regarding EBP?

1. EBP is cheaper than petrol as alcohol is cheaper.
2. Ethanol burns more cleanly and completely as compared to petrol.
3. Calorific value of Ethanol is higher than Petrol

Select the code from following:

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 only
- c) 2 and 3
- d) All of the above

Q.102) Consider the following statements:

1. NDRF is managed by Central Budgets only.
2. Contributions to PM-CARES Fund are 100% tax free.

Which of the above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.103) Which of the following Ministry is responsible for launching Atal Rankings of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA)?

- a) Ministry of Science and Technology
- b) Ministry of HRD
- c) Ministry of Youth Affairs
- d) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology

Q.104) Which of the following is/are possible treatments for children suffering from Thalassemia?

1. Bone Marrow Transplantation
2. Repeated blood transfusions

Select the correct code:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

2019MARCH MONTH CURRENT AFFAIRS MCQs SOLUTIONS

1 B	28 D	55 D	82 C
2 A	29 B	56 C	83 B
3 C	30 A	57 A	84 A
4 B	31 D	58 A	85 A
5 B	32 D	59 A	86 B
6 D	33 B	60 C	87 A
7 C	34 C	61 B	88 A
8 C	35 B	62 A	89 D
9 A	36 D	63 A	90 B
10 C	37 C	64 A	91 B
11 B	38 C	65 B	92 A
12 B	39 C	66 A	93 C
13 D	40 A	67 B	94 D
14 D	41 D	68 D	95 A
15 A	42 A	69 A	96 B
16 A	43 D	70 C	97 D
17 D	44 D	71 B	98 D
18 A	45 B	72 B	99 D
19 A	46 D	73 D	100 D
20 B	47 D	74 A	101 B
21 D	48 A	75 B	102 B
22 A	49 B	76 A	103 B
23 A	50 B	77 A	104 C
24 D	51 D	78 A	
25 C	52 A	79 A	
26 D	53 A	80 A	
27 A	54 D	81 D	