

Forum IAS

7 PM COMPILATION

13th - 19th January, 2020

Features of 7 PM compilation

- ❖ Comprehensive coverage of a given current topic
- ❖ Provide you all the information you need to frame a good answer
- ❖ Critical analysis, comparative analysis, legal/constitutional provisions, current issues and challenges and best practices around the world
- ❖ Written in lucid language and point format
- ❖ Wide use of charts, diagrams and info graphics
- ❖ Best-in class coverage, critically acclaimed by aspirants
- ❖ Out of the box thinking for value edition
- ❖ Best cost-benefit ratio according to successful aspirants

Integrating South Asia Through Trade

Topics: India and its Neighborhood- Relations.

Subtopics: India – South Asia

Combating Criminalization of Politics

Topics: Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

Subtopics: Criminalization of Politics

Population Explosion and India's Concerns

Topics: Population and Associated Issues

Subtopics: Population Explosion

EU – India Partnership to Achieve Common Strategic Goals

Topics: Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Subtopics: India- EU relationship

Interplay Between COVID 19 and Air pollution

Topics: Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation

Subtopics: Air Pollution

Preserving Gender and Social Justice in Times COVID

Topics: Salient features of Indian Society, Social Empowerment

Subtopics: Gender and Social Justice

Integrating South Asia Through Trade

Source: <https://indianexpress.com>

Context:

China is using its economic strength to increase its influence in South Asia. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC); investments in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal are pursued actively. Such investments are leading to debt traps as is seen in case of Sri Lanka, Maldives.

In such a scenario, India must rejuvenate its own neighbourhood policy to counter expansionist moves of China in south asia. Trade is one important tool to do so.

Unfulfilled potential of intra regional south asian trade:

World bank's report on south asian trade points out that restrictions in a south asian country are 2 to 9 times more for trade from south asian countries compared to other countries. While SAFTA (South Asian FTA) is in force, it has a lot of tariff lines excluded from the agreement on the basis of a 'sensitive list'. This has resulted in only \$23 billion goods trade in 2015 against a potential of \$67 billion.

Further, average trading cost between country pairs in South Asia is 20 percent higher than among country pairs in ASEAN. It is cheaper for India to trade with Brazil than with Pakistan.

It is a result of lack of trading infrastructure, complex non-tariff barriers and red tape. Hence there is a need for renewed focus on intra-regional trade.

Proactive approach for facilitating trade:

India being the largest economy and country must assume asymmetric responsibility in promoting intra-regional economic integration. India can expand imports of other south asian countries without expecting immediate reciprocity. Such early harvest can generate trust and good will.

In 2012, India provided unilateral duty-free access to its market for the least developed countries from South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal). Further steps that can be taken to facilitate imports from neighbourhood are:

1. Encouraging Indian private sector to invest more in the neighbourhood. This leads to building of regional value chains which will increase regional trade. Further Indian companies can tap markets in south asia. IT services, tourism, spices, garments, leather products, agriculture products are some areas which can be explored.
2. Investing in hard and soft infrastructure that enables trade and investment. Hard infrastructure includes Integrated check posts, port infrastructure, waterways, logistics. Soft infrastructure include digitalization, data exchange mechanisms, single window clearances and risk management. This seamless integration at borders will enable reduced costs and promote investments.
3. Enabling adherence to non-tariff measures (NTMs) of India. India must conduct systematic workshops to create awareness on NTMs. This builds capacities of exporters and also provides feedback to Indian authorities on NTMs.
4. Capacity building for standards and testing. This ensures conformation to Indian standards. Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has been providing technical support to the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution to help in standardisation and conformity assessment. Such programs must be made intensive and systematic.

Conclusion:

Size and capacity asymmetry make its neighbours view India with suspicion and mistrust. This can be bridged through a proactive 'Neighbourhood First' policy with India adopting

import liberalization from South Asia. This promotes trade and investments which will serve India's strategic interests in the long term.

Mains Question:

Q.1) South Asia remains one of the least economically integrated regions of the world. What are the challenges to trade in South Asia? What steps need to be taken to promote economic integration in the region? [15 marks, 250 words]



Combating Criminalization of PoliticsSource: <https://www.thehindu.com>**What happened:**

The Supreme court in its recent judgment has declared that criminalization of politics must be combated at the political party level. In pursuance of the same, it has provided 6 mandatory directions to political parties to end criminalization of politics.

These orders are vital in the context of rising criminalization in Indian political system.

Increasing criminalization: Causes and effects:

Number of legislators in parliament having criminal cases pending against them has risen since 2004.

- 24% in 2004
- 30% in 2009
- 34% in 2014
- 43% in 2019

Effects of such criminalization is felt in all walks of life:

- Loss of public trust in democratic process and politics
- Bad governance which is reflected in public services like public education, public health.
- Bureaucracy, business, civil society, media need governance free of criminalization for fulfilling their roles
- Political corruption
 - Use of money power in horse trading of MLA's, MP's
 - Scams like 2g scam, coal scam
 - Cash for query scam
 - Crony capitalism
- Nexus of politicians – criminals – bureaucrats. Vikas dubey case in Uttar pradesh has revealed such an unholy nexus

Root cause of this malice lies with flawed rationale of political parties in deciding candidates.

- Winnability in elections based on money and muscle power is determinant for fielding candidates.
- Capability in administration is seen as sole criteria without considering intent for public service. This is flawed as British were also capable but they were exploitative.
- Power is seen as an end rather than means for public service. Hence political parties compromising values to win with any means including fielding criminal candidates

In such a context, 6 orders of the supreme court to political parties becomes important

6 orders of supreme court in February 2020:

- Political parties must upload on their respective websites and print as well as electronic media, detailed information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases, who have been selected as candidates.
- They also have to mention reasons for such selection over people with clean background
- The reasons as to selection of candidates shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate concerned, and not mere “winnability” at the polls

- These details shall be published within 48 hours of the selection of the candidate or not less than two weeks before the first date for filing of nominations.
- The political party concerned shall then submit a report of compliance with these directions with the Election Commission within 72 hours of the selection of the said candidate.
- Non-compliance of these directions shall be brought to notice of SC by Election Commission on the grounds of Contempt of Court

These 6 orders are in addition to directives provided by supreme court in its earlier judgments:

- Introduction of additional affidavit in 2002 with details of finances and criminal cases
- Each candidate must inform political parties of criminal cases against him or her. Parties shall put these details in public (newspapers, social media)
- Lily Thomas judgment of 2014 had struck down section 8(4) of representation of people's act, 1951. This has resulted in immediate disqualification of a sitting legislator in case of conviction in criminal cases.

Going ahead:

Rising trend in criminalization shows that earlier judgments of the Supreme Court were not effective. Lack of enforcement of court judgments is the reason for this. Even in the recent judgment, there is no clarity on what punishments will be there for non-compliance. Only by strict enforcement can a deterrent be created.

Greater vigilance during the upcoming elections is needed for strict enforcement:

- Election commission (EC) must monitor compliance with 6 directives and additional affidavit
- EC must ensure that information is disseminated promptly on all media
- Prosecuting for non-compliance will ensure deterrence
- Citizens must be made aware that politicians who bribe for votes cannot be trusted in governance

In addition, legislative changes must be done to prohibit people with serious criminal charges to contest in elections.

Only by these sustained efforts can the political system be rid of the menace of criminalization.

Mains Question:

Q.1) Criminalization has only increased in India in the last 2 decades. What role do political parties play in this trend? Discuss the role of the judiciary in addressing this menace? [15 marks, 250 words]

Population Explosion and India's ConcernsSource: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>**Introduction:**

11th July is world population day since 1987 when the global population reached 5 billion. It was designated to bring attention to population explosion and its issues. Issues like health problems faced by childbearing women, importance of family planning, gender equality, poverty, maternal health and human rights are highlighted.

Current global population is 7.8 billion and is expected to rise to 9 billion by 2050. Hence it is important to raise awareness of the effects of overpopulation on development, environment and planet.

Theme of world population day, 2020:

Theme is to raise awareness about safeguarding sexual and reproductive health needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls during the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the pandemic, if the lockdown continues for 6 months, with continued major disruption to health services, then 47 million women in low and middle-income countries might not have access to modern contraceptives. This leads to unintended pregnancies. This can lead to rise in gender-based violence, female genital mutilation and child marriages, going ahead.

Further, even in normal times, 800 women die everyday during childbirth. With the pandemic disrupting normal healthcare services, Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) is expected to rise. We can see this already in some hospitals denying deliveries without COVID 19 test report.

Hence the theme of this year assumes significance due to enhanced vulnerabilities to women.

India's concerns in checking overpopulation:

India has 2% of global land mass with 16% of global population. Trends seen in Indian population are:

- Decadal population growth rate between 2001 and 2011 was 18% (about 18 crore more people).
- India's population in 2019 was estimated to be 1.37 billion.
- It is expected to surpass China in the next 7 years and cross 1.6 billion by 2050.

In such a context, there are major concerns in checking overpopulation. These are:

1. Higher birth rate than death rate:
 - a. Till the mid-20th century, birth and death rates were equal in India, resulting in a stable population.
 - b. Since the mid-20th century, India has experienced population explosion. This was due to reduction in death rates with gradual improvement in the access to healthcare facilities, level of education, availability of proper nutrition and diet etc. It resulted in a triangular population pyramid and expanding population.
 - c. In 2020, India has registered a birth rate at 18.2 per 1000 population and death rate at 7.3 per 1000 population.
2. Poverty and illiteracy:
 - a. Children are seen as assets by poor families to earn more. Hence population growth is more concentrated in economically weaker sections of society and poorer regions of the country.
 - b. Female literacy has a direct impact on fertility rates with educated mothers having lower. Female illiteracy in India is about 39% in 2011. This results in lack of

- knowledge about contraceptives, consequences of frequent childbirth and reproductive rights.
3. Family planning and social factors: Societal attitudes are contributing to population explosion
 - a. Use of condoms declined by 52% over eight years and vasectomies fell to 73%(National Family Health survey, 2015-16). This shows failure of family planning programmes.
 - b. More children are preferred in order to take care of parents in old age
 - c. Patriarchal attitudes
 - Women lack agency in decision of family planning like when to plan for a child and gap between pregnancies
 - Male child preference leading to childbirth till a male child is born. Economic survey 2017-18 has pointed out 21 million unwanted girls due to this.
 4. Total Fertility rate(TFR): It is the average number of children born to women during reproductive age. TFR of 2.1 is called the replacement rate as it results in a stable population. Trends in India are:
 - a. In 2016, TFR was 2.3. It was decline in the last decade
 - b. Poorer states like Bihar (3.2), Uttar Pradesh (3.1), Jharkhand (2.7) and Rajasthan (2.7) still have TFRs above 2.5
 - c. Poorest household has a TFR of 3.2 children per woman compared to 1.5 children per woman from the affluent families

Hence we see concentration of population growth in economically weaker sections.

5. High youth unemployment and demographic disaster: 28% of Indian population is youth(15-29 years old) which is the highest in the world. Due to this there is a potential of demographic dividend where high youth employment results in higher growth. Yet India is facing a challenge of unemployment:
 - a. Only 7 million of 25 million new workforce get secure jobs annually
 - b. 18% of youth is unemployed
 - c. 33% of youth is not in employment, education and training.

This is resulting in a demographic dividend turning into a demographic disaster.

Way forward:

Overpopulation acts as hurdle in addressing poverty, malnutrition, hunger, gender equality, and in providing health and education. Hence it need to be addressed to attain Sustainable Development goals (SDG's)

Family planning must be made more effective. National Family Planning Program has failed in checking population growth. Hence it need to be made effective by multistakeholder approach by involving governments (national, state, local), civil society, businesses and citizens. Use of contraception and vasectomies; awareness on sexual and reproductive rights of women must be promoted.

Human capital need to be developed. Economic planning must focus on adequate education and training of large youth population. Skill training must focus on outcomes of employment post training rather than number of trainees.

Only by addressing challenges of overpopulation in India can we achieve the vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'New India'.

Mains Question:

Q.1) Overpopulation puts burden on limited economic resources. Discuss challenges faced by India in controlling population growth? What effect does COVID 19 have on population control?
[15 marks, 250 words]

EU – India Partnership to Achieve Common Strategic GoalsSource: <https://www.hindustantimes.com>**Introduction:**

15th European Union (EU)-India summit is being held virtually to strengthen the relationship between the traditional partners. This is being held in midst of COVID 19 pandemic and at a time of increasing antagonism of both the EU and India towards China. For tackling China and achieving strategic goals, EU and India can be crucial partners for each other.

EU's Chinese dilemma:

EU was a strong partner to Chinese economically since the early 2000's. It championed the entry of China into WTO(World Trade Organization). EU investments in China are significant with its industrial development linked to supply chains in China.

Yet Chinese expansionist moves since 2013 have raised apprehension.

- 16+1 mechanism of China with central and eastern european countries is threatening the unity of European Union.
- Chinese acquisition of strategic ports(Piraeus in Greece) and technologies have raised red flags.
- Joint military exercises in baltic sea with Russia; misinformation campaigns of China and naval forays in South China sea and Indian ocean are raising security concerns

This was reflected in the recent EU-China summit which didn't have a joint statement. EU is looking for ways to reduce its economic dependence on China and also protect its strategic interests.

In this context, EU views India as a strategic partner in realising a multipolar Asia to maintain balance of power in the region. This was reflected in EU Strategy document on India, 2018 and EU-India Agenda for Action, 2020.

Converging interests of India and EU:

Along with tackling China, interests converge in a range of areas including economy, infrastructure, technology, security and global multilateralism. Major areas of cooperation are:

- Economic cooperation:
 - EU is 2nd largest destination of India's exports as well as source of investments. Hence it is economically beneficial for early conclusion of an FTA(Free Trade agreement) and Investment treaty can benefit India economically. In the context of European supply chains mulling moving away from China, India must move fast to attract them.
 - EU too will benefit economically from closer ties as it awaits a future without Britain. India's large market presents the EU an economic opportunity. Hence it needs to address India's concerns on movement of people and opening up of european markets for India's goods and services.
- Technology: In 5G, IT, artificial intelligence(AI), space etc, India – EU are natural partners. With concerns on Chinese equipment and technologies being a common security concern, both can collaborate to develop technologies.
- Infrastructure: India needs investments in infrastructure development domestically to the tune of 102 lakh crore(National Infrastructure pipeline). EU can be a credible investor which brings in technology, expertise.
- Countering BRI(Belt and Road Initiative): Chinese strategy is increasing influence through debt trap diplomacy and BRI. This is being used in South Asia as well as

Europe. Hence this is a common concern for both EU and India. To counter the same there is a need for collaboration to present alternatives. A common partnership of India, EU, Japan, USA can provide such alternatives. It serves India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy.

- Multilateral cooperation:
 - Increasing Chinese influence in multilateral organizations is evident due to COVID 19 pandemic. EU – India cooperation is vital to check such institutional capture.
 - Ensuring relevance of institutions like WTO, WHO in the context of USA's exit needs collaboration of EU and India.
 - Further, India's strategic goals in counter-terrorism, UNSC(Security council) reforms need EU support.
- Security cooperation:
 - Indo-pacific collaboration to ensure freedom of navigation and overflight. This needs cooperation in maritime domain awareness, information sharing in Indian ocean. Further joint naval exercises need to be increased along with Japan, Australia and USA to counter Chinese naval forays into Indian Ocean
 - Terrorism and radicalization is a common concern for both nations.
 - Combating misinformation campaigns as seen from China during COVID 19 regarding origin and response to virus
 - Cyber security and telecommunications security are potential areas of collaboration.

Conclusion:

As EU and India become more assertive against China to protect economic, technological and strategic interests, India-EU collaboration can become pivotal. A comprehensive vision of close collaboration is needed to strengthen the partnership.

Mains question:

Q.1) India – EU collaboration serves the interests of both especially in the context of Chinese assertiveness. Discuss? [15 marks, 250 words]

Interplay Between COVID 19 and Air pollutionSource: <https://www.hindustantimes.com>**Introduction:**

COVID 19 pandemic has resulted in an unprecedented health crisis globally. While the pandemic related health crisis is unfolding, another aspect of health relating to air pollution is impacted by disruptions induced by pandemic. This was visible in temporary improvement of air quality of cities due to lockdowns and movement restrictions.

But as economic activities resume, air pollution is bound to increase. Air pollution related health risks are greater than COVID 19 based on long term morbidity and mortality. Air pollution also increases the risk of infection of COVID. Hence air pollution needs to be addressed with the same urgency as COVID. Actions taken by nations to recover from the pandemic will have impact on air quality

Based on disruptions and actions taken in response, 3 types of outcomes are possible related to air quality. They are:

- New opportunities to accelerate transitions of systems and behaviour to improve air quality
- Dilution of environmental safeguards in pursuit of fast economic recovery which worsens air quality. These have to be avoided.
- Sustaining recent progress in tackling air pollution to make it long term. This is challenging in the context of limited fiscal resources.

Disruptions and opportunities to set new agenda:

Disruptions have induced certain behaviours, systemic changes and new policies. These when sustained for long term can have a positive impact on air quality.

5 areas where such opportunities are available are:

- Providing increased, better-targeted LPG subsidy to make it primary cooking fuel of poor households. PM Garib Kalyan Yojana providing 3 LPG cylinders is a right step.
- Sustaining the increased rate of shifting away from paddy cultivation in Punjab and Haryana due to labour constraints, and ensuring that the alternatives (for example, maize, cotton) are viable for farmers.
- Focusing on the demand for vehicle scrappage policies towards the replacement of old, heavily polluting vehicles, especially trucks. This also is positive for the economy as demand for new vehicles will increase.
- Retiring old coal power plants so that newer or less polluting plants can meet a larger fraction of power demand, while likely easing the financial crisis in the sector.
- Sustaining acceptability of work-from-home and online meetings to reduce commute by private vehicles and taxis.

Contesting dilutions to safeguards:

Quick economic recovery is priority to protect incomes and livelihoods. In pursuit of the same, governments may dilute environmental safeguards to improve ease of doing business.

Examples of such measures are:

- Draft EIA (Environment Impact Assessment) notification, 2020: It dilutes the process to obtain environmental clearance, reduces the categories of projects and activities that will have to undergo impact-assessment scrutiny and curtails public consultation processes significantly. It also proposes procedures to deal with violations that are legally untenable, and will effectively allow environmental offences to be condoned at very little or no cost to the violator.
- Extending deadlines for power plants to meet 2015 emission standards

Yet such actions can lead to long term adverse health outcomes due to ecosystem damages and increased air pollution. Hence they must be contested. Greater transparency in monitoring, inspection and enforcement data from the pollution control boards becomes more urgent to ensure dilutions in day-to-day regulation do not go unnoticed

Sustaining recent progress:

We need to sustain the actions initiated prior to the pandemic to tackle the air pollution. They cannot be compromised by funding cuts or delays. Avenues must be made to make them long term and systemic by sustaining the discourse and generating new ideas.

NCAP – National Clean Air Programme: For improving air quality in 102 non-attainment cities (where air quality standards are inadequate). 5 year programme (2019-2024)

Objectives:

1. 20-30% reduction in PM 2.5 and PM 10 by 2024 compared to 2017
2. Strengthening air quality monitoring network
3. Awareness and capacity building.

The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) needs continued strengthening, by developing uniform processes for identifying non-attainment cities and to track inter-year air quality improvements. This must be done by:

- Effective utilization of performance based grant provided by 15th Finance commission to improve air quality in 42 cities with million plus population. This needs collaboration of national, state and local governments with civil society to prioritize actions
- Expanding such performance based grants for 2021-26 i.e whole period of finance commission.
- Expanding scope of NCAP to regional, airshed level level from city level

In addition, investments in sustainable infrastructure and improvement in public transportation will lead to cleaner air.

Conclusion:

COVID 19 pandemic requires emergency response to tackle the emerging health and economic crises. This response can be fine-tuned to ensure air quality is improved which will result in sustainable recovery and improves long term health outcomes.

Mains Question:

Q.1) Discuss the link between COVID 19 pandemic and air quality? [15 marks, 250 words]

Preserving Gender and Social Justice in Times COVIDSource: <https://indianexpress.com>**Introduction:**

COVID 19 pandemic has resulted in an unprecedented health and socio-economic crisis across the globe. It threatens the progress made in SDG's as we enter the decade of action. While short to medium term impact on health and economy are evident, long term socio-economic impact with gender implications must be understood.

Pandemic has increased the existing socio-economic inequalities. Crisis is more acute for disadvantaged groups. These groups include – Women and girls; adolescents; sexual and gender minorities (LGBTQI); elderly; Persons with Disabilities (PwD's) and people from low income and socially marginalized backgrounds.

Impact on women and girls:

Sexual and reproductive health (SRH): SRH services (contraceptives; pregnancy services) are disrupted due to the health crisis and movement restrictions.

- Availability of contraception has reduced due to disruption of supply chains
- In addition mobility restrictions and apprehension of infections have resulted in women not seeking SRH services and accessing contraceptives.
- Due to disruption to normal health services like pregnancy care, MMR (Maternal Mortality Rate) is expected to increase.

These will result in an increase in unintended pregnancies (7 million estimate) and rise in total fertility rate. This is against the right of women to control fertility and vision of population control. Hence SRH services must be provided uninterrupted.

Gender based violence: Increased time spent in home has seen rise in cases of domestic violence. The National Commission of Women reported rise in calls of distress. Hence services which address this violence must not be interrupted. Civil society and state institutions must ensure that vulnerable women are rescued and rehabilitated.

To address these issues, vision of gender rights enshrined in Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979), International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD, 1994) and Beijing Declaration (1995) must guide our response.

Impact on adolescents:

- Prolonged closure of schools, along with severe economic stress at the household level, may find many girls forced into child marriage.
- With closure of schools, access to sexual education will reduce. This can result in unintended teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.
- Lack of social connectivity and limited social support can increase the risk of stress and mental health issues
- Lack of peer contact can hinder development of life skills and abilities learned through socialization like team work.

Hence there is a need for targeted interventions in imparting knowledge and developing life skills to support youth. In addition, vigil must be stepped up to prevent child marriages.

Impact on elderly:

Elderly are impacted by pandemic directly and indirectly.

- They are the most vulnerable section to the pandemic related deaths.
- Disruption in normal health care services to elderly threatens their lives and worsens age related morbidities.

- Social isolation, lack of family and community support even for basic necessities will worsen their physical and mental health

Considering this, health services and essential services like food, water, pension must be provided on a priority basis to the elderly

Impact on health care workers:

Being the frontline in the fight against the COVID, healthcare workers have emerged as vulnerable sections. Women make up a large proportion of these workers making gender dimension more important.

- They need access to psychosocial support to handle the immense stress of providing care to intense, continued suffering, and for the sense of inadequacy and guilt they feel when they lose patients after giving everything to save them.
- Protection against stigma and discrimination from family and community members is needed. Evictions from rental homes and restrictions must be prohibited.
- Adequate protective equipment (masks, gloves, PPE etc) is needed to protect these frontline workers from the pandemic
- Social security in terms of insurance to life in case of COVID related deaths of medical workers is needed.

These needs must be satisfied to enable our “Corona warriors”.

Conclusion:

COVID 19 has proved the collective vulnerability of all in the face of the crisis. Hence the principle of “*We are all in this together*” must inform our actions. By transcending socio-economic divisions, empathy and compassion must be shown towards vulnerable and larger community. We must “Build Back Better” by ensuring social justice and gender equality, to secure rights and choices for all.

Mains question:

Q.1) Vulnerable sections are most affected by COVID 19. Discuss this impact and ways to ensure gender and social justice? [15 marks, 250 words]