

9pm Compilation

1st to 5th July, 2020

General Studies - 1

1. Structural injustices in Bollywood

General Studies - 2

1. Reviving SAARC to deal with China
2. The magnanimity must prevail in ending India-China standoff
3. PM Garib Kalyan Rozgar yojana vs MGNREGA
4. Lockdown Impact on MGNREGA and Way ahead
5. Global challenges and UN's incapability to resolve them
6. In an uncertain world, a seat at the UNSC
7. Reforming India's digital policy
8. Banning Applications – Goes against democratic norms
9. The Neglected Pillars of Hospital – The cleaning staff
10. Staying alert: On monitoring non-COVID-19 diseases
11. Accounting rural women's work and health in Pandemic
12. Custodial deaths In India – A pervasive Police Culture
13. Police violence and how some lives do not matter

General Studies – 3

1. Digitising Trade across borders
2. Privatizing Indian Railways
3. PCR testing is a double-edged sword
4. India-China Standoff threatens India's Pharmaceutical Industry
5. The problem of Plastic pollution during the time of COVID-19.

General Studies Paper - 1

General Studies - 1

Syllabus – Social empowerment

1. Structural injustices in Bollywood

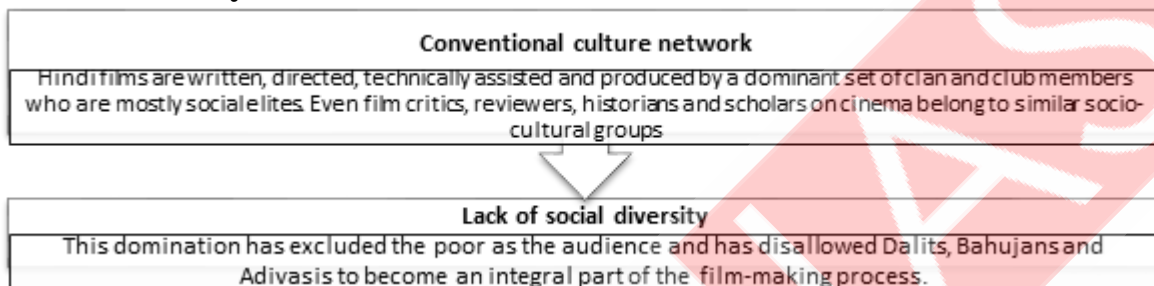
Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – Social empowerment

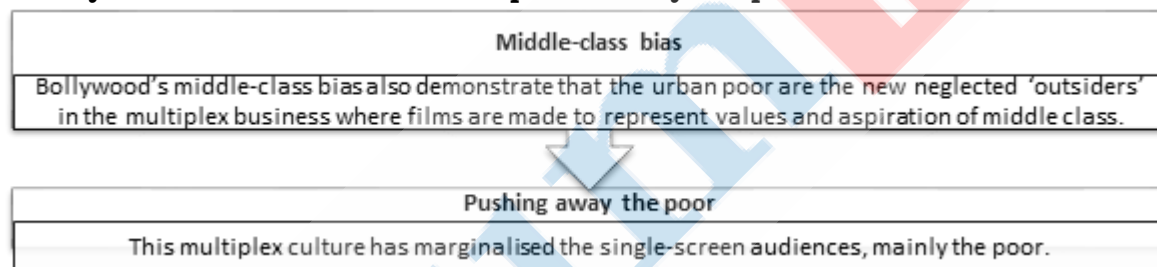
Context – The debates on nepotism also reveals other structural injustices in the industry.

Structural injustices in the industry

1. Conventional culture network within the industry is leading way for absence of social diversity.



2. Bollywood's middle-class bias has pushed away the poor audience



3. Nepotism - After the suicide of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, there are allegations that certain powerful elites decide the flow of the industry's economy and also distribute the privileges without much concern for professional ethics.

4. Cinema is not the mirror of society - The mainstream narratives of the films represent the taste and values of the social elites and visibly neglect the life stories of the Dalit-Bahujan-Adivasi world.

Implications of these injustices –

- 1. Favouritism kills talent-** Such an atmosphere undermines creative instincts and a robust respect for artistic talent. It shows its limitation in breaking the clutch of commercial logic and has failed to produce cinema that can be honoured at the global level for its creative motifs.
- 2. Social exclusion because of social elites** - Even if issues related to marginalised are represented on –screen (Sujata, Ghulami, Mrityudand, Manjhi, Article 15, etc.), the industry has to operate according to the emotive and psychological concerns of the social elites.

Way Forward - When we are discussing the ills of nepotism in Bollywood, these partner maladies also need equal diagnosis so that a more comprehensive cure can be prescribed.

General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies - 2

Syllabus: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

1. Reviving SAARC to deal with China

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Context: Analysing the role of SAARC in the backdrop of India-China tensions.

Background: Hegemonic China is looking towards global expansion to chipping away India's interest in South Asia.

- China has well known proximity with Pakistan which will increase with CPEC.
- Nepal is moving closer to China for ideational and material reasons.
- China is offering Bangladesh tariff exemption to 97% of Bangladeshi products.
- China has intensified its ties with Sri Lanka through massive investments.
- According to a Brookings India study, most South Asian nations are now largely dependent on China for imports despite geographical proximity to India.

Ignoring SAARC:

- **Isolating Pakistan:** India has been trying hard to isolate Pakistan internationally for its role in promoting terrorism in India.
- **Alternatives to SAARC:**
 - India started investing in other regional instruments such as BIMSTEC but it cannot replace SAARC for reasons such as lack of a common identity and history among all BIMSTEC members.
 - As BIMSTEC's focus is on the Bay of Bengal region, it is an inappropriate forum to engage all South Asian nations.

Many foreign policy experts argue that India's strategic dealing with China has to begin with South Asia.

Infusing life in SAARC by reviving the process of South Asian economic integration:

- **Trade:**
 - South Asia is one of the least integrated regions in the world with intra-regional trade teetering at 5% of total South Asian trade as compared to 25% of intra-regional trade in the ASEAN region.
 - **Trade treaties:**
 - While South Asian countries have signed trade treaties, the lack of political will and trust deficit has prevented any meaningful movement.
 - India should take the lead and work with its neighbours to slash the tariff and non-tariff barriers.
- **Investments:**
 - There's a need to rejuvenate the negotiations on a SAARC investment treaty which has been pending since 2007.
 - According to the UN Conference on Trade and Development, intra-ASEAN investments constitute around 19% of the total investments in the region.
 - The SAARC region can likewise benefit from higher intra-SAARC investment flows.

There are certain domestic issues of India in reviving SAARC.

Domestic challenges in revitalising SAARC:

- **Ideological reasons:**

- There has been an anti-Pakistan and Bangladesh migrant rhetoric due to ideological reasons and to reap political dividends.
- **Denting soft power:** Majoritarian politics dents India's soft power of being a liberal and secular democracy which gives moral legitimacy to India's leadership in the region.
- **Complexity in the economic vision:**
 - There is a lack of clarity on the slogans of atma nirbharta (self-reliance) and 'vocal for local' mean.
 - **Protectionism:** The government is stating that India needs to cut down its dependence on imports which signal a return to the obsolete economic philosophy of import substitution. This questions India's interests in deepening South Asian economic integration.

Way Forward

Deeper regional economic integration will create greater interdependence with India acquiring the central role which would serve India's strategic interest

Syllabus: India and its neighborhood - relations

2. The magnanimity must prevail in ending India-China standoff

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Context: A bloody hand to hand combat between India and China in Galwan Valley left 20 Indian soldiers dead.

Boundary dispute:

- China has refused to recognise the McMahon line and the demarcation of boundaries done by the British colonial power.
- **Agreements between India and China:** Pending a final settlement of the boundary.
 - They signed the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the LAC in the India-China Border Areas in 1993.
 - Another similar agreement (Agreement on Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field along the LAC in the India-China Border Areas) signed in 1996 contains a specific clause which does not permit the use of firearms, hazardous chemicals etc. within two kilometers from the LAC.
- **Option of war to resolve boundary dispute:**
 - In post-nuclear times, the only way to resolve disputes is through negotiations as equal powers.

China's record in boundary disputes:

- **Lost opportunity:** The Indian PM rejected the proposal by China's Foreign Minister to settle the boundary dispute in his visit to India in April 1960. It led to tragic consequences including the India-China war in 1962.
- **Contemporary China:**
 - **Assertive China:** China regards itself as a superpower in the making and is now an ambitious rising power which wants to reorient the global order. It wants the boundary negotiations to happen as per their vision.
 - **Flexing of muscle:**
 - China has refused to recognise the authority of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

- **Rejection of China's claims by PCA:** It ruled that China had breached its obligations under the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea and Article 94 of UNCLOS concerning maritime safety and violated international obligations.
- **South China sea:** China has not paid any heed to international opinion that supports unimpeded commerce, freedom of navigation, overflights and peaceful resolution of disputes.
- The same audacity has made China more intolerant of infrastructure built by India while it continues to build its own along that frontier.

There are divisions in policymakers with respect to the measures needed to counter China.

Weighing in the options by India:

- **Strengthening military power:**
 - India needs to increase its strength but it may not be the wisest option when the economy is suffering and COVID-19 is taking its toll.
- **Boycotting Chinese imports:**
 - **Moral justification:** Sanctions and boycotts are justifiable only when there is strong moral justification.
 - For example- Boycott of South Africa during the Apartheid period was justified and it served its purpose in hastening South Africa's turn to equality and democratic governance.
 - **Dependence on China:** The boycotts of goods will hurt India more and barely make a dent in China's economic prospects. For example- India is lauded as the pharmacy of the world because it is able to import essential raw materials from China.
- **Competitiveness:** The world buys Chinese goods because of their compelling quality and price. India should emulate China in its manufacturing practices and agility to adapt to international demand to replace it in future.

The nationalist feelings come to fore aftermath of the unfortunate incidents like the Galwan Valley faceoff which generate problems for people from north-east.

Keeping vigilance on hate against North-eastern people:

- The people from the North-east who have features resembling Chinese are boycotted in some cities.
- India must be on guard not to unleash any kind of hostility against anyone especially resident Chinese nationals.

Way Forward:

- The bond between India and China are in terms of aatmiata (soulful intimacy), nikatata (closeness) and bhaichaara (solidarity). There could not be more genuine and sincere affirmation of the spirit of friendship.
- India must learn the hard lesson that pragmatic and shrewd diplomacy can stop hostilities.

Syllabus – Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes

3. PM Garib Kalyan Rozgar yojana vs MGNREGA

Source – [The Hindu](http://www.thehindu.com)

Context – PM Garib Kalyan Rozgar yojana has raised several questions about intention of government to provide employment opportunities to vulnerable sections that also benefited under MGNREGA.

PM Garib Kalyan Rozgar Yojana –It aims to provide work to migrant workers in 116 selected districts of selected states.

MGNREGA - The mandate of the MGNREGA is to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

Need to strengthen MGNREGA

- Issues with PM Garib Kalyan Rozgar Yojana
- **Exclusion of States** - States of West Bengal and Chhattisgarh be omitted when reverse migration is particularly high in these States
- **Politicisation of scheme** - Of the ₹4,794 crore spent between June 20 and June 28, Bihar received more than 50% of the fund which can be attributed to the fact that Bihar elections are scheduled for later this year.
- **Overlapping with MGNREGA** - According to the list of 25 kinds of work available under this “scheme” it is clear that almost every single one of them is already covered under the convergence programmes of MGNREGA which leads to wastage of resources and duplication of efforts.
- **Crony Capitalism** - The nature of the work is manual work, mainly construction and earth work, including work to lay cables, ostensibly to take Internet connections to rural areas. It is unstated but clear that this will benefit private telecom companies.
- **Lack of legal right** - MGNREGA is a legal right, whereas the Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan has no such legal binding on the administration.
- **Lack of work** - According to figures available on the Ministry of Rural Development’s website, in this fiscal year, 8.07 crore workers demanded work, but work was provided only to 6.25 crore workers.
- **Insufficient funds** - The Central government released ₹38,000 crore for MGNREGA work, of which 70% has already been utilised. With the return of migrant workers to their home States and with substantial numbers having completed the quarantine period, the demand for work is bound to increase. The remaining ₹8,000 crore fund available to the States is clearly insufficient.

Suggested Reforms for MGNREGA

- **Household vs Individual** - This will require a removal of the restriction of only one person per household to make every individual eligible.
- **Increasing number of working days** - The cap of 100 days should be removed to expand it to at least 200 days.
- **Compensation to all** - Unemployment allowance should be guaranteed for all those turned away from work.

Way Forward - MGNREGA should not be diluted in the name of the Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan. The potential for MGNREGA to provide relief to the suffering of rural India should be utilised to its fullest capacity especially in times of Corona when unemployment is at its highest.

4. Lockdown Impact on MGNREGA and Way ahead

Source: [Livemint](https://www.livemint.com)

Context: The government has launched PM Garib Kalyan Rozgar yojana which seems to overlap with MGNREGA.

About Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

- It is an employment guarantee act, introduced in 2005 through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005.
- The Act aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.
- It is **demand driven** i.e. Worker to be hired when he demands and not when the Government wants it. Gram Panchayat is mandated to provide employment within 15 days of work application failing which worker is entitled to unemployment allowance
- Payment of wages is provided within 15 days of completion of work failing which worker is entitled to delay compensation of 0.05%/ day of wages earned.
- Ministry of Rural Development (MRD), Government of India in association with state governments monitors the implementation of the scheme.

How is the govt's GKRA Yojana different from MGNREGA?

It seeks to provide 125 days of guaranteed employment and focuses on 116 districts across six states, which received the highest number of returnees. Unlike MGNREGA, it is a one-time scheme and is not available pan-India.

Impact of covid-19 lockdown on MGNREGA

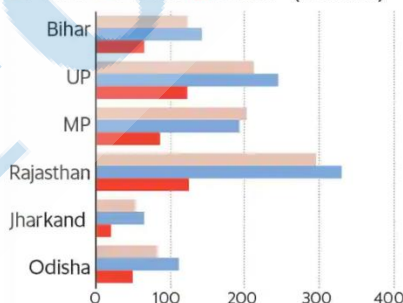
1. The demand for MGNREGS work jumped by 55% from 21.2 million workers in May 2019 to 32.9 million in May 2020.
2. Since April, 3.5 million new workers have registered under the scheme reflecting the job losses in cities.
3. 116 districts, with the highest number of returnees, have witnessed 86% increase in demand under MGNREGS in May from 2019.

Lockdown impact

The demand for MGNREGS has peaked in three months of FY21 as migrants returned home. Since April, 3.5 million new workers have registered under the scheme.

No. of person days' work generated

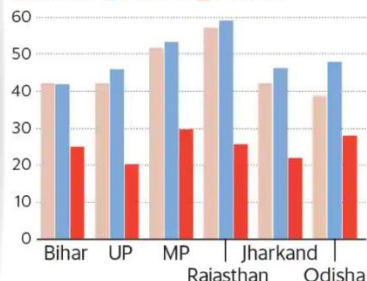
FY18-19 FY19-20 FY20-21* (in million)



*Untill June 2020

Average days of employment provided per household

FY18-19 FY19-20 FY20-21*



Source: MGNRE Guarantee Act, 2005, Ministry of Rural Development

Concerns regarding MGNREGA

1. **Insufficient budget allocation:** MGNREGA's success at the ground level is subject to proper and uninterrupted fund flow to the states. However, almost every year, more than 80% of funds get exhausted within the first six months

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2. **Supply driven scheme:** Most states have implemented the scheme; till the time the funds were granted to them by Centre. Over time, this led to MGNREGS running in a supply-driven way instead of a demand-based model.
3. **Low wage rate:** MGNREGA wage of ₹202 per day is 30-40% lower than average wage offered to unskilled workers
4. **Delay in wage payments:** Wages remain uncleared even after 15 days, and many get denied work.

Measures to be taken:

- Proper and timely allocation of funds
- Ensuring minimum wages for workers
- Effective monitoring of projects
- Ensuring employment to rural households as per demand for work.
- Guaranteed Unemployment allowance for all those denied work.

Conclusion: MGNREGA should not be diluted in the name of the Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan. The potential for MGNREGA to provide relief to the suffering of rural India should be utilised to its fullest capacity especially in times of Corona when unemployment is at its highest.

Syllabus – Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate

5. Global challenges and UN's incapability to resolve them

Source – [Indian Express](#)

Context – Pandemic has accentuated challenges to global order which needs urgent reforms.

The four major challenges highlighted by the UN Secretary General- Antonio Guterres before arrival of the Corona virus are:



Corona virus crises has aggravated these issues by manifold during last two months:

Challenges	Impact of Pandemic
1. Cyber-security threat	1. Cyber Pearl Harbor attack - cyberspace use has expanded in lockdowns across globe but without commensurate growth in security features. Thus next few months will see increase in cyber attacks.
2. Geo-political tensions	1. Increased rivalry of China – USA-China, India-China, Hong-Kong China reflects the state of exacerbated relations and tensions across

	the borders.
3. Global mistrust	<p>Mistrust among friendly neighbors</p> <p>a. European Union -When faced with corona crisis shortages, almost all EU states responded at the national level.</p> <p>b. Nordic nations – Norway opened its borders to the rest from the region bar Sweden, because of its infection rate.</p> <p>Impact on diversified supply chains – From efficiency to self-sufficiency</p> <p>a. India's Atmanirbhar Mission</p> <p>b. USA's Buy American</p> <p>c. Japan paying companies to relocate from China</p>

Suggested reforms

1. Strengthening global governance - Reforming global governance architecture which includes reforms in UN organs as well.
2. Implementing Paris agreement on Climate Change - In April daily carbon emissions were down by 17 per cent compared to last year. New data in June indicates that they are 5 per cent lower than at the same point in 2019, indicating a spurt. Thus, implementation of agreement in spirit and letter to constraint rise in emissions.

Way forward - Challenges that transcend borders are of cardinal importance to India's well being. It is, therefore, time to conceptualize, in concrete terms, pathways to address them. This will need to include our envisaging the new order and India's own role in it as well as who our partners in this venture are to be.

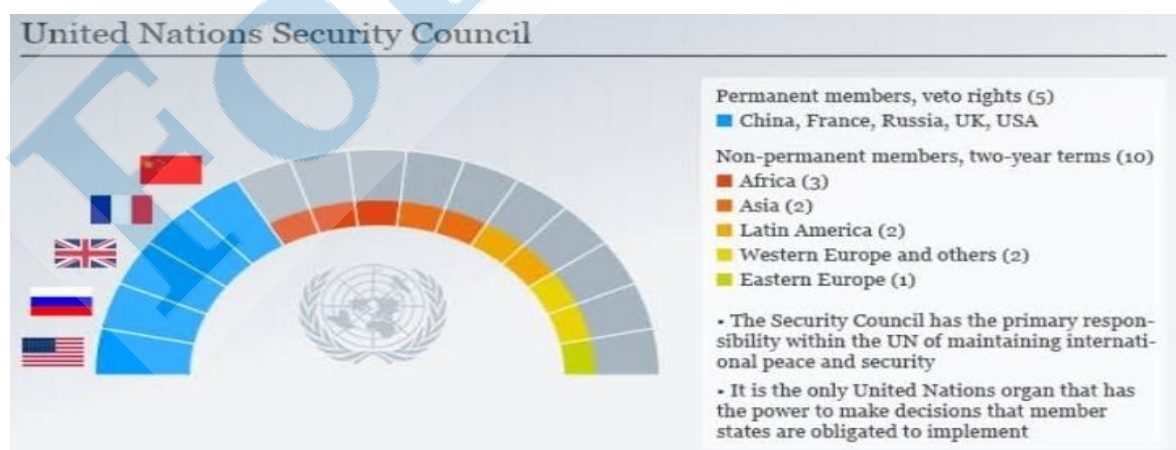
6. In an uncertain world, a seat at the UNSC

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Context: India won the election for the non-permanent seat in the powerful United Nation Security Council (UNSC).

Background:

- India's two-year term will begin on January 1, 2021.
- India is serving for the eighth time.
- **Composition of UNSC:** It is composed of 15 Members.



- **Voting in General assembly:** Members have to secure a two-third majority of the member states.

How countries were elected?

- **Non-permanent members in respective regional groups and their sub-groups:**
 - **Regional endorsements:** If there is regional endorsement then all countries, except those with any grievance against the candidates, vote for them and they sail through easily.
 - **Difficulty in regional endorsement:** The countries have to inscribe their names years in advance and those squatting countries have to be persuaded to vacate the place.
 - **For example-** Last time, Kazakhstan vacated the place for India and this time Afghanistan.
- **Excitement in Voting in General Assembly:**
 - **Secret ballot:** The two-thirds majority is assured but the competition is to secure all the votes cast.
 - **For example-** India got 184 out of 192 vote cast and will never know about the eight countries that did not vote for India.
 - **African Group:** Since there was no endorsement in the African Group, Kenya had to go for a second round against Djibouti.
 - **In the Western European and Others Group:** Canada lost to Ireland in a contentious contest.
- **Effect of COVID-19:**
 - **Voting:** Ambassadors were allowed to enter the General Assembly Hall one by one instead of the simultaneous voting that usually takes place.
 - **Unconventional campaign:** It took place through Zoom conversations and the sharing of brochures and pamphlets rather than through meetings around the UN.
 - **Saving of money:** The win is normally an occasion for celebration by the candidates.
- **Success for India:**
 - a. **Role of India:** The new Permanent Representative of India, T.S. Tirumurti, produced an impressive multimedia presentation with memories of India's sterling role in the annals of the UN.
 - b. He reacted with victory with the belief that India will continue to provide leadership and a new orientation for a reformed multilateral system in the COVID and the post-COVID world.

The win for India Reignited the hope for its quest for permanent membership of the Council but it is difficult to amend the Charter to add new permanent members.

Issues in Reforms in UNSC:

- **Procedure to amend the charter:** The debate has thrown up many ideas but none of the proposals has the possibility of securing two-thirds majority of the General Assembly and the votes of the five permanent members.
- **Role of Permanent members:** They are sometimes adamant about protecting their privileged positions.
- **Members against the privilege:** Majority of the UN members are against the privileges of the permanent members particularly the veto.
- India's performance in the Council may earn it respect but it will not lead to its elevation to permanent membership as the opposition to any expansion is not India-specific.

Indi will play a constructive role in UNSC.

India and UNSC:

- **Higher profile:** Non-permanent members have a collective veto over every resolution in the Council.
- **Its role in resolutions:** Permanent members can prevent adoption of resolutions by themselves but they need at least nine votes to get a resolution passed.
- **Consultation process:** India will have an access to the consultations chamber of the UNSC which is closed to non-members of the Council. It is there that hard negotiations take place without any public record characterized by arm-twisting and threats of veto.
- **Pressure of different issues:** India will get involved in many issues in which it may not have any direct interest.
- **Proceeding cautiously:** As India does not have veto, it has to work cautiously by not offending anyone.

Way Forward

- India's mission has earned a reputation that it is next only to the permanent members in influence but its dealing in traditional challenges will depend on the turns and twists in an uncertain world.
- Counter-terrorism will be one of the highest priorities for India at the UNSC.

Syllabus –Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

7. Reforming India's digital policy

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Context: Even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, investments in digital services continue to flow at record levels globally, outpacing investment in nearly every other sector.

Need for a robust Digital Policy in India

- **FDI potential:** India is an ideal destination for increased FDI flows in the digital services sector.
- **Increasing digitised population:** In 2018, India had over 480 million internet users across the country. This figure is projected to grow to over 660 million users by 2023.
- **Start-ups:** India has huge potential for innovative homegrown start-ups.
- **Emerging importance of digital services:** The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of digital services. Digital services enable access to and delivery of a wide array of products across multiple sectors, from healthcare to retail distribution to financial services.

Pending Reform Measures:

At present, there are three pending reform measures under consideration that are likely to affect India's growth trajectory in digital services:

- **Personal Data Protection Bill (PDPB):** The bill has been prepared by a high-level expert committee headed by former Supreme Court judge B.N. Srikrishna. The bill seeks to provide for protection of personal data of individuals, create a framework for processing such personal data, and establishes a Data Protection Authority for the purpose.
- **Draft e-commerce policy:** It has been put forward by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). The prime objective of the policy is to prepare

and enable stakeholders to fully benefit from the opportunities that would arise from progressive digitalization of the domestic digital economy.

- **Information Technology Act Amendments** which aim at making social media companies more responsible for potentially harmful content.

Challenges ahead:

- India's policy changes need to reconcile with India's strong interest in promoting data privacy, protecting its democratic institutions, and encouraging FDI and India's position as a global leader in information technology.
- India is yet to conclude negotiation on a bilateral trade agreement with USA that could address some digital services issues.
- The U.S. has recently just initiated a "Section 301" review of whether digital services taxes in 10 countries constitute "unfair" trade measures, including India's equalisation levy.

Conclusion: Post-COVID-19 international cooperation and approaches to good governance in the digital sphere should be top-priority initiatives to foster digital services in India.

8. Banning Applications – Goes against democratic norms

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Context – In a virtual strike, India bans Tik-Tok and 58 other apps with Chinese links which has raised questions on legality of strike.

Banning applications by passing an executive order has following legal implications:

- 1. Lack of transparency** - The legal order banning the apps, by itself has not yet been published or been made publicly available. Disclosure of this order is necessary because the nature of the action of blocking impacts the right not only of the owners of these smart-phone applications, but the public's fundamental right to receive information.
- 2. Absence of parliamentary debate and consensus** - The Ministry's assessment may not have been technically examined or debated on the floor of the house. For instance, August 2012's decision of blocking around 245 web pages to prevent disinformation that purportedly was causing the exodus from Bengaluru of Indians belonging to the north-eastern part of the country was debated on floor of the house.
- 3. Aggrieved parties cannot approach court** –In Shreya Singhal case, while upholding the blocking powers of the government, court reasoned that the writ remedies would always be available to an aggrieved person. Hence, to approach a High Court in a writ, the petitioner would require the availability of the legal order which needs its public disclosure by government.

Suggested Solutions

- 1. Data Protection Act** – Passing the bill will ensure privacy and data protection for national citizens, especially those using apps of hostile neighbor.
- 2. Examining relation** between technological advancement and strategic concerns –This involves commencing an exploration into whether investments and operational control pose cyber security concerns. This may be done through legislation and creation of an institutional process that may draw inspiration from the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States.

Way Forward - The principle of legality is inherent to a republic that is governed by laws and not the whims of powerful individuals in high office. It is the hallmark of a democracy that laws are validly enacted and do not violate fundamental rights.

Syllabus – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources

9. The Neglected Pillars of Hospital – The cleaning staff

Source - [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus– GS 2 - Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources

Context - COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of cleaning staff and without them doctors, nurses will be left paralyzed.

The services offered by cleaning staff remains precarious and devalued because of the following reasons:

1. **Low caste status** - Most cleaners are Dalits who belonged to 'sweeper castes.'
2. **Low class status** - The fact that most of them are contract workers makes them vulnerable to exploitative practices like low wages and absence of social security measures.

Issues they witness in hospitals:

1. **Neglected by Policy makers** – Even in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic, Indians were encouraged to applaud the work done by doctors, nurses, and 'other health workers' and nowhere the term cleaning staff was used by policy makers to recognize their efforts.
2. **Absence of basic protective gears** - Cleaners do not have gloves as they sweep and mop floors, clean latrines, and wipe delivery tables leave alone a full PPE kit.
3. **Lack of training** - Most cleaners have never received any training as:
 1. First, cleaning jobs are not considered important enough to warrant special training.
 2. Second, anyone of a sweeper caste who took the job of a cleaner is assumed to already know what to do.
 3. Third, hospital staff who received infection control training often did not communicate procedures and guidelines in detail to cleaners because they assumed that they were not intelligent enough to understand.

Way Forward – Policy makers must not allow caste prejudices to exacerbate the dangers of COVID-19. Rather, they should take advantage of this moment as an opportunity to train, protect, and improve the working conditions of these essential workers as they do the indispensable work of ensuring the survival of the sick.

10. Staying alert: On monitoring non-COVID-19 diseases

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Context: Analysing the role of the IDSP in monitoring of the non-COVID-19 diseases.

Background:

- IDSP is responsible for alerting the Centre and the wider world on a weekly basis about the emergence of disease outbreaks, a surge in novel pathogens, the rate of spread and remedial action taken. On average, there are 30-40 such alerts.
- **Advent of COVID-19:**
 - **Reduction in alerts:** The latest weekly report available on the IDSP website is from Week 12 (March 16-22). The alerts have reduced from 2017-2020 in the same week.



- In Week 11 this year, there were 28 alerts of which 12 were for COVID-19 and these corresponded to the 110 cases of the disease that were reported in that week of March from when the disease escalated.

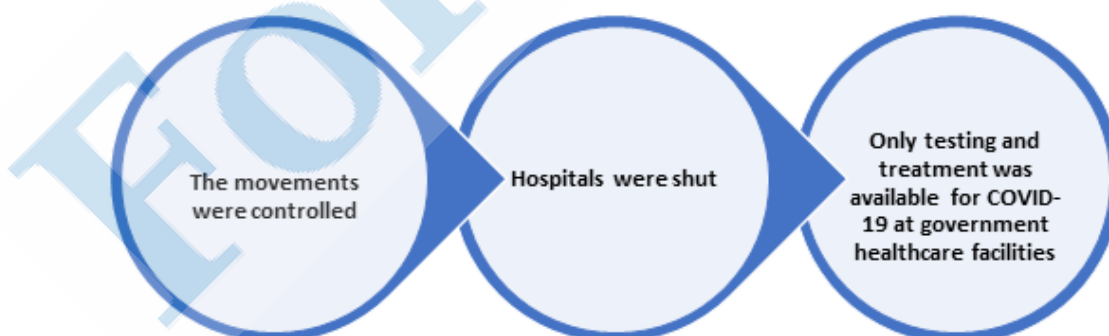
IDSP:

- The Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) is one of the major National Health Programme under National Health Mission for all States & UTs.
- **Objective:** To strengthen/maintain decentralized laboratory-based IT enabled disease surveillance system for epidemic prone diseases to monitor disease trends and to detect and respond to outbreaks in early rising phase through trained Rapid Response Team (RRTs).
- It is the backbone of India's disease monitoring network.

The COVID-19 appears to have veiled the country from any other disease.

Effect of COVID-19 on health infrastructure:

- **New normal:** The IDSP went into new normal once the COVID-19 was declared a pandemic and a lockdown was imposed. It led to reduced focus on other diseases as the reports of other diseases suffered because:



- **Neglect of other diseases:** There has been a reduction in the notifications of fresh tuberculosis infections and a general decline in claims under the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme.
- **Contribution of lockdown:** It led to decline of contagious diseases just like to decline in accident related deaths. Many of the outbreaks that are routinely reported

involve pathogens contracted from contaminated water or those airborne that spread through social interaction.

- **Lack of public updates:** The alerts for health has significantly reduced since March 12 which is totally unacceptable for the health of the people.

The pandemic has many lessons for the world.

Learning for the world:

- **No perfect forecast of diseases:** No modelling can quite forecast the spread of disease and an affliction that may seem under control one week can quickly be threatening the next week.
- **Need for routine examination:** The unlock policy of the countries should also apply to routine surveillance for other diseases.
- **Importance of Manpower:** The IDSP is mirroring the experience of public health facilities in other countries and is trying to recruit in the middle of a pandemic. There should be enough manpower to fulfill its mandates.

Way Forward

It will be disastrous if the focus on COVID-19 come at the expense of monitoring other diseases.

11. Accounting rural women's work and health in Pandemic

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Context – As India emerges from the lockdown, labour market policy has to reverse the pandemic's gender-differentiated impact.

Feature of rural women's work

1. **Crisis of regular employment** - When women are not reported as workers, it is because of the lack of employment opportunities rather than it being on account of any "withdrawal" from the labour force.
2. **Defining potential workforce** - Women from all sections of the peasantry, with some regional exceptions, participate in paid work outside the home. In thinking of the potential workforce, thus, need is to include women from almost all sections of rural households and not just women from rural labour or manual worker households.
3. **Young vs old women** - Younger and more educated women are often not seeking work because they aspire to skilled non-agricultural work, whereas older women are more willing to engage in manual labour.
4. **Wage inequality** - Women's wages are rarely equal to men's wages in rural areas, with a few exceptions. The gap between female and male wages is highest for non-agricultural tasks — the new and growing source of employment.
5. **Woman's work day** - Counting all forms of work — economic activity and care work or work in cooking, cleaning, child care, elderly care — a woman's work day is exceedingly long and full of drudgery.

Lockdown's affect on employment for rural women

1. **Agriculture and allied sector** - While agricultural activity continued for harvest operations; employment available to women during the lockdown was limited.

- **Dairy products** - When households own animals, women are inevitably part of the labour process. During the lockdown, the demand for milk fell by at least 25% (as hotels and restaurants closed), and this was reflected in either lower quantities sold or in lower prices or both.

- **Mariculture** - For women across the country, incomes from the sale of milk to dairy cooperatives shrank. Among fishers, men could not go to sea, and women could not process or sell fish and fish products.
2. **Non-agricultural jobs** - Non-agricultural jobs came to a sudden halt as construction sites, brick kilns, petty stores and eateries, local factories and other enterprises shut down completely and thus women depended on these were forced out of work.
 3. **Government schemes** - During the pandemic, Accredited Social Health Activists or ASHAs, 90% of whom are women, have become frontline health workers, although they are not recognized as “workers” or paid a regular wage.

Lockdown's affect on health and nutrition for rural women



Way Forward – In the short-run provision, employment of women can be increased through an imaginative expansion of the MGNREGA while a medium- and longer-term plan needs to generate women-specific employment in skilled occupations and in businesses and new enterprises.

Syllabus – Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

12. Custodial deaths In India – A pervasive Police Culture

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Context – The tragic deaths of P. Jayaraj and J. Benicks, a father-son duo in a small town in Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu has highlighted the presence of culture of torture in police force of India.

Torture is integral part of Police forces:

1. **Data by Asian Centre for Human Rights** - The **Asian Centre for Human Rights** (ACHR) has consistently underlined that about 99.99% of **deaths** in police **custody** can be ascribed to **torture** and occur within 48 hours of the victims being taken into **custody**.

- Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) has stated that a total of **1,674 custodial deaths**, took place from 1 April 2017 to 28 February 2018.

2. **Centerpiece of legislations against heinous crimes** - The fact is that the current laws facilitate such torture, such as through the admissibility of confessions as evidence under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

3. **Supreme Court on torture** – In Francis Coralie Mullin v. Union Territory of Delhi (1981) and Sheela Barse v. State of Maharashtra (1987), the Court condemned cruelty and torture as violative of Article 21.

Implications of Custodial deaths



Solution to curb custodial deaths:

1. Recognizing its presence – The recognition that torture is endemic and a systemic problem is must as Indian government has denied its presence on many platforms.

- For instance - In 2017, the then Attorney-General represented India in United Nations Human Rights Council and invoked Gandhi and Buddha, stating that “India...believe[s] in peace, non-violence and upholding human dignity. As such, the concept of torture is completely alien to our culture and it has no place in the governance of the nation.”

2. Strict legal framework - The only answer lies in stringent legal framework that is aligned with and committed to the principles of international law under the UN Convention Against Torture (UNCAT) to which India has been a signatory since 1997.

3. Implementation and enforcement – A watertight enforcement mechanism that deters such practices is needed along with a law.

4. Social Mobilization through movement - People’s movement at home too, like #Blacklivesmatter against USA police, will bring about the necessary legislative changes that the Law Commission has suggested, and that encourages institutions to #EndTortureToday.

Way Forward – Participation of all stakeholders including the media, civil society and student groups is must in bringing about the change we want to see in the Police’s colonial era practices.

13. Police violence and how some lives do not matter

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Context: Analysing the abuse of power by Police in the backdrop of custodial killing of Jayaraj and his son in Tamil Nadu.

Background:

Incident	Reaction
Disha case (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Hyderabad police were celebrated by the public for killing four men accused of raping, murdering and burning the body of the victim.
Custodial killing of father and son (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All are horrified by the brutal violence inflicted upon these two men.• There is a collective call to keep our police in check and that we must not tolerate such abuse of police powers.

Reasons for different reaction:

- **For instant justice:** Sometimes we are willing to accept an instant (but illegal) version of justice.

- **Moral evaluation:** We embrace mob justice in some situations where we feel it is 'deserved'. It conveniently blurs the lines between our moral judgment and the limits we must place on police power. For example-we are shocked that father and son were tortured for keeping their shop open for a few minutes after lockdown timings whereas when someone is present to us as sexual offenders, terrorists and anti-nationals, we accept such tortures.

The track record of our public and legal conversation on torture and fixing accountability present a sad picture.

Records for abuse of power:

- **On Custodial deaths (police and prison):** In the last three years, the NHRC has received nearly 5,300 complaints which are only a fraction of the actual number of such deaths.
- **Fixing accountability:** Government data recorded 1,727 deaths in police custody between 2000 and 2018 but only 26 police officials were convicted as the legal process to investigate, prosecute and fix accountability has many hurdles.

There is an institutional and public culture that breeds, protects and even celebrates this kind of violence.

Reasons for abuse of power:

- **Responsibility:** The Law Commission of India has suggested that if a person dies in police custody, the burden should be on the police to show that they are not responsible but the law still requires the prosecution to prove that the police caused the death.
- **India's political commitment to address torture:** It is symbolized by its failure to ratify the UN Convention Against Torture.
- **Not following judgments:** The Supreme Court of India has laid down many measures to prevent torture and fix accountability but these judgments are rarely followed.
- **Institutional apathy:** The law mandates an independent magisterial inquiry into a custodial death. Such inquiries have happened in only about 20% of custodial deaths and prosecution of police officials for custodial torture requires the sanction of the government.
- **System working:** The system incentivizes torture by seeking convictions without modernizing the police force.
- **Instant justice:** The use of torture is often justified by police personnel as being required to teach 'hardened criminals' on behalf of society.

Way Forward

There should be a domestic law that enables torture prosecution by accounting for the particularities of custodial torture.

General Studies Paper - 3

General Studies - 3

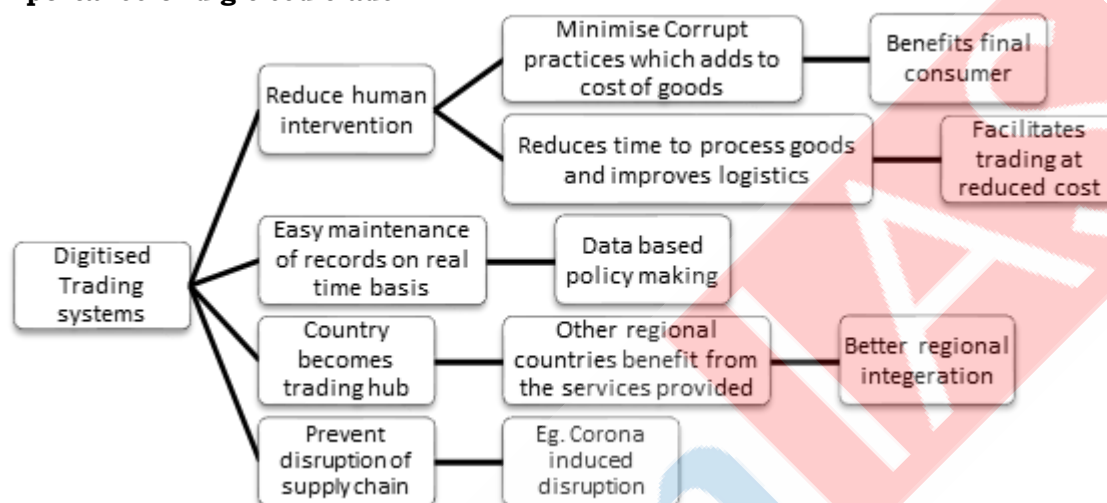
Syllabus – Infrastructure - Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc

1. Digitising Trade across borders

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Context – Pandemic has made it necessary to digitise procedures and lower human intervention to facilitate trade across borders.

Importance of digitised trade



Challenges in attaining digitisation in trade

- **Functioning of digitised trading systems** - Shortcomings in the functionality of the system and technical glitches result in limited use of the system or parallel use of hard copy. For example, the absence of a shipping line delivery order in customs and terminal systems results in usage of hard copy for cargo movement.
- **Multiple stakeholders** - Lack of connectivity/message exchanges between different stakeholders' systems results in delayed cargo clearance.
- **Capacity building in stakeholders** - There are many issues with respect to training and capacity building amongst the users, restricting the optimal utilisation of digital platforms.
- **High upfront costs of digitisation** - Trade ecosystem including customs brokers, shipping lines, freight forwarders, transport operators, port custodians, container freight stations and border management authorities have been restricted. This indicates the need to further augment the digital infrastructure in the trade ecosystem which involves high upfront cost.

Steps taken by government to digitise cross border trading

Post India's ratification of the Trade Facilitation Agreement of the World Trade Organization in April 2016, following reforms focused on infrastructural upgradation, digitisation and automation.

1. **Direct Port Entry and Direct Port Delivery**
2. **Radio Frequency Identification system and Single Window Interface**
3. **The Port Community System** – It is aimed at seamlessly integrating all maritime trade-related stakeholders on a single platform.
4. **e-SANCHIT (e-Storage and computerised handling of indirect tax documents)** - Aimed at reducing human intervention.

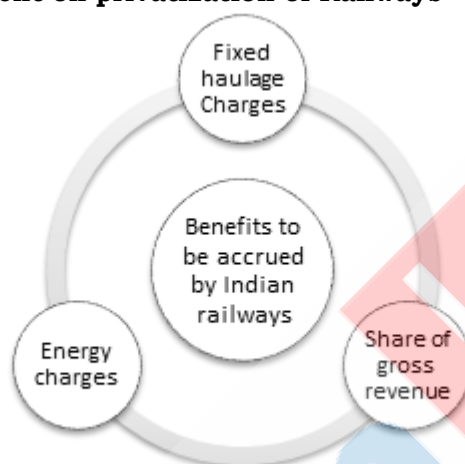
Way Forward - With trade volumes contracting and economic indicators shrinking, the present crisis presents an opportunity to develop new systems and enhance existing platforms while at the same time changing the attitude of stakeholders on the ground.

2. Privatizing Indian Railways

Source – [Indian Express](#)

Context – Indian Railways recently initiated the process to allow private firms to operate passenger trains on its network.

Advantages to Government on privatization of Railways



Critical Issues which need to be addressed for this initiative

1. **Financial Viability** - There will be questions over the financial viability of some routes which has not been good for Indian Railways in terms of revenue earned in last few years.
2. **Subsidy by Indian Railway** – Railways tend to cross-subsidize passenger fares through freight revenue. This translates to below cost pricing, which will make it difficult for private players to compete.
3. **Issues associated with higher pricing** - The higher fares needed to cover costs by private players might bring them in direct competition with airlines, pricing them out of the market.
4. **Absence of independent regulator** - Further, as the experience of private operators in running container trains suggests, setting up an independent regulator will be critical for creating a level playing field for private players. Currently, the same entity is effectively the policy maker, regulator and service provider, rolled into one.

Way Forward - The Rakesh Mohan committee report had pointed out that the international experience on privatizing railways showed that it was “exceedingly difficult and controversial”. Thus, liberalizing the entry of new operators may be the path for improving services, and facilitating growth of the sector, but there is need to exercise caution.

Syllabus: Science and Technology

3. PCR testing is a double-edged sword

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Context: The government has allowed SARS-CoV-2 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing in many government and private laboratories.

Different types of Tests used for Covid-19 diagnosis

There are mainly two types of tests being used for Covid-19 diagnosis

- **Genetic test/Molecular Test:** This test is done using the conventional **real-time Reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test**. It is a method of testing by taking a nasal/throat swab from a patient. It involves extracting ribonucleic acid or RNA, which is the genetic material of the virus. If it shares the same genetic sequence as SARS-CoV-2 virus, then it is deemed positive.

Syllabus: GS-3- Effects of liberalisation on the economy (post 1991 changes), changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

4. India-China Standoff threatens India's Pharmaceutical Industry

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Context: There is a growing clamour in India for boycotting trade with China amidst recent political tensions. However, it is a cause of concern for India's pharmaceutical industry.

India's Pharmaceutical Industries' dependence on Chinese Imports

- India is the third largest producer of finished drugs in the world however it relies significantly on China for supplies of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs).
- According to Ministry of Commerce, India sourced \$3.5 billion worth of bulk drugs in 2019 from China, which accounts 67% of the total pharmaceutical raw material imports.
- For certain drugs like antibiotics or penicillin, 90% of raw materials come from China. For paracetamol and ibuprofen, this dependence is almost 100%.
- Even for APIs made in India, 85% of key starting materials and chemicals are imported from China.

Reasons for Dependence: Import reliance of pharmaceutical industries is because of environmental controls in India and competition with China, which has higher volumes of production and lower costs.

Concerns before Pharmaceutical Industry:

- Restricting or banning the import of APIs would cause significant disruption to the Indian pharmaceutical industry which had \$40 billion in revenues in 2018-19.
- A severe contraction of Indian pharmaceutical production would affect access to medicines both in India and globally. The impacts would be especially high in low and middle-income countries which have become increasingly dependent on affordable medicines supplied by India.

Incentives to Boost Local Output

- As part of a Production-Linked Incentive Scheme, financial incentives for the eligible manufacturers of 53 critical bulk drugs have been provided on their incremental sales over base year 2019-20 for a period of six years at a cost of ₹6,940 crore.
- Schemes have also been sanctioned to develop three mega bulk drug parks in partnership with States. The government is giving grants to States with ₹1,000 crore for each bulk drug park.

Way Forward

Reducing dependence on China must be strategic, with significant policy support. An ad hoc or reactive decoupling could disrupt the production of a wide range of medicines which currently require ingredients from China.

Syllabus: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

5. The problem of Plastic pollution during the time of COVID-19.

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Context: During the pandemic, strides made over the last year in dealing with single-use plastic have suffered a setback.

Background:

- **Dependence:** The hyper-hygienic way of life has become the increased dependence on non-recyclable items such as plastic-lined masks, gloves, hand sanitizer bottles and other PPE kits which has increased SUP waste.
- There has also been a steep increase in day-to-day items such as plastic bags and delivery packaging.
- **Plastic waste:**
 - According to a report of McKinsey, we generate 350 million tonnes of plastic waste globally in a year of which only 16 % is recycled.
 - **Post COVID-19:** Today, the WHO estimates that the planet is using about 89 million masks and 16 million gloves each month whose waste is much higher than that estimated in the McKinsey report.
 - **Stark picture:** The Guardian recently reported that there are possibly more masks than jellyfish in the oceans today.

Single-use plastic (SUP):

- They are disposable plastics meant for use-and-throw.
- These comprise polythene bags, plastic drinking bottles, plastic bottle caps, food wrappers, plastic sachets, plastic wrappers, straws, stirrers and Styrofoam cups or plates.

Handling of Plastic pollution:

Pre-coronavirus time:

Different nations had their own programmes to handle plastic waste:

- In countries such as Canada and the US, recycling of plastic is classified as essential.
- In India, we have the Plastic Waste Management Rules of 2016, which were updated and amended in 2018. In Swachhata Hi Seva campaign in 2019, people from all walks of life collected plastic waste from their surroundings and disposed of it suitably with the help of the local authorities.

Corona time:

- The national as well as the global momentum for plastic waste management has been seriously disrupted.
- Thailand had planned to slash plastic waste completely in 2020. Now it expects to see such waste rise by as much as 30%.
- In Singapore, the Bring Your Own (BYO) movement was started in 2017 where consumers were urged to bring their own utensils to restaurants in the effort to reuse and recycle. This has received a blow with global giants such as Starbucks doing away with their "Bring Your Own Cups" policy due to the pandemic.

How to deal with the SUP in current circumstances?

Effective Handling:

- It is important to understand the distinction between plastics and SUP so that we may change our lifestyles to balance our need for plastic with effectively managing its waste.

Economic opportunity:

- We require new business models which are designed for sustainability.
- In Uganda, they are melting plastic waste to make face shields for selling.
- In Singapore, start-ups are using stainless steel cups and bamboo boxes which can be returned and reused after being washed and sanitized.

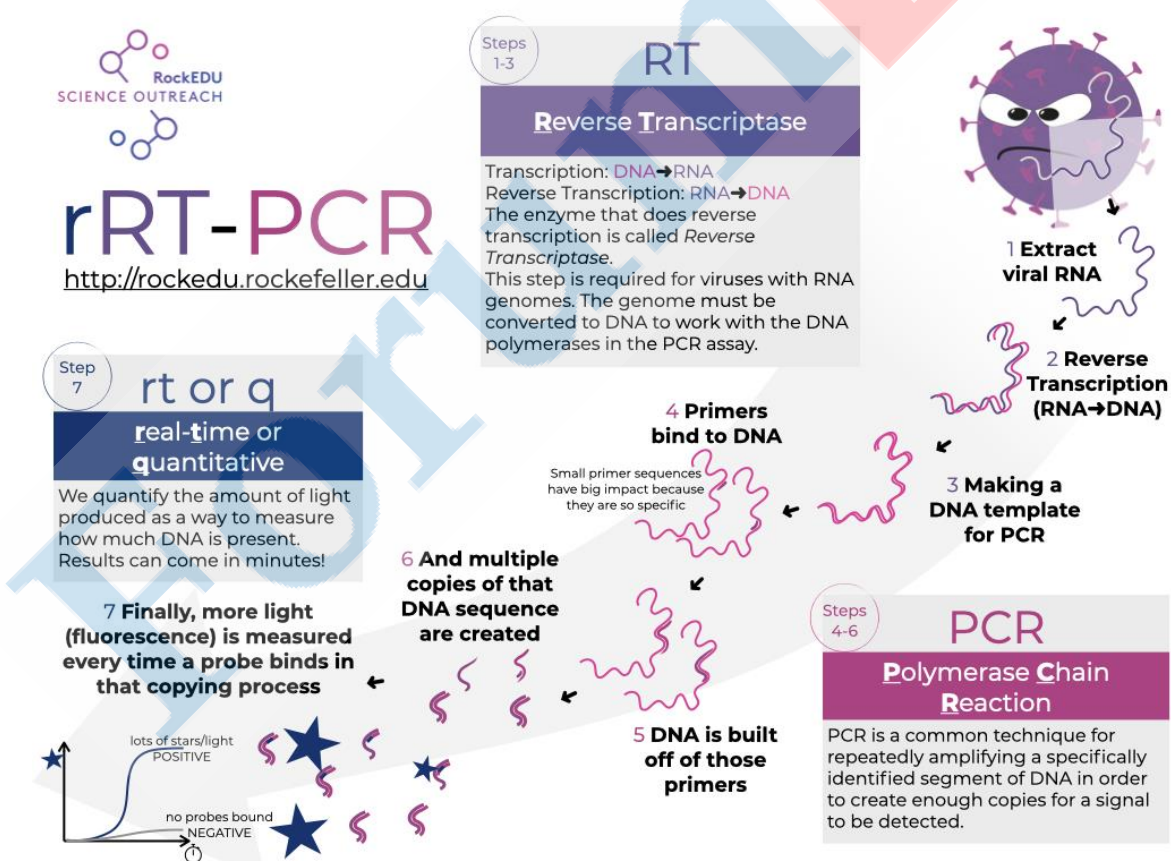
By Shifting consumers behaviour:

- We need consumers to care about their role in the plastic waste value chain by using their power to change the existing unsustainable approach.
- **For example-** In rural India which have declared themselves open defecation free (ODF), village communities across the country are now starting to plan for setting up waste collection and segregation systems with material recovery facilities at the block-level under phase 2 of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen).

Though the plastic-made items used to protect ourselves against the coronavirus are necessary but these are essential short-term needs for health, sanitation and other frontline workers as preventive measures against the coronavirus.

Way Forward

The options are all around us but true change is possible only when each one of us takes responsibility for the environment around us and takes necessary steps to Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Remove, or dispose of plastic waste safely and effectively.



- **Serological Test/Antibody Testing:** It is a blood/serum/plasma test to detect the presence of antibodies against a microorganism. In the case of Covid-19 these antibodies are usually IgM (the first antibody that the body makes) and IgG

antibodies. These antibodies when detected in the strip give a coloured response. The symptomatic individual then can be confirmed using the molecular test.

- **ELISA Test:** ELISA stands for enzyme-linked immunoassay. It is a commonly used laboratory test to detect antibodies in the blood.

Pooled Testing:

1. It is a procedure where individual specimens (e.g., urine or blood) are combined into a common pool.
2. If the pooled test turns out to be positive, individual samples are tested. If there's no positive result, all individual samples in the pool are regarded as negative.
3. This type of testing helps to reduce the cost of screening many individuals for infectious diseases and can help in tracing asymptomatic cases of the disease, thereby tracking community transmission.

Issues with RT-PCR Tests

1. It can only identify infections that are active and thus cannot detect and trace past infections.
2. It is expensive compared to serological tests.
3. It cannot be administered on-site and do not provide quick results.
4. It accurately detects the presence of virus but it is also prone to false negative and false positive results because of very nature of PCR. The viral load is lower in the throat than in the nasopharynx. Hence throat swabs are falsely negative in 60% of tests and nasopharyngeal swabs in 30%.
5. False PCR results underestimates the real extent of spread and mislead government thus augmenting the epidemic.

Steps to be taken

1. Cross-contamination should be avoided when samples are handled in a laboratory. A laboratory technician's proficiency is integral to quality assurance.
2. Doctors should not be misled by false negative tests when COVID-19 is clinically diagnosed with specific criteria. The patient must be treated as COVID-19, and the PCR repeated.
3. Laboratories should be checked for compliance with protocols and record-keeping.
4. In order to avoid blind reliance on the PCR test result, clinical diagnosis by specific criteria, should be popularised among doctors.