

9pm

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6th to 12th July, 2020

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Syllabus: Urbanization

1. Addressing Urban Heat Island

Source: The Indian Express

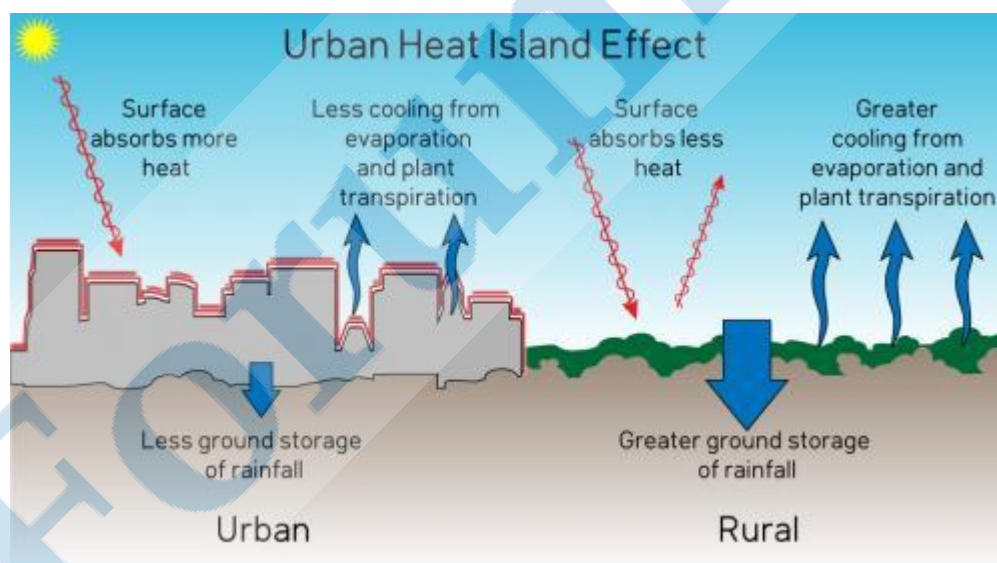
Context: The Covid-19 pandemic has sharpened need to make right choices for sustainable urban growth.

Urbanization in India- a brief overview

- In 2018, nearly 34% of India's population lived in the cities. This is expected to increase to 40% by 2030 contributing 75% of the GDP.
- Driven by growing urbanization, the real estate sector (the second-largest employer after agriculture) contributed 6-7% of the GDP in 2017. It is expected to increase to 13% by 2025.

Urbanization and the problem of Urban Heat Island

- Due to increased urbanization most of the open spaces in urban and semi-urban areas are being used up to create more of paved surface cover, heat-trapping roofs, buildings and roads.
- More than 60% of the roofs are made of concrete, metal and asbestos, all of which tend to trap heat. Over time, these hot surfaces lead to formation of urban heat island and thus soaring up temperatures. An urban heat island occurs when a city experiences much warmer temperatures than nearby rural areas.



Urbanization and Electricity Consumption: Buildings account for more than 30% of India's electricity consumption and a significant share of annual carbon dioxide emissions.

Making Buildings Smart- Lessons from Telangana

- Telangana has taken steps to ensure energy efficiency in its buildings by incorporating the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)'s Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC).
- It has included mandatory ECBC and green building codes, under section 176(4) in the newly promulgated Telangana Municipality Act 2019.

- **Interventions taken for cool-roofing:**

- Telangana has tested cool roof technologies through pilots undertaken in 2017. Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) implemented a cool roofs pilot in low-income neighborhoods to showcase the benefits and impact of cool roofs in the city.
- Learning from the pilot projects, the government has designed Telangana Cool Roofs Programme. It is a target-based initiative to increase the percentage of cool roofs in the state. The programme will aim to install cool roofs in low-income housing and slum communities.

Cool Roofs:

- A cool roof is one that has been designed to reflect more sunlight and absorb less heat than a standard roof.
- Depending on the setting, they can help lower indoor temperatures by 2 to 4 degrees Celsius as compared to traditional roofs. These roofs also potentially lead to less air pollution since they save energy, especially on cooling appliances.

Suggested Reforms:

- **Short-term:** It's crucial to ascertain how to respond to extreme heat and urbanization challenges during a major pandemic.
- **Long term:**
 - proactive pre-disaster actions to reduce risk
 - investment in forward-looking plans, policies and programmes to ensure right choices to balance urban growth and sustainable development

General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies - 2

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

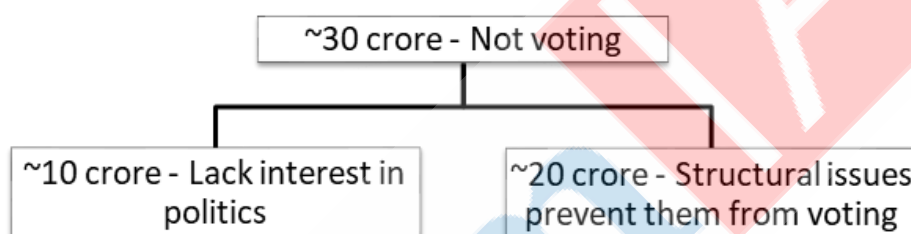
1. One Nation One Voter ID

Source – The Hindu

Context –The stark indignity that many internal migrants endured on their long march home suggests that they are perceived as being politically powerless as they do not form part of voter banks. This calls for considering One Nation One Voter ID as a policy measure to resolve the issue.

Data on Eligible voters

- Total number of registered voters - India currently has over 91.05 crore registered voters and in the 2019 general election, a record 67.4%, i.e., 61.36 crore voters, cast their vote.
- Registered voters who don't cast vote - 29.68 crore



- National Election Study surveys have shown that about 10% of registered voters refrain from voting due to a lack of interest in politics. That leaves approximately 20 crore voters who want to vote but are unable to do so.

Current model's of voter portability

- Service voters (government employees) posted away from home can vote through the Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS).
- Classified service voters (e.g., military personnel) can do so through their proxies.
- For senior citizens - In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has made it possible for senior citizens above the age of 65 to vote by postal ballot, given that they are at greater risk from exposure to the novel coronavirus

Plight of Internal migrants

- Total number of internal migrants - Internal migrant workers constitute about 13.9 crore as in the Economic Survey of 2017, that is nearly a third of India's labour force.
- Issues they face for voting –
 - Lack of proof of residence - Internal migrant workers do not enroll as voters in their place of employment since they find proof of residence hard to provide.
 - Not affordable - Many are seasonal migrants who would rather vote in their villages if they could afford to return home.

Suggested solution for migrant workers –

- **Immediate measure** - Migrants should be able to physically vote in their city of work based on the address on their existing voter IDs and duration of their temporary stay.
- **Long term measure** - Aadhaar-linked voter-ID based solution to enable electors to cast their votes digitally from anywhere in the country.

Way forward - Ensuring that every Indian who is eligible to vote can do so must be a central mission for the ECI. We must demonstrate the political will to usher in 'One Nation One Voter ID,' to ensure native ballot portability and empower the forgotten migrant voter. Once migrant workers get to exercise their franchise, we expect that we will see a change in how they are treated.

2. Is reservation policy being undermined?

Source: The Indian Express

Context: The reservation policy has been undermined off late by recent developments and government policies.

sReservation: Reservation in India is provided as a form of affirmative action acting as a positive discrimination, which means reserving access to seats in the government jobs, educational institutions, and even legislatures to certain sections of the population such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes.

Constitutional Provisions:

- **Article 15 (4):** It allows State to make any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.
- **Article 16 (4):** It allows State to make any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State.
- **Article 16 (4A):** It allows State to make any provision for reservation in matters of promotion, with consequential seniority, to any class or classes of posts in the services under the State in favour of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes which, in the opinion of the State, are not adequately represented in the services under the State.
- **Article 335:** It recognises that special measures need to be adopted for considering the claims of SCs and STs in order to bring them to a level-playing field.

Benefits of Reservation- Statistics:

Scheduled Castes

- In the Central Administrative Services, SCs reached 14% of the Class C in 1984, 14.3% of the Class B in 2003 and 13.3% of the Class A in 2015.
- In the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), their proportion rose from 14.6% in 2004 to 18.1% in 2014.
- SCs' literacy rate increased from 21.38% in 1981 to 66.1% in 2011.

Other Backward Classes:

- In 2013, OBCs represented 8.37% of the Class A in the Central Government Services, 10.01% of Class B and 17.98% of Class C.
- Their percentage in the CPSEs increased from 16.6% in 2004 to 28.5% in 2014.

How has the reservation policy been undermined recently?

Employment in Government jobs:

- The total number of employees has dropped so dramatically between 2003 and 2012, from 32.69 lakh to 26.30 lakh in the Central Government Services that the number of Dalits benefiting from reservations has been reduced by 16% from 5.40 lakh to 4.55 lakh.
- In CPSEs the number of OBCs benefiting from reservations had increased from 14.89 lakh in 2008 to 23.55 lakh in 2012, however, it has dropped to 23.38 lakh in 2013.
- There are concerns that new Public Sector Enterprises Policy (PSEP) and consequent privatization would further undermine reservation for SC, ST and OBCs.

Lateral Entry in Bureaucracy: Reservations have also been undermined by lateral entry in to the bureaucracy. In February 2019, 89 applicants were short listed (out of 6,000 candidates from the private sector) for filling 10 posts of Joint Secretary, however, quotas did not apply.

Supreme Court judgements:

- **Reservation in Universities:** The Supreme Court upheld Allahabad high Court judgement under which, the University Grants Commission (UGC) was allowed to issue a notification in 2018, which sought to shift the unit of provision of reservations from a university as a whole to the departmental level. This reduced the quantum of reserved seats and restricted the entry of lower castes in smaller departments.
- **Reservation in job promotion as a Fundamental Right:** In February 2020, the Supreme Court overturned a 2012 Uttarakhand High Court verdict, and ruled that reservation in job promotions was not a fundamental right.

Educational Fund cuts: Funds earmarked for Dalit education in the Indian budgets were reduced in 2014-2019. As a result, scholarship funds were cut drastically. According to S K Thorat, nearly five million Dalit students have been affected by this reduction and delays in payment.

Conclusion: The implementation of reservation policy has been a function of the political clout of Dalits and OBCs. The backward castes and classes gained when caste-based parties were in a position to put pressure on the governments.

3. Internet freedom versus national security

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Context – The government's decision to block 59 Chinese apps has once again spotlighted the vulnerability of Internet freedom at a time of national security.

Laws regulating Internet ban

1. **Section 5(1) of the Indian Telegraph Act** - It states that the State has the power to temporarily take possession of the 'telegraph' established and maintained or worked on by any person authorized under the Telegraph Act, if there is a public emergency or in the interest of public safety, the state believes it is necessary.
2. **Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) 1973** – It empowers the state government machinery to impose a temporary ban on connectivity.

3. **Sub-Section (1) of the Section 69A in the Information Technology Act, 2000** – Under this sub-section, authorized officers have the power to direct Internet Service Provider's to block public access to any information, generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer resource.

Issues associated with ban of these apps

1. **Violation of freedom of speech and expression** - Fundamental right to free speech and expression applies to online content which is infringed on ban of such apps.
2. **No focus on data protection** - The use of Section 69A of the Information Technology Act has been criticised in some quarters, with one of the criticisms being that it isn't designed for data protection compliance.
3. **Absence of reason for banning such apps** - When the Government of India issues blocking orders under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, it asserts secrecy and confidentiality in those orders.
4. **Disadvantage in trade talks** -By making it clear that this is due to geopolitical reasons, India [becomes] vulnerable from a trade law perspective. It allows China to claim the moral high ground in trade talks.

Suggested solutions to balance the trade-off between internet ban and digital rights:

1. **Publishing the reason for banning** - Supreme Court in the Anuradha Bhasin judgment said very clearly that any order blocking people's rights to liberty, especially in relation to the Internet, requires to be published.
2. **A new national cybersecurity strategy** - Defining who is responsible for such bans, what powers authority has in such cases, what remedies are there for concerned parties need to be solved through such a strategy.
3. **Enacting data protection framework** - Data protection framework where authorities investigate the entity and see whether other mechanisms could be followed instead of banning the internet is needed.

Way Forward - Under our existing legal framework regarding blocking of content, there are two mechanisms — there is the normal process by which a government department complains to the Central government officer and a committee reviews it, and an emergency process by which orders are issued and then a subsequent review is taken. Need is to follow a less regressive approach in the technological era where life of citizens is internet driven.

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

4. On Prime Minister's e-Vidya scheme

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Context: Union finance minister launched PM eVidya programme in May 2020.

PM e-Vidya Scheme

It is a programme for multimode access to digital/ online education. It aims to promote digital education in the country and make e- learning feasible for students and teachers.

Salient Features:

1. Top hundred universities will be permitted to start online classes.
2. **DIKSHA** for school education: This will consist of e-content and energized textbooks for all grades in all the schools across the states and union territories of the country.

3. One earmarked TV channel per class for 1st to 12th standard, to air educational content related to their courses and syllabus this academic year.
4. Extensive use of radio, community radio and podcasts to broadcast educational programmes for students living in nearby localities.
5. **Manodarpan:** This is an initiative for the psychosocial support of students, teachers and families, who are struggling to maintain their mental health and emotional well-being
6. **New National Curriculum and Pedagogical framework** for school, early childhood and teachers, which will be integrated with 21st century skill requirements.
7. **National Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Mission**, which will ensure that every child attains learning levels and outcomes in grade 5 by 2025.
8. **Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY):** It consists of bespoke materials for the differently-abled.

Significance of e-Vidya Programme

- It synergises and strengthens several distance-education projects — digital, online, and mass media.
- It will benefit 25-crore school children by providing them access to education sitting at home.
- it focuses on developing permanent assets for quality education for generations to come.
- it focuses on equity in education as the dedicated channel for education on tv will help students who do not have access to internet

Conclusion: The approach to education during the pandemic has relied on short-term and strategic initiatives. The e-Vidya scheme is a commendable initiative which will lay a strong foundation for the education system in India.

5. India's AYUSH industry needs an entirely new regulatory model

Source: [Livemint](#)

Context: Patanjali Ayurveda's claimed cure for COVID-19 has been criticised for making unsubstantiated claims of efficacy.

AYUSH

- AYUSH stands for Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy. In 2015, Ministry of AYUSH had also included Sowa Rigpa to the AYUSH system.
- These systems are based on traditional medical philosophies and represent a way of healthy living with established concepts on prevention of diseases and promotion of health.

Regulation of AYUSH in India

- Ministry of AYUSH: It was established in 2014 to ensure the optimal development and propagation of AYUSH systems of health care.
- Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 lays down the regulatory and quality control provisions for the manufacturing of Ayurvedic, Siddha and Unani drugs/medicines.

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In 2018, the AYUSH Ministry amended India's Drugs & Cosmetics Rules, 1945, to prohibit manufacturers of AYUSH drugs from advertising their products "for the use of diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment or prevention of any disease, disorder, syndrome or condition". However, AYUSH industry managed to procure a de facto stay from the Delhi High Court on these new rules in January, 2019.

- CCRS (Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences) lays down guidelines for Ayurvedic drug development.

National AYUSH mission:

- National AYUSH mission was launched in 2014 by the government of India.
- The basic objective of mission is to promote (a)AYUSH medical systems through cost effective AYUSH services (b)strengthening of educational systems to impart quality AYUSH education (c)facilitate the enforcement of quality control of AYUSH drugs and (d)sustainable availability of AYUSH raw materials.

Issues with AYUSH Industry

Poor Regulation: The AYUSH Industry subject to very light regulation. Under the 1964 provisions of law, the industry can manufacture any product based on substances mentioned in traditional books listed under First Schedule of Drugs and Cosmetics Act. The government could then test the products to ensure the contents matched the label.

Standard of Healthcare: of the around 4,000 AYUSH hospitals in India, only 87 meet the standards of the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers (NABH).

Quality and safety of AYUSH Products:

- There exist ambiguities on whether the product should be classified under the food category or treated as an Ayurveda medicine.
- Further, due to poor regulation, AYUSH manufacturers do not establish the therapeutic efficacy of their products through a documented process that would substantiate their claims, as is the case for drugs that are marketed by the pharmaceutical industry.
- An important issue with AYUSH concoctions is the presence of heavy metals. Evidences suggest that most of these concoctions contain detectable levels of lead, mercury and arsenic, which are known to produce harmful toxicological effects in humans.

Paucity of medicinal plants and herbs: According to the Ministry of AYUSH, 93% of wild medicinal plants used for making Ayurvedic medicines in the country are endangered.

Suggested Reforms:

- Attention should be paid to augment product and service quality, improve documentation, invest in research and innovation in AYUSH medicine.
- It is important to strengthen the regulatory environment. The advertising and marketing rules for its products should be significantly tightened to prohibit both the industry and Ayurveda practitioners from making therapeutic claims in relation to their products.
- The option of integrating AYUSH with modern medicine should be explored further.

Syllabus: GS-2- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and the States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections

6. Plight of Domestic Workers amid Covid-19 Pandemic

Source: The Hindu

Context: Domestic workers are struggling to make ends meet as employers choose to keep them away during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Domestic Workers in India- Brief Overview:

- According to data, Indian homes have witnessed a 120% increase in domestic workers in the decade post liberalisation-from 7,40,000 in 1991, to 16.6 lakh in 2001.
- According to data provided by the Delhi Labour Organisation, at present there are over five crore domestic workers in India, most of whom are women.

Issues faced by domestic workers:

- **Lack of legal protection:** Domestic work is a predominately female-dominated sector that is poorly regulated and often unprotected by labour law.
- **Working Conditions:** Domestic workers face the major problems such as – low wages, long working hours, harassment, sexual exploitation, physical torture, poor working conditions.
- **Low bargaining power:** The domestic workers seldom have an organized mechanism for collective bargaining since they work in the informal sector.
- **Lack of Social Security:** Domestic workers are not entitled to old-age pensions, gratuity or bonus or medical insurance.

Initiatives taken by Indian Government:

1. Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008:

- The Act covers domestic workers and provides formulation of social security schemes for life and disability cover, health and maternity benefits and old age protection by the Central government.
- The State governments are mandated under the Act to formulate suitable welfare schemes for unorganised sector workers relating to provident fund, employment injury benefits, housing, education schemes for children, skill upgradation of workers, financial assistance and old age homes.

2. Draft National Policy on Domestic Workers: It seeks to provide right to form their own associations/unions, right to minimum wages, access to social security etc.

3. Code on Social Security, 2019: It proposes to amalgamate legislations pertaining to provident fund, pension, medical insurance, maternity benefits, gratuity and compensation. It will subsume Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008

Way Forward: There needs to be a detailed legislative framework that ensures that domestic workers are treated with dignity and respect. Legislation should provide range of workers' rights such as caps on working hours, bonuses for overtime work, maternity benefits, the prohibition of unfair dismissal

7. A case for extension: on MGNREGA Scheme

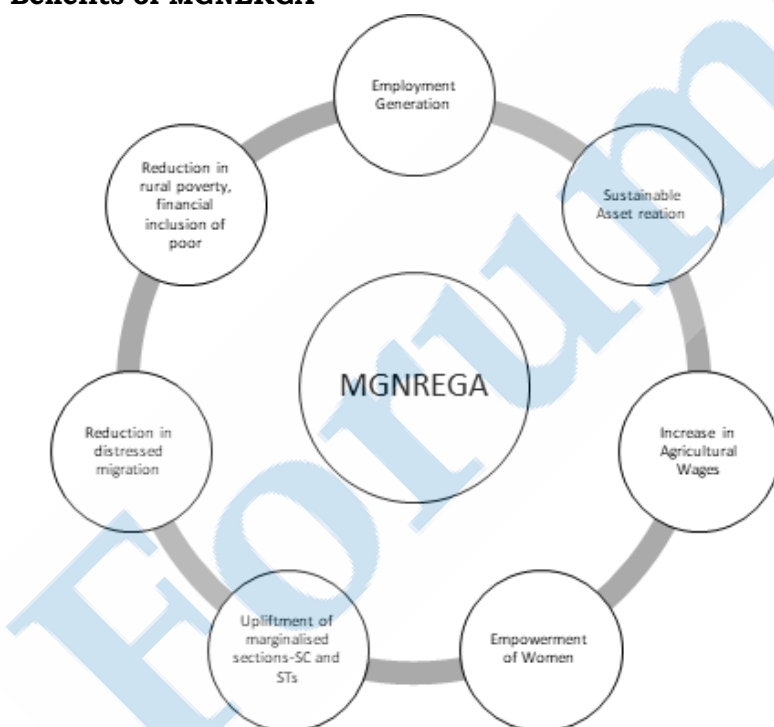
Source: The Hindu

Context: In 2020, 8.4 lakh poor households have completed at least 80 days of the 100-day limit for work under the MGNREGS and 1.4 lakh among those have completed the full quota.

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. 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.

Benefits of MGNREGA



Status of MGNREGA amidst Covid-19 pandemic

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

Steps taken by government:

- The completion of full quota of employment and high demand for work is a reflection of the distress amidst Covid-19 pandemic. The government has already introduced **PM Garib Kalyan Rozgar yojana** to address excess supply of labor owing to reverse migration from the cities.
- It is a one-time scheme which seeks to provide 125 days of guaranteed employment and focuses on 116 districts across six states, which received the highest number of returnees.

Way Forward:

- The MGNREGA has acted as insurance for rural dwellers during crop failures and agrarian crises. The government should use lessons from its successes and failures for a more comprehensive job guarantee plan that covers urban India.
- To start with, the government should focus extension of the 100-day limit and comprehensive implementation of the scheme in all rural areas. This would not only help alleviate distress but boost consumption and aid economic recovery amid the coronavirus crisis.

Syllabus: India and its neighborhood- relations

8. Reservation of China to the idea of Indo-Pacific

Source: The Indian Express

Context: Analysing the need to look carefully at Indian Ocean by India in the backdrop of India-China faceoff at Galwan Valley.

Indo-Pacific vision: It was presented by Indian PM in his address at the Shangri-La Dialogue in June 2018.

- It is rooted in our historical associations with this region and India does not see the region as a strategy or as a club of limited members.
- Inclusiveness, openness and ASEAN centrality and unity lie at the heart of the new Indo-Pacific.

China in Indian Ocean:

- **Historically:**
 - Chinese naval activity was limited to the East China Sea, the Bohai Sea, the Yellow Sea and the South China Sea.
 - **Role in trade:** The Indian Ocean trade especially beyond the Malacca Straits, was mainly carried on by Arab, Indian and Persian traders.
- **Today's context:**
 - China is the second largest economy and the world's largest trading nation.
 - The sea-lanes of communication in the Indian Ocean are vital to her economy and security.

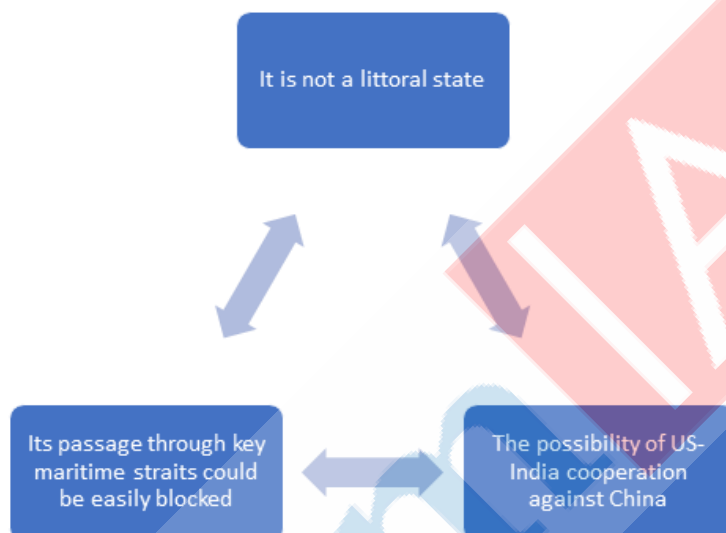
China has undermined the idea of Indo-Pacific approach and described the idea as akin to sea-foam in the Pacific or Indian Ocean that will dissipate.

Reasons for increased Chinese actions in Indian Ocean:

- **After the founding of the People's Republic in 1949:**
 - China initially focused on the consolidation of its homeland.
- **Malacca Dilemma:**

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- China felt that others would block the Malacca Straits to “contain” it and strategised to dominate not just the Malacca Straits but the ocean beyond it.
- **By 2012:**
 - A Maritime Rights and Interests Leading Group was established inside the Communist Party.
 - One of its reports to Party Congress saw the first official reference to “building China into a sea-power nation”.
 - **Maritime Silk Road:** The 21st Century MSR in October 2013 was carefully wrapped in terms of trade and finance in order to disguise its dual purpose.
 - **China want to overcome some of its inherent deficiencies:**



- **These deficiencies might be overcome by:**
 - Carefully selecting sites to build ports such as Djibouti, Gwadar and Seychelles.
 - By conducting activities in a low-key manner to reduce the military color as much as possible.
 - By not unnerving India and America by first cooperating and then slowly penetrating into the Indian Ocean beginning with detailed maritime surveys, ocean mapping, port construction etc.

Way Forward

- The Indo-Pacific idea might potentially derail China’s carefully crafted plans as it is inclusive, participative and evolving through open discussion.
- China still thinks in terms of balance of power while speaking about a Community with a Shared Future of Mankind.
- It should re-consider its position and view the Indo-Pacific idea as an instrument for advancing common interests and not make it a source of conflict or tension.

9. India’s foreign relations and the course of history

Source: The Hindu

Context: Analysing the perception of national interest by different generations of leadership.

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Background:

- The Indian PM made a public and undisguised reference to China's expansionism in his address to Indian troops.
- China rejected the allegation of expansionism and said that they had signed boundary agreements with all except two of its neighbours.

Approaches of former governments in Foreign Policy:

- **Nehru's approach:**

- **China policy:**

- He was convinced that China would not attack India and his Defence Minister had likely played a big part in inclining Nehru towards this conviction.
 - None of his advisers cautioned him against this miscalculation as most of them had no experience in foreign relations.
 - He was not guided by any ideological considerations and still dreamt of India playing a big role on the world stage and believed that China could be a partner in that endeavor.

- **Kashmir policy:**

- **No Himalayan blunder:**

- When a ceasefire was called for in January 1949, it was not because he was pacifist by nature or that he trusted the UN or any other country to label Pakistan as aggressor and persuade it to vacate the aggression.
 - **Ground Reality: The** Indian Army was in no position to run over the whole of Jammu and Kashmir at that time which has been definitively and conclusively brought out by respected scholars as well as in the official history of the war published by the Defence Ministry.

- **No ideological bias:**

- The writer believed that national interest was the guiding principle in foreign policy of Nehru as he described foreign policy as essentially selfish in a response to a letter by Albert Einstein.
 - **Interest with West:** India needed technology and other assistance which he convinced could be obtained only from America.
 - He looked towards Soviet Union only after the Americans concluded the military agreement with Pakistan.

- His mistakes and the blunder over China were caused by wrong assessments and not due to any ideological factors.

- **Indira Gandhi approach:**

- **"Verify and still not trust approach":**

- Her basic approach was that there is no such thing as trust in international relations.
 - She expects to have normal and peaceful relations with Pakistan in future but never with China as it is an expansionist power.

- **Handling Pakistan:**

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- She is accused of being naive and too trusting when she allowed Pakistan's 90,000 prisoners of war (POWs) to return to their country without getting anything in return.
- **Available options:** Whether she should have asked Pakistan to vacate all the territory it had occupied in Jammu and Kashmir or she should have kept the POWs in our country for long.

Conclusion:

- The previous leaderships must be held accountable for the mistakes or blunders they might have committed but they acted in the prevailing circumstances according to their perception of national interest.
- **For example-**One government might conclude that the civil nuclear deal with the US served India's national interest and some other government in different circumstances may think otherwise.

10. In stand-off, keeping an eye on the nuclear ball

Source: The Hindu

Context: There is growing evidence that China continues to expand its nuclear arsenal despite domestic and external challenges.

Background:

- **Planned Modernization of nuclear arsenals:** China fears the multi-layered missile defense capabilities of the United States.
- It is arming its missiles with Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs) capabilities to neutralize America's missile shield such as DF-31As.
- The Peoples Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF) also fields a range of Medium Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBMs) and Short-Range Ballistic Missiles (SRBMs).
- According to the International Panel on Fissile Materials (IPFM), China is estimated to possess 2.9+-0.6 metric tonnes of Weapons-grade Plutonium (WGP) compared to India's 0.6+-0.15 tonnes.

Concerns due to increasing China's nuclear arsenal:

- **Expansionist mode:** The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) observes that China's nuclear arsenal has risen from 290 warheads in 2019 to 320 warheads in 2020.
- **Motivation:** The Chinese state mouthpiece has recently called for a 1,000-warhead nuclear arsenal to match U.S. and Russian nuclear force levels.
- **Nuclear powered neighbourhood:** India also has to contend with a nuclear-armed Pakistan. As per SIPRI, India has roughly 150 nuclear warheads with the Pakistani are slightly ahead with 160 warheads.
- **Effect on conventional military escalation:** The conventional military balance between Indian and Chinese forces along the LAC presents significant challenges for India as nuclear weapons give Beijing considerable coercive leverage. Beijing could commit further aggression under the cover of its nuclear arsenal.
- **Nuclear signaling:** Beijing is communicating that an escalatory response from New Delhi will incur punitive responses with China mounting aggressive military action at several points along the LAC.
- The Chinese nuclear arsenal could serve as an instrument of coercion under which the PRC could press ahead with a limited aims war.

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- The PRC is believed to base a part of its nuclear arsenal in inland territories such as in the Far-Western Xinjiang Region, which is close to Aksai Chin.
- China's land-based missiles are primarily road mobile and could play a key role in any larger conventional offensive of PLA against Indian forces along the LAC.

Way Forward

- India's Strategic Forces Command (SFC) needs to be on a heightened state of alert to ward off Chinese nuclear threats and brinkmanship as well as geared to support India's conventional forces.
- India should start seriously assessing its extant nuclear doctrine and redouble efforts to get a robust triadic capability for deterrence.

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

11. More sabre-rattling, more isolation

Source: The Hindu

Context: Chinese muscularity in the South China Sea is leading to a growing chorus of protest

The South China Sea (SCS): It has been a transit point for trade since early medieval times containing rich fisheries and is a repository of mineral deposits and hydrocarbon reserves.



Background:

- The Philippines invoked the dispute settlement mechanism of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 2013 to test the legality of China's 'nine-dash line' regarding the disputed Spratly islands.
- **The PCA verdict:**
 - **Undermined Chinese claim:** It held that none of the features of the Spratly qualified them as islands and there was no legal basis for China to claim historic rights and to the resources within the 'nine-dash line'.
 - The UNCLOS provides that islands must sustain habitation and the capacity for non-extractive economic activity. Reefs and shoals that are unable to do so are considered low-tide elevations.
 - **Violated Philippines Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ):** It noted that China had aggravated the situation by undertaking land reclamation and

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construction and had harmed the environment and violated its obligation to preserve the ecosystem.

- China dismissed the judgment as “null and void.”

Issues in South China Sea:

- **Accepted status quo:** The Philippines did not press for enforcement of the award due to the power equations.
- China agreed to settle disputes bilaterally and to continue work on a Code of Conduct with countries of the ASEAN.
- **Growing discontent with China:** ASEAN are seeking political insurance, strengthening their navies and deepening their military relationships with the United States.
- **Strengthening their power:**
 - Vietnam has added six Kilo-class Russian-origin submarines to its navy.
 - Japan is partially funding the upgradation of the Indonesian coast guard.
 - Indonesia and the Philippines are in early stages of exploring procurement of the BrahMos missile from India.
- **Growing Chinese muscularity:** It is visible in the increased patrolling and live-fire exercising by Chinese naval vessels and building of runways, bunkers and habitation for possible long-term stationing of personnel on the atolls claimed by China.
- **Chinese exploration:** Chinese exploration and drilling vessels compete aggressively with those of other littoral countries in the disputed waters.
- **Increase protest by other countries:**
 - Indonesia protested to China about Chinese vessels trespassing into its waters close to the Nantua islands, towards the south of the SCS.
 - The Philippines protested to China earlier this year about violations of Filipino sovereignty in the West Philippine Sea.

Options for India and Way Forward:

- India is the fulcrum of the region between West and East Asia and between the Mediterranean and the SCS.
- **Stakes of India:** The SCS carries merchandise to and from India.
- **Defence diplomacy outreach:** India must continue to actively pursue this in the Indo-Pacific region by:
 - Increasing military training and conduct exercises and exchanges at a higher level of complexity
 - Extend Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief activities
 - Share patrolling of the Malacca Strait with the littoral countries, etc.
- The Comprehensive Strategic Partnerships that India has concluded with Australia, Japan, Indonesia, the U.S., and Vietnam could be extended to Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore.
- India must also buttress the military capacity of the tri-service Andaman and Nicobar Command.
- These areas have immense geo-strategic value as they overlook Asia’s maritime strategic lifeline and hence India cannot afford to continue undervaluing one of its biggest assets.

Syllabus - Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein

12. Concerns related to Sub-National Fiscal Policy

Source - [Livemint](#)

Context - India's fiscal responsibility rules for states might need a relook in post-corona world.

Facts related to State's Borrowing in India

Dated Securities- State Development Loans - SDLs are basically dated securities (original maturity of one year or more) and they are auctioned by the RBI through the Negotiated Dealing System (NDS).

Guarantor of SDL - Union government acts as the guarantor of loan taken by states.

Borrowing rates of SDL are dependent on -

Demand-supply of Government securities - For instance, if union government is borrowing highly than the interest rate charged from states for SDL will be considerably higher.

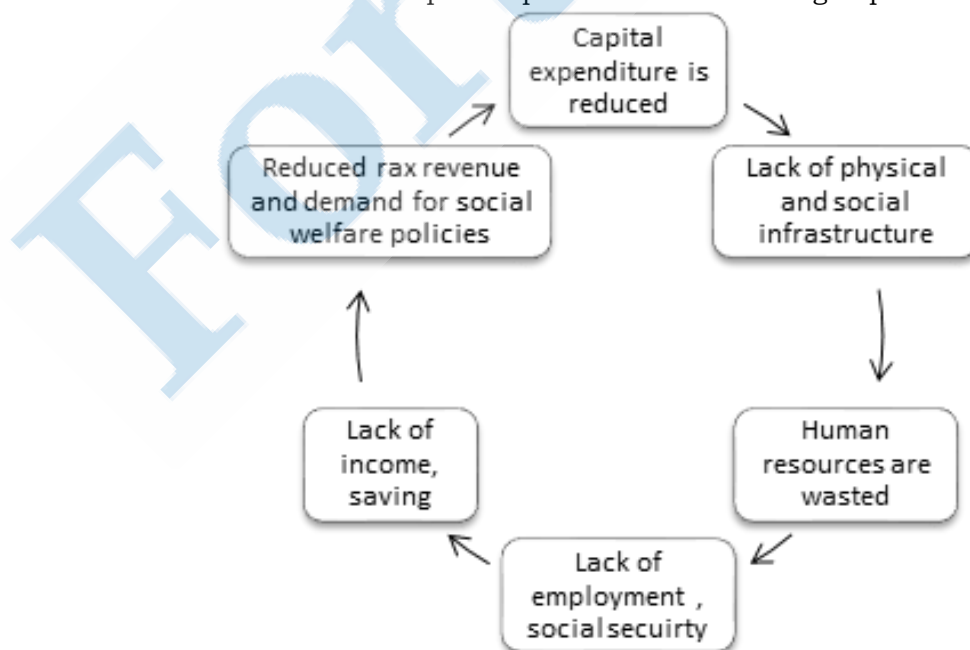
Liquidity in market - When RBI injects liquidity than interest rate is lower compared to when RBI decreases liquidity from market.

Limits on borrowing - Like centre is restricted under FRBM Act to borrow upto a certain limit, similar restriction has been imposed on states to for fiscal prudence.



Figure 1 - Concern related to limited borrowing

The reduced capital expenditure has following implications-



Way Forward - States are at the frontline of our development efforts and may need greater flexibility in borrowing to achieve their goals. Thus, the fiscal relation between state and union government demands a revisit to empower states to fight the battle with adequate resources.

13. Revisiting social contract due to corona induced crises

Source – The Hindu

Syllabus – GS 2 - Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States

Context – The pandemic has highlighted the failure of social contracts in many nations as well as multilateral institutions.

Social contract

Social contract is an agreement between a legitimate authority and citizens in which citizens wilfully surrender some of their freedom and liberties for establishing a society with peace and which has security for its members.

Modern society and modern governments use the social contract theory to claim legitimacy for their actions and they rely more on the theory as expounded by Hobbes and Rousseau.

Difference - While Hobbes believed that man, in Nature, was “solitary, nasty and brutish”, for Rousseau, man, in Nature was “born free”.

Similarity – They both agreed that the social contract comprises two distinct agreements-

- a. **Opting for collective good** - People agreed to establish society by collectively and reciprocally renouncing the rights they had against one another in unbridled nature
- b. **Sovereign power is must** - They agreed to confer upon one (or more) among them, the authority and power to enforce the initial contract.

Modern government’s misuse of social contract

1. **Consolidating power and centralising tendency** - The social contract is being used by modern governments to justify greater aggrandisement of power in the hands of the sovereign, under the garb of “public good” or will of the people.
2. **Neglecting voiceless** - In moments of crisis, people look to the state for guidance and taking them to safety. This has led to some sections of society seeking a strong response from a strong leader. But, when the source of power in an unequal society is centralised, the response to the crisis will result in unequal relief to different strata of society.

Implication of failure of social contract in India – Creation of two India

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Urban India - The first is an India that observes social distancing, buys its groceries and provisions by observing all precautions and largely obeys governmental directives about COVID-19 prevention. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rural India - The second is an India that crowds railway terminals to travel long distances, sometimes for days, to get back to native towns, and when that fails, decides to resort to the drastic step of even walking those hundreds of kilometres, defying all governmental directives |
|--|--|

Way Forward - The pandemic crisis can be overcome only when a state is sensitive, has decentralised steps and ensures empowerment and this can be achieved by revisiting the social contract in post-corona India.

14. Cooperative Federalism in India – Reality or rhetoric

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Context – The principal tool with Centre for combating State governments is no longer Article 356 and it is replaced by delayed payments to states.

Sources of revenue for State governments

1. Tax and Non-tax revenue collected by States including GST collection.
2. Devolution by centre as recommended by 14th Finance Commission.
3. Borrowings under State Development loans

Restrictions on State Financing under FRBM

1. **Fiscal Deficit** - As per provisions of the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) can actually accommodate a fiscal deficit of 3%.
2. **Escape clause** - The FRBM has an “escape clause” that allows for a one-time relaxation of the fiscal deficit threshold upto 0.5% in a time of exigency. However, it has proven woefully insufficient in addressing the current crisis.

Violation of principle of Cooperative Federalism by Centre

1. **Lower tax devolution** - According to a study by the Centre for Policy Research, there is a ₹6.84 lakh crore gap between what the 14th Finance Commission promised to States and what they have received. The reason for this has been the economic slowdown, caused primarily by the Central government, and lower-than-expected GST collections.
 - For example, Centre owed States about ₹35,000 crore as GST compensation for December 2019 and January 2020
2. **Negligible support in crises** - According to a State Bank of India report, the collective loss to GSDP due to the pandemic is ₹30.3 lakh crore or 13.5% of GSDP. The Centre is providing almost negligible support to help states.
 - For instance - In West Bengal, the State government had spent ₹1,200 crore in fighting COVID-19. Whereas, Centre has not given any support specifically for pandemic.
3. **Cut in expenditures** - Following the pandemic, the Ministry of Finance has asked all Union Ministries to cut expenditure. The immediate impact is being felt by States, and grants-in-aid are drying up. Crucial rural development programmes have come to a standstill.
4. **Rhetoric under FRBM** - In theory, the Centre has raised the fiscal deficit limit for States, from 3% to 5%. But only 0.5% of this rise is unconditional. The remaining 1.5% is dependent on fulfilling certain unrealistic and impractical measures like including privatisation of power distribution.

Way Forward - In Cooperative federalism the Centre and states share a horizontal relationship, where they “cooperate” in the larger public interest. It is an important tool to enable states’ participation in the formulation and implementation of national policies. Centre needs to reflect on the steps taken to go against the spirit of principle.

Syllabus – Development processes and the development industry

15. Digitising public sector

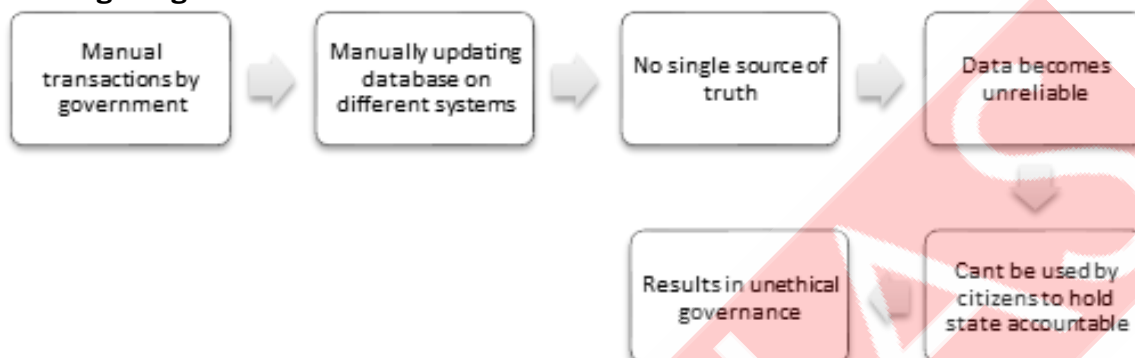
Source – [Indian Express](#)

Context - A three-phase government project uses COVID policy window for a much-needed reform of digitizing India

CAG recommended new project and law called DATA (Digital Accountability and Transparency Act) aimed at transition to mandatory digital payments, accounting, and transactions by government.

Need of this project

Ensures good governance



Business continuity with all stakeholders is ensured - The electronic records cannot be lost or misplaced like files or paper records and an incontrovertible audit trail can also be conducted.

Three-phases in the project

Technology architecture - It must ensure that all IT government systems should conform to a prescribed open architecture framework (for instance, IndEA) while ensuring robust security and maintaining privacy.

100 per cent end-to-end electronic data capture - All receipts and expenditure transactions including demands, assessment, and invoices should be received, processed, and paid electronically.

Data governance for standards across all government entities - Data standards are rules for describing and recording data elements with precise meanings and semantics that enable integration, sharing, and interoperability. Prescribing data elements for all transactions will ensure standardization, clarify ambiguity, minimize redundant etc.

Pre-requisites for DATA project

1. Data Governance Authority - Recurring operations in government entities will require a Data Governance Authority.

2. Three-year timeline - One year for standard-setting by the data governance authority, two years to ministries/departments of the Government of India and states, and three years to all other recipients of government money such as local and autonomous bodies.

Way Forward - COVID demonstrated how one element of Digital India — Aadhaar enabled Direct Benefit Transfer — facilitated quick and targeted action. But COVID also demonstrated how large parts of the Indian state continue to resist, underinvest in, and delay

Syllabus: Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

16. Owing up to criminalization in politics

Source: The Hindu

Context: The Supreme Court in February 2020 has given a judgement on criminalization in politics which have far reaching consequences.

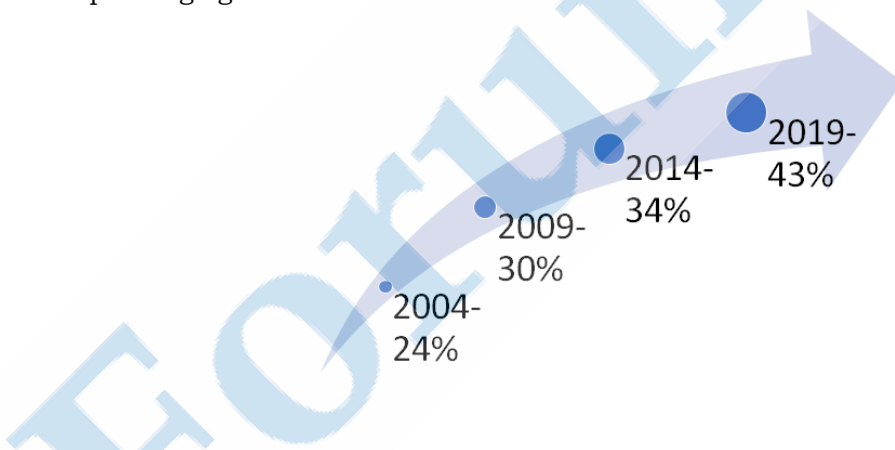
Background:

- **Judgement:** The Court has asked the political parties to state the reasons for selection of candidates with criminal background and why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates.
- If a political party fails to comply then it would be treated as contempt of Court's orders/directions.
- It will first be implemented in the coming Bihar elections in October 2020.

Earlier orders for reducing criminalization in politics:

- Each candidate shall submit a sworn affidavit giving financial details and criminal cases.
- Each candidate shall inform the political party in writing of criminal cases against him or her.
- The party shall put up on its website and on social media as well as publish in newspapers the names and details of such candidates.

Why did the Court pass such an order? There is increasing number of MPs with criminal cases pending against them.



Need of criminal free politics:

- **Governance free of the criminals:** As politics dominates the bureaucracy and reins in business, civil society and the media.
- **Better intention:** Capability is not sufficient and there is a requirement of intent to do public service.
- **No single party problem:** It is not about any party but about the political system as one of them is going to run the government.
- **Better result:** The criminalization in politics result in bad governance and survey after survey show that people around the country are unhappy with the quality of governance.

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- **Better choices:** As there are limited choices, voters try to vote as best of their ability. They need better alternatives.
- **Other wrongs:** Using money power to buy MLAs and MPs sometimes makes a mockery of election outcomes which is expected to be followed by criminals.

Reasons for criminalization despite several laws and court judgements:

- Lack of enforcement of laws and judgments.
- There are no tough penalties on them if they don't follow the orders.

Need of more vigilance:

- **Better monitoring:**
 - Monitoring the affidavits of candidates
 - Working with the Election Commission to ensure that information is promptly available on their websites and widely circulating this information to voters using all the social media tools available.
- **Better compliance:** It includes monitoring compliance with the Supreme Court judgment to see if details of tainted candidates are promptly put up on their websites and on their social media handles along with proper reasons for giving them tickets.
- **Not just winnability of candidates:** Voters need to be vigilant about misuse of money, gifts and other inducements during elections. We need to realize that people who bribe us for votes cannot be trusted.
- **More public pressure:** There is a need for ensuring prosecution with public pressure. For example-some positive may come up if one political leader is hauled up for giving tickets to large numbers of tainted candidates.

Conclusion:

- **Need initiatives from political parties:** All the Supreme Court judgments on electoral reforms since 2002 are in fact responses to citizen initiatives and not one initiative has come from the political system.
- Mahatma Gandhi taught us that to solve a problem, we have to confront the real issue. A root cause diagnosis shows that political party leaders are squarely responsible for this state of affairs as they field such candidates.

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

17. Rule of law and police encounters

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express

Context: The chain of events leading up to the killing of Kanpur gangster Vikas Dubey throws a spotlight on governance and police reform.

Background:

- Vikas Dubey, a hardened criminal with 62 cases against him, along with his gang allegedly shot dead eight policemen.
- **Official narrative:** He was killed in an 'exchange of fire' while he was 'trying to flee' after the police vehicle in which he was being taken 'met with an accident'.
- **Revenge:** There is possibility that his death is officially sanctioned retribution for the murder of eight policemen.

Three important things to remember:

- Extrajudicial killings have no place in a liberal democracy.
- **Excuse:** The usual excuses given in such contexts, even if they had a bit of truth to them, do not apply. Judicial infirmity as an excuse should not be used because behind judicial infirmity is usually a political hand.
- **Strong arm tactics:** It must be questioned for law and order. Too much strong hand is not the creation of law and order and will not diminish violence in UP.

Need of Police reform:

- Protect police from political interference
- Invest in police training
- Shore up the judicial system.

Reasons for not wanting Police reforms:

- **Trust issue:**
 - **Distrusted institution:** The police is one of the most distrusted institutions of the Indian state.
 - **Fear:** There is a fear that empowering the police more or reforming it is simply giving them more powers of repression.
 - **Little margin of negotiation:** It may reduce for disempowered groups who already suffer most at the hands of the police with increasing effectiveness of police force.
- **Position of police:**
 - It has a strange position in a democracy as it is an instrument of political power to channelize patronage. There is no incentive to reform as no incumbent wants to give up its position.
 - **Even opposition not expressing demand:** It is because an ad hoc rule of law structure, open to negotiation by community identity, money, violence and connections, actually fragments power in a democracy.
 - **Not giving up the monopoly over violence:** Many criminals, like Dubey, subvert the rule of law but people see them as nodes of power which are often deployed in resistance to the state.
- **The peculiar status of the police as “expendables”** at one level central to the order but triply marginalized.
 - Most of the police deaths were not at the hands of criminals but a result of neglect and poor working conditions.
 - They are visibly expected by society to publicly stage violence or be implicated in its structures by politicians.
 - **Marginalized morally:** They are roundly morally condemned for enacting the norm. They are asked to sacrifice, morally and legally condemned, both central to the political order and marginal to it, in terms of their own needs.
 - The police cannot demand their own well-being so it is little wonder that with no real constituency of police reform, the line between the criminal and the state will remain blurred.

Way Forward

- The state must get tough on crime but the police should not be allowed to break the law.
- **Mob justice:** Goading the police on to deliver instant justice or even tolerating such behaviour creates an atmosphere of impunity that could lead to murder of

innocent people as happened with the custodial deaths in Tamil Nadu. Mob justice is no justice at all.

- The courts and the National Human Rights Commission must show a tough approach in such cases.
- When law enforcers short-circuit due process then the damage to state institutions is severe and long-lasting.

Syllabus – GS 2 - Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies

18. Fiscal council – Another bureaucratic structure

Source – The Hindu

Context – Fiscal council was first recommended by the Thirteenth Finance Commission and was subsequently endorsed by the Fourteenth Finance Commission and then by the FRBM (Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management) Review Committee headed by N.K. Singh.

Fiscal Council – It is a permanent agency with a mandate to independently assess the government's fiscal plans and projections against parameters of macroeconomic sustainability, and put out its findings in the public domain.



Reasons for need of a Fiscal Council

1. **To maintain government's credibility in the market** – Government needs to borrow to create demand in economy which may not be appreciated by rating agencies. The government can signal its virtue to market in post-corona world, by establishing fiscal council as a n institutional mechanism for enforcing fiscal discipline.
2. **To aid Parliament** - Fiscal council will give an independent and expert assessment of the government's fiscal stance, and thereby aid an informed debate in Parliament.
3. **To act as a watchdog** - It will prevent the government from gambling with the fiscal rules through creative accounting.

Arguments against the need of Fiscal Council

1. **Failure of FRBM** - The FRBM enjoins the government to conform to pre-set fiscal targets, and in the event of failure to do so, to explain the reasons for deviation under 'Fiscal Policy Strategy Statement' (FPSS). Despite of this, there is in-depth discussion in Parliament on the government's fiscal stance.
2. **Blame game and shifting of accountability**- The fiscal council will give macroeconomic forecasts which the Finance Ministry is expected to use for the budget. Forcing the Finance Ministry to use someone else's estimates will dilute its accountability. If the estimates go awry, it will simply shift the blame to the fiscal council.
3. **Strengthen existing watchdogs** - There is already an institutional mechanism by way of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) audit to check government's fiscal expenditure. If that mechanism has lost its teeth, then fixing it that rather than creating another costly bureaucratic structure is the prudent solution.

Way Forward - The way forward for establishing fiscal council is to start small and scale it up if it proves to be a positive experience for all the stakeholders.

General Studies Paper - 3

General Studies - 3

Syllabus: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment

1. Importance of Service sector

Source: Live Mint

Context: Analysing the role of the service sector for the recovery of Indian economy.

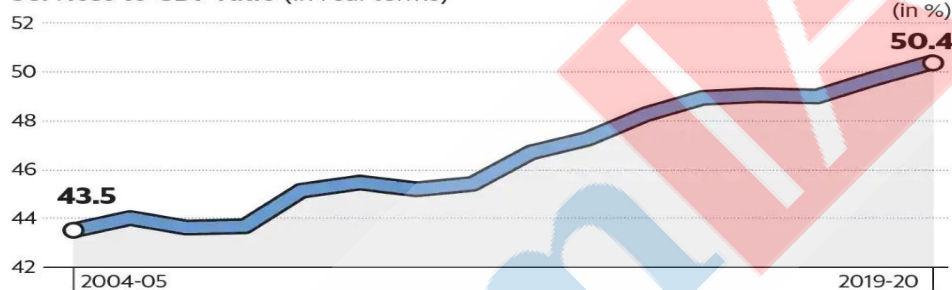
Background:

1. In 2004-05, services constituted 43.5% of the economy.
2. By 2019-20, the proportion had jumped to 50.4%.

Key space

The proportion of the services sector in the economy is now at 50.4%. As long as social distancing norms need to be followed, services (including the self-employed) will continue to remain unviable.

Services to GDP ratio (in real terms)



Source: Ministry of statistics and programme implementation

Role of service sector in economy:

3. Share of Manufacturing sector:

- a. Historically, countries first develop a vibrant manufacturing sector before creating a vibrant services sector because service businesses emerge to cater to the needs of the growing industrial middle class as factories pop up around cities.
- a. The manufacturing share of GDP rises steadily before peaking between 20%-35%.
- b. Indian economy:** It has not followed the historical development formula as the size of the manufacturing sector has varied between 15%-16% of the economy in the last decade and a half.

2. Growth of service sector:

- a. The Building of factories generates funds for upgrading them which then increases pressure to invest in improving roads, bridges, ports, railroads, power grids and water systems.
- b. All this creates jobs and gives people the purchasing power to demand services.
- c. People have had to fend for themselves to earn a living as the manufacturing sector has not created enough jobs.
- d. This is reflected in the informal services sector with a huge number of street vendors and small businesses seen across cities.

3. Activities part of services:

- a. Trade, hotels, transport, financial services, real estate and public administration come under services.

- b. **Effect of COVID-induced lockdown:** Most of these sectors have either been asked to remain shut or norms of social distancing have ensured that people are staying away.

Importance of revival of service sector:

- 4. Service forms half of the economy:** The Care Ratings points out in a research note that two-thirds of the economic sectors would broadly be operating at 50-70% capacity by end Q3 [December] then the balance may not even reach this state this year.
- 5. Longer time to normal:** Services like hospitality, tourism, travel, entertainment would take a much longer time to reach anywhere close to normal.
6. Services (including the self-employed) will continue to remain unviable as long as social distancing norms are to be followed.

Addressing of concerns and Way Forward

- 7. Limited survival:** The Report on Fifth Annual Employment-Unemployment Survey (2015-16) has pointed out that 67.5% of self-employed workers had average monthly earnings of up to ₹7,500 and the things have not improved much.
8. The economic revival is not possible unless these individuals get back to business.

Syllabus: Major crops-cropping patterns in various parts of the country, – different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; e-technology in the aid of farmers.

2. Aatma Nirbhar Bharat in agriculture

Source: The Indian Express

Context: Analysing the scope of “Aatma Nirbhar Bharat (ANB)” in agriculture.

Background:

1. Indian PM has given the clarion call for ANB in the backdrop of COVID-19 (which has disrupted the global supply chains) and border standoff with China.
- 2. Protectionism:** The government has banned 59 Chinese apps, has stepped up effort to check imports and investments from China and asked Indians to “be vocal for local”.

“Aatma nirbharta” in the agriculture sector:

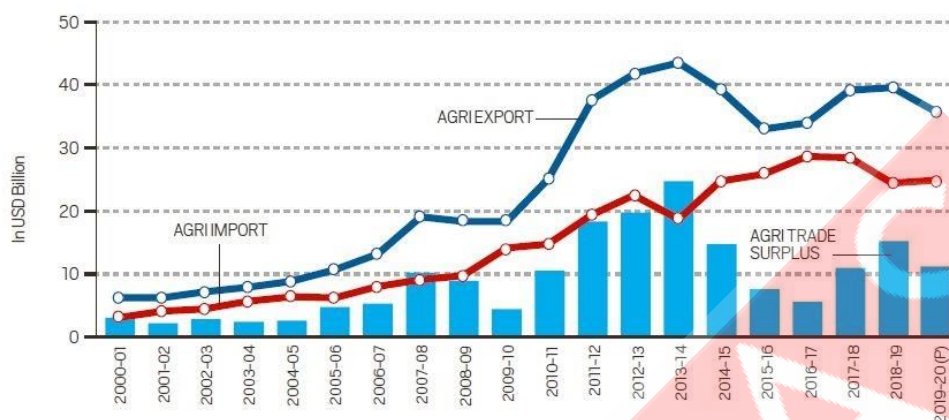
- 3. Presumption:** A large country like India should produce most of its food at home.
- 4. Increase in foreign exchange reserves:** The “aatma nirbharta” in food is because of reforms in correction of the exchange rate which is coupled with the gradual integration of India with the world economy.
5. This has helped India increase its foreign exchange reserves from \$1.1 billion in June end, 1991 to more than \$500 billion today.

1960s	2020
1. The availability of foreign exchange reserves: If India had spent all its foreign currency reserves (the country had about \$400 million) just on wheat imports, it could have imported	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. India has foreign exchange reserves of more than \$500 billion.2. Even if the country has to buy 20 mt of wheat at a landed cost of \$250/tonne, it will spend just \$5 billion — just one

about seven million tonnes (mt) of wheat.

per cent of its foreign exchange reserves.

'AATMANIRBHARKHETI'-INDIA'S EXPORTS AND IMPORTS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE



- 6. India as Net exporter of agri-produce:** The graph presents exports and imports of agricultural commodities over the last 10 years (2010-11 to 2019-20).
- It clearly shows that India has been a net exporter of agri-produce ever since the economic reforms began in 1991.
 - Golden time of agri-trade:** It was 2013-14 when agri-exports peaked at \$43.6 billion while imports were \$18.9 billion, giving a net trade surplus of \$24.7 billion.
 - Sluggish agri-exports:** Since 2014, agri-exports have been sluggish and sliding and in 2019-20, agri-exports were just \$36 billion and the net agri-trade surplus at \$11.2 billion.

How to chalk out a strategy for increasing agriculture exports?

1. Comparative advantage:

- India needs to export more where we have a competitive edge and importing where we lack competitiveness.

2. Current agri-export basket of 2019-20:

- It gives a sense of "revealed comparative advantage". Marine products with \$6.7 billion exports top the list, followed by rice at \$6.4 billion (basmati at \$4.6 billion and common rice at \$2.0 billion), spices at \$3.6 billion, buffalo meat at \$3.2 billion, sugar at \$2.0 billion, tea and coffee at \$1.5 billion, fresh fruits and vegetables at \$1.4 billion, and cotton at \$1 billion.

b. High subsidy effects:

- Rice and sugar cultivation are quite subsidised through free power and highly subsidised fertilisers which accounts for about 10-15% of the value of rice and sugar produced on a per hectare basis.

- 2. Faster depletion of groundwater:** It is leading to the virtual export of water as one kg of rice requires 3,500-5,000 litres of water for irrigation and one kg of sugar consumes about 2,000 litres of water.

3. Incentives for exports of high-value agri-produce like fruits and vegetables, spices:

- On the agri-imports front, the biggest item is edible oils which values about \$10 billion (more than 15 mt).

- b. **Atma Nirbharta:** India needs to create a competitive advantage through augmenting productivity and increasing the recovery ratio of oil from oilseeds and in case of palm oil, from fresh fruit bunches.
- c. **Potential:** The maximum lies in oil palm apart from the mustard, sunflower, groundnuts and cottonseed. This is the only plant that can give about four tonnes of oil on a per hectare basis.
- d. India has about 2 million hectares that are suitable for oil palm cultivation — this can yield 8 mt of palm oil.

Way Forward

Government needs a long-term vision and strategy to achieve the “aatma nirbharta” in agriculture which requires incentives for export of high-value agri-produce.

Syllabus – GS 3 - Inclusive growth and issues arising from it

3. Poverty Deepening Amidst the Lockdown

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Context – Several news reports and surveys on the plight of India’s less-privileged workforce during the lockdown have highlighted the massive scale of falling incomes and loss of means of livelihood.

Issues related to poverty estimation in India

1. **Low thresholds** leading to conservative poverty numbers.
2. **Irregular updating of official poverty lines**
3. **Unavailability of data on consumption expenditure** from National Sample Surveys.

Data on Poverty

1. **42% of total population** - According to the household consumption expenditure reported in the Periodic Labor Force Survey (PLFS), 2017-18 and applying State-specific poverty lines (used by the erstwhile Planning Commission in 2011 based on the Tendulkar Committee recommendations, adjusted with current price indices), about 42% or around 56 crore people were ‘officially’ poor before the lockdown was announced.
2. **20% just above the poverty line** - Another 20-crore people were within a narrow band 20% above the poverty line. A modest dip in earnings — and hence a fall in consumption spending — would push a majority of them into the vortex of poverty and hunger.
3. **Impact of Lockdown** – The estimates from the PLFS data extrapolated for the year 2020 suggest that about an additional 40 crore people were pushed below the poverty line due to the lockdown.
 - **Phenomena of poverty deepening** - Those who were already poor are going to suffer a further worsening in their quality of life, a phenomenon known as poverty deepening.

Inadequacy in state responses

1. **Inadequate and poorly conceived MGNREGA** - The demand for work is anticipated to increase by 25% with reverse migration-fueled increase in rural labor supply. However, there is a token increase of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) wage by Rs 20 (Rs 182 to Rs 202).
2. **No focus on equitable distribution of goods** – The expanding of food coupons to non-ration card holders in Delhi suggests that such measures are likely to exclude marginalized communities including Dalits and Muslims at the lowest strata of the work hierarchy.

Suggested Solutions

1. **Focusing urban areas** - Around 12 crores of this lockdown-induced newly poor are in urban areas. Thus, a 'direct' employment program implemented through municipal corporations could be introduced to guarantee 20 days of work in urban areas. This will also stop the reverse migration from urban to rural areas.

2. **Wage subsidy** -To encourage a revival of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the most prominent clusters, wage subsidy can be provided in the employer-contractor facilitation programs.

Way Forward - The neo-liberal growth that we have experienced since the 1990s has been largely through breaking the back of the laboring class. In post corona India, we need policy measures to alter the course of economic progress and reorient development programs for benefit of all stakeholders including the labor class.

Syllabus: GS-3 Environment

4. Confronting air pollution and global warming

Source: The Hindu

Context: Covid-19 pandemic has challenged to re-think and re-align strategies for combatting air pollution and global warming.

Status of air pollution in India

- According to WHO, of the 20 most polluted cities in the world, the top 14 are Indian cities. These include Kanpur, Faridabad, Varanasi, Gaya, Patna, Delhi, Lucknow, Agra, Muzaffarpur, Srinagar, Gurgaon, Jaipur, Patiala, and Jodhpur
- Exposure to outdoor and indoor air pollution contributed to over 1.2 million deaths in India in 2017 and is the 3rd largest cause of death among all health risks (State of Global Air, 2019).

Correlation to Covid-19 and Air Pollution:

- A recent study by Harvard University has shown the correlation between long-term exposure to air pollution and Covid-19 morbidity and mortality. Those living in polluted cities are likely to have poor respiratory, cardiac and other systems and hence are more vulnerable to Covid-19.
- There is an association between pollution levels in cities (despite the improvements during the pandemic) and COVID-19 infections and death rates- such a link has been observed in New York City and the northern provinces of Italy.
- Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu, in the top tier of pollution concentration, have also seen high deaths and infections per thousand people.

Covid-19 lockdowns and Air Pollution status:

- According to a study conducted by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, the India has witnessed 43, 31, 10, and 18% decrease in PM 2.5, PM 10, CO, and NO2 levels respectively during the lockdown period.
- In Europe, 11,000 air-pollution related deaths were estimated to have been averted since the start of lockdowns

Climate Change Vulnerability of India

- According to Global Climate Risk Index, 2020 India is the fifth most vulnerable of 181 countries to the effects of climate change.

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- India had the most (2,081) deaths in 2018 due to extreme weather events caused by climate change--cyclones, heavy rainfall, floods and landslides.
- Economic losses due to climate change were the second highest in the world with a loss of Rs 2.7 lakh crore (\$37 billion)
- Further, global warming intensifies heat waves and worsens respiratory illnesses.
- Mosquito-borne diseases in India have been connected to global warming through both increased rainfall and heat waves.

Suggested Reforms:

- Larger allocations and subsidies to initiatives like the National Solar Mission. Spending on reducing air pollution and GHGs provides estimated health benefits of 1.4 to 2.5 times more than the cost of the actions.
- Reforms should encourage public transportation, expand electric vehicles, and provide inter-connectivity between the metro and buses.
- Investment in new technologies for cleaner air. Examples: smog free towers, vertical forests.
- In managing health risks, emission reduction should be coupled with a stronger public health system.
- Reduce regulatory barriers that restrict the flow of capital to green projects.
- National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) should be used as a platform to combat air pollution as an emergency.

Syllabus – GS 3 – PDS and issues arising out of it

5. Issues with social welfare program

Source – [Indian Express](#)

Context – Large sections of poor are unlikely to benefit from extension of food grains scheme which was announced recently by Prime Minister

Changes introduced in scheme and its fallout

New Benefits for vulnerable sections	Associated issues
1. Extension of free food grains for those covered under NFSA till November.	<p>a. Economists estimate that 100 million names have not been updated in NFSA lists.</p> <p>b. Inclusion-Exclusion error - The process of selection of beneficiaries has always been fraught with targeting errors.</p> <p>c. Failure of technology - The insistence on linkage with Aadhaar has deprived scores of genuine beneficiaries.</p> <p>d. Top-Down approach - It is unclear if the migrants will receive additional food grains. As the food ministry has uniformly increased coverage by 10 per cent for all states, irrespective of their levels of out-migration or in-migration.</p> <p>e. Issue with One Nation One Ration Card –Many states have discontinued biometric authentication at ration shops, to prevent the spread of the infection from the glass sensor. Thus, Aadhar enabled One Nation One Ration card scheme will suffer invariably.</p>

Suggested solution

1. Increasing liquidity - The PM has yet to extend cash transfers in Jan Dhan bank accounts of 200 million women. So families who relied on these modest Rs 500 deposits in the last three months have more resources to survive with more liquidity.

2. Providing pension - The FM only provided a one-time grant of Rs 1,000 to 32 million National Social Assistance Program pensioners which can be provided once more to help the old age and dependent citizens.

3. Upgrading MGNREGA - There is a compelling need to increase the guaranteed employment to 200 days per year for all households nationwide and boost wages of those who are forced to live on wages less than the minimum wages stipulated for unskilled agricultural workers.

Way forward - Expansion and universalisation of the PDS, pensions, cash grants and employment guarantee schemes in both urban and rural areas are essential to tide through these difficult times.

Syllabus: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment

6. Centre's over-reliance on cesses and surcharges put state finances at risk

Source: Live Mint

Context: Analyzing the over reliance of the central government on cesses and surcharges.

Background:

- **State's share:** Their share has remained well below the 14th Finance Commission recommendation of 42% from the divisible pool of central taxes during the five-year period to FY20.
- The transfers are plummeting to 32.4% in FY20.

Cesses: Imposed on specific purposes.

Surcharges: Tax on taxes.

Role of cess and surcharge in economy:

- The Constitution allows the Centre to levy them and need not share it with state governments.
- **Nature:** They are meant to be temporary.
- **Changes with GST:** The introduction of GST has subsumed many cesses but the government has imposed fresh cesses such as Swachh Bharat cess and Krishi Kalyan cess to finance Swachh Bharat initiatives and to promote initiatives to improve agriculture respectively.

Issues in States' finances due to cess and surcharges:

- The CAG has pointed out the lack of transparency and incomplete reporting in accounts on the utilization of amounts collected under cesses.
- **By States:**
 - States are opposing the permanent nature of such cesses and a majority of them had told the 14th Finance Commission that they should either be eliminated or, if continued beyond a specified period, should form part of the divisible pool.

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- In FY20, the central government increased the rate of road and infrastructure cess and the special additional excise duty on the central excise on petroleum products which reduces the sharable portion of Centre's gross tax revenue (GTR).
- This led to a fall of shares of states in the Centre's GTR from 36.6% in FY19 to 32.4% in FY20.
- These changes have happened at a time when the states' own tax revenues are suffering on account of the ongoing economic slowdown.
- **Problems due to GST:**
 - **Squeezing of state's taxation authority:** As States don't have any autonomy on GST rates.
 - **Falling tax buoyancy of the Centre:**
 - The Centre has relied relatively more on them to meet its own expenses.
 - FY20 was particularly difficult because GTR contracted on account of falling nominal gross domestic product growth and corporate tax reforms.

Revenue buoyancy, end of GST compensation period and Centre's increasing reliance on cesses and surcharges should be considered together because they are interlinked.

Way Forward

- The 15th Finance Commission had ordered a study on the matter from Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy.
- The study's report has suggested:
 - All cesses in force for a long duration or where there is evidence of non-utilization and diversion of funds should be abolished.
 - In future, cesses should be imposed for a narrowly defined purpose and with a clear estimation of the amount of money aimed to be raised by the centre.
 - For surcharges, income tax rates should be rationalized instead of using surcharges as a proxy for a progressive tax to impose additional burden on relatively richer taxpayers.

7. Challenging the Dragon: Is India ready to boycott China?

Source: Financial Express

Context: There are increased appeals in India to boycott Chinese products and restrict trade with China in the backdrop of the border dispute in Ladakh.

Dependence of India on China:

Largest import partner:

- While China's share in Indian imports was 15% for the year 2018, that of Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, UAE and the US remained in the range of 4% to 6%.
- In 2019, 14% of India's total imports came from China whereas India is less than 1% of Chinese imports.

Significant proportion of goods from China:

- China's share in Indian imports for intermediate inputs, capital goods and final consumer goods is 12%, 30% and 26%, respectively.

Increase in productivity:

- As 1991 trade liberalization policy ensured the availability of a greater variety of inputs for domestic firms.

Lower cost:

- **Competitive pricing:** Consider the following products (with their import shares in 2018 in parentheses):
 - Fertilizers (1.82%) are about 76% cheaper
 - Electronic circuits (2.6%) 23%
 - Data processing units (3.5%) are about 10%.

Cost of moving to another trade partner: If we consider that both countries pay a premium of even 10% to import from a different trading partner then India would have to additionally incur a cost equivalent to \$7.6 billion (0.27% of its GDP). Whereas China would only incur a cost of about \$1.6 billion (0.01% of its GDP) if it shifts away from India to another import partner.

Costly replacement:

- **Dependence:** 571 of the 4,090 products that India imported from China in 2019 constitutes 75% share of China in India's total imports for each of these products.

Investments by Chinese conglomerates:

- Like Alibaba and Tencent have invested heavily in various Indian start-ups like Paytm, Make My Trip, Ola, Big Basket, Swiggy and Zomato.

Value addition:

- Chinese value-add in total imported manufactured inputs is more than 20% for the following Indian industries: textiles, pharmaceuticals, rubber and plastic, computer and electronics, electrical equipment, and transport equipment.
- On the other hand, Indian value added in imported inputs of China's manufacturing industries is under 5%.

Hence a trade war with China at this point of time shall do more harm than good to India's economy.

Redundancy of sentiments like Boycott China:

- There is the dominance of Global Value Chains (GVCs) in international trade which implies that a product is not manufactured from start to finish in a single country.
- **Fragmented production:** Different countries add value in different stages of this production process. For instance, a Bianchi bicycle undertakes its design and conception in Italy, sources parts and components from China, Japan, and Italy and assembles them in Taiwan, China.
- **Practically not possible:** Due to such fragmented production processes and China's high involvement in GVCs.

Way Forward

- It is important to understand that it is in the interest of domestic industries (as well as Indian consumers) not to adopt a protectionist stance or engage in a trade war.
- We should encourage domestic industries and in an effective way for a labour-abundant country like India would be to increase participation in the labour-intensive segments of Global Value Chains.

8. Joblessness and opportunity in the time of COVID-19

Source: The Hindu

Context: The COVID-19 pandemic has presented policymakers with the unenviable task of sustaining employment amidst lockdowns.

Background:

- It would be instructive to compare one of India's most industrialized and also one of the worst pandemic-hit States Tamil Nadu with other States that have a large manufacturing sector and are net recipients of migrants.
- The article relies on the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) even though its employment data series is relatively new.

Trends in Tamil Nadu:

- **Unemployment rate:** It increased sharply during the strict lockdown in late March and April 2020 but registered a large turnaround in May when the lockdown was eased.
- **Declined labour participation rate (LPR):** Workers are either still hesitant due to the fear of disease or are unable to return due to transport and communications bottlenecks and lack of information even after easing of lockdown.
- **Effect in May:**
 - **Recent drop-in unemployment rate in May:** It was faster in urban areas and among males.
 - **The decline in LPR:** It was less in urban areas, among males and among those with higher education.
 - **Schooling:** Persons with intermediate levels of schooling were affected more than college graduates as their LPR continued to drop in May.
 - **Taking level of education for skill:** The lockdown has affected the semi-skilled workforce more than the skilled and unskilled workforce.
- Demonetization did not significantly impact either the rural or the urban LPR whereas GST had a significant negative effect on urban LPR.

Tamil Nadu like Gujarat and Maharashtra boasts of a large manufacturing sector and these States are among the top four COVID-19-affected States.

Comparing industrialized States:

- Urban Tamil Nadu compares with urban Gujarat and Maharashtra insofar as its LPR continued to fall in May.
- **Urban unemployment rate:** It dropped sharply in May in Tamil Nadu while it continued to rise in Gujarat and Maharashtra.
- It bears emphasising that the States with low unemployment rates are not necessarily better off if their LPR has dropped sharply.
- Software/new economy hubs such as Karnataka and Telangana have not seen a very sharp decline in LPR.
- In most States, rural labour participation picked up probably due to harvest-related activities and there are lower incidence of COVID-19 and the return of urban migrants.

Challenges before TN industries:

- The longer-term decline in LPR in Tamil Nadu could be attributed to general economic shocks such as demonetisation and the introduction of GST and a

combination of industry-specific issues such as changing tastes, a tightening regulatory environment and growing international competition.

- **For example-Challenges to the firecracker industry in Tamil Nadu:**
 - It has been hit by campaigns calling for the boycott of polluting industries and products.
 - It faces major challenges due to the change in the regulatory environment such as a ban on barium nitrate in the manufacture of firecrackers.
 - It faces competition from illegal import of cheaper fireworks from China.
- **Counterproductive:**
 - The answer to environmental challenges is not a complete shutdown of MSMEs.
 - **For example-** The closure of tanneries in Dindigul. It led to lost employment and unresolved environmental damage.

Way Forward

- The pandemic has exposed India's unsustainable dependence on other countries for a variety of goods and nudged the government to help build supply chains for critical products that are less dependent on foreign countries.
- States that can adapt quickly to shifting economic currents will recover faster.

9. 15th Finance Commission – Nudging states for agriculture reforms

Syllabus – GS 3 - Marketing of agricultural produce and issues

1.15th Finance Commission – Nudging states for agriculture reforms

Source – [Financial Express](#)

Context – The Fifteenth Finance Commission (FC-XV) has, in its interim report for the year 2020-21, recommended implementation of a specific set of agricultural reforms by the states, based on which states will be provided incentives or grants.

Agricultural reforms recommended for states by Fifteenth Finance Commission Model Agricultural Produce & Livestock Marketing Act

2. Model Agricultural Produce & Livestock Contract Farming & Services Act
3. Model Agricultural Land Leasing Act prepared by the NITI Aayog in 2016

Suggested solutions for Fifteenth Finance Commission for better implementation of performance based incentive by states -

1. **Implementation result needs to be measurable** – This is required as if result is measurable in terms of reliable and comparable time-series data is available in the public domain, greater transparency can be ensured for all the states.
2. **Straightforward formula** - The formula for incentive grant reliant on multiple performance indicators must also be transparent and straightforward.
3. **Including new core areas** - The panel can suggest a couple of other core areas, over and above the legislative measures for liberalising agricultural markets, in which state action ought to be incentivised.

For states to perform well with respect to agricultural reforms and receive grants, following steps has to be taken by State's:

1. **Agricultural Marketing** – Centre has promulgated Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce Ordinance 2020, and states would have to take following steps for its successful implementation–

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- **Make their APMC Act compliant with Section 6 of the ordinance** - It ensures that no market fee or cess or any other levy is collected on transactions carried out outside the physical boundaries of the notified principal market yards.
 - **Conciliation Boards envisaged under section 8** - These have to be set up at the sub-divisional level for dispute resolution by the state governments.
2. **Contract farming** - Centre has promulgated Farmers Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance, 2020 and state governments have to take following steps -
- **Section 6(4)**. – As per section 6(4), prescribe the mode and manner of payment to be made to the farmers by the sponsors under an agreement for seed production,
 - They have to establish and notify a Registration Authority to provide for electronic registry of the farming agreements.
 - **Section 14** - They have to ensure that the dispute resolution mechanism prescribed in Section 14 at the level of the sub-divisional magistrate and the collector is operationalized.
3. **Land Leasing** - The panel should make it obligatory for all states, except the North Eastern states where the community owns the land, to enact Model Agricultural Land Leasing Act prepared by the NITI Aayog statute by 2021-22.

Suggested new core areas for performance based incentives:

Core Areas	Indicators for Tracking performance
1. Climate-resilient agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Production of rice, wheat and coarse cereals per hectare.• Gross value added in agriculture per worker.• Balanced use of chemical fertilisers.
2. Agri-input subsidies through DBT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aadhaar seeding of land records• Soil health card recommendations
3. Ease of doing Agri-business	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase agri-entrepreneurship, FPO• Promotion of post-harvest technologies

Way Forward - Incentivising states for better performance in the agriculture sector with a transparent implementation and monitoring system is expected to bring positive results for sustainable growth of Indian agriculture.

General Studies Paper - 4

General Studies - 4

Syllabus – Probity in Public service and work culture

1. Journalism - In need of re-invention

Source – The Hindu

Context – Everyone acknowledges that the news industry is in deep crisis. While the prognosis varies and the prescriptions for revival differ, everyone seems to believe that in order to survive for sake of democracy, journalism must be re-imagined.

Reasons contributing for crises of journalism

1. Digital disruptions - Technology has transformed the way news is produced, delivered and consumed around the world in following ways:

- Worldwide access to journalism, wherever it is reported or published. This includes changes in revenues and costs and in how journalists perform their roles.
- Faster response to news by journalists and their consumers, with implications for the ethics and accuracy of those stories.
- Lower costs of production, enabling greater competition and requiring dynamic new business models.
- New platforms, particularly in social media, that shift the balance of power in news and threaten to disintermediate traditional players.
- Greater mobility in news, for journalists and their audiences.

2. The shrinking advertising market – Newspaper agencies, tv media and even radio stations earn their revenue from advertising market. But the corona crises and the lockdown which followed it devastated the economies leading to curtailment of ads for goods and services and thus loss of advertising market for legacy journalism.

3. The trust deficit – Fake news, yellow journalism is casting shadows of doubt over the credibility of media and creating the impression that the media is offering just one of several possible truths.

Elements common to good journalism are-

1) Truth - Journalism's first obligation is to the truth only to promote sharing of credible information in society.

2) Loyalty being a public good- Its first loyalty is to citizens who subscribe it to learn more about their surroundings.

3) Verifying information - Its essence is a discipline of verification to present double-checked information.

4) Independence - Its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover to prevent any biasness in reporting.

5) No Politics - It must serve as an independent monitor of power to prevent concentration of power with a single institution and promoting shared power among all.

6) Constructive criticism - It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise which helps to build democracy and enables people's participation in events.

7) Being precise - It must keep the news comprehensive and proportional.

8) Conscience is supreme source of ethics - Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience so that they take ethical decisions based on their conscience not under pressure.

9) Duties of citizens - Citizens, too, have rights and responsibilities when it comes to the news. It includes holding news agencies accountable for all their acts.

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Way Forward - The task of re-imagining journalism cannot be left to journalists and media managers alone. It requires the collective thinking of all stakeholders. Readers are the substantial stakeholders and their inputs are essential in reworking the contours of journalism for the 21st century.

ForumIAS