

9pm

Compilation

July, 2020

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General Studies Paper - 1

General Studies - 1

1. Structural injustices in Bollywood

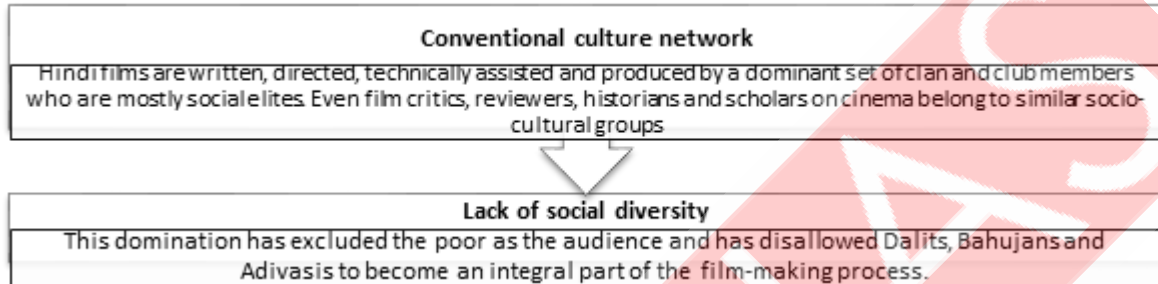
Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS 1 - Social empowerment

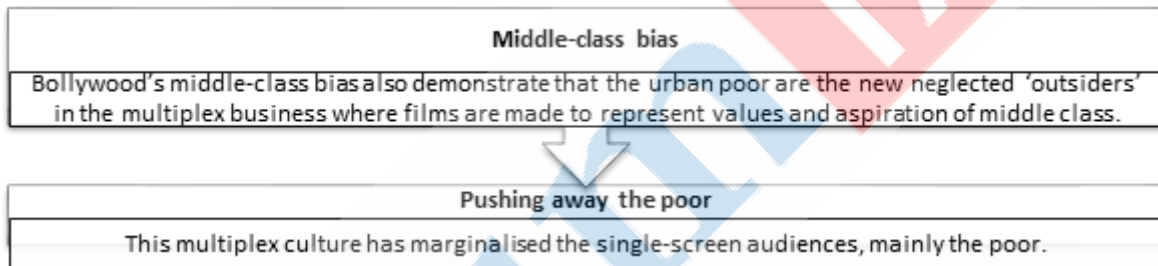
Context – The debates on nepotism also reveals other structural injustices in the industry.

Structural injustices in the industry

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



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



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

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

Implications of these injustices –

1. Favouritism kills talent- Such an atmosphere undermines creative instincts and a robust respect for artistic talent. It shows its limitation in breaking the clutch of commercial logic and has failed to produce cinema that can be honoured at the global level for its creative motifs.

2. Social exclusion because of social elites - Even if issues related to marginalised are represented on –screen (Sujata, Ghulami, Mrityudand, Manjhi, Article 15, etc.), the industry has to operate according to the emotive and psychological concerns of the social elites.

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

2. Addressing Urban Heat Island

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-1- Urbanization

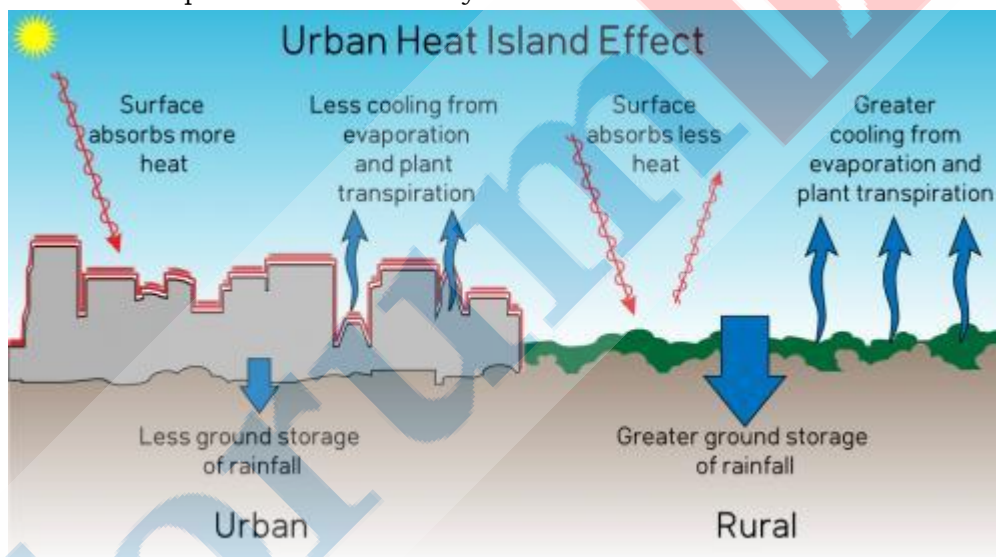
Context: The Covid-19 pandemic has sharpened need to make right choices for sustainable urban growth.

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

3. Curbing the growth of large cities – Not the right approach

Source – [Financial Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 1 - Urbanization, their problems and their remedies

Context – Considering a limited model that aims to curb the growth of large cities has its repercussions.

Parameters which affect growth of cities	Limited size of cities	No restriction on size of cities
<p>Economies of agglomeration – It refer to the benefits from concentrating output and housing in particular areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If an area specializes in the production of a certain type of good, all firms can benefit from various factors such as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Good supply networks Supply of trained workers Infrastructure built specifically for the industry Good transport links. 	<p>Digitization eroding benefits of economies of agglomeration</p> <pre> graph TD A[Digital Technology] --> B[Rich content and ideas] B --> C[Cloud sharing and online communication] C --> D[Nullified economies of agglomeration] </pre>	<p>Not all urban areas are digitized - The part of India's urban economy that is 'digitized', while economically important, is small in demographic terms.</p> <p>Population increase-Digitization is just one of the many factors that contribute to determining a country's urban structure, the prime factor being the population increase.</p>
<p>Diseconomies of scale – Beyond 1 million population rise, there is increase in per unit cost of goods and services.</p>	<p>U-shaped cost curve - It hypothesized that the unit cost of supplying infrastructure and services tended to be high in small cities, costs tended to decline</p>	<p>The U-shaped cost curve didn't apply to India – Research in Indian cities on 1960's proved that although unit cost of supplying infrastructure and services tended to be high in small cities, costs tended to decline</p>

	<p>over a range of intermediate-sized cities, and to rise with cities attaining certain sizes.</p> <p>4th Five-year plan - The social and economic costs of servicing large concentration of population are prohibitive. Beyond a certain limit, unit costs of providing utilities and services increase rapidly with increase in the size of cities.</p>	<p>over a range of intermediate-sized cities, but concluded that the cost curve did not rise as stipulated with the expansion in the size of cities.</p> <p>Research work in 1980's outlined that- Changing the size distribution of cities was a long-term and a costly exercise Well-managed cities were central to economic growth and poverty reduction—city size was of no consequence.</p>
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Way Forward- According to the United Nations (2018), India's rural population will begin to decline in absolute numbers from about 2027 onwards, where after population growth in India will wholly be an urban story. The task, thus, is to accept the inevitable and work on making the process of urbanization sustainable, resilient, inclusive and productive, rather than to consider a model that aims at curbing the growth of large cities.

4. Changing Dynamics of Dalit Movement in India

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-1 Social empowerment

Context: Dalit issues are submerged in the broader discussions on economic vulnerabilities highlighted by COVID-19.

Who is a Dalit?

- The term Dalit was firstly used by Jyotirao Phule for the oppressed classes or untouchable castes of the Hindu.
- Dalit (broken down) is a social term for depressed class. Whereas schedule caste is a constitutional term mentioned in article 341 for depressed class.

Demographic Profile of Scheduled Castes

1. According to 2011 Census of India, Scheduled Caste communities comprised 16.6% of the country's population,
2. Uttar Pradesh (21%), West Bengal (11%), Bihar (8%) and Tamil Nadu (7%) have the highest Scheduled Caste population.
3. **Literacy Rate:** The literacy rate of SC women, about 42% in 2001, increased to 56.5% in 2011. Among SC males it went up from 66.6% to 75.2% in the same period.

Current Dalit movement in India

At present Dalits are more organised and connected and see themselves as a part of an assertive movement of social justice. The main concern is caste is getting reinforced, rather than annihilated and there are rising Dalit atrocities.

However, **there are challenges to the current Dalit movement:**

- **Focus on caste-based issues:** Caste-based issues have either become invisible or are only visible as part of the wider discourse.

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- **Poor representation of concerns:** There are a large number of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes among the migrant labourers. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic, Dalit leaders have not been able to represent the concerns.
- **Poor agendas:** The movement is facing a crisis of agendas and social programmes.
- **Poor leadership:** There is a crisis with leadership. In States such as U.P., Bihar, Punjab and Rajasthan, Dalit assertions are mostly centred around the electoral politics of Dalit-Bahujan political groups and parties.
- **Undermining reservation:** 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.

Conclusion: The Dalit movement has to evolve new social strategies for its expansion in order to keep up with the changing times.

5. Urban-Rural India – The false division

Source – [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 1 – Urbanization - problems and their remedies

Context – In contrast to the imagination of the city as a hub of social and economic activity, it is now perceived as the center of disease and distress.

Challenges in Urban areas

1. Over- Congestion in cities–The congestion is most evident in slums in large cities and poses a grave health and environmental challenge. The risk of contagious diseases is more potent in these areas as residents also suffer from a lack of basic services such as safe drinking water and sanitation.

For instance - Many slums in Mumbai and Delhi have become COVID-19 containment zones.

2. Over-burdened health systems - The health systems in megacities like Delhi and Mumbai are also overburdened and face a shortage of hospital staff and beds. The urban support under the National Health Mission is just three per cent of the total allocation, while 97 per cent of the funds are set aside for rural areas.

3. Biased policies favoring large cities only - Current infrastructure development schemes, including the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) and the Smart Cities Mission, focus on Class I cities. Both these schemes focus on development projects and provide funds for the more developed cities that already have relatively better infrastructure and overlook the nearly seven crore people who live in smaller towns (population between 20,000 and one lakh).

4. Lack of employment opportunities - While the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) provides employment opportunities to rural households, there is no equivalent scheme for the poor in urban areas.

5. Environmental challenge - According to the report published by IQAir AirVisual, 21 of the world's 30 most polluted cities are in India. This pollution challenge will be exacerbated by the waste created for tackling Covid which includes bio-medical and solid waste.

Way Forward - Small towns that are urban in nature but rural in character are the most neglected in the current policy environment. They are forced to exist with poorer services and policy neglect while having to meet the demands of a large population. Thus, policy orientation toward the binary of rural-urban classification needs to include the smaller town for inclusive development of all.

6. Impact of Covid-19 on Women

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-1 Role of women and women's organisations, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanisation, their problems and remedies.

Context: Women have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19 pandemic

Impact of Covid-19 on women:

Domestic Violence: Domestic violence cases have increased exponentially during the pandemic due to the following reasons:

- Tension and strain created by security, health, and financial worries
- Confinement and lack of access to alcohol leading to interpersonal violence and abuse.
- Domestic labour becomes taxing during a lockdown if not distributed equally.
- Lack of institutional support, inability to complain during lockdown.

Increase in burden of work: With pandemic induced lockdown, family members are constantly at home and children are being educated online. This has increased the number of hours of unpaid work and enhanced the burden on women.

Sexual Harassment: There are concerns around abduction, wrongful confinement, molestation and harassment even in homes.

Shrinking Livelihood Opportunities: There has been a disproportionate economic exclusion of women both in rural and urban areas. The covid-19 pandemic has aggravated the declining female participation in the labour force and many women might not be able to get back to work again.

Impact on Health: grass roots health workers such as anganwadi and ASHA workers who provide reproductive and maternal services to millions of poor women are overburdened. As a result, women have poor access to family planning services, to institutional support for deliveries, natal and neonatal support or adequate access to hygiene and sanitary items.

Conclusion: The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 seeks to “eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women in the public and private spheres, and to undertake reforms to give them the same rights to economic resources and access to property by 2030”. India needs to address the issue of domestic violence, economic exclusion, and health issues of women to fulfil its commitment towards gender equity.

7. Dadabhai Naoroji

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-1- Modern Indian History

Context: Contribution of Naoroji and his relevance in present-day India.

Background: Dadabhai Naoroji was born in 1825 at Navsari, in present-day Gujarat.

Contribution of Dadabhai Naoroji

- **Founder of East India Association:** He helped found the East India Association in London in 1866. The association voiced the grievances of Indians and suggested remedial measures. He was also instrumental in forming London Indian Society.
- **Formation of Indian national Congress:** Naoroji played an important role in formation of Indian national congress and went on to become its President 3 times. He was the first leader to establish swaraj as the goal of the Congress.

- **Member in British Parliament:** He was first Indian to become Member of Parliament in UK and put forward the issues faced by Indians.
- **Economic Contributions:** He was one of the key proponents of the “Drain Theory”. His book ‘Poverty and Un-British Rule in India’ (1901) focussed on the drain of wealth from India to England during colonial rule of British in India
- **Nationalism and Outreach to minorities:** He is popularly known as the Grand old Man of India and was a flag bearer of Indian nationalism. However, in contrast to present-day majoritarianism, he worked to secure minority participation.
- **Magazines and Other Works:** He edited the newspaper Rast Goftar (Speaker of Truth). He started a magazine Dharma Marg Darshak. He also established Rahnumae Mazdayasne Sabha for parsi people to assemble and discuss on current situations in India

8. Education, Marriage and Maternal health

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-1- Population and Associated Issues

Context: Understanding the relationship between maternal health, delayed marriage and women’s education.

Maternal Health and Delayed Marriage

- According to the latest Sample Registration System (SRS) data, India’s maternal mortality ratio is 122. It is a significant decline from an MMR of 556 in 1990.
- There is also a parallel decrease in prevalence in child marriage from 58% in 1970-80 to 21% in 2015-16.
- However, there is large regional variation and rural-urban difference. For example, early marriage is highest in West Bengal at 39% followed by Bihar and Jharkhand. According to NHFS-4 there is urban-rural difference in the incidence of early marriage — 17.5% in urban and 31.5% in rural women.

Level of Women’s education and Early Marriage

- The relationship between level of education and age of marriage is clearly established. With no education, 44.7% women are married before 18 years. This decreases to 39.7% with primary education, 23.2% with secondary education and 2.9% with higher education.
- Further, with better education, women are empowered to take decisions within the family and better equipped to practice safe sex, family planning and safe abortion practices.

Impact of Early Marriage on Health

- **Maternal Mortality:** Women attain maximum height during adolescence (10-19 years). Entering pregnancy at this stage obstructs attaining optimum height. It also prevents full growth of reproductive organs resulting in higher chances of obstructed labour and mortality.
- **Child Malnutrition:** Poor maternal height (<145 cms) is reported to be one of the highest risk factors associated with chronic child undernutrition. According to data, prevalence of malnutrition among children born to adolescent mothers is 11% higher than among the others.

Suggested Measures:

- Incentives or cash transfer education schemes for girls to enable them to complete secondary education.
- Efforts need to be made to delay the age of conception. Schemes such as universal registration of marriage can help in providing newly married couples with information on family planning and family care.

Conclusion: education is of paramount importance to provide women gainful employment and enable them to make informed decisions. This would help break the vicious cycle of poverty, early marriage and ill health, and also inter-generational cycle of malnutrition.

July 30, 2020

9. The South Asian-Gulf migrant crisis

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-1- Society

Context: The Kerala High Court recently issued notice to the Central and State governments on a petition seeking to set up a mechanism to assist NRIs who had lost their jobs abroad and had returned to India.

About South Asia-Gulf migration corridor

1. It is among the largest in the world. South Asians account for nearly 15 million in the Gulf.
2. According to the World Bank, in 2019, total remittances to South Asia was about \$140 billion, of which India received \$83.1 billion.

Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on South Asian migrants in Gulf Countries:

- **Unsanitary living conditions and exposure to Covid-19:** Most of the migrants are single men living in congested labour camps which are overcrowded and have unsanitary living conditions. There has been a spike in Covid-19 cases in these camps.
- **Aggravated the plight of migrants:** South Asian migrants in Gulf countries have no safety net, social security protection, welfare mechanisms, or labour rights. The pandemic, the shutdown of companies and the exploitative nature of the Kafala sponsorship system have aggravated their plight.
- **Shortage of Medicines:** Since medicines are expensive in the GCC, migrants often procure them from India and stock up for a few months. However, the suspension of flights caused an acute shortage of medicines.

Indian government Initiatives:

- **Vande Bharat Mission:** It is a multi-agency mission that will see the operation of 64 flights to bring back Indian nationals from Gulf countries, US, UK among other nations.
- **SWADES (Skilled Workers Arrival Database for Employment Support) Initiative:** It aims to create a database of Indian citizens returning from overseas under the Vande Bharat Mission based on their skill-sets and experience to tap into and fulfil demand of Indian and foreign companies.
- **Dream Kerala:** It aims at the rehabilitation of returning expatriates and the state's overall development.

Initiatives by Other South-Asian Countries:

- **Bangladesh:** the government has announced a special package for the resettlement of return migrants which includes money on arrival, money to launch self-employment projects, and compensation for the families of those who died abroad from COVID-19.
- **Pakistan:** The Overseas Employment Corporation has come out with special programmes to upgrade the skills of returnees.

Conclusion: The Covid-19 pandemic induced crisis has provided an opportunity to voice the rights of South Asian migrants and to bring the South Asia-Gulf migration corridor within the ambit of SAARC, the ILO, and UN conventions.

July 31, 2020

10. The Debate around Age of Marriage

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-1- Society

Context: The government had given a proposal to raise the legal age of marriage for women.

Current age of Marriage:

- At present, the minimum age of marriage is 21 and 18 years for men and women, respectively.
- The minimum age of marriage is distinct from the age of majority, which is gender-neutral. According to the Indian Majority Act, 1875, an individual attains the age of majority at 18.

Status of Child Marriage in India:

- Though, there has been a decline in the incidence of child marriage nationally (from 54% in 1992-93 to 27% in 2016) and in nearly all states, the pace of change remains slow, especially for girls in the age group 15-18 years. Further, according to NHFS 4, 6.6% married before 15 years of age.
- Child marriage is more prevalent in rural areas (48%) than in urban areas (29%).

Impact of Child Marriage on Health

- **Sexually transmitted diseases:** Child marriage exposes the young girls to risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- **Maternal Mortality:** Women attain maximum height during adolescence (10-19 years). Entering pregnancy at this stage obstructs attaining optimum height. It also prevents full growth of reproductive organs resulting in higher chances of obstructed labour and mortality.
- **Child Malnutrition:** Poor maternal height (<145 cms) is reported to be one of the highest risk factors associated with chronic child undernutrition. According to data, prevalence of malnutrition among children born to adolescent mothers is 11% higher than among the others.
- **Mental health** is also a major concern. Violence and abuse at marital home can lead to post-traumatic stress and depression.

Can raising age of marriage help address women health issues?

- Raising the age of marriage will raise the age of motherhood, and thus address the health problems of young mothers and their infants. It will also lower the fertility rate.
- However, it is important to understand that the root cause of child marriage is poverty and address the issue. Poverty and marriage expenses such as dowry often lead a family to marry off their daughter at a young age to reduce these costs. Therefore, if poor women continue to remain poor and malnourished, raising their age of marriage by a few years would not make much difference.

Way Forward:

- Incentives or cash transfer education schemes for girls to enable them to complete secondary education. Further, efforts should be made to provide gainful employment to women.
- Efforts need to be made to delay the age of conception. Schemes such as universal registration of marriage can help in providing newly married couples with information on family planning and family care.

General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies – 2

1. Reviving SAARC to deal with China

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2-Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

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

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

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

Ignoring SAARC:

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

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

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

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

Domestic challenges in revitalising SAARC:

- **Ideological reasons:**

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

Way Forward

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

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

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2- India and its neighborhood- relations

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

Boundary dispute:

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

China's record in boundary disputes:

- **Lost opportunity:** The Indian PM rejected the proposal by China's Foreign Minister to settle the boundary dispute in his visit to India in April 1960. It led to tragic consequences including the India-China war in 1962.
- **Contemporary China:**
 - **Assertive China:** China regards itself as a superpower in the making and is now an ambitious rising power which wants to reorient the global order. It wants the boundary negotiations to happen as per their vision.
 - **Flexing of muscle:**
 - China has refused to recognise the authority of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
 - **Rejection of China's claims by PCA:** It ruled that China had breached its obligations under the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea and Article 94 of

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UNCLOS concerning maritime safety and violated international obligations.

- **South China sea:** China has not paid any heed to international opinion that supports unimpeded commerce, freedom of navigation, overflights and peaceful resolution of disputes.
- The same audacity has made China more intolerant of infrastructure built by India while it continues to build its own along that frontier.

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

Weighing in the options by India:

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

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

Keeping vigilance on hate against North-eastern people:

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

Way Forward:

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

3. PM Garib Kalyan Rozgar yojana vs MGNREGA

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – Gs 2 - Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes

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

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

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

Need to strengthen MGNREGA

1. Issues with PM Garib Kalyan Rozgar Yojana

- a. **Exclusion of States** - States of West Bengal and Chhattisgarh be omitted when reverse migration is particularly high in these States
- b. **Politicisation of scheme** - Of the ₹4,794 crore spent between June 20 and June 28, Bihar received more than 50% of the fund which can be attributed to the fact that Bihar elections are scheduled for later this year.
- c. **Overlapping with MGNREGA** - According to the list of 25 kinds of work available under this “scheme” it is clear that almost every single one of them is already covered under the convergence programmes of MGNREGA which leads to wastage of resources and duplication of efforts.
- d. **Crony Capitalism** - The nature of the work is manual work, mainly construction and earth work, including work to lay cables, ostensibly to take Internet connections to rural areas. It is unstated but clear that this will benefit private telecom companies.
- e. **Lack of legal right** - MGNREGA is a legal right, whereas the Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyaan has no such legal binding on the administration.

2. Lack of work - According to figures available on the Ministry of Rural Development’s website, in this fiscal year, 8.07 crore workers demanded work, but work was provided only to 6.25 crore workers.

3. Insufficient funds - The Central government released ₹38,000 crore for MGNREGA work, of which 70% has already been utilised. With the return of migrant workers to their home States and with substantial numbers having completed the quarantine period, the demand for work is bound to increase. The remaining ₹8,000 crore fund available to the States is clearly insufficient.

Suggested Reforms for MGNREGA

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

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

4. Lockdown Impact on MGNREGA and Way ahead

Source: [Livemint](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 – Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes

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

About Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

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

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

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

Impact of covid-19 lockdown on MGNREGA

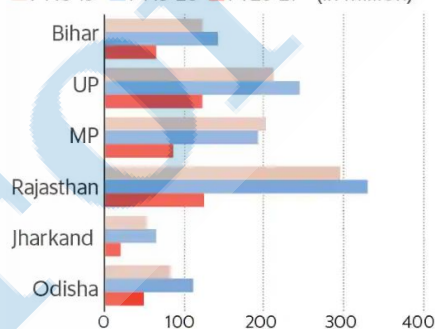
1. The demand for MGNREGS work jumped by 55% from 21.2 million workers in May 2019 to 32.9 million in May 2020.
2. Since April, 3.5 million new workers have registered under the scheme reflecting the job losses in cities.
3. 116 districts, with the highest number of returnees, have witnessed 86% increase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

Lockdown impact

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

No. of person days' work generated

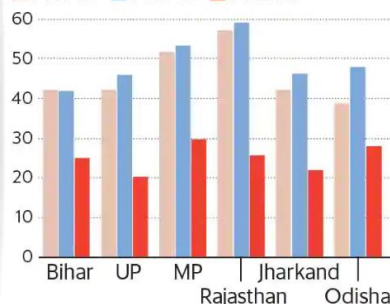
■ FY18-19 ■ FY19-20 ■ FY20-21* (in million)



*Until June 2020

Average days of employment provided per household

■ FY18-19 ■ FY19-20 ■ FY20-21*



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

Concerns regarding MGNREGA

- **Insufficient budget allocation:** MGNREGA's success at the ground level is subject to proper and uninterrupted fund flow to the states. However, almost every year, more than 80% of funds get exhausted within the first six months
- **Supply driven scheme:** Most states have implemented the scheme; till the time the funds were granted to them by Centre. Over time, this led to MGNREGS running in a supply-driven way instead of a demand-based model.

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- **Low wage rate:** MGNREGA wage of ₹202 per day is 30-40% lower than average wage offered to unskilled workers
- **Delay in wage payments:** Wages remain uncleared even after 15 days, and many get denied work.

Measures to be taken:

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

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

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

Source – [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate

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

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



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

Challenges	Impact of Pandemic
1. Cyber-security threat	1. Cyber Pearl Harbor attack - cyberspace use has expanded in lockdowns across globe but without commensurate growth in security features. Thus next few months will see increase in cyber-attacks.
2. Geo-political tensions	1. Increased rivalry of China – USA-China, India-China, Hong-Kong China reflects the state of exacerbated relations and tensions across the borders.
3. Global mistrust	Mistrust among friendly neighbors a. European Union -When faced with corona crisis shortages, almost all EU states responded at the national level. b. Nordic nations – Norway opened its borders to the rest from

	<p>the region bar Sweden, because of its infection rate.</p> <p>Impact on diversified supply chains – From efficiency to self-sufficiency</p> <p>a. India's Atmanirbhar Mission</p> <p>b. USA's Buy American</p> <p>c. Japan paying companies to relocate from China</p>
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Suggested reforms

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

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

6. Reforming India's digital policy

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- Government policies and interventions aimed at development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

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

Need for a robust Digital Policy in India

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

Pending Reform Measures:

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

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

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

Challenges ahead:

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

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

7. Banning Applications – Goes against democratic norms

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

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

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

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

Suggested Solutions

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

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

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

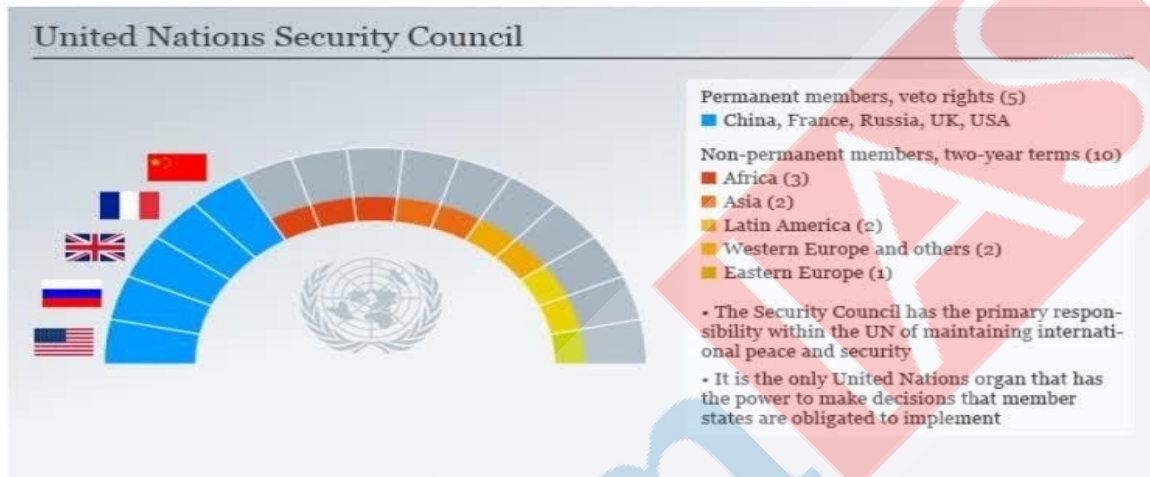
Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2- Important International institutions, agencies and for- their structure, mandate

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

Background:

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



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

How countries were elected?

Non-permanent members in respective regional groups and their sub-groups:

- **Regional endorsements:** If there is regional endorsement then all countries, except those with any grievance against the candidates, vote for them and they sail through easily.
- **Difficulty in regional endorsement:** The countries have to inscribe their names years in advance and those squatting countries have to be persuaded to vacate the place.
- **For example-** Last time, Kazakhstan vacated the place for India and this time Afghanistan.

Excitement in Voting in General Assembly:

- **Secret ballot:** The two-thirds majority is assured but the competition is to secure all the votes cast.
- **For example-** India got 184 out of 192 vote cast and will never know about the eight countries that did not vote for India.
- **African Group:** Since there was no endorsement in the African Group, Kenya had to go for a second round against Djibouti.
- **In the Western European and Others Group:** Canada lost to Ireland in a contentious contest.

Effect of COVID-19:

- **Voting:** Ambassadors were allowed to enter the General Assembly Hall one by one instead of the simultaneous voting that usually takes place.

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- **Unconventional campaign:** It took place through Zoom conversations and the sharing of brochures and pamphlets rather than through meetings around the UN.
- **Saving of money:** The win is normally an occasion for celebration by the candidates.

Success for India:

- **Role of India:** The new Permanent Representative of India, T.S. Tirumurti, produced an impressive multimedia presentation with memories of India's sterling role in the annals of the UN.
- He reacted with victory with the belief that India will continue to provide leadership and a new orientation for a reformed multilateral system in the COVID and the post-COVID world.

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

Issues in Reforms in UNSC:

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

India will play a constructive role in UNSC.

India and UNSC:

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

Way Forward

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

9. The Neglected Pillars of Hospital – The cleaning staff

Source - [The Hindu](#)

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

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

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

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

Issues they witness in hospitals:

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

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

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

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

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

Background:

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



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

IDSP:

- The Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) is one of the major National Health Programme under National Health Mission for all States & UTs.
 - **Objective:** To strengthen/maintain decentralized laboratory-based IT enabled disease surveillance system for epidemic prone diseases to monitor disease trends and to detect and respond to outbreaks in early rising phase through trained Rapid Response Team (RRTs).
 - It is the backbone of India's disease monitoring network.
- The COVID-19 appears to have veiled the country from any other disease.

Effect of COVID-19 on health infrastructure:

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



- **Neglect of other diseases:** There has been a reduction in the notifications of fresh tuberculosis infections and a general decline in claims under the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme.
- **Contribution of lockdown:** It led to decline of contagious diseases just like to decline in accident related deaths. Many of the outbreaks that are routinely reported involve pathogens contracted from contaminated water or those airborne that spread through social interaction.
- **Lack of public updates:** The alerts for health has significantly reduced since March 12 which is totally unacceptable for the health of the people.

The pandemic has many lessons for the world.

Learning for the world:

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

Way Forward

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

11. Custodial deaths In India – A pervasive Police Culture

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Important aspects of governance

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

Torture is integral part of Police forces:

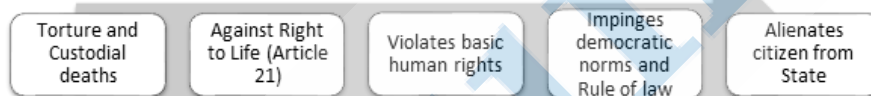
1. Data by Asian Centre for Human Rights - The **Asian Centre for Human Rights** (ACHR) has consistently underlined that about 99.99% of **deaths** in police **custody** can be ascribed to **torture** and occur within 48 hours of the victims being taken into **custody**.

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

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

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

Implications of Custodial deaths



Solution to curb custodial deaths:

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

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

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

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

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

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

12. Police violence and how some lives do not matter

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2-Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

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

Background:

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

Reasons for different reaction:

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

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

Records for abuse of power:

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

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

Reasons for abuse of power:

- Responsibility:** The Law Commission of India has suggested that if a person dies in police custody, the burden should be on the police to show that they are not responsible but the law still requires the prosecution to prove that the police caused the death.
- India's political commitment to address torture:** It is symbolized by its failure to ratify the UN Convention Against Torture.
- Not following judgments:** The Supreme Court of India has laid down many measures to prevent torture and fix accountability but these judgments are rarely followed.
- Institutional apathy:** The law mandates an independent magisterial inquiry into a custodial death. Such inquiries have happened in only about 20% of custodial deaths

and prosecution of police officials for custodial torture requires the sanction of the government.

- **System working:** The system incentivizes torture by seeking convictions without modernizing the police force.
- **Instant justice:** The use of torture is often justified by police personnel as being required to teach ‘hardened criminals’ on behalf of society.

Way Forward

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

13. Accounting rural women’s work and health in Pandemic

Source – [The Hindu](#)

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

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

Feature of rural women’s work

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

Lockdown’s affect on employment for rural women

1. **Agriculture and allied sector** - While agricultural activity continued for harvest operations; employment available to women during the lockdown was limited.
 - **Dairy products** - When households own animals, women are inevitably part of the labour process. During the lockdown, the demand for milk fell by at least 25% (as hotels and restaurants closed), and this was reflected in either lower quantities sold or in lower prices or both.
 - **Mariculture** - For women across the country, incomes from the sale of milk to dairy cooperatives shrank. Among fishers, men could not go to sea, and women could not process or sell fish and fish products.
2. **Non-agricultural jobs** - Non-agricultural jobs came to a sudden halt as construction sites, brick kilns, petty stores and eateries, local factories and other enterprises shut down completely and thus women depended on these were forced out of work.

3. Government schemes - During the pandemic, Accredited Social Health Activists or ASHAs, 90% of whom are women, have become frontline health workers, although they are not recognized as “workers” or paid a regular wage.

Lockdown’s affect on health and nutrition for rural women



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

14. One Nation One Voter ID

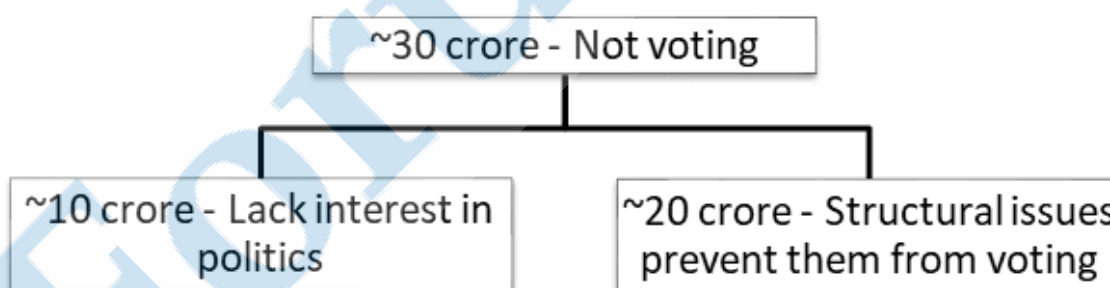
Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

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

1. 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.
2. Registered voters who don’ 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 –

1. **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.
2. **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.

15. On Prime Minister's e-Vidya scheme

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

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

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.

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- 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.

16. Plight of Domestic Workers amid Covid-19 Pandemic

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

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

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

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 2- India and its neighborhood- relations

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.

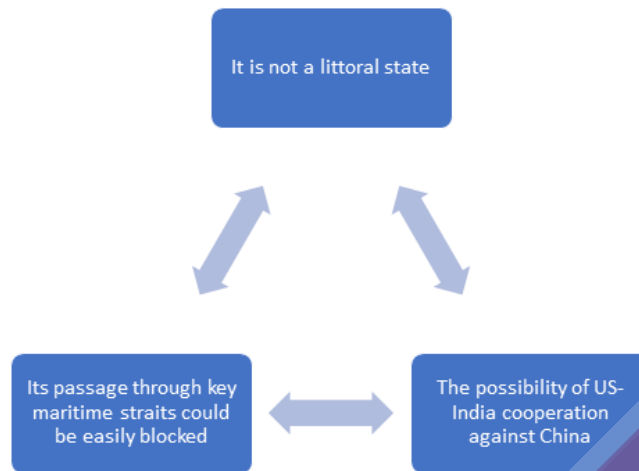
China in Indian Ocean:

- **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:**
 - 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.

18. India's foreign relations and the course of history

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 India and its neighbourhood- relations

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

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.

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- 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:**
 1. 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.
 2. **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:**
 1. 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.
 2. **Interest with West:** India needed technology and other assistance which he convinced could be obtained only from America.
 3. 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:**
 - 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.

19. Concerns related to Sub-National Fiscal Policy

Source - [Livemint](#)

Syllabus –GS 2 - 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

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.

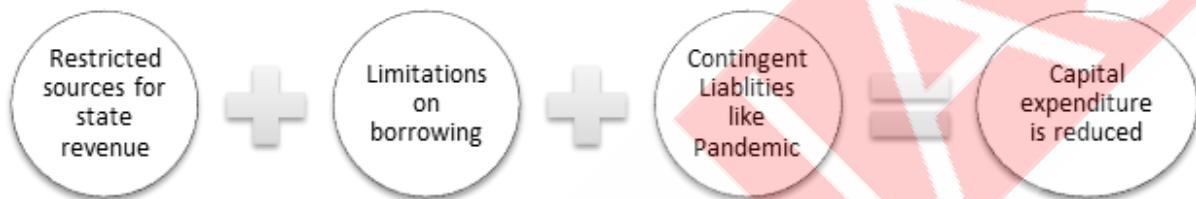
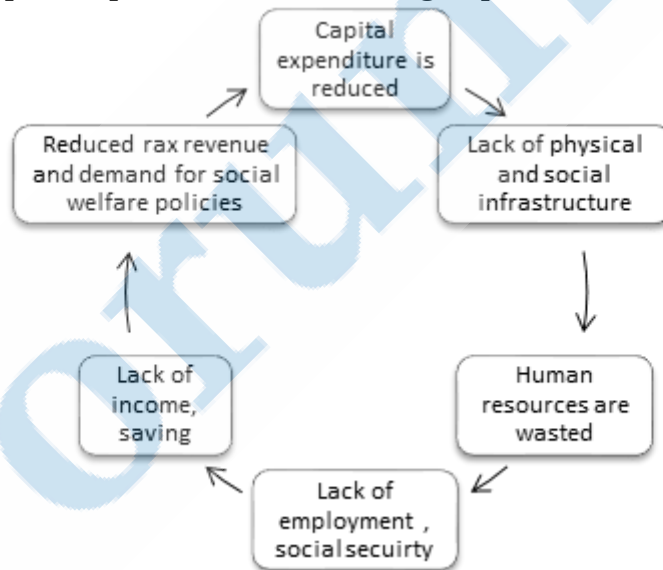


Figure 1 – Concern related to limited borrowing

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.

20. More sabre-rattling, more isolation

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

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 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.

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- **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.

21. Is reservation policy being undermined?

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-2 Government policies and interventions

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

Reservation: 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.

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

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2- India and its neighborhood- relations.

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.
- 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.

23. Digitising public sector

Source – [Indian Express](#)

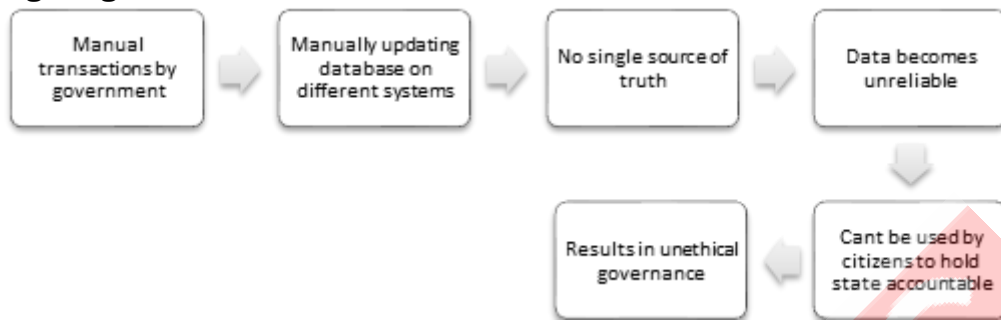
Syllabus – GS 2 - Development processes and the development industry

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 digitisation. The DATA will expedite the digitisation of India when implemented in true spirit.

24. A case for extension: on MGNREGA Scheme

Source: [The Hindu](#)

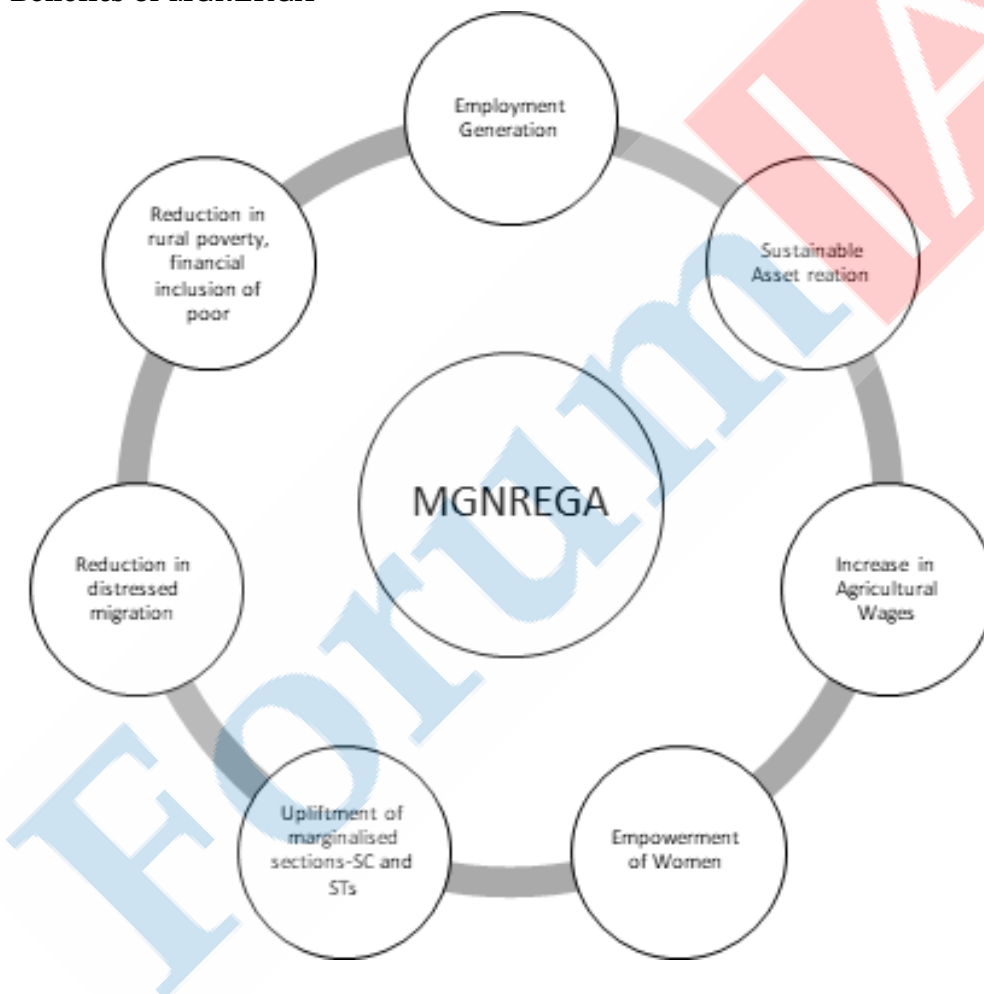
Syllabus: GS 2 – Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes

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:

1. 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.
2. 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.

25. 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-

- **Opting for collective good** - People agreed to establish society by collectively and reciprocally renouncing the rights they had against one another in unbridled nature
- **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

- **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.
- **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
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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.

26. Owing up to criminalization in politics

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: **GS 2-** 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.

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

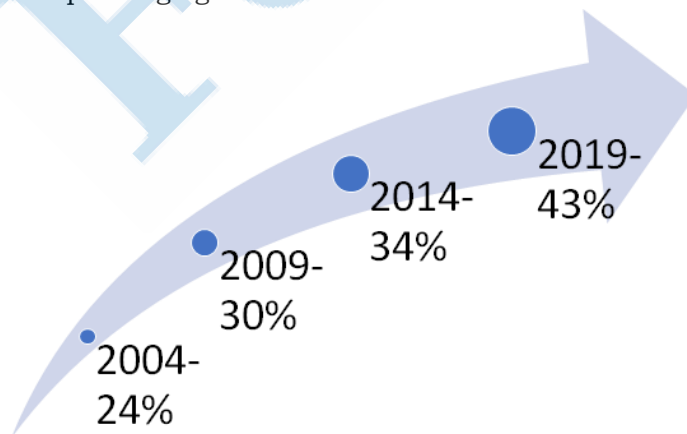
Background:

- 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.
- **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.

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

Source: [Livemint](#)

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

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.

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.

28. Internet freedom versus national security

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

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.

29. Rule of law and police encounters

Source: [The Hindu](#), [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-2 Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures

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:** Goaded 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.

30. Cooperative Federalism in India – Reality or rhetoric

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - 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

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.

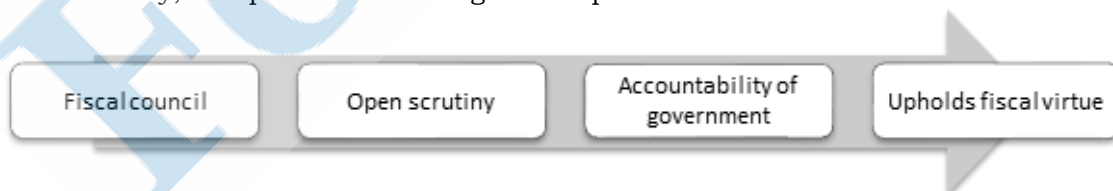
31. Fiscal council – Another bureaucratic structure

Source – [The Hindu](#)

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

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.

32. Importance of government interventions to reduce economic impact of COVID-19

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

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

Context: The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana targeting 800 million people for free rations through the Public Distribution System has been extended until November.

Background:

- 1. For vulnerable population:** The government is taking a massive effort to minimize the economic impact of COVID-19 on our most vulnerable population.
- 2. Reach:** Schemes such as Jan Dhan, PM Kisan and PM Ujjwala aim to transfer Rs 532 billion to 420 million people.
- 3. Danger:** Many people in danger of slipping into poverty. It is imperative to create a regime, even with a sunset clause, of universal benefits.

The writer has commissioned a multi-round survey of 47,000 households of which mostly are below poverty line across 15 states. The surveys explore whether relief schemes have been working as intended, who is missing out and what more is needed.

Impact of COVID-19:

1. Primary income earners in two-thirds of the households have lost their jobs or wages.
2. The average family has lost more than 60 per cent of its pre-crisis income and is now making just Rs 4,000/month.
3. Twenty-four per cent of low-income households have run out of money and supplies.
4. Forty per cent families are in debt.
5. In some states, as many as one in five primary income earners do not expect to find work in the near future.

6. Government relief:

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- a. Ninety-four per cent of eligible families had received extra PDS rations by end May and 80 per cent had received cash entitlements averaging close to Rs 2,000.
- b. About five million households could have both run out of savings and not received any cash transfer from the government.

7. On workers:

- c. **Estimation:** Over 55 million workers who were earning above poverty line incomes have lost jobs during this crisis.
- a. The scale of current urban-rural migration makes this challenge worse.

Steps to improve conditions of vulnerable:

1. Shifting to universal benefits:

- a. To minimize a situation where millions miss out on critical relief.
- b. **For example:**
 - Whoever turns up to a ration shop needing free/subsidized rations should be able to get it.
 - People should be able to sign up for a cash relief transfer with minimal paperwork.

• Digitalization:

- It has created efficiencies that can be leveraged to expand the welfare net.
- **Reducing leakages:** The vast amount of leakage in the welfare system was not due to fraud by citizens but because of fraud and inefficiency by those delivering the benefits.
- a. **JAM trinity has helped:**
 - **Lower transaction costs**-Aadhaar can prevent identity frauds.
 - **Reduce leakages**-Our sophisticated payments infrastructure enables DBT.
 - **Reach beneficiaries quickly**
- b. Pilots for the One Nation-One Ration Card project have shown that inter-state portability is possible.

2. State models:

- a. Several states have experimented with a more universal approach with positive results.
- b. **For example:**
 - Tamil Nadu's PDS system has strong coverage and equitable pricing, delivering 20 kg of rice at Rs 1/kg every month to all families who need it.
 - Chhattisgarh universalized PDS to provide for their returning migrants with encouraging results.
- MGNREGA has always been open to all rural households.
- **Voluntary opt-outs:**
- **Reducing burden on exchequer:** The well-off could be inspired to give up their own benefits by highlighting the real intended targets of the relief effort and the adverse impact on millions of people.
- **For example:** The "Give up LPG Subsidy" campaign.

Way Forward

1. During a crisis like COVID-19, the emphasis needs to be on including those who really deserve the help rather than making sure the wrong people are kept out.
2. It's precisely because the current systems are largely working that we can contemplate a universal benefits approach. This approach can be discontinued once the pandemic ends and the economic shocks abate.

33. Smart Cities – No focus on public health infrastructure

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Context - The novel coronavirus pandemic has largely been an urban crisis so far, with megacities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chennai accounting for most of the COVID-19 positive cases.

Smart cities mission - The Mission had sought to make 100 selected cities “smart”, primarily through an “Area-Based Development” model under which a small portion of the city would be upgraded by retrofitting or redevelopment. It had the stated aim of improving the quality of life of urban residents.

Issues Indian cities are facing amidst the pandemic

- Public health crisis with rising number of case in urban areas.
- Economic issues and loss of livelihood faced by urban residents as well as migrant workers.

Issues related to smart city mission

- **Lack of focus on public health infrastructure** - An analysis of the smart city projects under the Mission shows that only 69 of over 5,000 projects undertaken under the Mission were for health infrastructure. These projects are for an estimated cost of ₹2,112 crore, amounting to just around one per cent of the total mission cost
- **No capability building of local bodies** - As per the 12th Schedule of the Constitution, introduced by the 74th Amendment, “public health” is one of the 18 functions that are to be devolved to the municipalities. Centralised programmes such as the ‘Smart Cities Mission’ have driven local governments away from their core responsibilities.

Suggested solutions

- **Empowering local bodies** – The functionaries of local bodies need to be trained for better implementation of schemes and handling of crises such as covid. Greater financial devolution can be considered by state government and focus need to be on mobilising revenue by increasing property tax base.
- **Restoring economy health** - Introduction of a national urban employment guarantee programme that assures jobs for urban residents and strengthens the capacities of urban local bodies is needed.
- Kerala has been running such a scheme since 2010 and States such as Odisha, Himachal Pradesh and Jharkhand have also recently launched similar initiatives in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.

Way Forward - As Indian cities face an unprecedented challenge, it is important to get the priorities of urban development right and invest in programmes that improve the health and livelihoods of its residents.

34. Police Reforms – Now or Never

Source – [Indian Express](#)

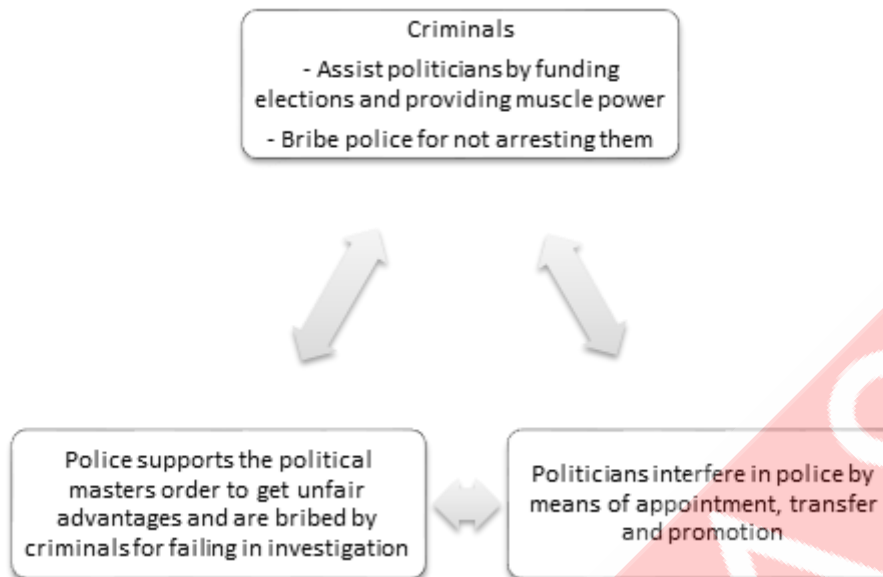
Syllabus – GS 2 - Important aspects of governance

Context – The brutal treatment of a father and son in police station in Tamil Nadu, resulting in their death and an encounter in Kanpur where a criminal wanted for the murder of eight policemen was killed by UP Police under strange circumstances have raised uncomfortable questions regarding policing in India.

Reasons for violation of laws by law upholders (Police) –

- a. Nexus between criminals, politicians and police

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- b. Criminalisation of Politics** - The number of members of parliament with criminal background has been going up with every successive election. It was, according to the Association of Democratic Reforms, 30 per cent in 2009, 34 per cent in 2014 and 43 per cent in 2019.

Suggested solutions

- 1. Preventing entry of criminals in legislature** – A law which debars persons with serious criminal cases from entering the assemblies and the Parliament is the need of the hour.
- 2. Legislation against organized crime** - A Central act on the lines of MCOCA should be enacted to curb the activities of organised criminal gangs.
- 3. Federal crime** - The concept of federal crime, as recommended by the Second Administrative Reforms Commission, should be accepted and offences which have all-India ramifications or are trans-national in character, like those of terrorism and organised crimes, should be brought within its ambit.
- 4. Monitoring the activities of the mafia and criminal syndicates** - An institution comprising representatives of the police/CBI/NIA, Intelligence Bureau, Income Tax department, Revenue Intelligence and Enforcement Directorate should be set up to monitor the activities of the mafia and criminal syndicates in the country and ensure stringent action against them.

Way Forward - We must, without further delay, build an environment where police become an instrument of service to the people so that security of people is ensured and any public protest against police can be prevented.

35. Need of governance by the people

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Context: Analyzing the stress occurred at the governance at all the levels i.e. global, national and local due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Background:

- 1. Complexity of handling many subsystems:** Breakdowns have occurred in many subsystems that had to be managed at the same time like health care, logistics, business, finance and administration.
- 2. Solutions for one subsystem backfired on other subsystems:** For example, lockdowns to manage the health crisis have led to economic distress.
- 3. Stress on institutions for global governance:** They have been put through a severe stress test by the global health and economic crises. The test has revealed a fundamental flaw in their design.

There is a mismatch in the design of governance institutions at the global level (and also in India) and the challenges for management by them.

How to handle such challenges of governance?

Interconnected issues:

- a. Systemic challenges:** As listed in the global challenges in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN.
- b. Interrelated:** Environmental, economic and social issues cannot be separated from each other and solved by experts in silos or by agencies focused only on their own problems. A good solution to one can create more problems for others.
- c. Requirement:** The solutions must fit the specific conditions of each country and of each locality within countries to fit the shape of the environment and the condition of society there.
- d. For example:** Solutions for environmental sustainability along with sustainable livelihoods cannot be the same in Kerala and Ladakh or in Mumbai and Tokyo.
 - The knowledge of different experts like the environment, the society and the economy must come together to fit realities on the ground.
 - **A case for local systems:**
 - **Local solutions:** The local people must believe that the solution is right for them and not a solution thrust upon them by outside experts for the local people to support the implementation of solutions.
 - **Active contributors:** The local people must be active contributors of knowledge for, and active participants in, the creation of the solutions.
 - **Governance by the people:**
 - For example- Gandhiji and his economic advisers developed their solutions of local enterprises through observations and experiments on the ground (and not in theoretical seminars in capital cities).
 - Elinor Ostrom, the first woman to win the Nobel Prize in Economics, had developed the principles for self-governing communities from research on the ground in many countries including India.
 - **Scientific explanations for the need of local systems solutions:** The writer got an insight that several IAS officers who seemed to have more compassion for communities than their colleagues were involved at some time in their careers with the evolution of community-based public health and the self-help group movements. They had begun to see that the role of government is perhaps to 'enable governance'.
 - **Role of district Collector:** They are key IAS functionary in India's governance.
 - **Pre-independence:** To collect revenues and to maintain law and order.
 - **Post-independence:**
 - India took up a large welfare role and they became the District 'Deliverer' of government largesse.

- **Role became complicated:** When the numbers of government schemes multiplied of which some were designed by the central government and others by the State government.
- The schemes were managed by their own ministries and departments in the capitals, with local functionaries of those departments as the points of contact with citizens.
- **Reasons for schemes not producing enough benefits:** There are a large number of schemes that are operational. The citizens did not know about many schemes and it is hard to disentangle the schemes.

Way Forward

1. **Reason:** A hypothesis is that those States and countries in which local governance was stronger like Kerala, Taiwan have done much better than others. This is worthy of research for insights into design principles for good governance systems.
2. The government has to support and enable people to govern themselves to realize the vision of 'government of the people, for the people, by the people'.

36. Reviving economy – Focussing on Infrastructure

Source – [Financial Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Context – The Covid-19 pandemic has brought global economic activity to a virtual halt. While the world was long expecting a recession, the pandemic has surely pulled the trigger.

Components of aggregate demand



Challenges in increasing Consumption, Exports and Investment

- **Sharp deceleration in credit supply** - The NBFC sector, which played an important role in fueling India's consumption growth, suffered from funding crunches, leading to further squeeze in credit supply and impacting consumption demand.
- **Job loss due to covid** - Industry-wide job/pay-cuts with a growing sense of uncertainty over the future may limit consumer spending to non-discretionary items and force people towards precautionary savings.
- **Underutilization of existing capacity** - Deteriorating economic scenario across the world with upcoming recession and underutilization of existing capacity will bring down the investment in new capacities by firms
- **Net-exports and trade war**- Global trade has been undergoing several disruptions since 2009. Heightened trade tensions between the US and China, with the onset of the pandemic only makes matters worse. As for India, our limited share in global trade, along with a battered domestic and global outlook, provide little room for exports to contribute towards growth.

Suggested solution for revival of economy – Government Expenditure

- **Boosts Real growth** - A study by S&P Global estimates 1% GDP spend on infrastructure can boost real growth by 2% while creating 1.3 million direct jobs.

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- **Historic evidence** - Historically, countries have used infrastructure to provide countercyclical support to the economy. Some of the most remarkable references are the New Deal in the US, Germany's expansion post WWII debt reduction (1953) and more recently with China in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis.

Way Forward – Restructuring the existing institutions for infrastructure development purposes - IIFCL, IRFC, NIIF into one organization and floating special infrastructure bonds through this organization to accelerate the funding of the National Infrastructure Pipeline could aid a speedier recovery.

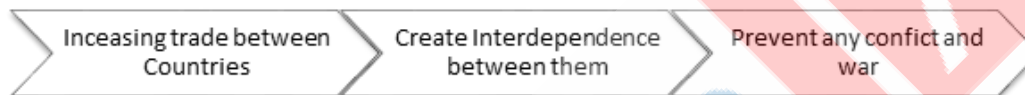
37. India – Changing paradigm in every dimension

Source – [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

Context - India needs a new paradigm for trade, industry, and development which is needed not only to strengthen India vis-à-vis China, but to make the economy good for India's poorer citizens too.

Ideology of Neoliberal School of Economics



Issues ignored by Neoliberal School of Economics

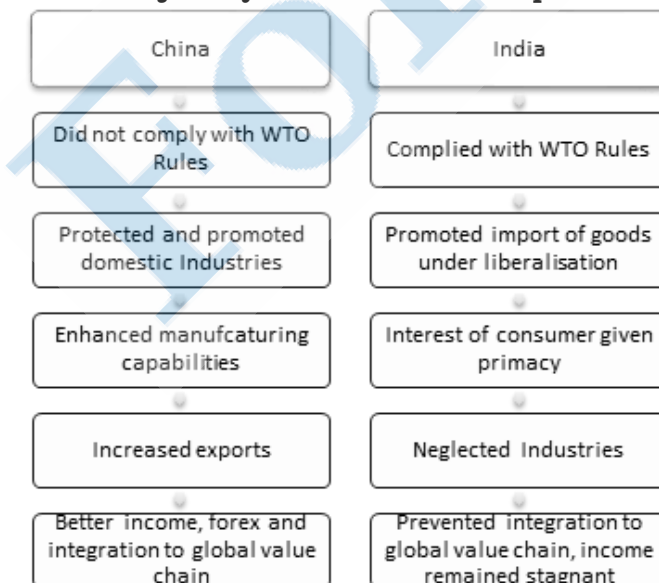
Pattern of trade – It involves which good are being exported and imported by respective nations.

For instance – India exports raw material to China and imports intermediate and final goods from China.

Volume of trade – It involves the Balance of payment concept which focuses on how much import and export is taking place between the two nations.

For instance – India and China has trade deficit of which presents India's larger import from China compared to our export to China.

Growth trajectory of China and India post 1990s



Suggested solution

- 1. Promoting labour-intensive industries** - The success of India's industrial policy must be measured by the number and the spread of jobs created which can be done by laying focus on labour-intensive industries like MSME's.
- 2. Skilling labour** – Workforce has to learn while earning. To earn they must be engaged in industries that will employ them with whatever capabilities they presently have. And, to learn at the same time, they must stay on the job and they must be trained while they work.

Way Forward - Atmanirbhar Bharat is, thus, essential. Otherwise, “interdependence” with China will be a colonial-like interdependence which will make India not only economically weaker but also strategically vulnerable.

38. Issue of Data protection in the backdrop of ban on Chinese apps

Source: [Financial Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 2- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Context: The recent ban on 59 apps by the Indian government amidst political tensions between India and China marks the watershed moment of ‘data nationalism’ in cyberspace.

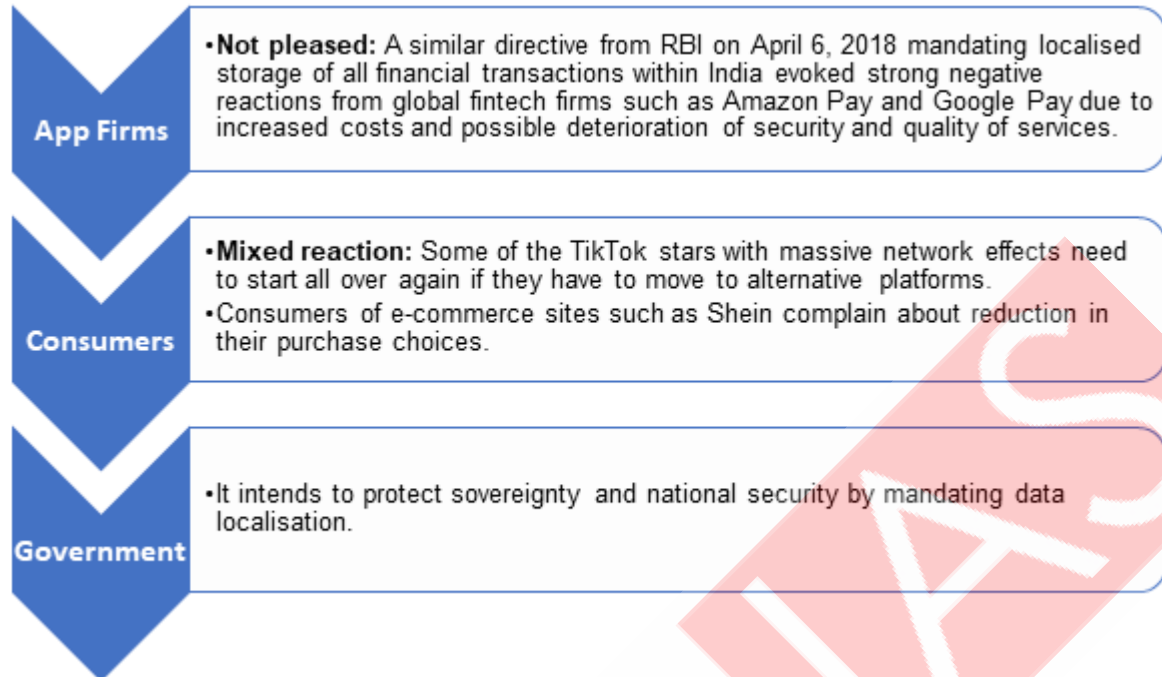
Data protection:

- **Data localization measure:** The requirement for all mobile application firms to prove that data is not exported out of the country.
- **Data nationalism:** It is not just a short-term political phenomenon which is subject to flows of protectionist sentiments. It is the expression of a profound unease with the increasing globalization due to infinite internet.
- The Snowden and Cambridge Analytica episodes have prompted even democratic countries like Brazil, Germany and India to undertake data localization measures which include regulations and rules on storing data within the territorial jurisdiction of the country.

Performance in data localization: According to a recent study by the European Centre for International Political Economy.



Reactions of all stakeholders to data localization restrictions:



The ban on Chinese apps have different meanings for every stakeholder.

Implications for Chinese app ban:

• **For local manufacturers:**

- There is some evidence that stricter restrictions on cross-border data flow provide advantages to local firms to serve their clientele better in terms of both price and quality. For example- Indian start-ups such as Chingari have upped their ante indicating they are well positioned to replace Chinese apps.
- **Cost advantage for local:** Data compliance costs imposed due to the data localization rules increase cost and reduce the quality and features of services provided by global firms to their consumers in those regions.
- **Capturing market share:** Local firms tend to benefit and often compete well in garnering the market share of their local consumers.

• **Consumers:**

- This leads to consumers clustering around their local producers of services and often have limited choices for purchase

• **Government:**

- Data fiduciaries argue that data localization provides local governments easier access to data of her residents.
- Data localization may give domestic intelligence agencies of the home country increased data collection powers over their residents' data through even coercion of residents.

Way Forward:

- There is a need for internet firms and governments to be transparent and respect the data protection and privacy laws of data.
- It's time India enacts the data protection Bill to enforce lawfully the property rights of our residents and penalize deviators.

39. China reshaping Asia and Indo-pacific

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

Context - China's coronavirus "mask diplomacy" has given way to tense geopolitical confrontations with a growing array of its neighbours, from stand-offs with Vietnam and Malaysia in the South China Sea to threatening Australia.

Steps taken to stop Chinese aggression

Top-Down solutions

- **Limiting economic exposure** - The Indian, Japanese, Malaysian, and Australian governments have all taken concrete steps to reduce their economic exposure to Beijing, spanning investment, manufacturing, and technology. For example – India's Atmanirbhar Bharat is aimed at promoting domestic capabilities in India and reducing dependence on China.
- **Recognizing Chinese aggression in South China Sea** – The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers issued one of their strongest statements to date on the South China Sea, insisting that maritime disputes must be resolved in accordance with the UN Law of the Sea treaty.
- **Strengthening strategic relations** - India and Australia recently inked a new military logistics agreement in the "virtual summit" between Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Scott Morrison. The Quadrilateral Dialogue between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States is growing stronger and even expanding.

Bottom-up solutions

- **Mobilising people in digital space** - A new "Milk Tea Alliance", named after the popular beverage, is aimed at forging solidarity between Taiwanese, Hong Kongers, and Southeast Asians on online platforms against China's - 'One China' principle.

Steps that can be taken by USA

- **Supporting regional institutions** - U.S. policy needs to start supporting, rather than attempting to commandeer, regional efforts to build a less China-centric future for the Indo-Pacific. U.S. leadership would be far more effective if it worked with Indo-Pacific partners on the issues that they prioritise and provided them significant space for independent action.
- **Coercion vs cooperation** - China certainly has the power to coerce, it also has a tremendous ability to be its own worst enemy by pushing too hard on its neighbours. Washington should avoid repeating Beijing's mistakes and offer a clear alternative in word and deed to China's "Wolf Warrior" diplomacy.
For instance - Moves such as demanding that a G-7 communiqué refer to COVID-19 as the "Wuhan virus" and blocking mask shipments to close allies are the kind of coercive actions that the U.S. should leave to China.

Way Forward - As Beijing's confidence in its growing material and military power solidifies, its neighbours as well as USA will need to think carefully about the long-term decisions necessary to preserve an open regional order.

40. India should believe in the EU

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2-Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context: Analyzing the partnership between India and EU in the backdrop of the current fragmented world.

Relationship between India and EU:

- **Common between them:**
 - Both aim to enhance strategic autonomy and their global standing.
 - **Urgent need to address climate change:** Diversifying strategic value chains is also a common interest.
- **On Economic terms:**
 - **Investments in India:** The EU is India's first trading partner and the biggest foreign investor with €67.7 billion worth of investments made in 2018 which is equal to 22% of total FDI inflows.
 - **Room for improvement:** EU investments amounted to €175.3 billion in China in the same year.
 - Enhanced business cooperation can help both diversify their strategic value chains and reduce economic dependency especially on China.
 - India could succeed in attracting EU investment that might be moving out of China but to do it must address the mutual trust deficit.
 - Facilitating people's mobility and connectivity is a good way to improve mutual understanding and create opportunities for innovation and growth.

The EU and India must tackle the issue of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations.

Talks on FTA:

Impact:

- **Significant gain for India:** A new study from the European Parliament assesses the potential impact of an EU-India trade agreement at between €8 billion and €8.5 billion gains from increased trade for both sides.
- **Additional potential gains:** From enhanced coordination on the provision of global public goods such as environmental standards.

On climate change:

- The EU is building on its ambitious target to render the continent carbon-emission neutral by 2050 through its new industrial strategy, the Green Deal.

In geopolitical terms:

- **Increasing rivals for India:** The Indo-Pacific region is increasingly the focus of attention and hence India should capitalize on its geopolitical leverage there.
- Stronger cooperation with like-minded and democratic powers can support this effort especially towards assertive competitors like China.
- Even India's strongest bilateral relations with individual EU member states do not come close to the potential of dealing effectively with the EU as a whole. New Delhi must learn how to maximize benefit from this strategic partnership.

Ruptures caused by COVID-19 and Way Forward:

- **Occasion for the EU to prove its worth:** The measures put in place at supranational level show a strong willingness to buttress the fundamental pillars on which the EU is built.
- **Next generation EU proposal:** It was submitted by the European Commission and has surprised many by its bold approach.
- **Game changer:** It allows the EU to take on debt in its financial implications. It shows that the ties that bind the EU extend well beyond treaties and individual members' self-interest.
- The EU champions the rules-based international order which is being increasingly challenged by the proliferation of exceptionalism.

- The EU and India must join forces to promote sustainable reform of multilateral institutions, with the World Trade Organization (WTO) first in line.
- A strong partnership would help both the EU and India become global decision-makers.

41. Equalization levy – Taxing the digital space

Source – [Live mint](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Context – The USTR is initiating a probe into the imposition of digital taxes on firms like Facebook, Netflix and Google in the EU and nine countries, including India.

Equalization levy

- Equalization Levy is a direct tax, which is withheld at the time of payment by the service recipient. The two conditions to be met to be liable to equalization levy:
 - The payment should be made to a non-resident service provider;
 - The annual payment made to one service provider exceeds Rs. 1,00,000 in one financial year.
- Currently the applicable rate of tax is 6% of the gross consideration to be paid.
- Collection of tax - The burden of paying the equalization levy, which is often called the 'Google tax', to the central government, falls upon the Indian company or a non-resident company with a physical establishment in India.

Rationale for introducing equalization levy

- **Foreign firms with permanent establishments vs. digital companies** - Foreign firms with permanent establishments are taxed at the rate of 40%. But the digital companies did not have any permanent establishment in India, so their income could not be taxed.
- **Digital growth in India** - Tech giants or e-commerce companies such as Google and Facebook benefit from growth of digital sector in India by generating revenue from outside the country of residence.
- **Level playing field for domestic companies** - It aims to equalize tax component between the domestic e-commerce company which is taxed under corporate tax and foreign non-resident e-commerce company which was not under Indian tax jurisdiction.

Issues associated with equalization levy

- **Discourage startups** – Since the burden is shouldered by local start-up's and SMEs who advertise on these platforms, Indian start-ups, other stakeholders are requesting cancellation or reduction in the equalization levy on the advertising revenue that overseas firms generate from India.
- **Double taxation** – It also discourage foreign firms from indulging in activities in India as they might not be liable for a tax deduction in their home country and can face double taxation.
- **Additional 2% levy** - 2% equalization levy imposed this fiscal year on any purchase by an Indian or India-based entity through an overseas ecommerce platform is not clearly worded. Companies fear that all kinds of online transactions including hotel bookings, software purchase and even buying certain components from overseas could come under the gamut of the 2% levy introduced this year due to the way the law has been worded.

Way Forward - The 2% equalization levy in its current form is too widely worded, needs clarity and could be challenged as lacking constitutional validity as it brings thousands of transactions made online under its scope. The government needs to clearly decide what transactions it wants to tax or whether there is a need for this levy when India is becoming investment hub of digital companies.

42. Need of National Curriculum Framework for police education and training.

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 2- Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

Context: The custodial deaths in Thoothukudi and the killing of eight policemen in an ambush in Uttar Pradesh has brought the country's police force under scrutiny.

Background:

- There are question marks on Vikas Dubey's encounter.
- **Killing of George Floyd in USA:**
 - It led to a series of protests against police atrocities in the US culminating into the Black Lives Matter campaign.
 - The Minneapolis council has drafted a plan to abolish the police and replace it with a department of community safety and violence prevention.
- **No such outrage in India:** Some people justify police violence in Kashmir and the Northeast as the only solution to the insurgency.

Maintenance of law and order: It is primarily the responsibility of the states.

• **Training:**

○ **Place of training:**

- **IPS:** They head the Police departments providing the system an anchor at the Central level. These officers are trained at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy for Administration, Mussoorie and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy (NPA) at Hyderabad.
- **Lower-level officials and constables:** They are trained at different state police academies. Most of the force uses strong arm tactics that date back to the colonial era at the lower level.

○ **Training time:**

- An IPS officer is trained for about two years, an inspector-level officer receives a year's training and a constable is trained for nine months.

○ **Quality of training:**

- It varies according to state. Generally, the officials at the lower rungs only receive basic training for field challenges and human rights issues are not an essential part of their training.

Fact: There are also two police universities in the country and the home ministry has recently approved the creation of a national police university.

• **Qualification:**

- One needs to be a graduate to become an IPS officer.
- **For recruitment at the lower levels of the force:** Only the physical agility of the candidate is tested.

Issues of police:

- Police officials work 10 to 16 hours and seven days a week which takes a toll on the health of several officers.

- **The “Status of Policing in India Report 2019”:**

- It points out that 70 police stations across 20 states do not have wireless facilities and 214 police stations do not have a telephone.
- More than 40 per cent of police stations in the country cannot avail the help of forensic technology.

- **Politicizing issue:** The “depolicing society” needs to be discussed on its nature and scope.

- **Need of modernization:** The Bureau for Police Research and Development was established in 1970 for the “modernization” of police. The institution has rarely engaged with human rights issues.

- Only a few states have in-service training for lower level officers and the constabulary. All this is bound to affect the functioning of the police and reflect in the ways they engage with the public.

Need of NCF and Way Forward

- It is high time that we address the infrastructural and organizational issues and concerns related to the police.
- There is a need to evolve a National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for police education and training like that for teachers and medical and engineering services.
- The curriculum must be informed by discussions at different levels — universities, NPA and the society itself.
- A progressive and democratic society and an aspiring economic superpower cannot be policed by a regressive system.

An NCF can help the police act according to its motto-“With you, For you, Always”.

43. Issues with Higher Education

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- Education

Context: Government-oriented bureaucratic centralization in higher educational institutions has intensified with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Issues with Higher Education in India

- **Access:** According to the All India Survey on Higher Education, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education in India is 25.8% in 2017-18. The Kasturi Ranjan Committee identified lack of access as a major reason behind low intake in higher education. It is much behind that of USA (85.8%) and China (43.39%)
- **Poor investment in research and innovation:** According to Economic Survey 2017-18, only 0.6-0.7% of GDP has been spent on research in India in the last two decades. This is very low as compared to 2.4% of USA, China-2.1%, Japan-3.58% and South Korea-4.29%
- **Curriculum and Employability:** The curriculum remains outdated, theoretical in nature with low scope for creativity. There is a gap between industry requirements and curriculum leading to low employability of graduates. The government noted in 2017 that 60% of engineering graduates remain unemployed, while a 2013 study of 60,000 university graduates in different disciplines found that 47% of them were unemployable in any skilled occupation.
- **Bureaucratic centralization and Lack of autonomy:** Universities lack institutional and academic autonomy. The university administration has been replaced by the Education Minister and his bureaucratic apparatus. The imposition of the ‘cafeteria system’ associated with the Choice Based Credit System and renewed attempts to

privatise higher education linked to an emphasis on rankings are prime examples of bureaucratic centralization.

Government Initiatives in Higher Education:

- Revitalizing Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE): It aims to increase investments in research and related infrastructure in premier educational institutions.
- IMPRINT India: It is a joint initiative of IITs and IISc to address major and science and technology challenges in India.
- Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM): E-education platform
- Ucchar Aavishkar Abhiyaan: To promote industry-specific need-based research
- Institution of Eminence: It aims to develop 20 world-class teaching and research institutions

Way Forward:

- It is important for Higher educational institutions restore the fertile academic space where ideas are discussed and debated rather than suppressed and dismissed.
- The higher education curriculum should focus on industrial demands and skill development to increase the employability of Indian graduates.

A National Research Foundation (NRF) should be set up as an autonomous body of the Government of India to boost investment in research and innovation.

44. Fighting COVID in Rural India

Source – [Down to Earth](#)

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

Context - The World Health Organization's chief scientist, Soumya Swaminathan, has expressed her concern, stating that rural India is the next corona virus hotbed.

1. Pre-lockdown phase - The pre-lockdown phase saw cases emerging in urban epicenters such as Mumbai, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Chennai, etc. These are the cities where much of the migrant population is concentrated.

2. Post-lockdown phase - post-lockdown, when urban migrants started moving and restrictions began to be eased, cases started emerging in many rural areas, including North Eastern states.

A total of 684 out of 736 districts have reported confirmed coronavirus positive cases in double digits, according to recent data.

Dismal rural healthcare infrastructure

1. Shortage of medical staff - There is chronic shortage of medical professionals including doctors, nursing staff, paramedics as well as hospital beds.

2. High burden of other diseases - There are high levels of non-communicable diseases (for instance diabetes, hypertension, etc.), infectious diseases (tuberculosis, diarrhea, etc) and malnutrition in rural areas.

3. Non-accessibility of services - Data from the National Family Health Survey-4 in terms of accessibility of rural primary health centers (PHC) / rural hospitals and community health centers or CHC (key delivery points that can be utilized for testing and treatment for COVID-19) is only 25 per cent.

4. Vulnerability of rural population - According to the Census of India, rural populations are comparatively older, placing them at a higher risk of contracting the COVID-19 infection.

5. Absence of WASH - More than 60 per cent households in rural areas of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Odisha do not have access to water and soap. These are also the states which are major destinations of returnee migrants.

Strengthening the National Rural Health Mission

1. Developing referral system - Since more than 12 percent of India's rural population accessed PHCs or outreach health service delivery points, there is a need to rapidly develop a robust referral system from PHCs to CHCs / rural hospitals and the nearest COVID-19 testing and treatment facilities.

2. Strengthening the testing outreach- The strategy may include clustering and increased coordination among four-five CHCs / rural hospitals accessible by road to strengthen testing outreach, with one of them being the COVID-19 RT-PCR testing node.

3. Equipping health personnel - Training of health personnel in CHCs needs to be provided at the nearest COVID testing centers.

Decentralized governance

1. Participative approach - The Gram Panchayats should be equipped with measures for handling breakouts. Quarantine centers need to be established and managed efficiently, private and local doctors should be trained for COVID-19 handling and management.

2. Awareness campaigns by local bodies - Adequate measures should also be in place to ensure that there is no stigma and discrimination against COVID-19 patients or their families. Awareness campaigns should be organized to increase awareness regarding self-care and sanitation facilities.

Way Forward - The pandemic presents an opportunity to realize the true potential of the existing National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and its associated budget allocation. A holistic approach needs to be adopted by the administration if the spread of corona virus to rural areas has to be curtailed.

45. Concerns of India in growing China-Iran ties

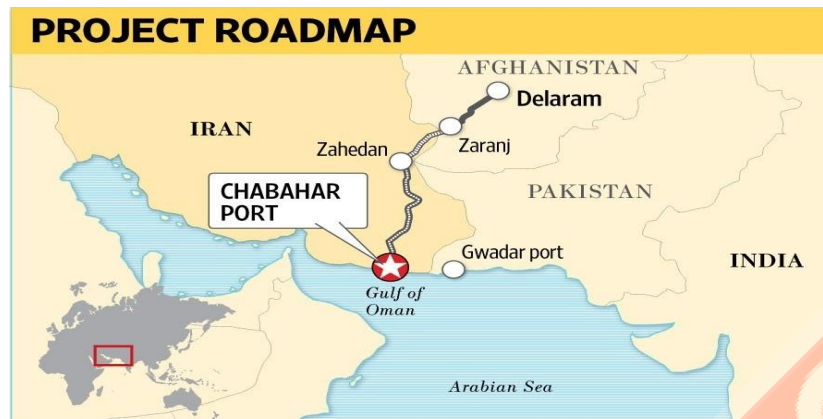
Source: [The Hindu](#), [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 2- **Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.**

Context: Analyzing the relationship between India and Iran in the backdrop of increasing proximities between Iran and China.

Background:

- **Exclusion of India from project:** There are reports that Iran had launched the track laying programme for the 628 km long rail link between Chabahar and Zahidan.
- **Clarification:** Iran has since clarified that India could join the project at a later stage.
- China and Iran are also close to sealing an ambitious deal on an economic and security partnership.



The Chabahar project:

- Chabahar port on Iran's Makran coast just 1,000 km from Kandla is well situated. There is a need to build road and rail links from Chabahar to Zahidan and then 200 km further on to Zaranj in Afghanistan.
- **Role of India:** IRCON had prepared engineering studies estimating that the 800 km long railway project would need an outlay of \$1.6 billion. India concentrated on the 220 km road to connect Zaranj to Delaram on the Herat highway which was completed in 2008 at a cost of \$150 million.
- **Progress on project:**
 - **During sanctions on Iran (2005-2013):** There was little progress.
 - **After sanctions were eased on Iran after 2015:** A MoU was signed with Iran during Indian PM's visit to Tehran in 2016 to equip and operate two terminals at the Shahid Beheshti port as part of Phase I of the project.
 - Another milestone was the signing of the Trilateral Agreement on Establishment of International Transport and Transit Corridor between Afghanistan, Iran and India.
 - In addition to \$85 million of capital investment, India also committed to provide a line of credit of \$150 million for port container tracks.
 - Phase I was declared operational in 2018 and India's wheat shipments to Afghanistan have been using this route.
 - A special economic zone (SEZ) at Chabahar was planned but re-imposition of U.S. sanctions has slowed investments into the SEZ.
- **Delays to project:**
 - Time is taken by the U.S. Treasury to actually clear the import of heavy equipment such as rail mounted gantry cranes, mobile harbour cranes, etc.
- **The rail-track project:**
 - A financing MoU was signed under which India undertook to provide \$500 million worth of rolling stock and signalling equipment including \$150 million of steel rail tracks.
 - **Iranian responsibility:** It was for local works of land levelling and procurement.
- **Ambitious plans by Iran:**
 - To extend the railway line from Zahidan to Mashad (about 1,000 km) and then another 150 km onwards to Sarakhs on the border with Turkmenistan.
 - Another plan is to link it with the International North-South Transport Corridor towards Bandar Anzali on the Caspian Sea.

Importance of China for Iran:

- **The nuclear programme:**

9 PM Compilation for the Month of July, 2020

- **1980s-90s:** China provided direct assistance to Iran's nuclear and missile development programmes.
- **After 1997:** China stopped further assistance to the programme and sales of complete missiles but Iran by then had progressed sufficiently to carry on the project.
- **Partnership:** After sanctions were eased in January 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Tehran and proposed a long-term comprehensive, strategic partnership programme. It would involve Chinese investment in Iranian infrastructure and assured supplies of Iranian oil and gas at concessional rates.
- **Tensions in the region:**
 - It has been growing since last year with missile strikes in Saudi Arabia claimed by the Houthis and a U.S. drone strike in January killing Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) chief Gen. Qassim Soleimani.
 - The U.S. announced that it wanted the UNSC to continue the ban on Iranian acquisition of conventional weapons.
 - UNSC Resolution 2231 was adopted in July 2015 by consensus to endorse the JCPOA and contains a five-year restriction on Iran's importing conventional weapons that ends on October 18.
 - **Unilateral quitting by US from JCPOA:** It is threatening to invoke the automatic snapback of sanctions provisions of JCPOA.

Stakes for India:

- **Alarming for India:**
 - China is also concluding a security and military partnership with Tehran. It calls for "joint training and exercises, joint research and weapons development and intelligence sharing".
 - Initial reports in Iran have suggested China will deploy 5,000 security personnel to protect its projects in Iran.
- **Growing Chinese presence in Iran:**
 - India is concerned about its strategic stakes around the Chabahar port project that it has been developing, and for which it committed Rs 100 crore in the last Budget.
 - **Importance:** The port is close to Gwadar port in Pakistan, which is being developed by China as part of its CPEC that links it to the Indian Ocean through BRI.

Tehran's balancing act:

- **Difficult balancing act:** To manage the hardliners at home while coping with Trump administration's policy of 'maximum pressure' which was vetoed by Russia and China.
- **Domestic politics:** Hard liners have accused Foreign Minister of undue secrecy surrounding the agreement amid rumours that China may be taking over Kish island in the Persian Gulf and that Chinese troops would be stationed in Iran to secure Chinese companies and investments.

Way Forward

- India needs to improve its implementation record of infrastructure projects that it has taken up in its neighbourhood.
- **Expansion of Chinese footprints:** Indian cooperation projects in Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar suffers from delays and cost overruns.
- The key is to continue to remain politically engaged with Iran so that there is a better appreciation of each other's sensitivities and compulsions.

46. Migrant workers – Right to vote

Source – [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Salient features of the Representation of People's Act

Context – B R Ambedkar emphasized that, a democratic government was inseparable from the right to vote, and it was voting that would prove to be (one of) the harbinger(s) of political education.

Migrant workers - According to the latest 2011 Census, the number of internal migrants stand at 450 million (45 crore), a 45 per cent surge from the 2001 census.

Challenges associated with exercising voting rights

1. **Social caste and economic class-** Migrant laborers mostly hail from most poverty-driven rural areas and from among the most marginalized sections (SC/STs and OBCs, and other minorities, including Muslims). They are mostly uneducated, and lack assets including land.
 - Economic constraints disable a majority of them from voting as they cannot, in the midst of harsh work cycles, commute to their home states on the polling day
2. **Section 20 , Representation of People Act** - Migrants are not permanent/long-term residents in host cities and do not satisfy the requirements of being an “ordinary resident” under Section 20 of the Representation of People Act, (RP Act), in the host state, to obtain voter cards.

Suggested solution

1. **Section 60(c), Representation of People Act** - The Election Commission of India has under Section 60(c) of the RP Act the power to notify a certain class of persons to vote via postal ballot system. The Indian migrant worker deserves the secured right to have access to vote through a similar system.

Way Forward - The Supreme Court has interpreted the right to vote as an extension of the fundamental right of the freedom of expression. This brings with it a positive obligation on the ECI to ensure optimal conditions for the exercise of this freedom.

47. Make the right call on ‘Malabar’ going Quad

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context: Analyzing the speculation that India could soon invite Australia to join the Malabar naval exercises to be held later this year.

Background:

- **Reports:** A key meeting of India's Ministry of Defense discussed the issue of adding Australia to the trilateral Malabar naval exercise with Japan and the United States in the Bay of Bengal.
- **Quad participation:** If Australia participates, it will make it the first time since 2007 that all members of Quad will participate in a joint military drill aimed ostensibly at China.

Quad: The grouping of four democracies –India, Australia, US and Japan– known as the quadrilateral security dialogue or quad, was first mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007.

Points of conflict:

- **Opposition by China for this coalition in the Indo-Pacific region:**
 - **Containing China rise:** The Chinese leadership sees the maritime Quadrilateral as an Asian-NATO.

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- **Move directed against China:** Due to current strained bilateral ties of India with China. It will have harsh consequences by putting more pressure on China and moving to expand its sphere of influence into the entire Indian Ocean and the South Pacific.
- **Overdue movement by India:**
 - **To shed its traditional defensiveness:** In the maritime domain following the stand-off in Ladakh.
 - **Realist view:** This alliance will be used to counter Chinese moves in the Indian Ocean.
- **Need of caution by India:**
 - **Sending contrary signals to China:** Invitation to Australia to participate in the Malabar exercise at a time when India and China are negotiating a truce on the border in Eastern Ladakh.
 - **Needlessly open a new front:** If China responded churlishly through aggressive posturing in the Eastern Indian Ocean

The prospect of modest gains for India:

- **Strategic rationale of the military Quad:** India's priority is to acquire strategic capabilities to counter a Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean.
- **Anti-submarine warfare tech in exchange for signing up the 'military-quad':**
 - **To deter Chinese submarines:** The Indian Navy is yet to develop the undersea capability to deter Chinese submarines in the eastern Indian Ocean.
 - **To improve Indian Navy's deterrence potential:** Cooperation with the U.S. and Japan without attendant benefits of strategic technology transfers will not improve it in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- **In operational terms:** It might be premature for Delhi to initiate multilateral engagement with Quad partners.
 - **To be used to draw India into the security dynamics of the Asia-Pacific:** As the strategic contest between the U.S. and China in East Asia and Southeast Asia are growing up.
 - **Expectation by the US to assist the US Navy in the South China Sea:** By its Indo-Pacific partners including India as China has stepped up its naval presence.
 - The U.S. and Japanese navies have little spare capacity for sustained surveillance and deterrence operations in the IOR. Australia is the only one ready and able to partner India in securing the Eastern Indian Ocean.

The China has been cautious so far in the ocean region.

Cautious approach by China:

- **Question of timing:**
 - A balancing coalition must come together when the nature and magnitude of the threat is wholly manifest.
 - **Challenge by China:**
 - Despite a growing presence in the Indian Ocean, the PLAN is yet to physically threaten Indian interests at sea.
 - **Not challenged Indian sovereignty:** Chinese warships in its territorial waters or ventured close to Indian islands with malign intent.
- **Avoided entanglement with Indian naval ships:**

- In the subcontinental littorals, Chinese Navy has limited its ventures to friendly countries in the region, many of which are happy to benefit from Beijing's economic and military power.
- **Cautious approach by Chinese maritime agencies:** Chinese research and intelligence ships have ensured that operations do not cross the threshold of conflict with India.

Need for careful thought and Way Forward:

- For India, naval coalition building alone will not credibly deter Chinese naval power in the Indian Ocean.
- **Upgrading the trilateral Malabar to a quadrilateral:** This without acquiring the requisite combat and deterrence capability could yield gains for India in the short term but would prove ineffective in the long run.
- New Delhi should not sign up to quadrilateral engagement without a cost-benefit exercise and commensurate gains in the strategic-operational realm. What might appear politically sensible could be operationally imprudent.

48. Why a separate anti-torture law?

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-2 Human Rights

Context: The alleged torture of a father-son duo in Sattankulam town in Tamil Nadu has once again given rise to the demand for a separate law against torture.

Existing Law against Torture:

- Torture is not defined in the Indian Penal Code, but the definitions of 'hurt' and 'grievous hurt' are clearly laid down.
- Definition of 'hurt' includes psychic torture, environmental coercion, tiring interrogative prolixity, and overbearing and intimidatory methods, among others. However, it does not include mental torture.
- Under the Code of Criminal Procedure, a judicial magistrate inquires into every custodial death.
- The National Human Rights Commission has laid down specific guidelines for conducting autopsy under the eyes of the camera.

Important Supreme Court Judgements:

1. The Supreme Court judgment in *DK Basu v. State of West Bengal* was a turning point in the evolving jurisprudence on custodial torture. The Court laid down certain basic "requirements" to be followed in all cases of arrest or detention till legal provisions are made in that behalf as a measure to prevent custodial violence.
2. The SC in *Nilabati Behera v. State of Orissa* made sure that the state could no longer escape liability in public law and had to be compelled to pay compensation.
3. The Court has held in many cases that policemen found guilty of custodial death should be given the death penalty.

Draft Prevention of Torture Bill, 2017: The Bill seeks to provide for punishment for torture committed by government officials. It provided death penalty for custodial deaths. The bill has been criticised on many grounds such as:

- a. It is very harsh for the police to discharge its responsibilities without fear of prosecution and persecution.
- b. It was inconsistent with the existing provisions of law.

c. It included 'severe or prolonged pain or suffering' as a form of torture but that was not defined.

- a. The 273rd Report of the Law Commission recommended ratification of the U.N. Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment (CAT).
- b. CAT aims to prevent torture and other acts of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment around the world

Way Forward:

The prevalent law in India is adequate and well in tune with the provisions of CAT. Thus, it is important to properly implement existing laws to deal with police torture and custodial deaths

The investigations, the prosecutions are not fair and these must be rectified at first. The temptation to use third-degree methods must be replaced with scientific skills. Implement recommendations of various commissions to bring in necessary reforms.

49. Importance of new Arabian business for India

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-2 Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context: Analyzing the costs of neglecting the new possibilities for wide-ranging Arabian business are far higher than a lost railway contract in Iran for India.

Background:

1. India's extra-special relationship with Iran: It rests on a number of claims:

- a. Historical connections
- b. Civilizational bonds
- c. Energy supplies
- d. Regional security.

2. With Arabian Peninsula:

All above factors are of far greater import in India's engagement.

Outweighing relationship with Iran:

1. Millions of Indian immigrants in the Arab nations
2. Massive hard currency remittances from them
3. The density of commercial engagement with the Arab Gulf.

In recent years, the UAE and Saudi Arabia have extended invaluable support in countering terrorism and blocked attempts to condemn India in the Muslim world

3. Curious inversion in India's intellectual imagination:

Latest anxiety: Delhi lost a railway contract in Iran.

Large countries with major foreign investments and projects win some and lose some. That is part of doing business in other countries. Then there is no escaping the political risk associated with foreign projects.

Dealing of India with Iran:

1. Sanctions imposed by the US have crippled the Iranian economy:

- a. It also targets third countries that do business with certain Iranian entities.
- b. **India gained exemption from sanctions:** For its participation in the Chabahar port project in Iran but they don't apply to some of the partners suggested by Iran in the railway project.
- c. **Iran would like India to break the US sanctions regime:** A prudent Delhi is resisting that temptation and would rather lose the railway contract than get into the raging crossfire between the US and Iran.

2. India's Iran policy as a continuous purity test for Delhi's "strategic autonomy":

Some foreign policy experts expect Delhi to conduct its relationship with Iran without a reference to either a cost-benefit calculus or Iran's troubled relationship with others with whom India has important partnerships.

3. On Iran's covert nuclear programme:

- a. As the US mounted pressure on Iran to come clean 15 years ago, there was a strong view in Delhi that India should cast its lot with Tehran.
- b. View of pragmatics:** They pointed to one of the preconditions for the India-US nuclear deal — Delhi's strong commitment to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.
- c. Confrontation of backing Iran in its nuclear confrontation with NPT:** It would mean killing support in the US Congress for the historic civil nuclear initiative signed by India in July 2005.
- d. Delhi's voted against Iran in the IAEA:** The pragmatists were vindicated when Iran concluded a nuclear deal of its own with the US and major powers a decade later.

4. Importance of Iran for India's foreign policy:

- a. Iran is one of the the most important nations of the world based on:
 1. Geographic and demographic size
 2. The geopolitical location next door
 3. Natural resources
 4. The extraordinary talents of its people
- b. Most of those fabulous assets have been, unfortunately, neutralized by Iran's prolonged confrontation with the US.

For both internal and external reasons, Iran will remain a difficult place to do business. Delhi must advance ties with it within the confines of that unfortunate but real constraint.

Opportunity for India in Arab:

- a. The Arab world has had its doors open for political, economic and technological cooperation with India.
- b. Three moderate Arab nations — Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE — are confronting radical forces in the region and are valuable partners for India in countering forces of destabilization.
- c. Scale of Beijing's economic advances in the Arab world:** The talk of a spectacular deal between China and Iran is just talk for now but there is real Chinese economic action in the Arab world as the region embraces China's Belt and Road Initiative. China's Digital Silk Road too is gaining ground in the Arab world.
- d. India is no minor economic force in the Arab world:** It is having had a much longer engagement with the region than China. Instead of defining an unrealistic competition with Beijing, Delhi must up its own commercial game in the Arab world. One of the new possibilities for India lies in the domain of new technologies.

Way Forward

- a. The UAE launched the first home-grown Arab space mission from a Japanese rocket. The UAE's space programme is only a reflection of the emerging sentiment among the Gulf Arabs to reduce the over-dependence on oil, promote alternative energy sources, invest in higher education, and develop technology hubs.
- b. This provides a solid basis for elevating India's economic partnership with the Arab world to the next level.

50. More than a crisis, a chance to rebuild health care

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Context: The Director-General of World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledged the success of Mumbai's densely populated Dharavi slum in containing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background:

- **Current foci of the pandemic:** Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Ahmedabad and Bengaluru are among India's major metropolitan agglomerations.
- This points to both the speed and the scale of the epidemic moving within densely populated areas.
- **Dharavi case success:** Sustained municipal efforts and community participation.

Opportunity to act

- **Cases:**
 - After nearly 100 days of the first 14-hour janata curfew, the Minister of Health highlighted how 49 districts out of the 733 in India accounted for 80% of the nearly eight lakh cases with eight States accounting for 90% of all the incident cases.
 - Numbers have moved steadily past the million mark and India is now third in global case standings.
- **Numbers at face value:**
 - There are on average roughly 250 cases per district in about 700 districts
 - Many of these districts may be closer to having no cases.
 - Others may be at a significantly higher incidence.

The low numbers in a large number of districts present officials the opportunity of stemming the epidemic and preventing morbidity, mortality and economic distress in a significant way.

Need of Key steps at ground level:

- **To disaggregate the COVID-19 tracking mechanisms and the national level tables and graphs that are updated daily:**
 - There should be 733 district-level versions where each one is updated and reported on a daily basis at the district level.
 - The accuracy and timeliness of district-level tracking should be ensured.
 - **Retain their low incidence status:** Such districts should be supported with all comprehensive testing kits and contact tracing know-how.
 - The earlier scheme of designating districts as green, yellow and red will be strengthened with this disaggregated reporting.
- **To encourage District Magistrates:**
 - To use the full range of social support schemes available in support of the District Health Officer and team.
 - To be able to prevent anyone from facing situations of hunger or economic distress.
 - **Addressing the epidemic:** By better household nutrition and income outcomes.
- **Scaling up the testing capacity in the district:**
 - **By coopting science departments of college and university:** Chemistry and zoology-allied departments such as microbiology and biochemistry can lend their laboratory services to carry out basic polymerase chain reaction (PCR)-based tests.
 - This will require administrative imagination and collaboration from the ICMR, the Department of Biotechnology as well as the UGC.

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- **Health as a reliable career opportunity:** From the laboratory to the bedside and not using emerging talents in educational institutions in tier 2 and tier 3 towns in many districts in India would be a wasted opportunity both in terms of training and nurturing ambitions.
- **Testing:**
 - It would be good to look at rapid innovations that have been surfacing within the past 12 weeks globally. Testing could become a self-administered process.
 - One has to look at recent insights into using saliva as the start point for testing rather than using a nasopharyngeal swab for sampling.
 - **Increased testing stems the tide of morbidity and mortality:**
 - Incidence rates have risen wherever testing has been constrained.
 - Epidemics are not to be treated as law and order situations with policing. Lockdowns can have multiple collateral damage at the community and economy levels.
 - **Inspiring confidence among the population:** By freely available, quality assured testing and even without lockdowns
- **Chance for biotech:**
 - **Without compromising the standards or rigor of evidence needed for regulatory and manufacturing approval:** The emphasis should be to encourage innovators and entrepreneurs to bring out and scale up their products.
 - The world is increasingly looking at personalised diagnostics and therapeutics.
- **Expanding the network of monitoring exponentially and addressing morbidity earlier in its course:**
 - If with a positive test report, COVID-19 positive individuals were able to:
 - Monitor their own oxygenation status at home
 - Along with basic fever management medicines and based on predetermined cutoffs
 - Able to seek and obtain care at oxygen equipped care facilities.
 - **This requires two bold administrative leaps:**
 - Ensure every positive diagnosis report is also delivered along with a pulse oximeter and phone number to call and report status on.
 - Ensure that there would be enough oxygen-equipped beds in every part of the country.
- **For roughly 3% to 5% of people who need more than oxygen support:**
 - We need to ensure that our doctors, nurses, laboratory personnel and floor workers in hospitals are protected with PPE kits to safety at home and salaries on time.
 - Critical engagement from Indian biopharmaceutical and biotech companies should be encouraged to produce validated and affordable antiviral drugs and monoclonal antibodies.

Way Forward

- COVID-19 is both a crisis and an opportunity for health-care reform as well as understanding the interplay of health outcomes with social and economic support interventions and limitations of law enforcement in managing epidemics.
- Innovations in managing the COVID-19 pandemic can help India revolutionize care delivery and related outcomes

51. Privatization of Indian Railways

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Context - The planned privatization of some services of the Indian Railways could impact maintenance, operations and welfare.

Selection of private parties – It is done using the tendering process and proposes two-stage competitive bidding.

These parties have to pay fixed haulage charges, energy charges based on actual consumption, and a share in gross revenue through the bidding process.

Issues Associated with privatization

- 1. Fixing responsibility in accidents, derailments** - The responsibility of the private investor ends with investment in the procurement and maintenance of coaches. While, train operation, safety and dealing with everyday problems rest with the Railways.
 - In case of an unfortunate event, the question would be how to fix responsibility when the coaches are owned by the investor but operated by the Railways and its staff.
- 2. Fixing passenger fares** - Full liberty is being given to the private party to unilaterally fix fares for these proposed trains that are on a par with air and air-conditioned bus fares. It will be beyond the common man's reach. Fare concessions extended to several categories of people will not be made available by the private investor.
- 3. Marginalizing the vulnerable sections** - The private investor is not bound to follow reservation regulations in employment, in turn depriving employment opportunities for those who are on the margins of society.

Suggested solutions

- 1. Considering IRCTC as an alternative partner** - Instead of a private entrepreneur, entrusting this task to the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation, a government undertaking which has gained experience in running the Tejas Express trains, will lead to 'unity of command' in maintenance, operation and passenger services under the single administration of the Railways and its undertaking.
- 2. Hyderabad Metro Model** - In the case of the metro railway services (Hyderabad, for example), an ideal PPP project, the private sector is solely responsible for daily maintenance, operation, passenger amenities and staff issues. The State government steps in when it comes to land, power, permissions, law and order, etc. Fare determination is in consultation with the government.

Way Forward - The Indian Railways is a strategic resource for the nation and provides a vital public good. Hence, it should not be judged solely on its profit-generating capability or market-based return on investment rather it needs to be considered as a social welfare organization.

52. National Commission for Scheduled Castes – Agency for empowerment of Dalits

Source – [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies

Context - In 2020, new thoughts and new actions are needed by citizens, civil society, and governments to advance the socio-economic empowerment of the Dalits.

Steps National Commission for Scheduled Castes can take for the socio-economic empowerment of the Dalits:

1. Strengthen the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act - Need is to develop Standard Operating Procedures for filing and investigating cases under relevant laws and make them available in all languages at all police stations.

- **Successful prosecution vs case registration** - Rewarding prosecutors who succeed in getting convictions in cases charged under the SC/ST Act is important because successful prosecution is a true metric rather than the registration of a case at the police station.
- **Digitalization can ensure transparency** - Online reporting and tracking of crimes, irrespective of jurisdiction will make system more transparent and will ensure social justice.
- **Capacity Building** - Training and capacity building of judges, lawyers, and policemen is of prime importance in strengthening the law and its implementation.
- **In-house mechanisms** - The need is to create internal structures within organizations to respond to complaints — just like internal complaints committees for sexual harassment. This will minimize criminal procedures also and reduce burden on courts.

2. Effective Governance – Generally, each ministry is supposed to set aside 15 per cent of its spending in a Scheduled Caste Sub Plan, but often their outcomes are insignificant. The National Commission for Scheduled Castes should work with legislators to identify four or five priorities across all government schemes and reorient all spending (SCP) around those priorities.

- For example, these could be employment generation and self-employment, capacity building, including soft skills. The ministries of civil aviation and skill development, for instance, could combine their SCPs into one.
- **Tracking the output** – NCSC can track the output of SCPs every quarter and then every month through a dashboard, just as the Niti Aayog tracks development in the “Aspirational Districts”.

3. Involving all stakeholders – Need is to catalyze social change through 3C’s - civil society, corporations, and communities. For that the Commission can create a platform for structured engagement with civil society groups working on Dalit issues.

4. Identifying key social practices – All stakeholders can identify key social practices across the country that still segregate Dalits—whether in schools, homes, or workplaces — and run targeted communication campaigns for students and teachers, villagers, companies, etc.

5. Creating social capital - Creating a network of Scheduled Caste alumni of IIMs and IITs and encouraging them to suggest and implement ideas within and around their own organizations that advance economic empowerment of Dalits will prove effective in long-term.

6. Cultural advancement – Funding and encouraging directors, film-makers, photographers for art work like film, periodic dramas on Dalits is important for bringing Dalit culture in light.

Way Forward - The Commission has a constitutional mandate to participate in the social and economic planning for SC welfare and it should use this mandate to guide such a group. Tasks of the National Commission for SCs, thus, needs to be reimagined to make it a transformative agency for the Dalit community.

53. Data governance for non-personal data

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Context – The non-personal data committee's data governance framework raises many questions.

To enable a robust regulation of Non-Personal Data, the report by a committee defines key stakeholders for the ecosystem. Following are the challenges associated with the report and its key stakeholders -

1. Absence of Personal Data protection - For a country that does not have a personal data protection bill, the setting up of a committee to regulate non-personal data seems premature.

2. Participatory approach in data management - There is recognition that data, in many cases, are not just a subject of individual decision-making but that of communities, such as in the case of ecological information. Therefore, it is critical that communities are empowered to exercise some control over how the data are used.

3. Data principals - They are those who/ which can be individuals, companies or communities. The roles and rights of individuals and companies in the context of data governance are well understood.

- **Lack of clarity on community as stakeholder**- The idea of communities as data principals is introduced ambiguously by the report. While it provides examples of what might constitute a community, e.g. citizen groups in neighborhoods, there is little clarity on the rights and functions of the community.

4. Data custodians – They are those who undertake collection, storage, processing, and use of data in a manner that is in the best interest of the data principal.

- **Fuzzy definition** - It is not specified if the data custodian can be the government or just private companies, or what best interest is, especially when several already vague and possibly conflicting principal communities are involved.
- **Conflict of interest** – The suggestion that data custodians can potentially monetize the data they hold is especially problematic as this presents a conflict of interest with those of the data principal communities.

5. Data trustees and Data Principals – Being data trustee is a method through which communities can exercise data rights. Trustees can be governments, citizen groups, or universities. However, the relationship between the data principal communities and the trustees is not clear.

6. Data trusts - The report explains data trusts comprising specific rules and protocols for containing and sharing a given set of data. Trusts can hold data from multiple custodians and will be managed by public authority.

- The power, composition and functions of the trust are not established.

Way Forward - The committee can organize broader consultations to ensure that the objective of unlocking data in public interest does not end up creating confusing structures that exacerbate the problems of the data economy rather than solving the arising issues in digital age

54. Transforming Higher Education

Source – [The Hindu](#)

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

Context - In normal times, maintaining the status quo or implementing incremental and marginal reforms was all one could hope for. The pandemic has opened the doors for ushering in massive, bold and transformational reforms in higher Education.

Ideal learning outcomes of higher education

1. Knowledge - The first **ideal learning outcome** is to provide knowledge in the relevant discipline to the students.

2. Skill development - Second, since higher education students are on the verge of joining the workforce, it is expected that their education will also impart them with the skills needed for their jobs/enterprises.

3. Value-based learning - Students are expected to play a constructive role in shaping the society and the world at large using the values and ideals of a modern, progressive society; the teaching-learning process is expected to mould their character accordingly.

Issue with India's higher learning institutions

1. Students focus on acquisition of degree not skills- The reality is that part from a handful of institutions in the technology, management and liberal arts streams, and a small number of extremely self-motivated students, a vast majority of other students just meander through college and acquire a degree.

2. Curriculum's relation with employability skills - That there is a huge gulf between the curriculums taught in the colleges and actual job requirements are universally known.

Suggested solutions for Higher Education Reformation

1. Completely re-evaluating the syllabus periodically.

2. Introducing substantive industrial internships.

3. Evaluation can be a mix of regular assignments, performance in the internship as rated both by the industry and the college, and a light, home-based proctored exam.

4. **Utilization of time for learning values** - The time saved in attending regular classes in the institution can be compensated for by spending time on the development of skills and prosocial attitudes and values that will help the student lead an enriching life.

Way Forward - India is uniquely positioned in the world today to benefit from its demographic dividend. Yet, in many contexts, it has been pointed out that this dividend can actually turn into a liability since those in the population bracket that are ready to join the workforce have practically no skills or knowledge that add to their employability. Thus, need is to utilize this big opportunity for country's growth and to accommodate aspirations of youth.

55. Right to Internet – Needed for inclusive development

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Context – Across the world, despite the structural hurdles to access, the Internet has become indispensable to human freedom.

Internet Ban in Jammu and Kashmir

Reason for suspension of Internet

- National security - To limit communications and movement internet was suspended with the aim of thwarting terrorism.

Arguments given against such ban in Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India (2020)

1. Order not made public - The government had refused to make public its orders blocking the Internet which violated a basic tenet of the rule of law: that people have a right to know why their freedoms have been constrained.

2. Link between ban on internet and security - The empirical evidence demonstrated that there was no link between shutting down the Internet and the state's objective of protecting security. Indeed, available materials pointed the other way: that the Internet was a valuable tool that could be used to counter the spread of incendiary rumors and fake news.

3. Use of alternative options - The government had at its disposal less restrictive options, such as the blacklisting of specific websites and targeted surveillance measures. It is unclear if these alternatives were even considered.

4. Affected entire population - There was no justification for a blanket Internet shutdown that impacted a territory of eight million people, a vast majority of whom had nothing to do with terrorism.

Supreme Court's ruling in Anuradha Bhasin Case

Right to Internet linked with other rights - The Court held that the ability to access the web had an instrumental bearing on a number of other fundamental rights, including the rights to free speech and freedom of business; and that therefore any limitation placed on the web must be necessary and proportionate to the goal that the State seeks to achieve.

Foundation for Media Professionals Case (2020) - This petition pointed out that it had been eight months since the web was restricted in J&K, and now the combination of the pandemic and a lockdown had made Internet deprivation even more unconscionable.

Supreme Court's Ruling - The court created a new three-member special committee headed by the Union Home Secretary — an exercise wholly outside the legal framework — to take stock of things.

Issue with the judgment - The executive that was responsible for restricting access to the Internet in the first place was now tasked with reviewing its own actions.

Way Forward - The Internet is known as a great equalizer. Its evolution was meant to herald a more equal society. However, blanket bans are still being imposed which deprive citizens of their basic rights and create unequal societies. The government needs to become the facilitator of rights for inclusive development of all.

56. Set up a High Court for Puducherry

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 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.

Context: Analysing the need of setting up a High Court (HC) in Puducherry.

Background:

- 1. 1962:** Puducherry was merged with India and the jurisdiction of the Madras HC was extended to it.
- 2. 2017:** The Puducherry legislature unanimously resolved to have its own HC and the Madras HC was informed on July 7, 2017.
- 3. April 2017:** The Pondicherry Bar Association also passed a resolution seeking establishment of the HC.

4. **August 2019:** Puducherry CM said that a Bench of the Madras HC at Puducherry on the lines of the one set up in Madurai was a felt need and sought the support of judges of the SC

Why should there be the need for a High Court at Puducherry?

- **Cost cutting:**
 - The Puducherry government spends exorbitant sums of money towards expenses of the large HC.
 - As its population is small, this amount can be reduced to less than a quarter of the amount spent with a much smaller HC.
- **Breaching of constitutional provisions:**
 - **Administrative expenses:** According to the Constitution, when a common HC is established for more than one State, this has to be paid only from the consolidated fund of the 'State' in which the principal seat of the High Court is situated.
 - But Puducherry shares the disproportionately exorbitant expenses with Tamil Nadu.
 - Also, administrative expenses of a High Court at the UT shall be drawn from the 'Consolidated fund of India' under the Constitution.
- **For quick action on pendency:**
 - A Puducherry HC with four to five judges can ensure quick action on pendency of matters of the HC matters, at least at Puducherry.
 - **All India Judges Association And Others vs Union Of India (Uoi) And Ors:** The Supreme Court observed that the time has now come for protecting one of the pillars of the Constitution, namely, the judicial system, by directing increase, in the first instance, in the Judge strength from the existing ratio of 10.5 or 13 per 10 lakhs people to 50 Judges for 10 lakh people.
 - It was also discussed in the Law Commission of India Report titled '**Arrears and Backlog: Creating Additional Judicial (wo)manpower**', in 2014.
- **Increasing ratio of judges:**
 - As of 2016, the ratio is only 12 judges for one million population.
 - It can be increased if a separate High Court with four to five judges is established.

A data comparison:

1. Size of population and territory is irrelevant:

- a. The number of cases filed and disposed of at Puducherry in 2010 is four times higher than the numbers at Sikkim, Manipur and Goa (with High Courts) put together.
- b. Bigger States have more judges and staff whereas smaller States have lesser numbers of these.

2. The data collected by this writer show:

	Sikkim	Manipur	Goa	Puducherry
In terms of the number of cases filed in 2010	5. (1,117)	6. (637)	7. (4,984)	8. (4,984)
The number of cases decided	9. (1,174)	10. (495),	11. (3,646)	12. (24336)

1. **Memorandum provided by the All India Bar Association to the Chief Minister in 2017:** It shows that the number of cases disposed from Puducherry (28,631 cases) is three times more than the number of cases (9,031 cases) disposed by four High Courts (Tripura, Manipur, Meghalaya and Sikkim) put together in 2016.

- 2. Presence of the Constitutional Court in the capital city:** It acts as a check on the executive and legislature.
- 3. Has to travel long distances:** Even the exercise of safeguarding fundamental rights involves travel, time and expenses.
4. The Constitution permits Puducherry to have its own High Court under Article 241. A High Court for Puducherry will also strengthen voices seeking Statehood.

Aiding Statehood demand:

- 1. Constitutional provision:** It enabled establishment of a legislature and Council of Ministers for certain Union Territories with the intent of providing them Statehood gradually.
- 2. Under Article 293A:**
 - Out of the seven UT originally placed all except Puducherry were granted Statehood by 1989.
 - Most UT under 239A at least had Benches of High Courts when they attained Statehood.
 - Tripura, Manipur, Meghalaya had Benches of the Gauhati High Court before they got their own High Courts.
 - Interestingly, the Delhi High Court was established in 1966 before Delhi got its legislature in 1993.

Even a Bench of the Madras HC as against a separate HC at Puducherry is unfavorable:

1. Puducherry will still have to share the expenses of such a large High Court
2. Judges might not prefer shuttling between Benches at Chennai, Puducherry and Madurai frequently
3. The protests against the setting up of the Madurai Bench a decade ago should be borne in mind.
- 4. Presidential order establishing the Bench was challenged before the Madras HC in 2004:** Its demand for a Bench of the High Court has always been met with stiff resistance from the Bar practicing in the Court having jurisdiction.
5. The advantage that Puducherry enjoys is that the Constitution enables Parliament to establish separate High Courts in Union Territories.

Way Forward

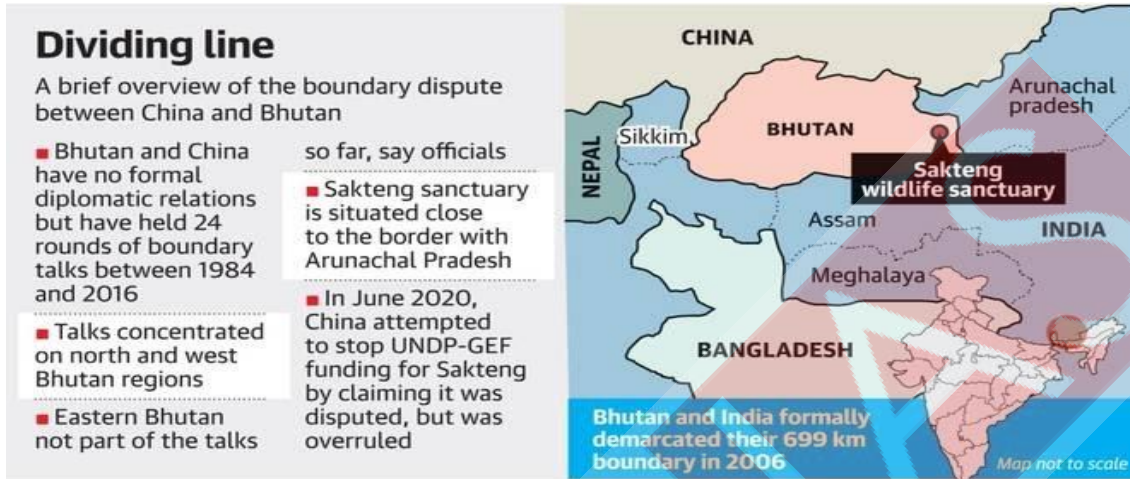
1. In March 2016, the Government of India had suggested that the establishment of a High Court will be taken up if the Puducherry government proposes the idea. However, the decision of the Puducherry legislature has still not been conveyed to the Central government.
2. The Puducherry government should now form a committee to prepare a comprehensive report and a draft Bill backing its proposal and forward it to the Central government.
3. In this the nominated Lieutenant Governor and the elected Chief Minister must work in tandem.

57. Another front: On India, Bhutan and China

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 India and its neighborhood- relations.

Context: China has repeated its claim that Bhutan's eastern boundary was a "disputed" area.



Background:

- 1. First claimed by china:** At a UNDP-led Global Environment Facility conference when the Chinese representative tried to stop funding for the Sakteng forest reserve in Bhutan's eastern district of Trashigang which abuts Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang district.
- 2. Surprising claims:**
 - a. China has not objected earlier to funding provided to the sanctuary at the GEF.
 - b. The Trashigang area does not share a boundary with China.
 - c. Chinese officials have not raised the eastern boundary in 24 rounds of talks with Bhutan that began in 1984. Till now, talks have been only about the Pasamlung and Jakarlung valleys in Bhutan's north and Doklam and other pasturelands to the west.

Current crisis:

- **Package solution by China:**
 - For the dispute that is believed to refer to an offer made in the 1990s to swap the northern and western areas. It was rejected by Bhutan due to India's concerns.
- **Bhutan's response:**
 - At the start was to reject China's claim at the GEF and it was able to secure the funding.
 - The Bhutanese Embassy in Delhi served a measure to the Chinese Embassy (Bhutan does not have diplomatic relations with China) but the Chinese MFA repeated the claim again and again.
- **Sober view by Bhutan:** To China's claims by saying that all disputes would be taken up in the next round of China-Bhutan talks. Talks. The last round was in 2016 that have been put off due to the Doklam stand-off in 2017, elections in 2018 and the pandemic this year.

Reasons for Beijing's repeated statements on the boundary issue:



- **Chinese claim seen as a pressure tactic:** An attempt to hurry the scheduling of the next meeting or to gain leverage in the boundary talks
- **Diversionsary tactic or aimed at driving wedge between India and Bhutan:** Due to Saktenge claim as India is already dealing with Chinese aggression across the LAC
- By claiming Bhutan's eastern boundary, China is attempting to double down on its claims over Arunachal Pradesh, neither of which is under its control.

Way Forward

- **Problem in China's package offer:** It implies that Beijing is not giving up its push for the Doklam plateau where it has consolidated its military infrastructure and would like to inch towards India's Chumbi valley which is a strategically sensitive location.
- **In order to respond purposively:** India and Bhutan must stay the course with the close cooperation and complete understanding they have shared for decades,

58. Issues with School Education System in India

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- Education

Context: CBSE has declared Class X and XII Board results. Its evaluation system shows that the goal is that maximum students pass and large number of students score high marks.

- **Funding:** Total money allocated to school education reduced from Rs 38,600 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 37,100 crore in 2018-19.
- **Gross Enrolment Ratio and Retention in School:** The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in 2016-17 for Grades 1-5 was at 95.1%. However, the GER for Grades 6-8 was 90.7%, while for Grades 9-10 and 11-12 it was only 79.3% and 51.3%, respectively. This indicates that a significant proportion of enrolled students begin to drop out after Grade 5 and especially after Grade 8.
- **Access to Education:** The RTE Act provides for free and compulsory education to all children from the age of six to 14 years. Despite advances in expanding access to education, participation rates are still not universal, particularly in rural regions and among lower castes and other disadvantaged groups.
- **Rote learning:** The K. Kasturirangan committee observed that the current education system solely focuses on rote learning of facts and procedures. According to Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), 2018, only 16% of children in Class 1 in rural areas can read the text at the prescribed level, while almost 40% cannot even recognize letters.
- **Outdated and Incoherent curriculum:** The curriculum in school education remains outdated and largely theoretical.

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- **Evaluation system:** Marks play the most important role in deciding the future of children and this often comes down upon students as a burdening factor and often leads to students underperforming.
- **Quality of Teachers:** The school education system faces issues of low teacher to student ratio and quality of teachers. Teachers are often unequipped with modern pedagogical methods of teaching.
- **Infrastructural Issues:** establishing primary schools in every habitation across India has helped increase access to education. However, it has led to the development of very small schools which makes it operationally complex to deploy teachers and critical physical resources. The lack of proper physical infrastructure and human resource in schools is a major hinderance in imparting quality education.

Suggested Reforms:

Funding: As suggested by NITI Ayog in its Strategy Paper for New India @75, Government spending on education as a whole should be increased to at least 6% of GDP by 2022

Curriculum: School education curriculum should focus on interconnectedness of the natural world with everyday lives in order to equip students with rising environmental challenges including climate change. Further, the curriculum load in each subject should be reduced to its essential core content. This would make space for holistic, discussion and analysis-based learning.

Learning. there should be an increased focus on foundational literacy and numeracy. Further, schools should introduce conceptual learning rather than focusing on rote learning. An electronic national educational registry may be conceptualised for tracking each child's learning outcomes.

Evaluation system: The focus of evaluation should be classroom participation by a student, projects, communication and leadership skills and extra-curricular activities.

- Further, checks and balances should be there so as to not provide inflating marks (as in case of CBSE). The goal to pass maximum students only hampers learning outcomes as evaluation becomes flawed.

Teacher's Training: The recommendations of National educational Policy 2019 should be followed-

- The practice of 'para-teachers' (unqualified, contract teachers) should stopped across the country by 2022.
- All teachers should be able to move into either educational administration or teacher education after a minimum number of years of teaching experience.
- Merit-based scholarships to be instituted to undertake the four-year integrated B.Ed. program.

59. Calibrated balance: On India and non-alignment

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2- **Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.**

Context: Analyzing the separate statements of the External Affairs Minister which laid out India's world view in the face of global challenges.

Background:

- **Contention of External Affairs Minister:**
 - Non-alignment as a concept belonged to a bygone era.

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- Multipolarity in the world necessitated that India would have to take a definite stand and even take “risks” on issues such as connectivity, maritime security, terrorism and climate change.
- **Not rejecting Non-Alignment in its entirety:**
 - While it would no longer remain disentangled from difficult decisions but it would not compromise on its independence.
 - **Not part of any alliance:** India has never been part of an alliance system nor looking at now. Even the U.S. must look beyond its present alliances and engage with more multilateral arrangements.

Non-alignment:

- Non-alignment worked for India during the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.
- Land boundary between India and China would always be a factor in a “new cold war” between the U.S and China.
- **Indo-U.S. cooperation:** In many fields such as the growing maritime collaboration like QUAD.
- **Hard reality:** Military collaboration with US on land would prove problematic given India’s disputed boundary with China.

Assessment of India’s constraints and avenues for its potential growth:

- **Assertion of India’s strategic independence:** India’s resistance to joining any alliance comes as a timely reminder amid speculation that tensions with China will push India into a stronger friendship with US.
- **Raising the land issue only bilaterally:** This despite multiple references by the U.S. Secretary of State to the India-China clashes. He has called for jointly countering China.
- **Outreach to Moscow:** Including a visit by Defence Minister and the participation of Mr. Jaishankar in the Russia-India-China trilateral last month and the External Affairs Minister’s comments that India should also seek to build coalitions with “middle powers” such as the EU and Japan.

Way Forward

- At a time of a double crisis for India — battling the novel coronavirus pandemic in the country and Chinese aggression at the border — the message from New Delhi is one of a carefully calibrated balance.

60. Deepening India-South Korea ties

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

Context: Analyzing the relationship between India and South Korea who have signed numerous bilateral agreements with the aim of taking their ties to the next level.

Background:

- **Economic partnership:** It is struck at \$22 billion annually.
- **Defence partnership:** It appears to have receded from great all-round promise to the mere sale and purchase of weapon systems.
- **People to people:** Indians and South Koreans are failing to touch a mutually meaningful chord of empathy. This is at least in part due to cultural prejudices on both sides which stands in the way of a relationship based on openness, curiosity and warmth.

- **Not sufficient momentum:** Whatever bilateral progress has been made in the realm of trade and investment has not let people start building bridges in other areas.
- **For example-**
 - **For South Koreans:** There may be a widespread perception of India as a third world country rife with poverty and hunger. While it is true that India is far from eradicating these deprivations, their extent may be exaggerated in the minds of some.
 - **For Indian:** Indians are unable to distinguish between the cultural and social characteristics of South Koreans and people of other East Asian nations.

Indians in South Korea:

- **Racial prejudice:**
 - Within South Korea, the integration of Indians in the local population is far from complete.
 - There have been some instances of what appears to be racial discrimination including toward Indians in work settings in South Korea.
- **Mutual respect regarding cultural values:**
 - It is the key to build a robust partnership between two countries.
 - This would help in filling the information gap that exists between the two countries.
 - **Information of Korean Culture:** The defining traits of Japan's and China's cultures are better identified than those of Korean culture.
- **Indian Culture Centre in Seoul:**
 - **India's engagement with a strategically important Asian nation:** The establishment of the Indian Culture Centre (ICC) in Seoul 10 years ago was a step in the right direction.
 - **Mission:** To promote people-to-people contacts.
 - The current focus is on diplomatic initiatives. Though it is an important but not the only component of a potentially rich bilateral space. It can sometimes be complicated for the average South Korean to access its offices and services.
 - The ICC's attempts to broad-base an appreciation of Indian culture by for example teaching south Indian dances to elementary school students in South Korea or organizing experiential sessions centered on Indian cuisine are commendable.
 - **Need focus of the common man of South Korea:** Then only it may reach an exponentially wider audience beyond the urban, English-speaking elite of Seoul. The same may be applicable to South Korean culture centers in India.

Way Forward

- **Shifting Balance of power in the region:** India and South Korea may need each like never before to protect their ways of life.
- Both countries will be able to help each other only if they can fill the cultural gaps.
- People from the two countries need to overcome cultural biases and move closer to each other

61. A case for Presidential system

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 2- Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Context: Analysing the need to change the parliamentary system in the backdrop of disgraceful political situations in Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Background:

- The horse-trading of MLAs has led to switch of allegiances for power.
- Pluralist democracy is India's greatest strength but its current manner of operation is the source of our major weaknesses.

Issues of parliamentary system:

- **Unqualified legislators:** The system has created them who sought election only in order to wield executive power.
- **Dependence on legislative majority:** They are obliged to focus more on politics than on policy or performance.
- **Distorted voting preference of an electorate:** They know which individuals it wants to vote but not necessarily which parties.
- **Shifting alliances:** The system led to changing sides by selfish individual interests and not guided by vehicles of coherent sets of ideas.
- **Focus to remain in power:** It has forced governments to concentrate less on governing and obliged them to cater to the lowest common denominator of their coalitions.

The parliamentary system devised in Britain:

- Which is a small island nation with electorates of less than a lakh voters per constituency and is based on traditions which simply do not exist in India.
- **Absence of a real party system:** In India a party is all-too-often a label of convenience which a politician adopts and changes easily.
- The voter chooses not between parties but between individuals usually on the basis of their caste, their public image or other personal qualities.

Reason for entering Parliament is to attain governmental office creates specific problems:

- **Limits executive posts to those who are electable than to those who are able:**
 - The PM cannot appoint a cabinet of his choice and he has to cater to the wishes of the political leaders of several parties.
 - **Talent pool has not been widened:** Though he can bring some members in through the Rajya Sabha but our upper house too has been largely the preserve of full-time politicians.
- **It puts a premium on defections and horse-trading:**
 - The anti-defection Act of 1985 has failed to cure the problem.
 - The bargaining has shifted to getting enough MLAs to resign to topple a government and promising them offices when they win the subsequent by-elections.
- **Legislation suffers:**
 - Most laws are drafted by the executive, in practice by the bureaucracy, and parliamentary input into their formulation and passage is minimal.
 - Many bills are passed after barely a few minutes of debate.
 - **MPs blindly vote as their party demands:** The ruling party inevitably issues a whip to its members in order to ensure smooth passage of a bill and since defiance of a whip itself attracts disqualification.
 - Accountability of the government to the people through their elected representatives is weakened.

- **Parliament or Assembly serves as a theatre for the demonstration of their power to disrupt:**
 - In India's Parliament, many opposition members feel that the best way to show the strength of their feelings is to disrupt law-making rather than debate the law.

What our present system has not done?

- **To ensure effective performance:** India's many challenges require political arrangements that permit decisive action whereas ours increasingly promotes drift and indecision.
- **Government stability:** By holding the executive hostage to the agendas of a few legislators.

The case for a presidential system has never been clearer.

Case for Presidential system:

- **Stability of tenure:** A directly elected chief executive in New Delhi and in each state instead of being vulnerable to the shifting coalition support politics.
- **Cabinet of talent:** The executive would have stability of tenure free and be able to devote his or her energies to governance and not just to government.
- **Will represent majority of Indians and not of MPs:** The Indian voter will be able to vote directly for the individual he or she wants to be ruled.
- **Judging performance:** At the end of a fixed period of time, the public would be able to judge the individual rather than on political skill at keeping a government in office.

Issue to Presidential system: Risk of dictatorship: It conjures up the image of an imperious president who is immune to parliamentary defeat and impervious to public opinion.

Way Forward

- **Democracy is an end in itself:** With the needs and challenges of one-sixth of humanity before our leaders, we must have a democracy that delivers progress to our people.
- Changing to a presidential system is the best way of ensuring a democracy that works.

62. Doctrine of Separation of power

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions

Context – Former Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot's rebellion against Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, has crash-landed in the Rajasthan High Court and the Supreme Court of India.

It has generally been a "hands-off" position as far as the courts interfering in the workings of legislative assemblies or Parliament is concerned. The sole exception is under the anti-defection law — after a final order of disqualification has been passed.

Kihoto Hollohan's case

1. Speaker's decision is under judicial review - A Constitution bench of the Supreme Court in Kihoto Hollohan's case in 1992 held that the Speaker acting in a disqualification matter acts as a tribunal and is subject to judicial review.

2. Non-interference by courts - The judgment makes it clear that the Court will not intervene at an interim stage.

3. Importance of speaker - The same judgment holds that The Speakers/Chairmen hold a pivotal position in the scheme of Parliamentary democracy and are guardians of the rights

and privileges of the House. They are expected to and do take far reaching decisions in a Parliamentary democracy.

Issues with Sachin Pilot Case

1. Court intervened at an interim stage - A mere issuance of a possible disqualification notice by the Speaker, has been contested in the constitutional courts, which have not rejected the challenge at the threshold.

2. Court gave interim judgment - The Rajasthan High Court reserved its judgment, requested the Speaker to defer further proceedings and proceeded to direct him to await judgment.

Way forward – Constitutional Courts are apolitical but keep getting pulled into political matters, especially in matters of mass defections resulting in regime change. They must therefore not turn of themselves into a third house of Parliament or legislature. The walls of separation between constitutional organs, once breached, cannot be then repaired against future intrusions. Even under a sovereign Constitution, parliamentary and legislative supremacy in their spheres of functioning should be respected.

63. The big fight

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 2- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Context: China has retaliated swiftly against US's decision earlier to close down the Chinese consulate in Houston by ordering the closure of the US consulate in Chengdu in China.

Background:

- China had rejected the Trump Administration's charge that its Houston consulate was engaged in espionage and theft of industrial secrets.
- **Downgrading diplomatic ties:** This is the first time since the US and China normalized relations in 1979.
- **Escalation of tensions:** By closure of consulates in Houston and Chengdu between the world's two most important powers and is bound to affect all major actors in the international system.

Relations between China and US:

- **Trade war:**
 - It had begun two years ago with both sides imposing punitive tariffs on imports from each other.
- **Continuing negotiations on resolving the dispute:**
 - The two sides had announced a phase one of the trade deal earlier this year.
- **Rapid expansion of the scope and intensity of the conflict:**
 - **By US:**
 - The Trump Administration charged China with spreading the COVID-19 virus that has infected more than four million Americans and killed nearly 1,50,000.
 - Now the Trump Administration accused Chinese hackers of trying to steal US research on anti-COVID vaccines.
 - The US stepped up its global campaign against China's telecom giant Huawei and pressed its allies and partners to reject its technology in rolling out the 5G mobile networks.
 - **By China:**

- Beijing retaliated by alleging that the Trump Administration was blaming China for its own failures in dealing with the pandemic.
- It also floated the theory that the US Army might have been the original source of the deadly virus.

Their conflict enveloping other countries:

- The US Secretary of State rejected Beijing's territorial claims in the disputed waters of the South China Sea as unlawful.
- **Sharpened the US tone on Chinese expansionism across Asia:** The US has put itself squarely on the Indian side in the unfolding military conflict between Delhi and Beijing in eastern Ladakh.
- **Deep concerns in India:** Due to the muscular approach of the Trump Administration's to Beijing about being drawn into the escalating US-China conflict.
- **Official response of India:** It has been more than careful in its responses to the new US-China dynamic.

Way Forward

Even as India-China tensions on LAC continue, Delhi must also calibrate response to new edge of US-China dynamic.

64. Contempt of Court

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

Context – The initiation of proceedings for criminal contempt of court against lawyer-activist Prashant Bhushan has once again brought under focus the necessity for retaining the law of contempt as it stands today.

Contempt of court – Article 129 and 215 of constitution of India empowers Supreme Court and High Court respectively to punish people for Contempt of court.

Types of Contempt of Court –

- 1. Civil Contempt** – It includes disobedience towards court's order which brings disrepute for the court.
- 2. Criminal Contempt** – This comprises of scandalizing court's authority, obstruction in judicial administration and interference in judicial proceedings.

Issues associated with Contempt of Court cases –

- 1. Chilling effect on Freedom of speech and expression** – An excessively loose use of the test of 'loss of public confidence', combined with a liberal exercise of suo motu powers is not good for civil liberties. It amounts to the Court signaling that it will not suffer any kind of critical commentary about the institution at all, regardless of how evidently problematic its actions may be.
- 2. Against principle of Natural Justice** – It's a classic case of judges being judges in their own cases.
- 3. Against judicial accountability** – Judiciary with its use of Suo-motu powers under Contempt of court prevents any form of judicial accountability and thus makes themselves the sovereign power among the other accountable organs – legislature and executive.
- 4. Overburdened judiciary** - It is not reasonable that instead of taking up matters of absolute urgency in the times of pandemic which are Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the

electoral bonds matter, or the issue of habeas corpus petitions from Jammu and Kashmir, the Supreme Court chose to take umbrage at two tweets.

Way Forward - In contemporary times, it is more important that courts are seen to be concerned about accountability, that allegations are resolved by impartial probes rather than threats of contempt action, and processes are transparent.

65. Role of Governor as the Constitutional Head

Source – [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies

Context – The Rajasthan government crisis has brought into the spotlight the role of the Governor.

Constitutional Power to Summon the House

Article 174 - Governor can summon, prorogue and dissolve the House, only on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers with the Chief Minister as the head.

The powers vested in the office of the Governor

- **Article 163(1) of the Constitution** – It says that “there shall be a council of Ministers with the Chief Minister at the head to aid and advise the Governor in the exercise of his functions, except in so far as he is by or under this constitution required to exercise his functions or any of them in his discretion.”
- **Use of discretion** - When the chief minister has lost the support of the House and his strength is debatable, then the Governor need not wait for the advice of the council of ministers to hold a floor test.

Supreme Court’s ruling

2016 Arunachal Pradesh Case – Supreme Court ruled that - “In ordinary circumstances during the period when the CM and his council of ministers enjoy the confidence of the majority of the House, the power vested with the Governor under Article 174 to summon, prorogue and dissolve the house(s) must be exercised in consonance with the aid and advice of the chief minister and his council of ministers.”

Also in this situation, he is precluded [from taking] an individual call on the issue at his own will, or in his own discretion.

Use of discretion -Only in a situation where the government in power – on holding of such floor test – is seen to have lost the confidence of the majority, would it be open to the Governor to exercise the powers vested with him under Article 174 at his own, and without any aid and advice.

Way Forward – Governor has the dual responsibility of being the constitutional head of the state as well as the agent of centre. The role performance, thus, needs to be done within the constitutional framework to uphold the principles of constitution.

66. Opportunity to change health care

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- Health care

Context: The covid-19 pandemic may have inadvertently given us to reshape our health care systems.

Health care and COVID-19 impact

- The epidemic has had a myriad of indirect effects on environment, livelihoods and on the supply chains.
- The number of patients seeking health care has reduced significantly due to covid crisis. Most affected being planned and non-urgent problems including procedures and surgeries, mainly because of fear.
- The incidents of caesarean sections have gone down, coronary stents, knee replacements or cosmetic surgeries which reflect supplier induced demand have almost stopped.
- There is a decrease in the number of routine admissions for observations or insurance claims. Emergency medical cases have also declined in the lockdown.
- Possibly the unpolluted air, decreased work stress or home cooked food has a great impact on health.
- The availability of beds and doctors are now the chief drivers for patient referrals instead of cartelisation of healthcare for commission. Most practices have had a forced detox from this addiction.
- The focus is back on the basics of preventive health such as diet, exercise, sugar control and hazards of smoking instead of regular health check-ups which did not have a proven health value.
- The population has been taught the importance of not coughing and spitting in the open by the pandemic.

Reflection for health care providers

- There has been a breakdown of overburdened health care facilities, negative impact on incomes and morale of the health care workers, and the collapse of private sector institutions.
- The resurgence of unethical practices is quite possible as the industry will try to make up for its losses. Hefty bills of COVID-19 patients are evidence for this.
- Epidemic's positive impact on unnecessary practices might get washed as normalcy is restored because artificial demands may be created in an effort to increase footfall.

Way Forward

- Medical fraternity in India has done commendable work in the challenge of Covid-19 crisis by putting aside commerce for now. They should seize this opportunity for helping in returning the trust between a doctor-patient relationship which was under severe threat before the pandemic.

67. Affordability of healthy diet in India

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-2-Nutrition

Context: Millions of people, even those who are above the poverty line do not have access to nutritious food and cannot afford a balanced diet.

Healthy and balanced diet in India

- Hundreds of millions of people are above the poverty line of 1.90 dollars purchasing power parity (PPP) per person per day cannot afford a nutritious diet in India.

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- The problem of poor nutrition in India is mainly because of the unaffordability of good diets and not because of lack of information on nutrition or tastes and cultural preferences.
- A new feature of State of food security and nutrition in the world 2020 (SOFI 2020) presented a detailed analysis of the “cost and affordability of healthy diets around the world.”

Types of diets in the World

- **Basic energy sufficient diet:** Required calorie intake is met by the consumption of cheapest starchy cereal available like rice and wheat. Standard reference of 2239 Kcal for a healthy young 30 year old woman is taken.
 - Eating cereals only to meet calorie requirements in South Asia costs around 80 cents and is affordable for a poor person whose income is of 1.9 dollars a day according to the data on retail prices of commodities.
- **Nutrient adequate diet:** In this type of diet, cheap cost items from different food groups are incorporated to meet the calorie requirements along with 23 micro and macro nutrients.
 - This diet costs 2.12 dollars in a day and the cost is above the international poverty line. 18 percent of south Asians cannot afford this diet.
 - The SOFI report suggests that a person cannot spend more than 63 per cent of total expenditure on food.
- **Healthy diet:** In this, the calorie norm and macro and micro nutrient norm are met by the consumption of a diverse diet from several food groups.
 - The Indian recommendation includes consumption of items from six groups for a healthy diet: protein rich foods like eggs and legumes, starchy staples, dairy, vegetables, fruits and fats.
 - The healthy diet costs more than twice the international poverty line that is 4.07 dollars a day. 58 percent of south Asians cannot afford a healthy diet according to the SOFI report.

Affordability of healthy diets

- Tendulkar committee defined poverty line of 2011-12 as 33 rupees per day in urban areas and 27 rupees per day in rural areas, so Indian poverty line is lower than the international poverty line used in the SOFI report.
- Poor in India whose cut off is lower than international norm cannot afford a nutrient adequate diet, let alone a healthy diet.
- Even people with incomes of twice the international poverty cannot afford a healthy diet.

Way Forward

- The problem of affordability of healthy diets has to be addressed in order to reduce malnutrition and food insecurity.
- In the time of crisis, one nutritious meal should be provided to the people who cannot afford a balanced diet.
- The pradhan mantri garib kalyan yojna offers an additional 5 kg of wheat or rice and 1 kg of gram or lentils a month free of cost for all household with ration card till November 2020. More such schemes should be introduced.

68. Governor's role vis-à-vis the Chief Minister

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- Polity

Context: Office takes cue from the constitution and not from the centre but the Rajasthan Governor's role in the current crisis appears to be opposite from this statement.

The political turmoil in Rajasthan

1. Rajasthan's governor held back the government's recommendation for an assembly session citing the COVID-19 situation among other reasons.
2. The repeated queries and the delay in convening the assembly by the office have raised questions about office's commitment to follow the constitution.
3. Raj Bhavan has the power to summon, "The House or each house of Legislature to meet at such time and place as the governor thinks fit" which is given by the Articles 163 and 174 of the Constitution.

The Supreme Court on Governor's Role

- **Nabam Rebia and Bamang Felix vs Deputy Speaker (2016)**: The Supreme Court referred to discussions in the Constituent Assembly and observed that the governor was a nominee of the president. The apex court told that such a nominee cannot have overriding powers over:
 - The representatives of the people who constitute the House (house of state legislature)
 - The executive government functioning under the Council of Ministers with the Chief Minister as its head.
- Politicisation of the office became more frequent when it became common for individuals still active in politics to be established in Raj Bhavans in the 1980s and 1990s.
- **Bomma judgement** : The Supreme Court laid down clear limits of the governor's authority in the landmark Bommai judgment to find a way to curb the misuse of Article 356 to unseat state governments led by parties opposed to the ruling party at the Centre.

Way Forward

The Supreme Court's interventions show that no matter how cloudy Rajasthan's crisis might be politically, its legal and constitutional aspects are crystal clear. The governor's office should take its cue from the constitution and not from the centre and should be completely unbiased in its approach.

69. Importance of triangular relation – India-Russia- China

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS 2 - Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Context – A westward shift in India's foreign policy appear misplaced as engagement with Russia and China does matter for various interests.

Evolution of relations among India-Russia- China

1. Initial Years - In the early 2000s, the three countries were positioning themselves for a transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world order.

2. Anti-US versus Non-west construct- It was not an anti-U.S. construct. The RIC shared some non-West perspectives on the global order, such as an emphasis on sovereignty and territorial integrity, impatience with homilies on social policies and opposition to regime change from abroad agenda.

3. Bilateral Relation - The advent of President Vladimir Putin reinforced the political, defense and energy pillars of the India-Russia strategic partnership. With China, the 2003 decision to bring a political approach to the boundary dispute and to develop other cooperation encouraged a multi-sectoral surge in relations.

Key irritants in India-Russia- China Relation

A. India –USA Relation

- 1. India-USA - Enhanced Relation** - India's relations with the U.S. surged after 2002, and it encompasses trade and investment, a landmark civil nuclear deal and a burgeoning defense relationship.
- 2. India-China - Deteriorated ties – With India' closeness to USA,** China went back on the 2005 agreement, launched the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, worked to undermine India's influence in its neighborhood and expanded its military and economic presence in the Indian Ocean.
- 3. India-Russia – Troubled ties** - As India-U.S. collaboration widened and U.S.-Russia relations imploded in 2014 (after the annexation/accession of Crimea), Russia's pushback against the U.S. included cultivating the Taliban in Afghanistan and enlisting Pakistan's support for it was not taken well by India.

B. Balance of Power in Indo-Pacific

- 1. Chinese perspective** - China sees our Indo-Pacific initiatives as part of a U.S.-led policy of containing China.
- 2. Russian perspective** - Russia's sees the Indo-Pacific as an American ploy to draw India and Japan into a military alliance against China and Russia.

Significance of Russia-India-China engagement

- 1. Dilution of the Russia-China duopoly in central Asia** - Growing Chinese influence in central Asia is testing the informal Russia-China understanding that Russia handles the politico-security issues in the region and China extends economic support. It is important for India to shape the Russia-China dynamics in this region, to the extent possible.
- 2. India –Russia** - Defense and energy pillars of India's partnership with Russia remain strong. Access to Russia's abundant natural resources can enhance our materials security.
- 3. India –China** - With China, while the recent developments should accelerate our efforts to bridge the bilateral asymmetries, disengagement is not an option. We have to work bilaterally and multilaterally on a range of issues, even while firmly protecting our interests on the border, in technology and the economy.
- 4. Indo-Pacific** - For India, it is a geographic space of economic and security importance, in which a cooperative order between India-Russia should prevent the dominance of any external power including China.

Way Forward - India's quest for autonomy of action in foreign policy needs to be based on its geographical realities, historical legacies and global ambitions — not a residual Cold War mindset.

70. Supreme Court's ruling on power of speaker

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- Polity

Context:

The Supreme Court granted the permit for the withdrawal of the Special Leave Petition filed by the Speaker of the Rajasthan State Assembly without any ado.

Background: The Rajasthan High Court temporarily ordered status quo on disqualification notices against Sachin Pilot and 18 other Congress legislators. The petition in which this status quo order came to be passed is yet to be finally decided.

Kihoto Holohan judgement

Kihoto Holohan case referred as the case where the constitution bench of the Supreme Court analysed in detail the various provisions of the 52nd amendment of the constitution which inserted Tenth schedule.

- The point of arguments will be constituted from the Kihoto Holohan decision of the Supreme Court delivered in 1992.
- The constitution bench was split by two opinions:
 - The majority upheld the constitutionality of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution
 - The minority challenged it by stating that it violated the basic structure of the Constitution and should have been circulated to all the state legislatures and should have received the approval of their majority.

Present Case: role of Rajasthan high court

- “The correctness of Kihoto Holohan needs to be considered” the bench had commented in the brief hearing before the Supreme Court.
 - It would have required a seven-judge Bench to be constituted in respect of the constitutionality of the Tenth Schedule, if the bench’s suggestion is undertaken and for the majority opinion to be overturned.
- The chairman or speaker has the final authority of whether any member(s) of Parliament or a legislature has become subject to disqualification. The high court may not have the authority to unsettle Kihoto Holohan and must apply its ratio.
- However, the Rajasthan High Court chose to exercise its extraordinary constitutional power under Article 226 to test whether the Kihoto Holohan judgement had tested the legal authority of Para 2 (1)(a) of the Tenth Schedule in the context of “intra-party dissent”.
 - This Para presumes disqualification of a member of house belonging to any party that has voluntarily given up his membership of a political party.
 - This is against the opinion of the SC in paragraph 21 of the Kihota Holohan case that says paragraph 2 of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution is valid.
- Further, the Rajasthan High Court also rejected the following on the grounds of lack of jurisdiction :
 - the prayer for “upholding the status of the petitioners as members of the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly on account of them continuing to be members of the Indian National Congress” and
 - declaring that alleged actions of the petitioners as members of the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly do not have the scope of disqualification under para 2 of the Tenth Schedule. However, the status quo was later restored.

Way Forward

The high courts and the Supreme Court have routinely refused to interfere in matters where the concerned authority has merely issued a show cause notice or granted an opportunity of being heard. This is an inviolable tenet of natural justice and the Rajasthan high court will ultimately have to decide on the acts of Supreme Court.

71. Health and Wellness potential of India

Source: [The Hindu Business Line](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- Health

Context: India has the potential to become a health and wellness hub if she tackles the obstruction of lack of adequate infrastructure and an acute shortage of skilled human resources.

Resources and data

- **Increased Focus:** Government's increased focus on health and fitness will lead to a boost in India's health and wellness sector which is already growing at 12 per cent per annum.
- **Traditional methods:** In order to promote the country's ancient and traditional healing and wellness methods, the central government has set up the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy).
 - The panchakarma technique of Ayurveda has been renowned in the world for its benefits in preventive healthcare and its treatment of many chronic lifestyle disorders.
 - These initiatives have made India the second-largest exporter of AYUSH and herbal products in the world today.
- **MSME domination:** The Indian wellness sector is dominated by micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) capturing around 80 per cent of the market share. Along with several large companies, the total estimate of the industry is around ₹49,000 crore.

Challenges to Health and Wellness industry

- **Tiny share:** The Indian wellness sector holds a very tiny share as compared to the global wellness industry which is estimated to be around \$4.2 trillion.
- **Inadequate resources:** Lack of adequate infrastructure and an acute shortage of skilled human resources is the main hindrance in unlocking the potential of this industry.
 - For instance, The growing population of India would require 2.07 million more doctors by 2030.
- **Low levels of funding:** India spends just around 1.3 per cent of its GDP on healthcare whereas the global average GDP spend is of 6 per cent.
 - Government has set a target of increasing the spending to 3 per cent of its GDP by 2022 but the funding for the sector needs to go up by 20-25 per cent for the next five years, if India aims to achieve its sustainable goals.

Changes to revamp the wellness sector

- **Transforming PHCs:** 1.5 lakh sub-health centres and primary health centres across the country are being transformed into health and wellness centres to provide all inclusive primary health care and establish a holistic wellness model.
- **National Ayush Mission:** Ayush Wellness Centers would be set up and strengthened under the National Ayush Mission in the next five years with the budget of ₹3,400 crore reserved for it.
 - The out of pocket expenditure would fall due to the self-care model.
 - There would be a reduction of the burden on the secondary and tertiary healthcare facilities, especially given the rising stress on this health infrastructure due to the on-going COVID-19 crisis.

- **Integration with SDGs:** According to NITI Aayog these initiatives would also help in the integration of AYUSH along with the Sustainable Development Goal of the Central Government.

Supporting government initiatives

- Promoting wellness is essential to drive productivity, efficiency and prosperity for the country and so, ASSOCHAM has been making continuous efforts to support the Government on several health and wellness initiatives.
- India should promote a healthy lifestyle through holistic measures, with a focus on a healthy diet, regular exercises through yoga, basic hygiene, and also preventive healthcare.

Way Forward

- Such models should be developed by the government and the industry where entrepreneurs can opt-out of their conventional businesses and grab opportunities that the wellness sector has to offer.
- India should focus on creating additional awareness on health and wellness in association with the Ministry of AYUSH.
- The country should also emphasise on initiatives like Make in India and Start-up India as it is going to give a further boost to the sector in the coming few years.

72. National Education Policy 2020

Source – [Financial express](#)

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

Context – The Cabinet have set a radical departure from India's past education paradigms by passing a transformational National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

State of Higher education

1. Gross Enrolment Ratio - 26.3 %

- GER for Women – 26.4%
- GER for SC – 14.9%
- GER for ST – 5.5%
- GER for OBC – 36.3%
- GER for Minorities – 20.2%
- GER for Muslims – 5.2%

2. Number of Students graduate per year - 91 lakh

How the reforms announced in NEP 2020 can make India a global education hub?

1. Grant full autonomy to top 200 institutions -India must grant full academic, administrative and financial autonomy to its 200 top-ranked universities, so they can quickly expand the variety of updated course offerings to keep up with the interdisciplinary nature of global innovation.

2. Establish the National Research Foundation (NRF) - India lags other major economies in research and innovation funding. Government must allocate at least Rs 5,000 crore per year on a non-lapsable basis for the purpose of funding fundamental and applied research in university laboratories and research institutions on a competitive basis.

3. Increasing the number of trained PhDs - Today, India only produces about 40,800 PhDs a year, mostly of indifferent quality. It must quickly scale to 50,000 more per year to a total of 100,000 of high global standards of quality.

4. Improve higher education infrastructure with long term loans from the market - The HE Finance Corporation must be authorized to raise money from markets with a government guarantee to grant long term 20-30-year loans to Indian universities to create the necessary infrastructure.

5. Improving GER in low-GER districts- Many states and districts of India have a GER below 25; states like Bihar (13.6), West Bengal (19.3), and Jharkhand (19.1). The HE Finance Corporation can grant long term loans for this purpose with a goal to bring the GER of these districts and states to the national average in 10 years.

6. Allow top 100 global universities to set up in India- The ministry of external affairs estimates there are 7.5+ lakh Indian students studying across 90 countries abroad spending around \$20 billion a year. India must incentivize world-class universities to come to its students. While inviting these universities, the terms must be set to provide a degree on par with the parent institution while operating within India with full autonomy.

7. National Scholarship Fund- The National Scholarship Fund can be modelled as a Public-Private-Partnership, with a private-sector board to oversee the organization. 50% of the funding can be raised from citizens all over India on a 100% tax exemption.

Way Forward - India is not a country where one size fits all—there is a very large differential across states and communities. The New Education Policy recognizes this fundamental differentiator, and has laid out a far-reaching vision to create learning environments that are multidisciplinary, that cater to a well-rounded education for all individuals, and has the immense potential to transform India’s human capital development.

73. Political culture: against presidential system

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- Polity

Context: Recently, the debate on the parliamentary versus presidential systems that had been resting for several decades has now been reopened.

Opposition party’s stance

- “The parliamentary system produces governments focused more on politics and personal glorification rather than policy” claimed a congress MP.
- The alleged foul display in Rajasthan is evidence for the lack of interest on the part of the executive and the legislature in policy making and legislation as they are busy in retaining their power.

The causes for political unease

- **Lack of ideological commitment:** Defection and party-hopping are not serious political disorders but essential components of political strategy to attain or retain power.
 - This is unlikely to change even if India moves to a presidential system because competitive buying of parliament members will contribute hugely to an executive-legislature deadlock.
- **Caste and communal considerations:** It is idealistic to assume that the president will choose his cabinet based primarily on considerations of merit when it is highly likely that same caste and communal considerations will apply in choosing a presidential cabinet that affects cabinet formation in a parliamentary system.
- **Absence of a viable party structure:** Elected political leaders belonging to the opposition parties will be encouraged for irresponsible behaviour by the presidential system.

- The actual problem is the political culture and not the parliamentary system of the country.
- **Voters' choices:** voters make their choices based on communal, caste and other primitive considerations and in response to emotional appeals rather than making informed choices about public needs and services.
- The state of India's public health system during this pandemic is clear evidence that public health was not a consideration for the voters when casting their ballots in state and parliamentary elections.
- The root causes of the trouble in the Indian polity are the highly **distorted public priorities** and the **corruptible political class**.

Way Forward

- Voters should cast their vote responsibly keeping in mind the public needs and services.
- The political culture of the country at the popular level and at the level of the political class needs to undergo an extreme transformation and just switching to presidential system from parliamentary system will not help.

74. Regulations proposed by draft report on non-personal data

Source: [Indian express](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- Government policies and interventions aimed at development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Context: Analysing the issues in the recently released draft report on non-personal data

Background: While the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, is under scrutiny by the Parliament, The Government has formed a Committee of Experts to enact a suitable Governance Framework on Non personal Data. It has come up with a draft report on which it has sought comments.

Important provisions of the Draft

- It proposes that anyone collecting data above a certain threshold would mandatorily share the data.
- Anyone collecting or deriving benefits from non-personal data is required to get registered with another new data regulatory body
- it proposes state "beneficial ownership" of certain categories of non-personal data. It further stipulates that the government should be the beneficial owner of community non-personal data though it is collected and generated by the private sector.

Issues

- **No evidence-based case for regulating non-personal data:** Personal Data needs regulation as there is a possibility of misuse against individuals whereas non personal data is unrelated to individuals. Also, the draft hasn't made any other concrete reasons for the case of regulating non personal data.
- **Irrational:** Despite the draft report favours regulation to control businesses from having enormous competitive advantage, it is inadequate to answer why competition law and India's Competition Commission are inadequate, or how non-personal data regulation would be a better method for promoting competitiveness.
- **Hypothetical assumptions:** It assumes that anonymised non personal data could be converted to de-anonymised personal data to target individuals or groups. Even if that happens, the use of such data could be governed by the Personal Data Protection Bill.

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- **Speculative:** Practically, evidence has shown us that expropriation of private property discourages innovation and growth whereas the draft argues that the mandated sharing of non-personal data will lead to higher innovation.
- **Against international principles:** Regulation of Non personal data is contrary to global property rights protections to which India has ratified.

Way forward

- If implemented, it will have negative impact on innovation in Data industry.
- Volume based threshold compliance will force firms to stay small to avoid compliance similar to what we witnessed in India's manufacturing sector
- Also, limited regulation by state has liberated India's population from poverty in the last three decades

Conclusion: State regulation should not create interventionist bureaucracies rather it must try to identify concrete problems. The lessons learnt from the over regulation of the industrial sector must not be forgotten.

75. Anti-Defection Law

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS2: Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues Arising out of these.

Context: The recent interim order passed by Rajasthan High Court's that stayed Sachin Pilot disqualification raises serious questions on powers of court and role of governor in deciding anti defection law.

Need for anti-defection law:

- **To deal with the issue of floor crossing** (Aya Ram, Gaya Ram) by legislators that leads to the collapse of governments.
- **SC observation: In Shrimath Babasaheb Patil v. Hon'ble Speaker, Karnataka Legislative Assembly (2019)**, the apex court held that the objective of anti-defection law is to stop the lure of political offices.

Disqualification under tenth schedule: Under anti-defection law a person can be disqualified for not only going against the party whip, but it also prohibits "voluntarily given up membership of the party".

Circumstantial evidence can be considered as a proof:

- **Observations from earlier court rulings:** Circumstances such as going to the governor with opposition leaders and non-compliance with party instructions can be considered as a fulfilling criterion for "voluntarily given up membership of the party".
- **SC directive In Ravi S. Naik (1994):** it held that resignation is not necessary for voluntarily giving up party membership and an inference can be drawn from a person's conduct in this regard.
- In a notable incident, Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu has disqualified a senior JD(U) leader Sharad Yadav for attending an RJD rally.

Powers of speaker and courts in deciding Anti defection

- **Power of speaker:** The final decision on disqualification rests with the Speaker as per provisions Clause 6(1) under the Tenth Schedule.
- **Power of courts:** Clause 7 of the tenth Schedule explicitly bars the jurisdiction of courts with respect to any matter connected with disqualification.

- **Power of High court:** As per the law laid down by the Supreme Court, the HC does not have much of a choice in determining the constitutionality of the anti-defection law.

Supreme court directives with respect to judicial review in matters pertaining to Anti defection

- **In Kihoto Hollohan judgment (1992) and Jagjit Singh (2006):** The Supreme Court held that the Speaker's decision is subject to judicial review.
- **In Shrimath Babasaheb Patil v. Hon'ble Speaker, Karnataka Legislative Assembly (2019),** the apex court held that **only limited judicial review is available against the Speaker's decision** on the grounds of violation of constitutional mandate, mala fides, non-compliance with the rules of natural justice and perversity.

Governors role should be facilitating to sort out issues related to anti defection

- **SC directives:** To stop horse trading, the SC in cases of defection/dissidence has been insisting on an early floor test. Hence governors should convene the assembly as soon as possible when legislature is not in session
- **Also, Governor's powers on convening the Assembly is not discretionary: In Nabam Rebia case (2016),** the Supreme Court held that under Article 174, the governor's office does not have any discretion in this matter.
- **Duties of a governor:** under Article 159, he has a duty to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and not the interests of any particular political party.
- **Impartiality of Governors office: In Hargovind Pant v. Dr Raghukul Tilak (1979)** the Supreme Court has held that the governor's office is an independent constitutional entity and he is not under the control of the central government.

Way forward: Constitutional reforms

- **Limited Disqualification:** The Dinesh Goswami Committee in 1990 had suggested limiting the grounds of disqualification to confidence or no-confidence motion, money bill and voluntarily giving up the membership of a party.
- Anti-defection law should be applied only when the government is in danger the Law Commission, 170th report,
- **Empowering Election commission:** Dinesh Goswami Committee has recommended that the decision on disqualification should be taken by the President/governor on the advice of the Election Commission.

Conclusion: Rajasthan High court's decision to status quo MLA Sachin Pilot's disqualification will produce an undesirable effect of diluting the anti-defection law, curtailing the powers of the Speaker and ruining the well-established law on legislative privileges.

"A judge must not alter the material of which the act is woven, but he can and should iron out the creases" - Lord Denning, one of the foremost British judges of the 20th century.

76. The National Education Policy, 2020

Sources: [The Hindu](#), [The Indian express](#), [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2- Education

Context: The Ministry of human resource development announced The National education policy 2020 with a goal of transforming the system to meet the needs of 21st century India.

Introduction

- Any educational reform can be implemented only with support from the states and with common consent built by the centre on the plans because ours is a federal (linked) system.
- The policy aims to eliminate problems of teaching methods, structural inequities, access imbalances and uncontrolled commercialisation.
- It has to cope with multiple crises in the system as this NEP 2020 is the first policy after one issued in 1986.
- In structural terms, the NEP's measures are intended to:
- Introduce early childhood education from age 3
 - Offer school board examinations twice a year to help improve performance and move away from rote learning.
 - Raise mathematical skills for everyone
 - Shift to a four year undergraduate college degree system and create a higher education commission of India.
 - The policy also states that students should be taught in their mother tongue or regional language until class 8 and beyond.
 - In a large and diverse country like ours, the students should also have an option to study in a language that enables a transfer nationally.

Good elements of NEP 2020

- **Provision to provide an energy filled breakfast** along with nutritious mid-day meal to help children achieve better learning outcomes.
- **Creation of 'inclusion funds'** to help socially and educationally disadvantaged children pursue education is another.
- **Universalization of access**, both in schools and higher education. However, a national higher education council as an apex control organisation is bound to be resented by states.
- The deadline to achieve universal literacy and numeracy by 2025 should be a top priority as a goal that will crucially determine progress at higher levels.

Vision for NEP 2020

- It acknowledges the 21st century need for mobility, flexibility, alternate pathways to learning and self-actualisation.
- The policy adopts a **5+3+3+4 model** for school education as it recognises the importance of the formative years from **ages 3 to 8** in shaping the child's future.
- **Multilingual felicity** could become the USP of the educated Indian and so blending the mother tongue and English in the first five years of school would be a beneficial move as picking up languages as a toddler is easier.
- **Breaking the streams:** The new policy aims to break the barriers of arts, commerce and science streams in high school and plans to introduce vocational courses with internships.
- The policy anticipates **100 per cent Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** in education by 2030.
- NEP 2020 proposes a **multi-disciplinary higher education framework** with portable credits, and multiple exits with certificates, diplomas and degrees.

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- **Inclusion of online pedagogy:**The huge potential of online teaching and learning methods would be incorporated in order to attain the GER (gross enrolment ratio) target.

The question of regulation

- NEP 2020 makes an effort to free schools, colleges and universities from periodic inspections and place them on a **path of self-assessment** and **voluntary declaration**.
- **Presence of a single lean body** with four verticals for standards setting, funding, accreditation and regulation is proposed.
- Institutions will now have to pursue transparency, maintain quality standards and favourable public perception 24x7.
- **Support for challenged kids:**NEP lays emphasis on providing adequate support to ensure that no child is deprived of education, and every challenged child is provided the special support he/she needs.
- A target of public spending at **6 percent of GDP** has been set. Given the current tax to GDP ratio, this is certainly an ambitious target.

Challenges faced in providing quality education

- Lack of resources and capacity.
- Dozens of mother tongues and a link language despite being a global language of choice is not well versed with the majority.
- Persistent mismatch between the knowledge and skills imparted and actual job requirements.

Critical analysis of NEP 2020

- There is an **absence of any mention of reservation** in academic institutions for students, teachers, or other employees.
- The passing reference to educational institutions in tribal areas designated as ashram shalas (NEP 1.8) and predicted as part of the **Early Childhood Children Education programme**.
- The implementation of policies in a situation of **growing privatisation** and the near **collapse of public institutions** of higher education is a matter of concern.
- **A linear top-down mode of administration**, as predicted, will deprive members of HEIs of an opportunity to engage with the challenges of democratic functioning.
- Departments in Languages, Literature, Music, Philosophy, Indology, Art, Dance, Theatre, Education, Mathematics, Statistics, Pure and Applied Sciences, Sociology, Economics, Sports, and other such subjects needed for a multidisciplinary, **stimulating Indian education and environment** will be established and strengthened at Higher education institutions across the country.
- While the list is unexceptionable, the fields of studies such as Women's Studies or Gender Studies, Cultural Studies, Media Studies, Dalit Studies, Studies of Discrimination and Exclusion, Environmental Studies and Development Studies, all of which have developed over the last three or four decades have no mention.
- The idea of a national higher education regulatory council as a supreme control organisation is bound to be disliked by the states.

Way forward

- There should be opportunities to examine its long-term implications and if necessary, a chance to revisit it, before it is actually implemented.
- Nep 2020 provides the ingredients of a right recipe; all we have to do is to find a way to gather resources from public and private sources.
- The deadline to achieve universal literacy and numeracy by 2025 should be a top priority as a goal that will crucially determine progress at higher levels.

77. Show cause Notice

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS2: Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues Arising out of these.

Context: The Rajasthan High Court's order **staying the anti-defection proceedings** initiated by the Assembly Speaker raises important constitutional issues such as

- Can **Show cause notice** be challenged in the court.
- Power of Court in dealing with anti-defection laws.
- whether the Governor has any discretionary power in the matter of summoning the Assembly.
- Strict adherence to 21-day gap between the date of summons and of the commencement of the House

Brief info on the Rules of Lok Sabha that needs to be adhered while issuing a Show cause notice

- In 1985, the then Lok Sabha Speaker first framed these rules and more or less all the State Legislatures have adopted it.
- Rule 6 of the Lok Sabha deals with the filing of the petition and further proceedings
- According to Rule 6 (4) the petitioner should satisfy himself that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the member concerned has become subject to disqualification before seeking the disqualification of a member.
- According to Rule 7 the Speaker should evaluate whether **the petition complies with the requirements of Rule 6.**
- If it doesn't comply with all the requirements, he can dismiss it.
- If it complies with all the requirements, the speaker can forward the copy of the petition to the concerned member and shall ask him to submit his comments within 7 days from the receipt of the copy of the petition. This is called **Show cause notice**

Can the Showcause notice issued by the speaker challenged?

- Speaker's act of forwarding the petition cannot be legally challenged unless he is acting in accordance with the rules of the house.
- **Exception: In Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillhu (1992)**, the Supreme Court held that a challenge is not barred if there is an imminent threat of disqualification/ suspension before the Speaker takes a final decision.

Staying the speakers notice by the high court is not fair

- **Obstructs the objective of tenth schedule:** because any member can go to court and obtain a stay and put a stop to the proceedings thus derailing its ultimate purpose.
- **Unconstitutional:** A High Court cannot adjudicate a constitutional issue that was to be settled by a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court.

Power of governor Governors w.r.t convening of the assembly

- Summoning the Assembly is a routine **constitutional function of the Governor**. Under Article 174 of the Constitution, the Governor summons the Assembly.
- Calling the session of the Assembly is a part of the executive functions of the government and the Governor can summon the Assembly only on the advice of the Cabinet. **In Nabam Rebia and Bamang Felix v. Deputy Speaker (2016), the Supreme Court reaffirmed this position.**
- The Governor does not exercise any of the executive powers except where the Constitution assigns him certain functions to be performed in his discretion.
- Also, The Nabam Rebia case makes it clear that so long as the Chief Minister enjoys majority support in the Assembly, **the Governor has no discretionary powers and is bound to accept the decisions of the Cabinet in regard to the date of commencement of the session.**
- Further, the Governor has no role in the conduct of the business of the House, which is done under the control and supervision of the Speaker.
- **In Shamsheer Singh v. State of Punjab (1974)**, the Supreme Court said: “The Governor has no right to refuse to act on the advice of the Council of Ministers. Such a position is antithetical to the concept of ‘**responsible government**’.”

21 days gap followed between the date of summons and of the commencement of the House is not a water tight rule

- In 1969, the Rules Committee of the Lok Sabha recommended that the gap between the date of summons and of the commencement of the House should be 21 days.
- This was thought of as necessary as the collection, collation and scrutiny of information relating to Questions, at different levels of bureaucracy, before it was placed in the House, was a time-consuming job.
- Although Parliament changed it to 15 days later, many State Legislatures continue with the 21-day period.
- It is not an inflexible rule, and says “unless the Speaker otherwise decides”. This rule is generally followed but it has never constrained governments from convening the House at shorter notice.
- In fact, the Rajasthan House rule itself provides for a session at shorter notice. If the government feels the urgency, it is well within its power to convene the House at shorter notice.

Conclusion: only, our highest constitutional principles and practices should excite the citizenry not the political norms. Adversarial politics will disrupt the normal politico-constitutional operations in the field of governance which needs to be culled.

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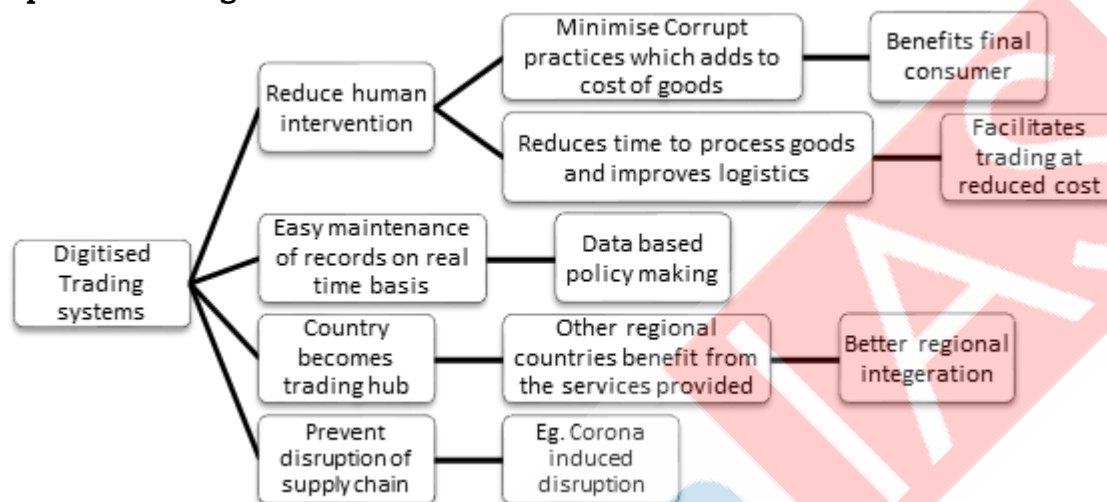
1. Digitising Trade across borders

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS 3 – Infrastructure - Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc

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

Importance of digitised trade



Challenges in attaining digitisation in trade

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

Steps taken by government to digitise cross border trading

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

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

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

2. PCR testing is a double-edged sword

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-3 Science and Technology

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

Different types of Tests used for Covid-19 diagnosis

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

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

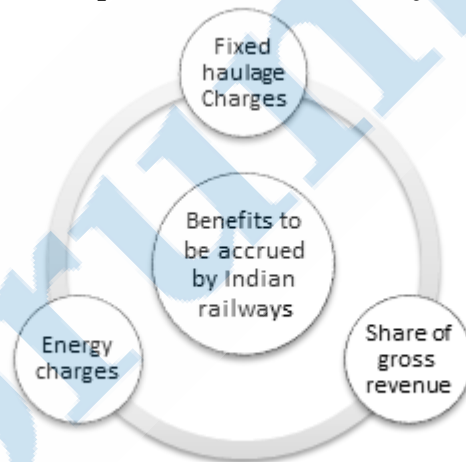
3. Privatizing Indian Railways

Source – [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 3 - Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways

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

Advantages to Government on privatization of Railways



Critical Issues which need to be addressed for this initiative

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

creating a level playing field for private players. Currently, the same entity is effectively the policy maker, regulator and service provider, rolled into one.

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

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

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

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

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

India's Pharmaceutical Industries' dependence on Chinese Imports

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

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

Concerns before Pharmaceutical Industry:

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

Incentives to Boost Local Output

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

Way Forward

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

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

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-3 Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

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

Background:

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

Single-use plastic (SUP):

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

Handling of Plastic pollution:

- **Pre-coronavirus time:**
 - **Different nations had their own programmes to handle plastic waste:**
 - In countries such as Canada and the US, recycling of plastic is classified as essential.
 - In India, we have the Plastic Waste Management Rules of 2016, which were updated and amended in 2018. In Swachhata Hi Seva campaign in 2019, people from all walks of life collected plastic waste from their surroundings and disposed of it suitably with the help of the local authorities.
- **Corona time:**
 - The national as well as the global momentum for plastic waste management has been seriously disrupted.
 - Thailand had planned to slash plastic waste completely in 2020. Now it expects to see such waste rise by as much as 30%.
 - In Singapore, the Bring Your Own (BYO) movement was started in 2017 where consumers were urged to bring their own utensils to restaurants in the effort to reuse and recycle. This has received a blow with global giants such as Starbucks doing away with their “Bring Your Own Cups” policy due to the pandemic.

How to deal with the SUP in current circumstances?

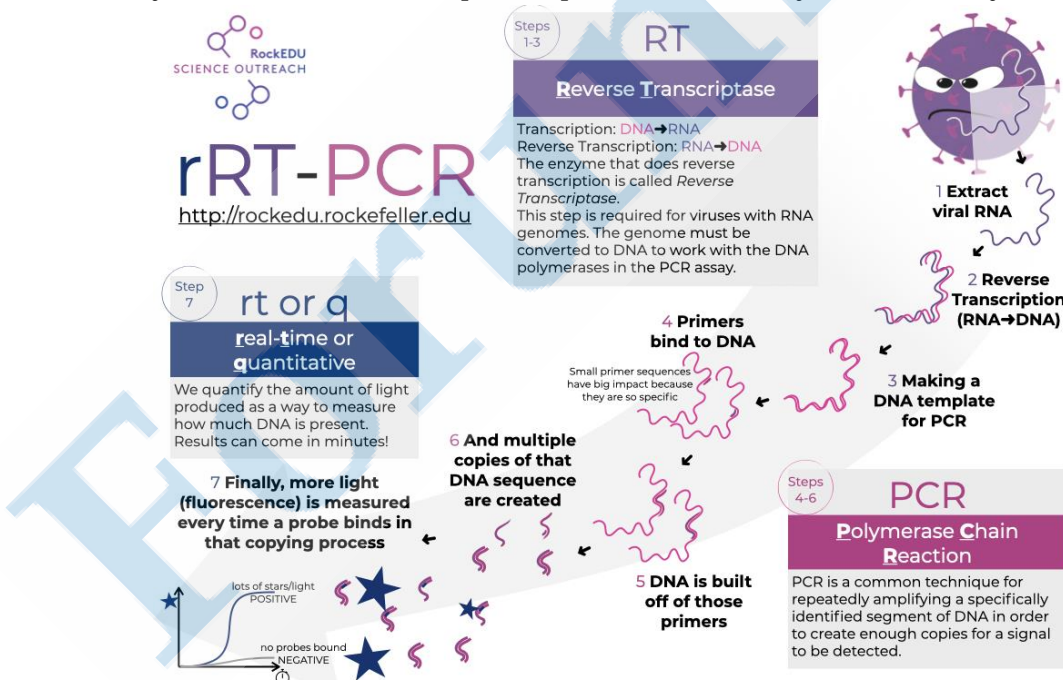
- **Effective Handling:**

- It is important to understand the distinction between plastics and SUP so that we may change our lifestyles to balance our need for plastic with effectively managing its waste.
- **Economic opportunity:**
 - We require new business models which are designed for sustainability.
 - In Uganda, they are melting plastic waste to make face shields for selling.
 - In Singapore, start-ups are using stainless steel cups and bamboo boxes which can be returned and reused after being washed and sanitized.
- **By Shifting consumers behaviour:**
 - We need consumers to care about their role in the plastic waste value chain by using their power to change the existing unsustainable approach.
 - **For example-** In rural India which have declared themselves open defecation free (ODF), village communities across the country are now starting to plan for setting up waste collection and segregation systems with material recovery facilities at the block- level under phase 2 of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen).

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

Way Forward

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



- 2. Serological Test/Antibody Testing:** It is a blood/serum/plasma test to detect the presence of antibodies against a microorganism. In the case of Covid-19 these antibodies are usually IgM (the first antibody that the body makes) and IgG antibodies. These antibodies when detected in the strip give a coloured response. The symptomatic individual then can be confirmed using the molecular test.
- **ELISA Test:** ELISA stands for enzyme-linked immunoassay. It is a commonly used laboratory test to detect antibodies in the blood.

Pooled Testing:

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

Issues with RT-PCR Tests

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

Steps to be taken

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

6. Importance of Service sector

Source: [Live Mint](#)

Syllabus: GS 3 Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment

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

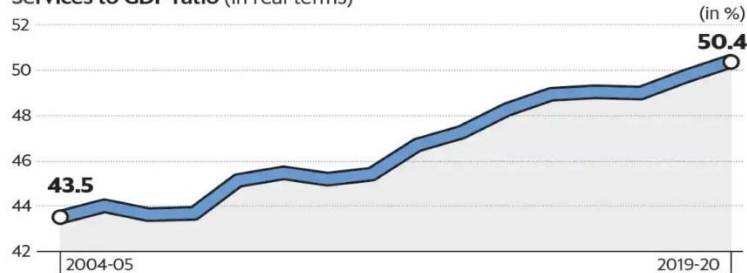
Background:

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

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Role of service sector in economy:

• **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.
 - The manufacturing share of GDP rises steadily before peaking between 20%-35%.
 - **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.

• **Growth of service sector:**

- 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.
- All this creates jobs and gives people the purchasing power to demand services.
- People have had to fend for themselves to earn a living as the manufacturing sector has not created enough jobs.
- This is reflected in the informal services sector with a huge number of street vendors and small businesses seen across cities.

• **Activities part of services:**

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

1. **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.
2. **Longer time to normal:** Services like hospitality, tourism, travel, entertainment would take a much longer time to reach anywhere close to normal.
3. 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

1. **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.
2. The economic revival is not possible unless these individuals get back to business.

7. Aatma Nirbhar Bharat in agriculture

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 3- 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.

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:

- 1. Presumption:** A large country like India should produce most of its food at home.
- 2. 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.
- 3.** 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
<p>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 about seven million tonnes (mt) of wheat.</p>	<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 per cent of its foreign exchange reserves.

‘AATMANIRBHARKHETI’-INDIA’S EXPORTS AND IMPORTS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE



- 4. 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).
 - a) It clearly shows that India has been a net exporter of agri-produce ever since the economic reforms began in 1991.
 - o **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.
 - o **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:

- a) 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:

a) 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.
- **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:

a) 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.

8. Poverty Deepening Amidst the Lockdown

Source – [The Hindu](#)

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

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.

9. Confronting air pollution and global warming

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-3 Environment

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.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of July, 2020

- 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.
- 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.

10. Issues with social welfare program

Source – [Indian Express](#)

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

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.	a. Economists estimate that 100 million names have not been updated in NFSA lists. b. Inclusion-Exclusion error - The process of selection of beneficiaries has always been fraught with targeting errors. c. Failure of technology - The insistence on

	<p>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, Aadhaar enabled One Nation One Ration card scheme will suffer invariably.</p>
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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.

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

Source: [Live Mint](#)

Syllabus: GS 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment

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.
 - 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.

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

Source: [Financial Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

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.

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

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment

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.

14. 15th Finance Commission – Nudging states for agriculture reforms

Source – [Financial Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 3 - Marketing of agricultural produce and issues

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 -

1. 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–
 - **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.

15. Sure power: On India's solar strategy

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-3: Infrastructure- Energy

Context: Prime Minister recently inaugurated Rewa Solar plant set up at Rewa, Madhya Pradesh. It is Asia's largest solar power project and has a total solar installed capacity of 750 MW

Solar Sector in India

- As on April 30, 2020, the installed renewable energy capacity in India stood at 87.26 GW, of which, solar comprised 34.81 GW.
- India has set a target of achieving 175GW of renewable energy capacity by 2022. This includes:

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- 60 GW from wind power,
- 100 GW from solar power (100GW = 60 GW of utility-scale projects (both solar PV and CSP) like solar parks + 40 GW of rooftop solar applications for commercial users and households)
- 10 GW from biomass power
- 5 GW from small hydro power

India's Nationally Determined Contribution:

The GoI in its submission to the UNFCCC on Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) has stated that India will achieve 40% cumulative Electric power capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources.

Issues and Challenges in the Solar Sector

- **Dependence on Imports:**
- Lacks manufacturing base for solar components and systems
- Heavy dependence on imported solar cells and modules, mainly from China
- **Issue of Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO):** There is lack of enforcement of RPO regulations and absence of penalties when obligations are not met. Many of the state DISCOMs (distribution companies) do not comply fully with their RPO targets.
- **Rooftop Solar:** Homeowners at large have not been installing solar panels at roof top. This is because small deployments naturally cost more than grid-scale farms. Homeowners do not generally consume all the energy it generates and are being unable to sell it.
- **Investment:** Issues such as uncertainty around import duties and future tax rates around purchasing power agreements (PPAs) have hampered investment
- **Technological challenges-** e.g. temperature sensor failures in PV cells, grid instability
- **Land scarcity** hindering establishment of large solar parks

Government Initiatives to Promote Solar Power

- **National Solar Mission:** Launched in 2010, it aims to achieve 100GW capacity by 2022. It is aimed at reducing the cost of solar power generation in the country through
 - long term policy;
 - large scale deployment goals;
 - aggressive R&D;
 - domestic production of critical raw materials, components and products, as a result to achieve grid tariff parity by 2022
- **Grid Connected Rooftop and Small Solar Power Plants Programme:** It aims at installation of grid connected roof top solar systems from 1 kWp to 500 kWp capacity in residential, commercial, institutional and industrial buildings.
- **Sustainable Rooftop Implementation for Solar Transfiguration of India (SRISTI) Scheme:** Financial Incentives to be provided to the beneficiary for installing solar rooftop projects.

International Solar Alliance (ISA)

- ISA is partnership of solar resource rich countries to address their special energy needs and provide a platform to collaborate on development of solar energy resource.
- It is an intergovernmental body registered with the United Nations under Article

102 of the UN Charter.

- It was jointly launched by the Prime Minister of India and the President of France in 2015 at UNFCCC CoP 21 Paris, France.

- India should plan a green deal, on the lines of what the EU has committed itself to: that future growth and employment should align itself to environmental and sustainability objectives, particularly in energy production.
- India needs to enhance domestic manufacturing of solar components by having integrated policies and providing low cost financing to industries.
- India should look at emerging trends in deploying solar innovatively. These include newer technologies such as aesthetic photovoltaic window and roof tiles for buildings, multi-role urban structures, and greater use of residential and commercial buildings to deploy more panels

16. Revival of MSMEs

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context: Analyzing the government initiative announced in the stimulus package towards helping MSMEs for maintaining liquidity and ensuring greater credit availability.

Background:

- **Aatma Nirbhar package:** Government announced the emergency credit line, the subordinate debt provision and the equity infusion measure and the long-awaited reform to the MSME definition.
- **MSMEs:** There are approximately 6.3 crore MSMEs that employ 11 crore people.

Expectation of industry:

- A recent nationwide survey was conducted by the All India Manufacturing Organisation (AIMO):
 - 78% of small companies' owners were not satisfied with the implementation of the package.
 - It also suggests that transmission on the ground is slow and moreover 85% of the sector may not benefit from it.
- In another survey carried out by FICCI-Dhruva Advisors:
 - 79% of respondents believed that the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) has not yielded the desired results and 70% say that they haven't availed the benefits of loans and interest moratorium.
 - As of July 4, Rs 1.14 lakh crore worth of loans have been sanctioned but only close to half has been disbursed.
- **Before COVID:**

MSME was marred by

Stunted growth

Rampant informality

Bore a heavy share of the compliance burden

- It is important to periodically assess and identify measures that could ease these challenges that have been exacerbated by the pandemic and provide relief to these businesses.

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- There is a clear operationalization and implementation gap despite financial and regulatory support offered to the sector.
- The Global Alliance for Mass Entrepreneurship's (GAME) National Task Force on MSMEs recommendations hold the promise of not just short-term survival but also of helping MSMEs thrive.
- **Decline in credit growth to MSMEs:**
 - A clear sign of risk-averse bank lending that has only become worse. Lending to micro and small enterprises has contracted 3.4% and to medium enterprises has contracted 5.3%
 - The RBI has clarified that Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) shall assign zero percent risk weight on credit facilities extended under the scheme since these are backed by an unconditional and irrevocable guarantee by the government. Still a lag in loan disbursements is seen,

In light of these trends and drawing upon the GAME-sponsored task force recommendations, certain changes are needed.

Changes to the current system of credit support proposed:

- **Set aside credit for new-to-credit MSMEs:**
 - **Conditions:** The current scheme is open only to MSMEs who have a Rs 25-crore loan outstanding and a turnover of up to Rs 100 crore.
 - **Formalization:** This implies that fresh borrowers cannot avail of this scheme. Such MSMEs need to be targeted to bring them into the formal credit ecosystem.
 - The Task Force has recommended that Rs 1 lakh crore be set aside for disbursing small ticket size loans of Rs 1 lakh to first-time MSME borrowers.
- **Mandate a definite percentage of credit guaranteed loans to be released to micro and small businesses:**
 - **Micro-enterprises:** They are Ninety-nine per cent of enterprises in the MSME sector which are largely informal. These 6.3 crore micro-enterprises comprise of one-person businesses/self-employed persons and units that employ less than 10 workers.
 - **Small enterprises:** They come next highest at an estimated 3.3 lakh.
 - A greater number of enterprises will be eligible for benefits enlisted for this sector after the upward revision in turnover limits of medium enterprises.
 - **For ensuring these enterprises are not crowded out:** Mandating a certain percentage of credit guaranteed loans to micro and small enterprises could offer them necessary succour.
- **Bridging gap:** Between the amounts sanctioned and disbursed by banks under the ECLGS.
 - **Need disbursements:** State-owned banks may be under pressure to show that the scheme has received a good response and hence are giving automatic sanctions to all eligible borrowers. Disbursements will depend on the actual credit needs of the borrower.
 - Another reason could be that a borrower can avail only 20 per cent of the outstanding loan amount. For those MSMEs that have repaid their loans, the window of fresh loans is very small. Such prescriptions need to be examined to ensure that MSMEs in genuine need of credit are not left out.
- **Simple conveyance of scheme:**
 - Scheme eligibility, application processes and benefits need to be conveyed more simply.

- Though the CHAMPIONS portal has a comprehensive information base and exhaustive FAQs, these need to be disseminated in multiple languages through various channels.

17. Post-corona world – India needs Skill, scale and speed

Source – [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 3 - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment

Context – The effects of the pandemic are expected to have a lasting impact on every sphere of activity, even as various nations are trying to revive their economies and protect livelihoods.

Atmanirbhar bharat – The twin objectives of the campaign are -

1. In-short run - Reviving different spheres of the economy.
 - Insulating India from any future global economic downturn.
2. In the long run - It seeks to build capacities across sectors and promote local products. It seeks to make the Indian economy robust in the long run by scaling up manufacturing, accelerating infrastructure development, attracting investments and promoting a consumption-led growth.

Impact of Pandemic

1. **On workplaces** - Offices straddling multiple domains, particularly IT, are functioning with minimum staff strength. The uncertainty created by the pandemic is being seen by many as an opportunity to upgrade their knowledge and acquire new skills.
2. **On laborforce** -It has led to the worldwide closure of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, threatening the continuity of skill development, especially those needed for self-employment.

Suggested solution to complement AtmaNirbhar Campaign

- **Collaboration of PSU and private sector** - PSUs and the private sector must not only play a complementary role in building a self-reliant India but collaborate wherever feasible. While, the private sector must massively step up investments R&D. PSUs too need to modernise in terms of technology.
- **Increasing Manufacturing's share in GDP** - In areas like hi-tech medical devices, equipment and labour-intensive goods India has to drastically increase manufacturing to cut down imports and save precious foreign exchange. This will also result in non-interdependence on other countries for critical goods.
- **Skilling youth** - A host of skill sets — listening and communication, cross-cultural sensitivity, adaptability to changing work environments, emotional intelligence and social etiquette along with a good academic record — are important for those seeking employment in the emerging job scenario.

Way Forward - This is the time for 130 crore Indians to showcase the country's collective resolve to overcome the setbacks caused by the pandemic. We need to forge ahead by harnessing India's human resources and technological capabilities.

18. Problems with unlocking of economy

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context: Analyzing the effects of unlocking the economy due to COVID-19.

Lockdown:

1. It was based on the assumption that lives were more important than livelihoods.
2. **Impact:** It led to the impoverishment of enterprise and has not halted the spread of the epidemic.
3. The decision to unlock the economy in phases poses a major conundrum for the government.

Issues that will arise due to Unlocking:

- **Steps involved in unlocking the economy:**
 - **About public services:** This is probably the most crucial element of unlocking the economy. There are questions on how does the government agree to allow public transport to function.
 - The truncated services have complex “standard operating procedures”(SOP) which deter travel. After opening up, the SOPs will lead to chaos as there would be millions of people on the move every day.
- **Food Grains:**
 - The PM announced extension of the free food grains to the poor for another three months which would cost the exchequer Rs 90,000 crore.
 - **After 3 months:** There are some question marks on the scheme such as Can one really withdraw the scheme given that most sectors in the economy would be getting back on their feet rather than walking?
 - **Pressure to fiscal deficit:** Retaining the scheme will add another Rs 90,000 crore or 0.45 per cent of GDP every three months.
- **Moratorium provided by the RBI to borrowers for six months beginning in March:**
 - **Rising debt:** The first-quarter corporate results were abysmal with negative growth in sales and a sharp drop in profits. This will get reflected in their ability to service their debt commitments. It is improbable that those who took the moratorium can actually start servicing their debt.
 - There is an increase in unemployment or under unemployment. The questions remain for how long this facility can be extended.
- **Tweaking of NPA classification norms by RBI:** It is in conjunction with the moratorium.
 - **Restructuring:** There are talks of restructuring loans but which part of the asset portfolio would qualify for the same. Whether it should be only the SMEs and also sectors that have been deeply impacted especially in the services sector such as hospitality, airlines, and entertainment.
 - **Rising NPAs:** Restructuring is a short-term measure and rising NPA is problematic for the system and the government because it would mean the provision of more capital to support public sector banks.
- **Outcome of lending based on guarantees given by the government for SMEs and NBFCs.**
 - Defaults in the region of 10-20% cannot be ruled out and hence an SME package of Rs 3 lakh crore of guarantees may have to be forgiven (waived off) and paid through the budget.
- **Provision of liquidity to the system by central bank.:**
 - **To ensure liquidity:** Central banks in the West have opted for quantitative easing in different forms while the RBI has used long-term repo operations and measures like facilities for NABARD, SIDBI, targeted long-term repo operations and open market operations.

- **Higher inflation expectation:** Due to subdued production (supply) even in 2021-22 and the generation of excess demand across the world.
- **Affecting economic viability:** There are question marks on loans that have been taken today at a variable rate, which will become more expensive in future.

Way Forward

- The government will find itself fiscally strained and could collect revenue through more taxes like the dividend distribution tax, surcharges on higher incomes or a COVID cess but this will be intrusive.
- The RBI will have to move away from the accommodative stance and rein in inflation.

19. Carbon financing can boost rural infrastructure development in India

Source: [Financial Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-3 Environment

Context: Climate financing has been one of the most effective tools in incentivising and scaling clean energy projects.

What is climate finance?

Climate finance refers to local, national or transnational financing—drawn from public, private and alternative sources of financing—that seeks to support mitigation and adaptation actions to address climate change.

Clean Development Mechanism (CDM):

- It comes under the Article 12 of the Kyoto Protocol and seeks to reduce the concentration of GHG emissions in the atmosphere in a cost-effective way.
- It allows developed countries to use carbon credits generated from clean energy projects in developing countries to meet a part of their emission reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol.
- The Adaptation Fund is financed by a 2% levy on certified emission reduction (CERs) issued by the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

Ongoing and upcoming interventions that have the most potential in enabling low carbon development in India's rural areas:

UJALA 2.0:

- Launched in 2015, the Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA) aims at promoting efficient usage of energy consumption, energy savings and efficient lighting for all. Under the scheme, Electricity Distribution Company distributes LED bulbs at subsidized rates to every grid-connected customer with a metered connection.
- 36 crore LEDs have been distributed till date; the rural household penetration has been about 20%. The learnings from the scheme could be used to further spur adoption of LEDs in the rural areas, thus creating a thriving market.

Decentralised solar plants: The government is in the process of establishing decentralised solar plants of 0.5 to 10 MW in Maharashtra on unused government land near rural substations.

- Using carbon finance, additional solar capacity can be added to provide public lighting in rural areas, and batteries can be installed to provide clean peak power in the evening.
- This would enable the proliferation of clean energy and increase power access.

Gram Panchayat street lights: Using carbon financing and innovative business models, almost 3.5 crore streetlights can be installed in rural areas. This would lead to a significant infrastructure upgrade for the villages.

Conclusion: Carbon financing can be used to strengthen rural infrastructure cleanly and sustainably, and create a resilient and sustainable rural community.

20. Opening economy for sustainable revival

Source – [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 3 - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment

Context – India has had little option but to open up the economy. That has led to some improvement in economic activity towards the latter part of the April-June quarter — but this is unlikely to sustain.

Improvement in economic activity towards the latter part of the April-June quarter

In the July-September quarter, the pace of improvement is expected to slow down or even stagnate and fall in some cases because of following reasons:

1. Reintroduction of containment measures - In some regions, where the spread has been faster, have reintroduced containment measures, which will adversely impact economic activity.

2. Hiccups for logistics - The partial unlocking of the economy and the back and forth on containment measures will continue to pose a hindrance to supply chains, transportation and logistics.

3. Most effected sectors - It will take time to restore normalcy in the services sector, particularly in hospitality, travel, sports and entertainment.

4. Failure of monetary policy - The problem is that the monetary measures announced after the pandemic do not have the heft to trigger a recovery because of rising financial sector stress and lack of fiscal space.

Suggested solutions for revival of economy

1. Promoting ease of doing business – Business environment need to be promoted for firms to utilize their underutilized capacity for fulfilling demand in economy.

2. Reforming financial sector – For monetary policy to work effectively for reforming economy, financial sector has to be reformed on priority basis with new provisions for lockdown affected firms under IBC code.

Way Forward – Opening the economy gradually in phased manner along with increasing fiscal space for states are the needed solution to curb lockdown's impact on livelihood of millions.

21. Discom loan package: A boon for the power sector?

Source: [Financial Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment

Context: Analyzing the Rs 90,000 crore loan package announced by the Centre for discoms.

Background:

- **Benefit:** Improvement in their cash-flows will help their credit rating and enable fresh funding.

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- State government guarantees against the loans to the discoms will help PFC and REC to treat the loans as standard assets.
- There is no assurance against default in debt-servicing and historically no lender has invoked a state government guarantee.

Over the years, the Centre has formulated various schemes to help the ailing state power sector.

No real improvements for Discoms:

- **Increase in liabilities with no creation of assets:** Diversion of funds meant for capital expenditure to meet interest liability is rampant.
- No significant investment has been seen in terms of strengthening sub-transmission and distribution, systems improvement or separation of agriculture feeders.

<p>The Accelerated Generation & Supply Programme (AGSP)-Late 1990s</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It subsidised the interest on loans from PFC by 3-4%. • Around Rs 38,000 crore was securitised under the Ahluwalia Committee model of One-Time Settlement to make SEBs bankable. • Interest/surcharge of Rs 8,300 crore was waived and Net outstandings were converted into tax-free bonds at 8.5% pa with a repayment period of 15 years.
<p>The Accelerated Power Development Reforms Programme (APDRP)-2002-03</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It envisaged a six-level intervention for reform with a budget of Rs 40,000 crore. • Objectives: To improve the financial viability of discoms and bring aggregate technical & commercial (AT&C) losses down to 10%. • Funding: The Centre funded 25% of the cost and 75% was arranged by the discoms from financial institutions or internal resources. • Failure of APDRP: As NTPC and PGCIL imparting consultancy to the discoms, fell short of expectations. They had little knowledge or experience of the constraints and complexity of distribution systems. • Delayed release of funds by states to the discoms, and even diversion of funds to other sectors compounded the problem. • In the XII plan, the Restructured APDRP was introduced with changes in the scope and revised terms and conditions with an outlay of Rs 51,000 crore.
<p>The Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS)-2014</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For strengthening of sub-transmission and distribution, metering of distribution transformers/feeders/consumers and IT enablement. • The scope extended to 4,041 towns. • An outlay of Rs 32,612 crore and R-APDRP scheme cost of Rs 44,011 crore, including a budgetary support of Rs 22,727 crore, was earmarked. • The latest information on the ministry of power's website shows a sanctioned amount of Rs 32,500 crore, and Rs 12,500 crore released.
<p>UDAY scheme-2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim: At financial turnaround, operational improvement,

	<p>reduction in cost of generation, development of renewable energy, energy efficiency and conservation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• State governments took over 75% of the debt of discoms and issued low-interest bonds.• In return: Discoms were given a deadline (2017-19) to meet efficiency parameters such as timely tariff revisions and elimination of the gap between the average cost of supply (ACS) and average revenue realised (ARR) by 2019.• The turnaround envisaged by UDAY hasn't materialised, with several targets missed.
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Other issues in power sector:

- **Overruns:** Power projects in India suffer from cost and time overruns.
- **Tariffs issue:** Many private players quoted unworkable tariffs in making successful bids for projects.
- Many naphtha/gas-based stations were built but the absence of gas supply and import of costly naphtha added to their woes. Most of these plants are either shut or some lucky few which got into long term PPAs are getting paid fixed charges but are not operating.
- **Role of banks:**
 - **Banks took considerable time in approving revised project costs:** This affects many private power plants as it accumulates interest during construction.
 - **'Evergreening' the loans to remain standard assets:** Additional assistance by the banks was adjusted against their dues. No disbursements went towards completing the project.
 - **Defaults:** As there is no cash flow. It resulted in many of the private projects today facing IBC proceedings or liquidation.
- **Role of regulators:** Despite APTEL order mandating electricity regulatory commissions to initiate suo-motu proceedings for discoms tariff revision, no tangible action is visible.
- Pendency of litigation has increased and sometimes commissions have been reduced to safe havens for retiring bureaucrats.

Role of private sector:

1. The FM's announcement regarding privatisation of discoms in the Union Territories is a welcome step.
2. Private players like Torrent Power with their successful experiences in distribution can even be retained on an agency basis, on a profit-sharing model.

Way forward:

- **Need of discoms' cash-flow and efficient collection:** By the introduction of prepaid metering (complemented by smart metering and remote reading), separation of agriculture feeders, metering and measurement of agriculture consumption, direct transfer of subsidy and write-off of all state government loans to discoms.
- It is important to establish benchmarks for efficiency in operations, develop MIS and use data analytics for continued improvement.
- Professionals can be appointed for managing the discoms and delegate operational authority can be given to them.

22. Assam Floods – In need of long-term solution

Source – [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 3 – Disaster and disaster management

Context - Floods are a recurrent feature during the monsoons in Assam. Still, the Centre and state governments have not found ways to contain the toll taken by the raging waters.

Reasons of flood in Brahmaputra valley

Natural Reasons

1. High sedimentation and changing course of river – River Brahmaputra is in its youth stage in valleys of Assam which leads to frequent changes in course causing flood as water swells up. Further, the river comes from a high slope (Tibet) to a flat plain in Assam, its velocity decreases suddenly and this results in the river unloading the sediment.

2. Monsoonal rainfall – India receives ~80% of rainwater from monsoon and that too is erratic and uneven in nature. High concentrated rain in parts of north-east leads to heavy rainfall in short time causing flood.

3. Topography of region - Guwahati's topography — it's shaped like a bowl — does make it susceptible to water logging which is exacerbated by flooding.

Anthropogenic reasons

1. Unplanned expansion of the cities – Lack of scientific approach in planning has led to severe encroachments in the wetlands, low lying areas, hills and shrinkage of forest cover. This also contributes in higher sedimentation of the areas. The denuded hills and loss of wetlands lead to artificial floods.

2. Lack of cooperation among basin states – The rainwater from Meghalaya and the surrounding hills often causes flash floods in Guwahati. However, recognition of the problem has not led to any meaningful conversation between the two states on flood control.

3. Overreliance on embankments - The state has primarily relied on embankments to control floods since 1950's. The pressure of the surging water and frequent changes in course of river takes a toll on these walls and they need constant reinforcement — by all accounts, that hasn't happened in Assam.

Suggested solutions

1. Preventing encroachment in green cover – State needs to bring in public domain the bye-laws associated with constructing building, implement the environment impact assessment in letter and spirit and mobilize people for participative approach in preventing loss of green cover.

2. Refocusing on traditional methods – Traditional methods of water harvesting used by ethnic communities of northeast need to be practiced to prevent flooding with low-cost sustainable model.

Way Forward - “Integrated basin management” - one that needs all the basin sharing (China, India, Bangladesh and Bhutan) countries to come to an understanding about taking measures in the catchment areas is the only long-term solution. For that, interstate relationships, political cooperation and the role of the government are important.

23. Covid-19, Climate Change and Inequality

Source: [Down To Earth](#)

Syllabus: GS-3- Environment

Context: The COVID-19 pandemic and associated health and economic crises have revealed the loopholes in our economic and political systems, which are producing intertwining crises of inequality, climate change and environmental destruction.

Climate Induced Disasters during Covid-19 pandemic:

Climate-induced disasters and extreme weather have continued to adversely affect Global south during Covid-19 pandemic. Examples include:

- Cyclone Nisarga that struck western India in early June
- Cyclone Amphan that struck eastern India and Bangladesh in May
- Locust swarms, exacerbated by rising temperatures that raged Global South, devastating crops and threatening food security and livelihoods. In May, the Red Cross warned that East Africa faced a complex 'triple threat' from the impact of the pandemic, locusts and flooding.

Commonality between COVID-19 and climate crises

The commonality between Covid-19 Pandemic and Climate crises is that both have unequal impacts, which exacerbate racial, gender, socio-economic and other inequalities. The impacts of both COVID-19 and climate change have revealed both vertical inequality (between individuals) and horizontal inequality (between status groups).

- The plight of persons living in poverty during the pandemic, such as those living in informal settlements, in over-crowded homes is a stark reminder of vertical inequality. Poor and marginalised communities are also more likely to live near polluting and extractive projects which cause respiratory health issues and make them more vulnerable to COVID-19.
- Similarly, climate-induced disasters and extreme weather disproportionately harm poor communities, especially in the Global South, who have contributed the least to the climate crisis.

What needs to be done?

- Recognise health, water, food, housing, social protection and education as rights, not commodities
- Invest in inequality-busting public services; tackling systemic discrimination and taking ambitious rights-respecting climate action
- build transformative solutions based on rights and dignity to realise a just and equitable world for present and future generations.

24. Agricultural-Inputs – Privatization is the key

Source – [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 3 - Effects of liberalization and other reforms on the economy

Context – In agriculture-inputs, government should free private sector from unnecessary controls and regulation for market-led growth.

1. Seeds - Today, India exports seeds to its neighboring countries. Even during the lockdown period, hybrid rice seeds were exported through special trains to Bangladesh by the private sector.

Actions against Private companies – The continuous battle of government against large seed companies, especially multinationals and their Indian joint ventures, on issues such as trait fees has prevented companies from introducing new generation of seeds and “illegal” spread of Bt HT cotton in Maharashtra.

Suggested solution – Privatization of seed production - Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had taken a bold decision to allow Bt cotton in India in March 2002. That decision made India the largest producer of cotton in the world and the second largest exporter of cotton by 2013-14.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of July, 2020

2. Fertilizer - In 2019-20, India imported fertilizers worth \$6.7 billion. Topping the list is urea (\$2.9 billion), followed by diammonium phosphate (DAP, \$2 billion) and muriate of potash (MOP, \$1.14 billion). We are totally dependent on imports in case of MOP and in case of DAP, we import the rock and the finished product.

Favoring public sector companies- The cost of many of new urea plants in the public sector is going to be more than \$400/tonne when the international price generally hovers between \$250-300/tons.

Suggested solution - Allowing the private sector plants to compete and expand urea production in a cost competitive manner. This is in addition to, depositing equivalent cash directly into farmers' accounts, calculated on a per hectare basis, and freeing up fertilizer prices.

3. Farm machinery - In 1961-62, before the Green Revolution, India produced only 880 tractor units, which increased to about 9,00,000 units in 2018-19, making the country the largest tractor manufacturer as well as largest exporter in the south-Asian region.

Issues for small farmers- In an economy of small landholders, owning a tractor is a high cost proposition as it is not fully utilized. This needs to be made more efficient by creating a market for tractor services.

Suggested solution - The new class of entrepreneurs and start-ups are coming up with special apps for “**Uberisation of tractor services**” so that farmers can avail of these services at low cost, without owning a tractor.

Way Forward - The private sector is India's strength which has been proved with 1991 reforms of privatization, liberalization and globalization and the consequences of same. The only thing the government has to do is to unshackle them from the chains of controls and webs of unnecessary regulations. They will make an Atmanirbhar Bharat.

25. What India can learn from Korea's economic boom?

Source: [Live Mint](#)

Syllabus: GS 3- Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth

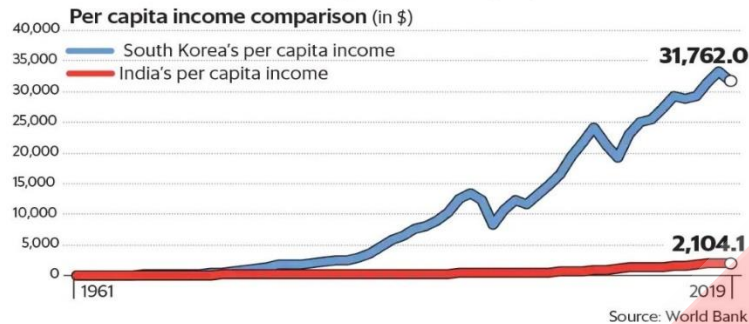
Context: Analyzing what has happened from 1961 when the per capita income (PCI) of India and South Korea was similar to 2019 when the difference has increased many folds in South Korea's favor.

Background: In the early 1950s, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, China, and India had comparable PCI.

PCI	India	South Korea
1961	5. \$85.4	6. \$93.8
2019	7. \$2,104.1	8. \$31,762

Trade miracle

In the early 1950s, South Korea and India had comparable per capita incomes. However, in the 1960s, South Korea switched to export-led policies, resulting in economic transformation and GDP growth of 8.97% per year from 1960 to 2000.



What has happened between the 1950s to now for South Korea?

- **Switched to Outward oriented policies in early mid 1960s:**
 - a. It resulted in wholesale economic transformation.
 - Export oriented policies ensured that South Korea grew at 8.97% per year between 1960-2000 with the GDP (in constant 2010 US dollars) jumping from \$23.3 billion to \$724.6 billion.
- **Labour-intensive exports:**
 - **Fast growth:** By 1972 it accounted for 72.5% of Korea's goods exports.
 - **Labour-intensive exports:** Plywood, woven cotton fabrics, clothing, footwear and wigs. Then in the later years it only intensified with new unexpected items such as wigs and human hair.
 - **People moving from agriculture towards the manufacturing sector:** Due to expansion of labour-intensive exports which led to the creation of jobs.
 - This led to income levels rising and that created a demand for services. In the process, a large part of the economy was rapidly urbanized.
- **Other steps by Korea for fast growth:**
 - The labour markets were flexible.
 - Policy changes weren't random.
 - Education was given the highest priority.
 - An important reform in 1965 raised deposit interest rates to encourage savings. This change plus rising incomes contributed to increased savings.
 - The higher savings were channelized to build more industry and raise incomes.

India lagged behind South Korea in the same period.

Where did India go wrong vis-à-vis Korea?

1. Until 1991, India had an inward-looking import substitution policy.
2. Even after opening up, India hasn't been able to get labour intensive exports going.
3. In the last 15 years, India's engineering exports have been more than labour-intensive exports of leather, textiles and readymade garments, put together.
4. The situation changes only when we add agricultural and allied products exports to the labour intensive exports.
5. In the last two years, engineering exports have been more even after adding agricultural exports.

Lagging of India's export growth and Way Forward

1. **Major reason:** Indian firms in manufacturing are small. As the Economic Survey of 2019-20 points out that Most firms face a complex architecture of the Indian governance framework.

- 2. Time consuming task:** Manufacturing units have to conform with 6,796 compliance items. Though, every unit does not have to conform to every item but this is a long list.
- 3.** This is an urgent need of economic reforms with focus on labour intensive exports.

26. PDS Reforms – Ensuring Right to Food security

Source – [Financial Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 3 - Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security

Context – A World Bank study states two-thirds of India's current workforce was stunted in childhood, resulting in reduction in GDP per capita income of 13%.

Challenges associated with PDS:

1. Rising Food subsidy- It comprises of consumer subsidy and the cost of maintenance of buffer reserve.

1. Consumer subsidy = Economic cost - Central issue price (CIP).

2. Economic cost comprises of two elements:

(a) cost of procurement, i.e. minimum support price (70%), and

(b) FCI's cost of procurement incidentals & operations involving handling/storage/transportation (30%).

- The government makes grains available to states at CIP. States fix retail price to be charged at fair price shops.

- Reasons for ever-increasing food subsidy are rising economic costs (increase in MSP), accumulation of large stocks, increase in quantum of offtake, and unchanged CIP.

2. Leakages – They are food grains not reaching the intended beneficiaries, and are primarily from 'above the poverty line' (APL) and ad hoc quotas. All leakages (2011-12, IHDS) are estimated to be costing nearly Rs 50,000 crore annually in today's rates.

3. Maintenance cost of excess buffer stocks- By June 1, FCI grain stocks were about 97 MMT, against a buffer stock requirement of 41.12 MMT. Monetizing this 'excessive stock' of over 50 MMT will fetch an estimated Rs 1.5 lakh crore.

4. Interest costs of storage - The Centre's food budget ignores the off-budget financing of Rs 2.54 lakh crore of food subsidy financed through borrowings by FCI from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF). Thus, carrying excess stocks would entail an additional interest cost of Rs 8,000-10,000 crore per annum.

5. Post-harvest losses – They are estimated by the Indian Grain Storage Management and Research Institute (IGMRI) to account for 10% of total food grains at Rs 7,000 crore.

Policy implications of PDS Challenges

- **Absence of equitable distribution of food grain** – This is leading to 'stunting syndrome'. In 'stunting syndrome', linear growth retardation in early life is associated with increased morbidity and mortality, reduced physical and economic capacity, and an elevated risk of disease into adulthood.

Suggested solution

- **Weekly DBT through biometric-enabled electronic debit cards** - The amount will be the difference between market rates and subsidized price of grains—adjusted for inflation—for the quantum of food grains supplied via PDS.

Pros of weekly DBT –

- a. Right to demand quality** - The intended beneficiary decides what and how much food grains (nutrition) to buy to feed herself and her family from an authorized private retail shop or a PDS outlet.
- b. Prevent leakage and wastage** - Providing subsidies directly to the poor would bypass middlemen, reduce waste and storing costs of grain.
- c. No misuse** - As a weekly transfer, the amount would be too small to be misused.

Way Forward - It is not just the morally required equity that demands action for reforming PDS. It is in our 'enlightened self-interest' to take serious policy measures, as it impacts the nation's growth prospects.

July 21

27. Agriculture - State intervention vs Liberalization

Source – [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 3 - Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices

Context - While the reforms announced by the Modi government are not the right ones, Indian agriculture does need real reforms and better state intervention.

APMC Act

Pro-liberalization	Pro-state intervention
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It does not allow the free market to function due to government intervention, thereby denying farmers the opportunity to determine the prices of crops in the marketplace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reaching out to farmers - Shanta Kumar observed in 2015, only 6 per cent of farmers get the Minimum Support Price (MSP) — 94 per cent already face the whims of the market. This is because of barriers to access for farmers as only 22 crops are procured under MSP.• No substantial increase in MSP - The gradual increase of MSP is being eroded post-1991 reforms. Thus, denying farmers fair income.• Global food crisis - India managed to weather the 2008 global food crisis only because it had enough food stocks as Indian agriculture was not linked to the international futures market. This was possible due to the procurement done through the APMC Act.• Liberalization in Bihar - The APMC Act was revoked in 2006 with the same rationale that further deregulation will attract private investment in infrastructure. Not only has that not materialized, but the existing APMC market infrastructure was also dismantled.

Suggested Reform - Instead of further liberalization of agriculture, state intervention for better pricing, investments in water harvesting and an agro ecological transition could ensure a more resilient system to weather shocks like the current one.

Way Forward - To make India's agriculture sustainable, the government could draw inspiration from the Andhra Pradesh Community Managed Farming model, which promotes agro-ecological principles with the use of locally-produced, ecologically-sustainable inputs focusing on soil health, instead of depending on chemical fertilizers.

28. Community canteens 2.0

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: Gs-3- Food Security

Context: The Covid-19 pandemic and resultant food insecurity has highlighted the importance of community canteens

Recent Initiatives to deal with food insecurity during Covid-19 pandemic

- **PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana:** Announced as a part of PM Garib Kalyan Yojana in March, 2020, five kilograms of Wheat or Rice is given to every member of the beneficiary poor family and one kilogram of Chana is given to each family.
- **One Nation One Ration Card (ONOR):** It introduces nation-wide portability of ration card holders under NFSA, 2013 which will enable them to lift their entitled food grains from any Fair Price Shop in the country without the need to obtain a new ration card.

Issue with initiatives:

The initiatives fall short of reaching all sections of vulnerable population during Covid-19 pandemic. For example, most migrant workers rely on roadside vendors and dhabas for food. Without access to cooking arrangement or fuel, only subsidised grains are not a sufficient solution to ensure nourishment.

Benefits of community Canteens

There are various state-funded community kitchens addressing the problem of hunger and malnutrition across India. Example: Amma Unavagam (Tamil Nadu), Annapurna Rasoi (Rajasthan), Indira Canteens (Karnataka), Ahaar Centre (Odisha) etc.

- **Nutritional Security:** With an initial social investment of ₹26,500 crore towards 60,000 canteens and about 8,200 kitchens, three nourishing meals a day could be served to the 30 million urban poor workers, primarily migrants.
- **Employment:** Community canteens could also contribute to jobs, growth and sustainability. The 60,000 canteens, each serving about 500 beneficiaries on average, would generate more than 1.2 million jobs to serve 90 million meals a day.
- **Saving Fiscal Resources:** If all urban migrant workers rely on community canteens instead of ONOR, it will help avoid the potential food subsidy outlay due to ONOR, leading to annual savings of about ₹4,500 crore after original investment towards community canteen pay backs in 6 years.

Way forward:

- Central government should extend the initial capital support to establish community canteens. The implementation at the State level should be led by urban local bodies or municipal corporations, in collaboration with private entities as service providers.
- The government should leverage community canteens to shift diets and agriculture production towards more sustainable and sustainably harvested food crops.
- The canteens must incorporate low-cost yet nutritious and environmentally sustainable food items in plate.

29. Achieving Nutritional Self-reliance

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-3- Food Security

Context: India's approach towards "food security" should change from the narrow availability aspect to achieving "nutritional self-reliance."

India's Approach to food security

1. First Generation Approach to Food Security:

- Traditionally, India's approach to food security was based on the 'availability' dimension of food security- looking at only the quantitative aspect. Policies and programmes were designed to ensure "self-sufficiency" in food grains.
- The Green revolution which was launched after two consecutive droughts in mid 1960s increased the production of food grains (mostly rice and wheat) by providing farmers an improved technology package consisting of high yielding seed varieties, modern farm inputs and credit, and assurance of a remunerative and fixed price
- The Green revolution though positively impacted the macro-level food security, had insignificant impact on ensuring access to food and hunger and malnutrition persisted.

2. Second Generation Approach to Food Security:

- Since 1980's there was an increasing acknowledgement that physical and financial access to food had a determining role in achieving food security in the country. The approach shifted from food production to access to food and from charity to a rights-based approach.
- The enacted of National Food Security Act, 2013 marked a shift in the right to food as a legal right rather than a general entitlement.

Eight-fold steps to achieve Nutritional Self-reliance

- **Firstly**, it is important to forecast nutrition requirement for the year 2050.
- **Secondly**, agroecological zones and the changing climate should be taken into account and accordingly, the government should draw area production plans for animal husbandry and crop production.
- **Thirdly**, based on these area production plans, identified crops and practices should be incentivised. The government should incentivise a risk and price support strategy for such crops and the farmers should be given the freedom to what they want to grow.
- **Fourthly**, the farm input (fertiliser, power etc) subsidy regime that incentivises production should shift to one of payment for environmentally sustainable agriculture practices such as intercropping, rainwater harvesting etc,
- **Fifthly**, the government should formulate a strategy to secure farmers' interests and not only focus on providing cheap food to consumers.
- **Sixthly**, the government should invest in a robust market intelligence system to deal with production and abrupt price fluctuations. The system should also provide regular farm advisories to farmers
- **Seventhly**, the government needs to invest more in agriculture R&D. There should be collaboration with the private sector and extensive use of digital technologies.
- **Lastly**, there should be a twenty-year awareness campaign across India to inculcate healthier eating habits.

Conclusion: The major strength of the Indian food security system has been in achieving self-sufficiency in the production of cereals and public distribution system. However, it's high time that India focuses on a 'third generation' approach towards nutritional self-reliance given India's increased vulnerability to climate change.

30. Power sector under stress

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 3 Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of July, 2020

Context: Analysing the deteriorating financial position of power distribution companies after the pandemic and lockdown.

Background:

- 1. Aggregate level:** Electricity demand fell by 16% in the first quarter of the current financial year.
- 2. Reasons for decline:** Due to a fall in demand from industrial and commercial users. These consumers account for a sizable portion of discom earnings.
- 3. Affect discoms financial position:** They help subsidise tariffs for other segments such as for farmers, domestic users etc.
- 4.** According to ICRA's estimate, discoms may be staring at a revenue gap of around Rs 42,000 to Rs 45,000 crore this year.
- 5.** Though the government had earlier announced liquidity support to the tune of Rs 90,000 crore to help discoms clear their obligations towards power generating companies but the off-take on these loans has been slow so far.

Stress on discom finances:

- 1. Audited losses closer at pre-UDAY levels:** Reports reveal that the audited book losses of discoms have been revised upwards to Rs 49,600 crore in FY2019 from the provisional estimate of Rs 28,000 crore.
- 2. Failure of UDAY scheme:** It is indicated by the mounting losses. (UDAY scheme was expected to engineer an operational and financial turnaround in the fortunes of the beleaguered discoms).
- 3. Hope:** The gap between average cost and realization per unit of power to be reduced.
- 4.** This continuing deterioration in their position stems from:
 - a. Inadequate and irregular tariff hikes
 - b. AT&C (aggregate technical and commercial) losses not declining to the levels envisage
 - c. Delays in disbursement of subsidy by state governments.

Way Forward

- 1.** The central government has proposed several amendments to the Electricity Act 2003 aimed at addressing some of these issues like from privatisation of discoms to moving towards DBT for subsidies.
- 2. To turnaround the sector:** The reforms need to be supplemented with the imposition of stiff penalties on states for failing to usher in the changes needed or meeting the targets laid out.

31. The COVID-19 fiscal response and India's standing

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 3- : Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context: Analyzing India's fiscal response drawing on the IMF Policy Tracker, the COVID-19 Economic Stimulus Index (CESI) of Ceyhan Elgin at Columbia University and the World Bank.

Background: India lagging behind: Before the announcement of the Atmanirbhar Bharat package behind comparable developing countries that are similar in GDP per capita, state capacity and structure of the labour force.

Challenges in distinction between fiscal and monetary components for accurate figures:

- **Atmanirbhar package:**
 - It is billed at 10% of GDP.
 - The India's fiscal response in international databases is around 4% of GDP.
 - According to estimation the new fiscal outlay including the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, of March, the direct fiscal aspects of Atmanirbhar Bharat and the latest extension of free rations under the PDS is around 1.7% of GDP.
- **Significant demand-side intervention in the Atmanirbhar Bharat package:** For Rs. 40,000 crores of additional outlay for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).
- **Other demand-side measures:** It involves the frontloading, consolidation or rerouting of existing funds for example Rs. 50,000 crore Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan.
- **India surpassing in the stringency of its containment measures:** The extent of relief measures does not seem to be commensurate with the economic disruption and dislocation caused by the severity of the lockdown.

Vietnam, Indonesia, Pakistan and Egypt averaging less stringent measures than those in India have announced stimulus measures that are as large or more substantial as a share of GDP.

Lessons from other countries:

- **On cash transfers:**
 - Cash transfers constitute the largest category of support.
 - The World Bank reports that such transfers amount to 30% of monthly GDP per capita reaching 46% for lower-middle-income countries for an average of three months.
 - Countries have also significantly expanded coverage of their cash transfer programmes from pre-COVID-19 levels such as Bangladesh and Indonesia have increased the number of beneficiaries by 163% and 111%, respectively.
 - India could take these actions into account in decisions about expanding existing transfer programmes or even creating new ones.
- **Enhance NREGA:**
 - In the World Bank's list of 621 measures across 173 countries, half were cash-based.
 - Most of the rest related to food assistance (23%) or waiver/postponement of financial obligations (25%).
 - Only 2% related to public works which is a clear indication of the popularity of cash transfers over public works for income support.
 - **One example:** Mexico announced an enlargement of its rural permanent employment scheme to 200,000 farmers and beneficiaries.
 - Indonesia has directed village authorities to focus their budgets on a cash-for-work programme for day labourers and the unemployed.
 - This is the right time to expand entitlements in MGNREGA as well as introduce an urban version of the programme, as many have called for.
- **Steps in the developing world:** They are resorting to drastic means to finance COVID-19 responses.
 - **Include:** The amendment of legal budget limits and the enhanced issuance of bonds — including a 'pandemic bond' by Indonesia.
 - **Notable measure:** Central banks in many emerging economies are experimenting with purchases of public and private bonds in the secondary market (quantitative

- easing) or directly purchasing government bonds on the primary market (monetising the deficit).
- Although the RBI has been buying sovereign bonds on the secondary market in India, the debate continues over whether the Indian government should invoke the “escape cause” in the FRBM Act, to enable the central bank to directly finance the deficit.
 - Indonesia and Brazil have both amended laws to allow their central banks to buy government bonds.

Way Forward

- **Reason for subdued fiscal response in India:** A concern with the debt-to-GDP ratio which is higher than for most countries in our set.
- Additional fiscal outlay in the form of cash and in-kind transfers and expanded public works schemes — would save lives and jobs today and might prevent a protracted slowdown

32. Why it is the time to reskill India?

Source: [Financial Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-3 - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilisation of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context: The Covid-19 pandemic and resultant rise in unemployment has highlighted the importance of skill development in India.

Impact of Covid-19 pandemic

- Travel and Tourism Industry The travel and tourism industry which accounted for 12.2% of employment opportunities generated in India in 2017, have been one of the worst hits by the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - As per initial estimates by the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH), losses could be in around Rs 5 lakh crore.
 - Since, 80% of travel & tourism industry is composed of SMEs, it is possible to have 25-75% employment loss in the short to medium term.
1. Reverse Migration: Due to Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown, there has been reverse migration from urban centres to rural areas.
 2. Impact on informal sector: Immediate burden of COVID19 lockdown in India has been on the informal sector and its workers. According to the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE), the unemployment rate in India is at its highest- 27.1%, with millions of informal workers out of job.

Which sectors can take up more jobs?

Domestic consumption-facing sectors: gig economy, healthcare sector, e-commerce, telecom, financial services.

For reverse migrants:

- entrepreneurship, self-employment and opportunities arising out of more focus on rural economy such as in construction of rural roads, houses and light manufacturing.
- Also, reverse migrants can be reskilled in high-value agriculture such as horticulture, livestock, sericulture, aquaculture and plantations.

Advanced vocational education and training (VET): It can be used as a livelihood continuity plan for a short-term period. Focus should be on courses relevant to Industry 4.0, automation and additive manufacturing.

Suggested Measures for Imparting Skill Education:

1. In imparting skill education, focus should be on remote counselling and a digital delivery of learning.
2. Learning tools for feedback, self-monitoring, self-explanation should be integrated in online training.
3. Trainer capacity has to be enhanced to provide more online training.
4. There should be an overall change in the mindset at all levels of skill delivery, administration and governance

Conclusion: The Indian government should focus on reskilling programme to strengthen vocational education and address the issue of rising unemployment.

33. Organizing Rural Labor force

Source – [Financial Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 3 - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context – In order to help the rural economy get back to its feet, the government must provide structural reforms to the unorganized rural population.

Unorganized rural population - This comprises the unorganized labour in the industrial and service segments, the small and marginal landed and landless farmers.

Steps to organize rural labor force

1. Leasing out farm land - Allowing farmers with small landholdings to lease out their lands to a consolidator or Farmer Producer Companies will lead to –

- **Minimum wage for farmers** - Farmers would be entitled to a lease rental for their land and would get priority to work on the land for a monthly wage that should also be standardized under the minimum wages regime.
- **Scientific farming** - Consolidation of farm holdings would enable scientific farming and improve yields per acre of land as the consolidator can bring in modern agriculture techniques, plan their cropping cycle and use high-yielding seeds and fertilizers to maximize crop yields.
- **Objectivity in policy making**- The government can also work in coordination with the consolidators to plan the crop acreage and decide on the MSP based on the total planned output of various crops and also ensure that the cultivator gets a fair return for their investment.

2. Skilling farm labor - Excess farm labor should be identified, and skilling institutions be set up for their training, for jobs that are essential or are in demand. Initiatives should be taken for them to be able to join the MGNREGA with farm operations to provide more work.

3. Using data for policy implementation - A comprehensive database of farm and farm-less labour in terms of number and their skill sets is essential to put them to optimum and productive employment.

- **Better allocation of human resource** - This skilled labour can be used to expedite various infrastructure and capital development schemes of the government.
- **Preventing congestion in cities** - This will ensure that labour does not migrate to the cities unless they have the requisite skills and can be linked to any company in the manufacturing or services sector.

Way Forward - To give a fillip to the agriculture sector amid the gloom of the coronavirus-induced lockdown, the government has rightly announced a spree of reforms, including additional funds and loans for farming and allied activities and a proposed deregulation of the sector. However, in long term organizing farm labor will accrue multiple benefits for all the stakeholders and this require an array of structural reforms in post-corona India.

34. Covid-19 and Inequality

Source: [Down to Earth](#)

Syllabus: GS-3- Inclusive growth and associated issues/challenges

Context: The COVID-19 pandemic and associated health and economic crises have revealed the loopholes in our economic and political systems and highlighted the inequality in the society.

Covid-19 and Inequality

- **Vertical Inequality:** The plight of persons living in poverty during the pandemic, such as those living in informal settlements, in over-crowded homes is a stark reminder of vertical inequality.
- Poor and marginalised communities are also more likely to live near polluting and extractive projects which cause respiratory health issues and make them more vulnerable to COVID-19.
- Oxfam has estimated that there are 121 million more people may face starvation due to mass unemployment, disruption to food production and supplies as a result of Covid-19 pandemic.
- Further, according to the World Food Programme, there will be an 82% increase in the number of hungry in the countries where it operates. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted countries where food crisis is already prevalent. For example, there is 135a5 increase in the number of food insecure people in west and central Africa.
- Economic growth has led to reduction in income inequality among countries. But within countries, inequality in income has, increased by 4% in Gini Coefficient. A Food and Agriculture Organization assessment reveals that COVID-19 may cause an increase in each country's Gini by 2%

Suggested Reforms:

- It is important to invest in health, water, food, housing, social protection and education as rights, not commodities.
- It is important investing in inequality-busting public services; tackling systemic discrimination and taking ambitious rights-respecting climate action
- Transformative solutions based on rights and dignity to realise a just and equitable world for present and future generations should be built.

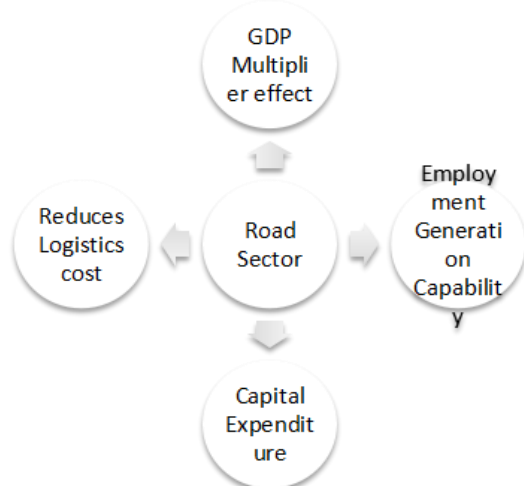
35. Re-engineering BOT Model

Source – [The Hindu Businessline](#)

Syllabus – GS 3 - Investment models

Context – Currently, the economic downturn, the Covid pandemic and stretched balance sheets of companies make BOT the least preferred option.

Focusing on Road Infrastructure



Reasons for inviting bids under Build –Operate-Transfer model

Among the PPP road construction models, the Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) model lays the least financial burden on the Centre, and therefore the focus is now on attracting bids for these projects.

Challenge in Build –Operate-Transfer model

- 1. Initial cost** - Companies have to bear entire cost upfront.
- 2. Absence of significant competition** - Fewer orders from government decreases the competition which in turn reduces the incentive for reducing cost and increasing revenue.
- 3. Less revenue** - Decline in traffic due to economic slowdown and pandemic induced lockdown.
- 4. Non-performing assets** - Banks have been wary of lending to road construction players for some time now, due to the higher re-payment risk.
- 5. Preference to other models** - Companies instead prefer the Hybrid Annuity Model, wherein the NHAI bears 40 per cent of the initial construction cost; or the Engineering, Procurement and Construction model, where the NHAI bears the entire cost upfront.

Steps taken by government

- 1. Assessment of revenue** - The most important step is to assess the revenue of the project every five years, instead of 10 years prescribed currently, so that the concession period can be adjusted if there is a significant decline in traffic.
- 2. Land acquisition** - With many projects held up due to issues relating to land acquisition, the model agreement now lays down that the work order shall be issued only after procuring 90 per cent of the land.
- 3. Dispute –resolution** - Setting up a dispute resolution mechanism and requiring the appointment of an independent engineer are other changes made to the agreement.

Way Forward - The Centre need to make other long-term financing options available to companies before making them take on more debt which involves reviving bond market and incentivizing mutual funds to invest in this sector.

36. Why is integrating with global value chains crucial for India?

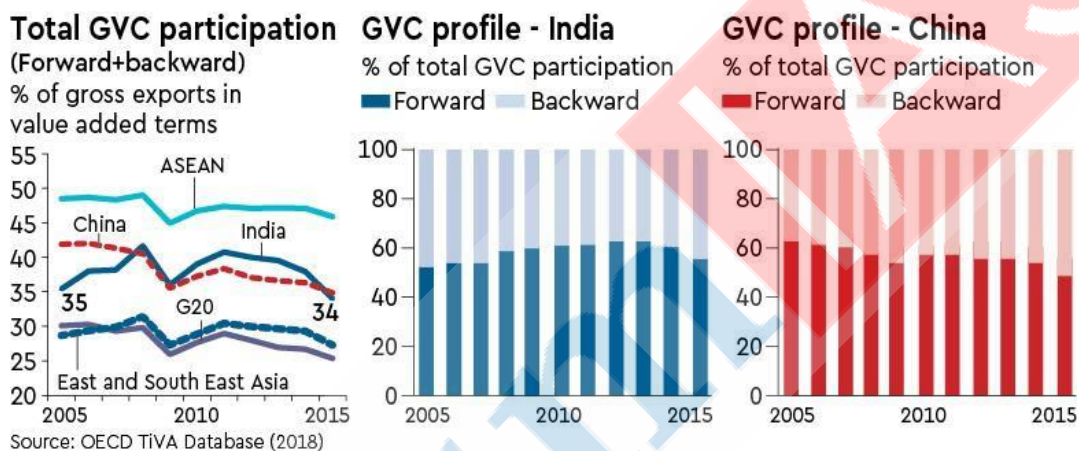
Source: [Financial Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context: The pandemic has triggered a debate as to whether the global value chains (GVCs) may lead to increased fragility of economies actively participating in them.

Background:

- **GVC:** They are production networks that seek to exploit gains from hyper-specialization across countries.
- **Experiences during the ongoing pandemic:** Major demand- and supply-side shocks to value chains and lack of redundancy planning in such networks.
- **Over the last decade:** The system of international production has been grappling with challenges arising from:
 - Industry 4.0.
 - Growing economic nationalism.
 - Sustainability concerns.
- The ongoing pandemic has fuelled calls for further de-globalization of such production networks to reduce industry- and economy-level vulnerabilities.



The graphic shows:

- It is clear that between 2005 and 2015, there has been a steady decline in GVC intensity across all major economies.
- For India, GVC participation peaked at 41.6% in 2008, but has dropped ever since, hitting a low of around 34% in 2015.

The stagnation of GVC trade since the global financial crisis and the unfavorable impact of the ongoing pandemic on GVCs notwithstanding.

There are substantial merits of widening and deepening links to GVCs:

- **GVCs can help reduce poverty and continue to augment growth and employment:**
 - As suggested by the World Bank's World Development Report 2020 (WDR 20) contingent upon deeper reforms in developing countries and policy continuity in industrial economies.
 - Cross-country estimates suggest that a 1% increase in GVC participation can boost per-capita income by more than 1% particularly when countries engage in limited and advanced manufacturing.
- **GVC participation can precipitate significant firm-level productivity improvements:**
 - WDR 20 suggests that GVC firms engaged in manufacturing activities show higher labour productivity than one-way traders or non-traders after controlling for firm-level capital intensity.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of July, 2020

- In particular, firms that engage in both import and export are 76% more productive than non-trading firms as compared with a 42% difference for export-only firms and a 20% difference for import-only firms.
- **Backward participation in GVCs can be particularly beneficial for economies:**
 - A 10% increase in the level of GVC participation could increase average productivity by close to 1.6%.
 - As the accompanying graphic shows while China has seen a rise in its forward GVC participation and a corresponding drop in the backward participation, the trend has been just the opposite for India.
 - India's share of foreign value-added content in total GVC trade has steadily increased from 53% in 2005 to 61% in 2014.
- **It can capture much of the value addition at the midstream stages:** If India can seize FDI looking to relocate from China and create conditions for firms to leverage the labour-cost arbitrage opportunities.
 - **Deeper reforms:** Reforms are needed in labour markets, trade infrastructure and improvements in the overall business environment.
 - Policies directed towards facilitating vertical GVC linkages between domestic SMEs and larger foreign and domestic firms can go a long way towards strengthening India's relative position in GVC trade.
- **Localized regimes are more vulnerable to shocks:**
 - As shown by the OECD METRO Model localized are less reliant on foreign suppliers.
 - It results in a significantly lower level of economic activity and fall in national incomes as compared to the interconnected regimes.
 - While interconnected regimes build resilience, stability and flexibility in the production networks, localized regimes offer fewer channels for adjustment to shocks.
 - Estimates for India suggest that a shift towards a localized regime can decrease real GDP by 1.1%, and reduce import and export demand by 11.4% and 14.8%, respectively.
 - Recent policy pronouncement for an Atmanirbhar Bharat may be antithetical to the spirit of efficiency-seeking economic interdependence typified by GVCs in the long-term.

In the aftermath of the pandemic:

- Regional value chains (RVCs) are expected to gain momentum to strike a balance between localization and globalization.
- However, if the recent RCEP experience is any indication, facilitating RVCs is difficult and requires intense regional coordination, geopolitical stability and conducive systemic conditions.
- **India may need to reassess its regionalization strategy:** To take advantage of the accelerated momentum towards RVCs. If India intends to strike a balance between managing vulnerabilities in GVCs (similar to those arising from the pandemic) and building resilience.

Way Forward

- Long-term gains from globally connected value chains can far outweigh the benefits from RVCs.
- Instead of a piecemeal approach, India needs to adopt a holistic perspective focused on the 'whole of the supply chain', by driving strategic changes in its investment-development paradigm, and through greater integration into the GVCs.

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37. Analysis on lowering of corporate tax rate

Source: [Financial Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-3-Economy

Context: The case for a uniform tax rate of 15 per cent in India will minimise tax litigation that arises due to numerous interpretations of exemptions and deductions in tax legislation.

Tax rates in India

- 1. High rate of corporate tax:** The high rate of corporate tax has been a major factor in affecting India's ability to attract foreign investment for a long span of time. India had a 30 per cent rate of tax on domestic companies, including surcharge and cess, the total tax incidence is 34.9 per cent in the year 2018-19 making the country an exception.
- 2. Tax rates of other countries:** Corporate tax rate in other countries is much lower than India. For example, the US (21 per cent), the OECD average (21.4 per cent), China (25 per cent), Vietnam (20 per cent), Thailand (20 per cent), Singapore (17 per cent), etc.
- 3. Cumbersome tax laws:** Indian tax laws have exemptions and incentives that can help in reducing the tax liability in abundance but it is not sufficient enough to match the low tax rates of other countries. Further, any prospective investor gets sceptical because of the exemptions and incentives that make the Indian laws cumbersome.
- 4. Cost of taxation firms:** An investor can't even think of running an enterprise in India without taking the services of a taxation firm for which they have to pay a hefty amount. All this gives rise to nepotism and corruption, and hampers ease of doing business because of the bureaucratic discretion.

Present Government's initiatives on corporate tax rates

- Then-finance minister Arun Jaitley had announced a roadmap for a phased reduction in the corporate tax over a period of five years to 25 per cent, accompanied by elimination of exemptions and incentives in the union budget of 2015-16.
 - The start-ups/ new enterprises and firms having an annual turnover of less than Rs 400 crore were the only ones who got the 25 per cent rate. Including surcharge and cess, the total tax was 29.15 per cent.
- Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman introduced a reduction of tax rates for new entities in the manufacturing sector from the existing 25 per cent to 15 per cent with no exemptions and deductions. Thus, the total tax incidence works out to be 17.1 per cent including the surcharge and cess.
- The existing companies' tax rates were reduced from 30 per cent to 22 per cent but these are not the final exemptions and deductions that the companies would be mandated to.
 - It's the companies' choice whether to opt for 22 per cent or stay on with the existing dispensation, i.e. 30 per cent plus exemptions/deductions.
 - The firms who decide to stay on get to pay the minimum alternate tax (MAT)—it is levied on book profits of a firm which has no taxable profit—at the rate of 15per cent, down from the existing 18.5per cent.
- Thus, the total tax incidence, including surcharge and cess, worked out to be at 25.17 per cent and is applicable to small firms as well. (The special treatment they earlier got on par with start-ups stands withdrawn)
- The tax rate is higher than most countries except for China where the tax rate is 25 percent.

Way forward

1. The cumbersome regime won't go away just by giving the companies the options to choose from. The government can, thus do the following:
 2. Erase exemptions and deductions from the rule book but this may not be practical.
 3. Give the option of 15% tax sans exemptions/deductions to all the existing companies.
- This will make India unambiguously the most attractive destination for foreign investors and will give a big boost to the GDP, increase in exports, better compliance, reduce litigation, and enhance recoveries.

38. Stock Exchange for social enterprises

Source – [The Hindubusiness Line](#)

Syllabus – GS 3 - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment

Context – SEBI's working group on the concept of a Social Stock Exchange has submitted a comprehensive report on establishing a structure within the existing stock market ecosystem to enable social enterprises and voluntary organizations to raise funds.

Need for introducing Stock Exchange for social enterprises

1. Lack of investment in social sector by government - With India ranking 129 among 189 countries on the Human Development Index, that tracks the progress made in education, health and income, there is indeed a pressing need to do more for the social sector and onus has mostly fallen on voluntary organizations as government is under-investing in the social sectors.

2. Mobilizing resources from various sources - While funds from individual philanthropists have been quite strong in India, amounting to Rs 70,000 crore in 2018, there is an opportunity to help these entities tap other sources of funding such as international philanthropy, domestic CSR, official development assistance and so on.

Issues with recommendations of report

1. Allowing for-profit entities to raise funds - The report is complicating matters by allowing both non-profit organizations and for-profit entities on the social stock exchange. Many of the global social exchanges cater only to NPOs, acting as an intermediary that screens and certifies them and helps them find eligible donors.

2. Misuse of self-declaration clause - The report suggests a self-declaration by FPEs about being a social enterprise. This is likely to be misused, in the absence of agencies that can do independent verification of the declarations made by these FPEs.

3. No return for investors – The report recommends that the NPOs can raise zero coupon zero capital bonds, listing of equity and debt of NPOs, raising social and development impact bonds and using social venture funds and mutual funds to channel money into charitable causes. However, investors will not get any returns and thus liquidity in these instruments is likely to be scant.

Way Forward – Government's policy need to allow foreign philanthropic funds to put money in this platform and also allow Indian companies to invest their CSR money in entities listed on a social stock exchange to raise substantive funds for social sector investment.

39. Economic Growth and Youth

Source: [LiveMint](#)

Syllabus: GS-3-Economy

Context: Global growth is slowing down and one possible factor for this is the slowing down of the working age population across the world.

Connection between the working class and growth

1. Higher the number of workers entering the labour force, higher is the economy's potential to grow. Lesser the workforce, less are the chances of economic growth.
2. Increase in the population leads to roughly half of economic growth.
3. If more people are employed and are earning, their monetary spends also increase creating a high consumer demand which leads to business expansions, in this process new jobs are created to meet the demand.
4. This multiplier effect benefits the business as well as the economy.

Data to support the claim

- Working population in the age group of 15 to 64 grew by 2.05 per cent every year on an average, between 1961 and 1990.
- The economic growth during this era averaged 4.11 per cent per year and the working age population grew by 2 per cent or more in 25 of the 30 years.
- Primary cause of the slowing down of the economy in the last three decades is the falling working age population below 2 per cent in the year 1991.
- In the year 2017, the working age population fell to 1 percent and has remained unchanged ever since.
- The average working age population between 1991 and 2019 is 1.53 per cent per year.
 - Global economic slowdown to 2.83 per cent per year was observed during this period.
 - The working-age population growth has dropped to 1.21 per cent per year with the economic growth slowing down to 2.5 per cent per year ever since the global recession in 2008.

Is this largely true for western nations only?

- 17 of the 20 largest emerging economies had a working age population growth rate above 2 per cent in the 1980s.
- The last time India's working age population growth rate grew by 2 per cent was in the year 2009.
- In 2019 India's working age population growth rate was 1.4 per cent.
- Any country where the working age population is not growing by over 2 percent will find it hard to constantly grow rapidly and is not just limited to the western countries.

Way Forward

Not every country that sees more than a 2 per cent growth in working age population grows quickly because good demographics are a necessary condition for growth in many instances but this can never be a sufficient condition. Thus, political leaders should create the environment necessary to attract investment and generate jobs to create suitable conditions of work for the working age population.

40. Compensating States – Fostering Cooperative Federalism

Source – [The Hindu](#) , [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 3 - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment

Context – With GST collections set to shrink in this fiscal year, the Centre must find new ways to compensate States.

Compensation Cess - The GST Compensation Cess collected by the central government is distributed to the manufacturing-heavy states or origin states to compensate for the possible revenue losses due to implementation of the consumption-based GST regime.

Calculation of the Compensation Cess Amount

1. Base Year - Revenue for the FY 2016-17 is considered as the **base revenue** for the state in consideration.

2. Compensation cess - Growth rate of the state is assumed to be 14% per annum for the 5-year period over which GST cess is applicable. Based on this, projected revenue for a FY that a state could have earned in the absence of GST is calculated.

Compensation cess = Projected revenue for the FY- Actual revenue collected by a State in the same FY

Challenges associated with state's revenue

1. Low GST collection in FY 2020 - With economic activity likely to remain well below pre-COVID levels, state GST collections will fall well short of expectations.

2. Low compensation cess - Collections through the compensation cess will not be enough to offset the shortfall in states' revenues as measured against their protected revenue growth. For instance, Compensation cess under GST last year was almost RS 70,000 crore less than the payments due to States.

Challenges GST council is facing

1. Fulfilling obligation of paying compensation cess - How to compensate states for the greater than expected shortfall this year is a major challenge with GST Council this year.

2. Extension of time-period - Whether the compensation cess should be extended beyond the five-year period that was originally agreed upon is another major contention.

Way Forward - Given that states are at the forefront of fighting the COVID, the GST council must ensure adequate flow of resources to them and reduce the uncertainty in state finances.

41. Farmer Producer Organizations

Source: [Financial Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-3- Agriculture

Context: There is a dire need for fostering rapid growth in the farm sector. FPO can be a game changer provided that the promotion and nurturing of FPOs is implemented in a mission mode

Need for fostering rapid growth in the farm sector:

- **Declining contribution to India's GDP:** The agriculture sector's share in GDP has significantly declined, from 59% in 1950-51 to about 14% in 2018-19.
- **Limited Size of Land holding restrict access to markets and finances:** In India, the average size of holding is 0.58 hectares. Owing to this, small farmers face numerous challenges such as lack of access to markets, finances etc.

Recent Reforms:

- **Incorporated new features into the e-NAM platform:**
 1. Warehouse-based trading module based on e-NWR.
 2. FPO trading module to enable FPOs to sell their produce at a collection centre circumventing agricultural produce market committees (APMCs).
 3. Direct buying facility by bulk buyers outside the mandi premises without any licensing or registration process.
- **Ordinances on agricultural reforms:** The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce Ordinance 2020, and The Farmers Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance 2020 was promulgated to facilitate inter-state and intra-state

trade of agricultural produce and to allow farmers to sell their agricultural produce at a place of their choice at a remunerative price.

FPO's as game changer: There is a growing realisation that the constraints of the marginal and small farmers related to product and financial markets can be addressed by aggregating the farm produce by forming farmers' groups and linking these groups to an integrated value chain.

Measures taken to augment FPO's:

- **To ensure Financial support:** Credit guarantee funds were created by the NABARD and the NCDC (National Cooperative Development Corporation).
- **To ensure sustainability:** Equity grant fund was set up in the SFAC (Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium).
- **For the development of marketing and infrastructure for FPOs:** The states/UTs were enabled to avail assistance for FPOs under the Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund (AMIF).

Some suggestions for making FPOs sustainable.

1. Identify experienced and credible cluster-based business organisations (CBBOs) that has prerequisite technical and administrative expertise. For example, Linking FPOs to the Krishi Vikas Kendras could help farmers by providing technical support.

2. Promote Cohesiveness: regular meetings ensure success in the business, hence FPOs should have their members from within a reachable contiguous area to execute various decisions taken by the executive committee

3. Create FPOs Federations at the district or the mandal level: it will ensure scalability and sustainability, and also creates mechanism for better backward and forward linkages. it will also be in line with One District, One Product (ODOP) motto.

4. FPO's needs to be limited: for better marketability FPOs need to grow only one or two varieties of a crop because lack of homogeneity of product fetches lesser price both in domestic and international markets. Example, case of milk & milk products

5. FPOs should be output-centric: It should concentrate on creating and managing the whole value chain for the identified product/crop.

6. Practise equal amount of shareholding for all the members: because concentration of shareholding in a few hands discourages other members to take interest in group activities as maximum gains will be reaped by shareholders.

7. Start experimenting with the aggregation model: to take advantage of better price discovery. Many FPOs has not started with aggregating farm produce and bulk purchase of inputs. CBBOs should encourage FPOs to get them registered on the e-NAM platform.

8. Produce crops that enjoy comparative advantage: it should not be guided by local demand.

Conclusion: FPOs have the potential to transform marginal and small farms from subsistence farming to market-oriented commercial farms. The central government's efforts in developing and assisting FPOs is commendable. Further these efforts need to be guided with regulatory amendments, particularly those related to land and tenancy rights.

42. Community participation in lake restoration- Examples from across India

Source: [Down to Earth](#)

Syllabus: GS-3- Environment- Conservation

Context: A large number of lakes in India are threatened and in dire need of conservation and restoration. This article showcases some of the successful examples of lake restoration through community and government participation.

Community participation in lake restoration- Examples from across India

1. Jakkur lake:

- **Issue:** It is located in northern Bengaluru. Due to urbanization and increase in population, the catchment area is highly encroached making the streams dry. Further, it was highly polluted by sewage from households nearby.
- **Revival:** With the effort made by the state government, local governing bodies, fishermen, citizens and lake revival groups, the lake has been revived. Contaminants were removed, wastewater treated and natural algae ponds or ecosystem were created for the lake to undergo a biophysical and chemical process.

2. Khatpewadi Lake: It is located in Pune. It was built in 1972 to mitigate the drought situation in the area. The lake is also a catchment area for the rivers and lake downstream to Pune.

- **Issue:** shrinking and water table reducing
- **Revival:** Ramnadi Restoration Mission de-silted the dam and its capacity increased by 25%. Further, de-silted soil was put along the rim of the lake to restore the saucer-like shape and native plants are protected.

3. Lonar Lake: It is a notified National Geo Heritage Monument located at Lonar, Maharashtra. It is the second-biggest crater in the world.

- **Issue:** pollution from sewage
- **Revival:** with joint efforts by the citizens and authorities, sewage from the villages has been stopped from entering Lonar lake water.

4. Loktak Pat lake: it is located in Manipur and is famous for the phumdis

- **Issue:** Due to the development works of Ithai Baarage and hydro-electric power projects, the fish population reduced and gave rise to unwanted pollutants and water plant species.
- **Revival:**
 - Manipur government introduced an act for the conservation of lake that included natural regeneration and protection.
 - In 2019, the Centre for Conservation of Nature & Cultivation of Science, along with the state forest department, declared a section of the lake as a bird sanctuary.
 - Also, a number of conservation groups have been working towards lake restoration since 2011.

43. Towards Sustainable Marine Fisheries

Source: [Down to Earth](#)

Syllabus: GS-3- Environment- Conservation

Context: Marine fishery is among the many economic sectors lagging behind in India

Marine fishery Sector: The total fish output in India was about 13.7 million tonnes in 2018-19, out of which about 35% was contributed by the marine sector.

Unsustainability Issues in Marine Fishery Sector in India:

- It is estimated, against the recommended fleet size, that the overall marine fleet size is in excess by about 125%
- Out of the total assessed stock of 52 species of various finfish and shellfish along the Indian coast, nearly 44% are beyond their biologically sustainable levels.
- For every tonne of fish caught, carbon dioxide emissions increased from 0.50 to 1.02 tonnes between 1961 and 2010.

Measures taken towards sustainable fishing:

- The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) has promulgated a Code Conduct of Responsible Fisheries (CCRF). It calls to regulate the fishing practices that have destructive impacts on the environment.
- India has taken steps adhering to the CCRF norms. Kerala has adopted a comprehensive Marine Fishery Regulation Act.

Impact of Covid-19

- There have been large-scale disruptions in the value chain due to Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown.
- According to some estimates, the loss would be as high as Rs 6,863 crore / month, or about Rs 224 crore / day

Lessons that can be learnt from lockdown:

- **Behavioural Change:** Resource enhancement during the lockdown period can have positive influence on the fishermen's behaviour related to sustainable harvesting.
- **Building up fishing stocks:** Due to the non-operation of mechanised fishing vessels in the Exclusive Economic Zone during the lockdown, the fishing pressure has reduced. This has given an opportunity to build up fish stocks at seas. Further, marine health might have also improved.
- **Hygienic Handling of Fishes:** COVID-19 has necessitated high level of personal hygiene, including frequent washing of hands, wearing masks, physical distancing. These changes have brought about behavioural change among fishermen regarding hygienic fish handling methods.
- **Co-management:** The experience during the COVID-19 in several villages in sharing food and meeting common challenges of the community has provided lessons on co-management and co-mobilisation.
 - Example: The Kerala government has proposed a co-management system by institutionalising fisheries management councils.

Way Forward:

The regular fishing ban / trawl ban period has adversely affected livelihood of fishermen. The primary focus at present should be giving social security payments and implement other welfare measures to address the plight of fishermen.

General Studies Paper - 4

General Studies - 4

1. Journalism - In need of re-invention

Source – [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS 4 – Probity in Public service and work culture

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 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.

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.

2. Leadership in times of Covid

Source – [Financial Express](#)

Syllabus – GS 4 - Empathy, tolerance and compassion towards the weaker-sections

Context - Placebo leadership is need of the hour in India

Placebo – The placebo effect is defined as a phenomenon that influences beneficially in illnesses, failures, despair, etc. It is attributable to the brain-mind responses to stimuli we receive from some people or some objects in our life.

For instance - People follow some gurus and some follow soothsayers because they get the placebo effect.

Placebo leaders- They are empathetic. Empathy is ability to accurately hear out and understand the thoughts, feelings and concerns of others, even when these are not made explicit. There is no feeling of pity.

Importance of placebo leaders:

Understand need of others - Empathetic leaders understand the needs of others; they are aware of not only their own feelings but also people's feelings.

Encourage people - They maintain communication and show up during periods of uncertainty. Even when there is not much to say, keeping a regular pulse of communication, especially face to face, provides reassurance and consistency.

For instance - Seven countries including Germany and Iceland, where women are heading the nations have tackled Covid-19 tactfully. Their empathetic leadership has cautiously tackled the situation.

- Mumbai 2008 Terrorist Attack - Ratan Tata went all out to care for each and every employee of the hotel to help them recoup from the shock.

Way Forward – Covid has caused distress across the world. This is aggravated by rumours, misinformation which is travelling faster than verified information. Thus, need of the hour is to promote placebo leadership at all levels so that people feel comfortable in panic stricken world.

3. A P J Abdul Kalam's Mission and Vision for Humanity

Source – [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus – G 4 - Human Values – lessons from the lives and teachings of great leaders, reformers and administrators

Context – A P J Abdul Kalam's world vision was creating a 'livable Planet Earth'. His mission was to connect the hearts and minds of billions of people and to give them self-confidence that "we can do it".

Challenges humanity is witnessing:

1. Political issues – Frequent disruption of parliament, criminalization of politics, lack of ethical conduct among politicians and issues like defection by house members has lead to undermining of legitimacy of political institutions of the nation.

2. Environmental challenges - Man-made forces like global warming and pollution are a threat to the planet as they are oblivious of class, caste, regional distinction and impacts whole of the humanity.

Steps suggested by A P J Abdul Kalam for creating a 'livable Planet Earth':

1. Conflict free Earth –According to A P J Abdul Kalam, humanity needs a great vision to forget all the conflicts and move towards a common goal of peace and prosperity for all global citizens.

2. Taking sustainable steps – Government and all stakeholders must act towards strengthening policy initiatives such as recycling, waste management, energy efficiency, sustainability education and other such relevant activities.

3. Self-Reliance - The identification of champion sectors, collaboration and co-option of the best international practices with a vocal campaign for local manufacturing, are among the steps taken towards making India a self-reliant country as envisioned by Kalam.

Way Forward - The combination of better governance systems and our demographic dividend — 65 per cent of its population is less than 35 years old — are key ingredients in developing India in a sustainable manner, which can also be inspiring to rest of the world.

