

9pm

Compilation

14th to 20th September, 2020

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General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies – 2

1. Cancelling of Question Hour in Parliament

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- The decision to go without “Question Hour” during the Monsoon Session of Parliament, beginning September 14, has evoked serious concerns about the democratic functioning of the institution.

What is the democratic functioning of the government?

- There are two type of democracy i.e. direct and indirect democracy.
- **Direct Democracy-** Nations which have direct democracy, people exercise their supreme power directly through referendum, initiative, recall, plebiscite. Such as Switzerland.
- **Indirect Democracy-** Nations which have indirect democracy, the representatives elected by the people exercise the supreme power. Thus carry on the government and make the laws. Such as Parliamentary and Presidential.
- India is an indirect democracy where the questions are asked from civil society platforms, the mass media, community gatherings and ultimately within the highest temple of democracy, the legislature itself.

What is the Question Hour?

- It is the **first hour of a sitting session** of India's Lok Sabha.
- Members of Parliament raise questions to the concerned minister about matters of public interest and administrative activity whether domestic or foreign.

It is not only an opportunity for the members to raise questions, but it is a parliamentary device primarily meant for **exercising legislative control** over executive actions.

- The concerned Minister is **obliged to answer** to the Parliament, either orally or in writing.
- Copies of answers given are available to members at the Notice office before the start of the day's proceedings and on the websites.

It is a device to **criticise government** policies and programmes, ventilate public grievances, expose the government's lapses, extract promises from ministers and thereby, ensure accountability and transparency in governance.

Illustration of this role can be seen in the **Lok Sabha in November 1957-** In which the finance minister T. T. Krishnamachari had resign and took the moral responsibility for what had happened after the enquiry headed by Justice M. C. chagla.

Why is government trying to avoid Question Hour?

The government is duty bound to respond to the following failures in Parliament. However, by cancelling the Question Hour, the government has opted for a face- saving measure.

- Prevent Spread of corona virus and limit mortality.
- Unprecedented decline in GDP and its impact on the economy.
- New Education Policy.
- Rising unemployment.
- Miseries of migrant labour.
- Tension at the border.

Thus, these actions erode the constitutional mandate of parliamentary oversight over executive actions as envisaged under **Article 75 (3)** of the Indian Constitution. It needs to be understood that such actions are a planned covert attempt by the government to diminish the role of Parliament and turn itself into an “Executive Parliament”.

Way Forward

Since the government is accountable to the parliament, the parliamentary proceedings meant to hold the government accountable should not be suspended or curtailed as it will go against the essence of the Constitution. The annals of history of parliamentary proceedings and functioning in India remind us of the strength and scope of Question Hour as an effective armour to raise the concerns of the people.

2. India's Policy on Tibet

Source: [LiveMint](#)

GS2: India and its neighbourhood

Context: Recently china has unveiled the Communist Party of China's (CPC's) new policy towards Tibet at a conclave.

What is China's new strategy towards Tibet?

- It entails a mix of persuasion, development, connectivity, indoctrination and coercion.
- It intends to construct an ironclad shield to safeguard stability against separatists and hostile foreign interests by sinicizing Tibetan Buddhism.
- It aims to step up ideological education, manufacturing a favourable historical narrative, strengthening border defence, deepening surveillance and enhancing connectivity to neighbouring Chinese provinces.
- The new policy continues to betray the CPC's insecurities vis-a-vis Tibet.
- It also indicates that China believes that it occupies the dominating heights of its relationship with Tibet.

What strategies China had in past Towards Tibet?

- Limit the Dalai Lama's global outreach.
- Constrain protests in Tibet.
- Change the demography of the region.
- Increased transgression across Indo-tibetan border.

What is Impact of Chinese strategy?

- Transform the Tibetan landscape and economy: it has created vested interests in favour of china's rule.
- It has found numerous ways to put pressure on New Delhi to limit formal interactions with the Dharamsala-based Central Tibetan Administration.
- Claims over Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh (China claims as “South Tibet”).

How China is interfering with Dalai Lama institution?

- China is planning to **end the institution of the Dalai Lama** with Tenzin Gyatso's departure.
- **Identifying the next Dalai Lama:** China has planned to manage by invoking the **Golden Urn** process.
- A bureaucratic device used by Emperor Qianlong of the Qing dynasty to manage the politics of reincarnation in the late-18th century by drawing lots.

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- China has declared that all reincarnations require the approval of the Chinese government.
- **Panchen Lama:** by tradition Panchen Lama is the preceptor of the Dalai Lama but it is already under Chinese control.

What could be possible implications, if china has full control over Tibet?

- Rise in Chinese aggression across Himalayas once it has strong hold over Tibet completely.
- It will legitimise the People Republic of China's (PRC) annexation of Tibet.
- The balance of power will shift massively in favour of China.

What role India needs to play in context of Tibet?

1. Ensure that China does not consolidate its hold over Tibet.
2. China's insecurities about the loyalties of ethnic Tibetans about the external legitimacy of its annexation will make harder to actively pursue territorial ambitions in the Himalayas.
3. Tibetan aspirations for autonomy or freedom from Chinese rule.
4. Ensure that senior lamas of all sects of Tibetan Buddhism, including the Dalai and Karmapa, remain free to pursue their religion and politics.
5. India should not accept the legitimacy of the **Golden Urn process** and China's self-arrogated authority to recognize religious reincarnations.
6. India is hosting the largest population of ethnic Tibetans outside their homeland. Hence, the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama can be from Tibetan residing in India.
7. **India's Tibet policy should concern itself with shaping:**
 - A) How the Tibetan people conduct politics.
 - B) The existence of credible, legitimate spiritual and political leadership outside China's control.

India needs to change its policy of incoherence towards Tibet and bring purposeful policy with substantive actions.

3. From peace to conflict Prevention

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: India - China Relations

Context: Recently, China and India have agreed over **five point consensus** to conclude CBMs (Confidence building measures) to maintain and enhance peace and tranquillity in the border areas.

What are the Major Clashes/wra/face-offs between India and China?

- 1962 war
- Clashes at Nathu La in 1967,
- Occupation of a post in Sumdorong Chu Valley by China in 1986.
- After the 1962 war, the India-China border was loosely controlled by both sides. It has a sparse deployment of troops.
- The China Study Group was established in 1976. It gave clarity to India's claims by laying down the patrolling points and guiding the scope of military activity along the LAC.
- Depsang intrusion in 2013.
- Intrusion at Chumar in 2014.
- 2017 Doklam standoff.
- Clashes in Ladakh

What are the steps have been taken to resolve border issues between India and China?

1993 India-China Agreement:

- India Accepted the term LAC in this agreement. However, there was no clarity as to where this line lay on the ground.
- **Differing perceptions:** The ambiguity regarding LAC has forced India to adopt a **policy of appeasement** on the LAC. It called for creating a group of diplomatic and military experts for “resolution of differences between the two sides on the alignment of the line of actual control”. Abstain from the use of force to settle the boundary issue. Principle of mutual and equal security: Reduce military forces along the line of actual control.

Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity:

- **Chinese occupation 1986:** It sparked realisation on both sides that the boundary issue needs to be settled and some mechanism must be evolved to keep peace along the LAC.
- After PM visit to Beijing in 1988, both sides came up with Confidence building measures and some of the recommendations were incorporated in the agreement.

1996 Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control:

- Reduce or limiting military forces to minimum levels.
- Limit the deployment of major armaments such as tanks, artillery guns, and missiles to mutually agreed levels.

2005 protocol on Modalities for the Implementation of Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field:

- Confidence-building measures in the event of face-off between two militaries.
- Expand the mechanism of border meeting points.
- No mention of a reduction in military forces.

What are the reasons behind increased number of clashes?

- **Unimplemented agreements:** unimplemented aspects of the agreements, combined with a shift in military posture by both sides, has led to an erosion of confidence-building measures.
- **Differences in the alignment of the LAC:** Some maps were exchanged of central sector but differences over the Western sector are not resolved. Also, the agreement on reducing military forces along the LAC to the minimum was not seriously implemented.
- **Faulty approach:** India perceived Pakistan as major security threat. However, many Military Operations Directorate stated that in about 15 years, India’s primary adversary would be China.
- **Infrastructure development on Indian side:** for example, building 73 strategic roads along the LAC, two new divisions were raised to strengthen deployment in Arunachal Pradesh, additional formations deployment in Ladakh and raising of a Mountain Strike Corps for the Northern border.
- Frequent face-offs weakened the protocols. It led to complete loss of trust.

Five-point consensus is a good step forward but India should now focus more on conflict prevention.

4. Cancer burden in India

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- Health

Context: In order to reduce India's cancer burden, the country needs to focus on early detection, programmatic and policy solutions.

What is the status of cancer in India and what are its causes?

- India recorded **13.9 lakh cancer cases in August 2020**, according to the reports of the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and research national cancer registry programme (NCDIR)**.
- **Steady rise in cancer cases:** India's cancer burden increased 2.6 times between 1990 to 2016 and deaths due to cancer doubled, according to 2017 report.
- **Late detection:** almost two-thirds of these cancer cases are at late stages.
- **Common cancers in men:** Cancers found are mostly of the lung, oral cavity, stomach and oesophagus.
- **Common cancers in women:** Cancers found are mostly of the breast, cervix, ovary, and gall bladder.
- **Risk factors:** Tobacco use (in all forms) is a major avoidable risk factor for the development of cancer in 27 per cent of cancer cases.
- Other important risk factors include use of alcohol, inappropriate diet, low physical activity, obesity and pollution.

What is cancer occurrence and what are the steps that can be taken to help cancer patients?

- **Cancer occurrence:** It is a complex interplay of host and environmental determinants, which makes it difficult to predict it at an individual level.
- Nearly **50-60 per cent of cancer cases can be avoided** by tackling the known risk factors effectively.
- **A multi-sectoral approach:** community empowerment with the help of government, private practitioners and civil society to increase health literacy and promote certain behaviour can go a long way in reducing potential risk factors.
- **Improved awareness:** In order to prevent the stigma attached to the disease, awareness about the disease needs to be increased.
- **Strengthening of health systems:** In order to get greater access to screening and vaccination, early detection, timely and affordable treatment, the health systems need to be improved and strengthened.

What is the importance of data?

- The information collected through **the national cancer registry programme has been used effectively over the years to advocate for better access to screening, early detection**, referral, treatment and comforting care services.
- **The data has also helped shape cancer research in India**, which is of crucial importance to guide our efforts on cancer prevention and control.
- **Making cancer a notifiable disease:** This could be one of the ways to help drive this research further by providing greater access to accurate, relevant data that can drive policy decisions.

What are the improvements and schemes introduced by the government?

- **Sustainable development goal:** India is aiming to achieve a one-third reduction in deaths caused by cancer by 2030 and it has made considerable progress.

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- **Improvements:** The country has improved in areas such as personal hygiene, which are distant drivers of cancer.
- **Government programmes:** Ayushman bharat, swachh bharat abhiyan, poshan abhiyaan, pradhan mantri janaushadhi pariyojana.
- Initiatives such as **FSSAI's new labelling and display regulations and drug price control** can encourage inter-sectoral and multi-sectoral action.
- Some other initiatives include national health policy, the national tobacco control programme, and the national programme for prevention and control of cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and stroke.

Way forward

- Reducing cancer is prerequisite for addressing social and economic inequity, stimulating economic growth and accelerating sustainable development.
- Emphasis should be on the inclusivity in thinking and action for equitable solutions that can reduce the impact of cancer across all socio-economic levels of the country.

5. Malnutrition in India

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- **GS 2** - Issues relating to poverty and hunger

Context- Malnutrition amongst the poorest in India remains high despite economic growth and government interventions.

What is Poshan Maah campaign?

Poshan Maah- It includes a month-long activities [during the month of September] focused on antenatal care, optimal breastfeeding, anemia, growth monitoring, girls education, diet, right age of marriage, hygiene and sanitation and eating healthy (food fortification). The campaign comes under the Poshan Abhiyan scheme.

Poshan Abhiyan - It also called as the National Nutrition Mission, it is Government of India's flagship programme to improve nutritional outcomes for children, pregnant women and lactating mothers.

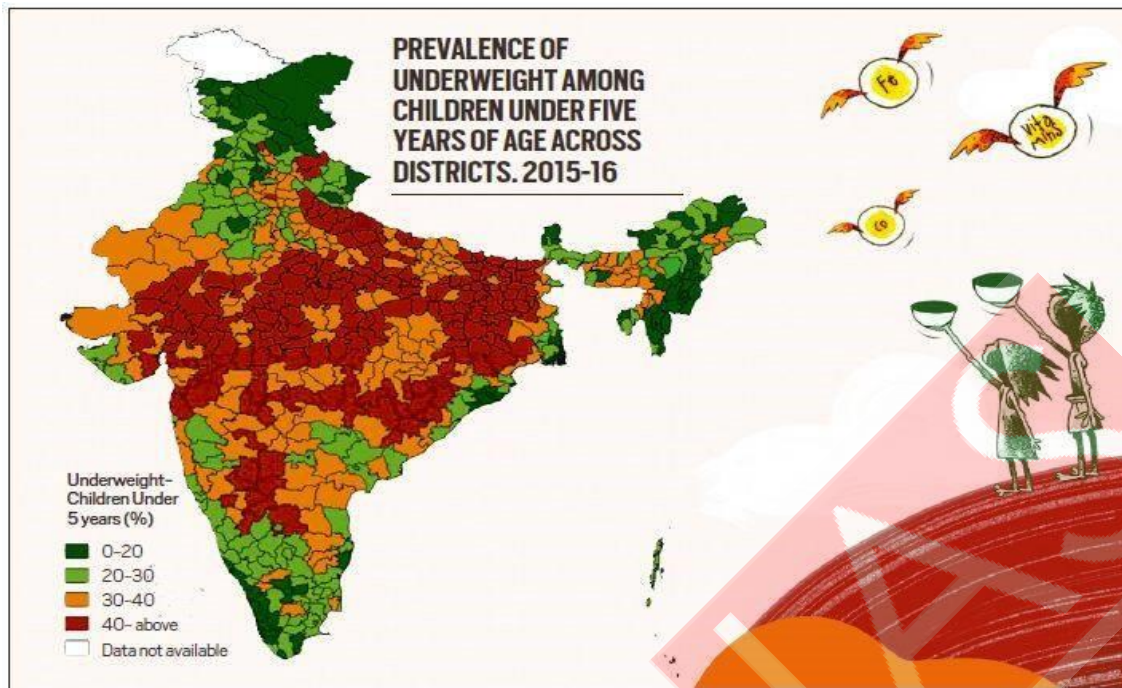
Implemented by- Ministry of Women and Child Development.

Aim- To reduce stunting, underweight and low birth weight each by 2% per year and anemia among young children, adolescents and women each by 3% per year until 2022.

How deep is the issue of malnutrition amongst children below the age of five years?

- India accounted for 28 percent of the world's stunted children (low height-for-age) less than five years of age, and 43 per cent of the world's wasted children (low weight-for-height) in 2019.
- As a proportion of India's own population, around 14 per cent were undernourished during 2017-19.
- As per the National Family Health Survey (NFHS, 2015-16), the proportion of underweight and stunted children was as high as 35.8 per cent and 38.4 per cent respectively.

The following map represents prevalence of underweight among children less than five years of age across India-



What are the key reasons behind massive malnutrition in India?

- **Lack of women's higher Education-** Women's education has a multiplier effect on the child's feeding practice and the sanitation facility. Access and utilization of prenatal and postnatal health care services also play a significant role in curbing under nutrition among children.

Reasons for lower rate in female higher education in India-

- Lack of basic facilities in school infrastructure such as separate toilets for girls.
- Distance between the school and home, are major factors for higher dropout rates among girls.

Monoculture agriculture practice-

1. Food-based safety nets in India focused on increasing food production, particularly staples (rice and wheat).
 2. This led to lower production and consumption of indigenous traditional crops, impacting food and nutrition security in the process.
 3. Farmers are not encouraged and incentivized for agricultural diversification.
- **Economic inequality-** One of the major causes for malnutrition in India is economic inequality. Due to the low social status of population, their diet often lacks in both quality and quantity.
 - **Lax implementation-**
 - Providing nutritious food to the country's children is more a matter of political will and effective policy implementation at the grassroots level.
 - Lacunae at policy level- There is a lack of real-time data that brings all these factors together to show the extent of India's malnutrition.

What are the possible solutions to tackle malnutrition problem?

- **WASH in schools** - State governments need to promote sanitation in schooling via the provision of separate sanitation facilities for girls in schools.

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- **Reducing drop-out rates** - Initiatives like the distribution of bicycles to girls in secondary and high schools could help reduce the dropout rates among girls.
- **Upskilling Aanganwadi workers** - Community participation via anganwadis can bring significant improvements in child-caring practices and antenatal care fothrough awareness programmes.
- **Diversified food basket** - Government need to provide a more diversified food basket, including coarse grains, millets, pulses and bio-fortified staples to improve the nutritional status of pre-school children and women of reproductive age.
- **More research and innovation** - The Harvest-Plus programme of CGIAR can work with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) to grow new varieties of nutrient-rich staple food crops.

Way forward-

For POSHAN Maah to contribute towards the holistic nourishment of children and a malnutrition free India by 2030, the government needs to address the multi-dimensional determinants of malnutrition on an urgent basis. Moreover, fortification of government approved commodities within the social safety net programmes can improve nutritional outcomes.

6. For a different yardstick: on 'Doing Business' report

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS2: Important International Institutions, agencies and fora - their Structure, Mandate.

Context: Recently, the World Bank has paused the publication of its 'Doing Business' report because of statistical irregularities.

What does the index indicate?

- The index estimates the cost to business from regulations across areas including dealing with construction permits and paying taxes.
- The rankings encourage countries to compete even on cutting vital regulations on health and environment.

What are the shortcomings of the index?

1. **Shortcomings:** The World Bank's independent evaluation group (2008) and an external independent panel (2013) together flagged 15 shortcomings in the index, many of which are still relevant.
2. **Lack of transparency and objectivity:** For instance, questions have been raised on Russia's leap in ranking from 120 out of 190 countries in 2012 to 62 in 2015. The survey excludes the informal sector. Curiously, low scores for China and India were associated with high growth in FDI.
3. **Sidesteps societal costs:** Survey ignores the impact on health, ecology, worker protection and right to information. China and India improved their scores sharply in 2019 and 2020, though the world's first and third largest emitters increased carbon effluents significantly.
4. **Slack business safeguards produce tragic results:** The 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory in Bangladesh resulted from slipshod factory regulation. Brazil, India, and the U.S. have slashed environmental standards.
5. **Weakening of standards during pandemic:** India's Parliament is considering an Environment Impact Assessment, the draft of which is filled with dilutions of the environmental law.

6. **Based on presumption that less regulation is better:** The 2008 global financial crisis resulted from too little banking supervision. Also, Climate change is driven by lax emission control in China, the U.S., etc.
7. **One size fits all approach:** The survey assumes that lower tax rates are best, which overlooks each country's fiscal requirements. For example, Maldives and Qatar scored high on paying taxes, but are not role models for India as most of their revenue relies on unique assets.
8. **Neglects other indicators:** such as indicators of infrastructure, entrepreneurship, and competition.
9. **Supports lighter rules and taxation to encourage shifts from informal to formal sectors:** But formalisation as such may not create jobs and cut obstacles to starting a business if economy is facing severe capital shortage and a low-skilled workforce.
10. **Unwieldy:** the survey is overloaded with too many variables.

What needs to be done?

1. **Workers' well-being and safety:** Changes to labour laws, especially during the pandemic.
2. **Strengthen RTI:** Global lessons warn India of the pitfalls of diluting the 2005 Right to Information Act.
3. **Revamped indicator that rewards:** A revamped indicator should reward investments in workers' skills, health and safety, low polluting activities and climate resilience.

The need of the hour is to blend liberalisation of unhelpful barriers with fortification of needed regulations.

7. India's geopolitical interest

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

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

Context- India's foreign policy to suit the demands of the present.

Background:

India's engagement with foreign countries has traditionally been focused on maintaining good relations with all the major powers in the region and avoiding involvement in their internal and intra-regional conflicts. However, the current geopolitical situations demand a significant change in India's foreign policy.

What are the various Middle East peace deals?

1. USA-Taliban peace deal-

- **USA's commitments** - US and Taliban signed an agreement for bringing Peace to Afghanistan, which will enable the US and NATO to withdraw troops in the next 14 months.
- **Taliban's commitments-** Taliban will not allow any of its members, other individuals or groups, including al-Qaeda, to use the soil of Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States and its allies.
- **Removal of sanctions-** UN sanctions on Taliban leaders to be removed by three months and US sanctions by August.
- **Ceasefire-** The agreement states ceasefire will be simply an item on the agenda when intra-Afghan talks start and indicate actual ceasefire will come with the completion of an Afghan political agreement.

2. UAE-Israel Peace deal- The Abraham Accords

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- **Normalized relations**- Israel and the United Arab Emirates just agreed to a historic deal to normalize their long-strained relations.
- **Importance**- This move is significant because, with the exception of Jordan and Egypt, Israel does not have diplomatic relations with Gulf Arab states owing to its long-standing conflict with Palestinians.
- **Terms of the accord**- The agreement comes after Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed to suspend plans to annex parts of the West Bank, one that had been bitterly criticized by these Gulf Arab states, Europe and a few other countries around the world.

How should India respond with the Middle East major powers?

1. Understand geopolitical landscape of the both peace deals-

- Taliban could not be defeated on the battlefield and must be accepted as a legitimate political force.
- Need to accept the contradiction between Arabs and Israelis is no longer the dominant one in the region.

2. Arabia's enduring importance for the Subcontinent's geopolitics-

- **Widening a horizon**- India needs to pay more attention to the unfolding realignments in the Middle East, especially between the Arabs and non-Arab states like Iran, Turkey and Israel rather than only focusing on ensuring oil supplies and promoting manpower exports.

3. Paradox of US power-

- US political and diplomatic weight that facilitated the formal dialogue between Kabul and the Taliban and also led the efforts for reconciliation between Israel and Gulf Arabs. India needs to find its own space in such talks.

4. Aiding economic integration-

- India should extend support to Arab economic integration, intra-Arab political reconciliation and the strengthening of regional institutions.
- India's needs to make strong ties with all major players in the region to achieve its geopolitical interest.

Way forward-

In the current situation, it is essential for India to maintain its strong links with the Afghan government, build and support its traditional Afghan allies and open lines of communication with the Taliban. The UAE-Israel deal opens up new opportunities for India to play a much larger role in the regional security and stability in the Gulf.

8. NEP and Socially and educationally backward

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- Education

Context: NEP 2020 fails to cater to the needs of rural India's marginalised majority.

What is NEP and what are the issues with the report?

- **The National Education policy 2020 (NEP)** is a layered document that recommends significant structural changes to the education system.
- The NEP claims to **"bridge gaps in access, participation and learning outcomes"**. However, it overlooks the fact that poor quality education marks and ruins the lives of rural citizens.
- **Neglecting to engage with equality of educational opportunity and equality in quality education:**

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- It **fails to address the growing school differentiation** in which government schools are now mainly attended by children of disadvantaged castes and Adivasi groups, while the private schools caters to the desires of the more advantaged castes.
- School differentiation **defies the idea of education as a leveller** and the possibility of schooling acting as a shared experience.
- **Growing privatisation of education along with no assurance of quality** is placing a huge burden on citizens and the report takes no notice of such trends.
- **Rural candidates are finding it increasingly difficult to gain entry into professional education.**
- The lack of fit between their degrees and the job market means that several lakhs of them find themselves both **“unemployable” and unemployed.**
- The report fails to take into account the **impact of poor-quality higher education on rural youth who are showing signs of hostility from their roots** and open to being recruited into violent anti-social activities.
- **Correspondence courses and distance education degrees have become a source of revenue generation** for universities and institutions. They are run without guarantees of quality yet it has no mention in the report.

What are some key points that need to be added in the report?

- **Prepare youth for a global economy:** Promotion and support the teaching of “lok vidya”, and the report highlights the importance of yoga, AYUSH, and Sanskrit, which can be taught along with Artificial Intelligence, machine learning and digital learning.
- Even though, there is no scope for considering the establishment of smaller regional learning centres in which the youth can be taught a **range of revamped older knowledge systems along with newer skills and knowledge.**
- **Promoting environmental studies for local ecological restoration and conservation:** Introduction of agro-ecologies that can draw on the varied sophisticated regional agricultural knowledge and practices, reviving local health and healing traditions.
- **Recognising vernacular architectural traditions and skills, and a range of artisan and craftsmanship** to use local resources and thereby generate both employment and revive regional economies.

Way forward

- Such measures can create a pool of skilled and employable youth who may make meaningful lives in the rural areas itself rather than become part of the tide of migrant labour whose insecure and dangerous lives were all too evident during the lockdown return migration.

9. The cost of peace: on intra-Afghan talks

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: India and its neighbourhood

Context: Recently held intra-Afghan talks were held between the Taliban, Afghan government and Afghan civil society in Doha.

What are the reasons behind delays in talks?

- The talks were a key outcome of the **U.S.-Taliban and U.S.-Afghanistan agreements** signed earlier this year.
- **Composition issues:**

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- **Delays over the composition** of the Afghan negotiating team led by chief negotiator Masoom Stanekzai.
- There were also **differences over appointments** between the former rivals, President Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, who was appointed as the head of the High Council for National Reconciliation.
- There were even concerns over whether the all-male Taliban team would deal with the negotiating team.
- **Issue of release of prisoners:**
 - The Taliban set **pre-conditions** including the release of all its prisoners, while not accepting the basic requirement of a ceasefire.
 - The biggest obstacle was the release of more than 5,000 Taliban prisoners and about 1,000 Afghan soldiers and others held by Taliban militia.
 - Issues of release of prisoners was resolved after a Loya Jirga of representatives approved the release.

What should be the aim of talks?

- **Declare a permanent ceasefire:** To stop violence in Afghanistan that has claimed another 1,300 civilian lives in the first half of 2020.

What are the challenges present before Afghanistan?

- How to shape Afghanistan's future with Taliban ?
- Whether Afghanistan can retain the constitution and political processes while bringing the insurgents into the mainstream.

What is the India's stance on talks?

- India has modified its stand, and External Affairs Minister attended the inaugural ceremony in Doha via videoconferencing.
- It was the first ever address by an Indian official at a gathering that includes the Taliban (India still maintains that Taliban is a terror group).
- India always stated that peace in Afghanistan as a result of an **"Afghan-led, Afghan owned"** process is a desirable outcome.
- Peace should not come at the cost of gains made by Afghanistan in the post-Taliban era. Talks should include democracy, institutions of governance, and the rights of minorities and women.
- The recent talks also ensured safe return of three Indian hostages, held since 2018 by the Taliban.

10. Disability issues

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- Society

Context: Disabled professionals in the legal world.

What is SCC and barriers to its access?

- SCC is the only database of India which supplies the true copies of judgements accepted in Indian courts.
- SCC Online has many accessibility barriers:** Such as unlabelled links, search filters which cannot be applied with screen readers and the text of judgments being inaccessible due to security settings.

What are the various challenges that people with disability face?

Two fundamental issues that prevent the disabled from leading lives of equal dignity and productivity:

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- a. An exclusionary mindset and
 - b. The inability to recognise the disabled as rights-bearing citizens, entitled to demand fair and equal treatment from every service provider, public or private.
- **The Supreme Court of India held last year, in V. Surendra Mohan vs. State Of Tamil Nadu:** Tamil Nadu's policy, of reserving the post of civil judge only for people whose percentage of blindness does not exceed 40-50%, was rational and reasonable.
 - It ruled that a judicial officer has to possess a reasonable amount of sight and hearing to discharge her functions.
 - It accepted the claim that impaired vision makes it impossible to perform the functions required of judicial officers'.
 - **The misconception in this line of thinking:** A blind person is as much entitled as anyone else to freely choose what profession they wish to pursue.
 - But, it starts on the idea that the existing ways of doing things will always remain the way they are, so tough luck to those whom they exclude.
 - **The case of B.K. Pavitra vs. Union of India:** The Supreme Court held that if the benchmark of efficiency is grounded on equal access, our outcomes will reflect the commitment of the Constitution to produce a just social order.
 - **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016:** Section 46 of the Act requires all service providers, public or private, to comply with the rules on accessibility framed by the Central Government within a period of two years from the date of their declaration. This two-year period expired in June 2019.

Way forward

- Each one of us should be firmly committed to the idea of implementing the two fundamental changes mentioned above.
- We should pause to reflect on what it is that makes it so hard for them to succeed in the first place and what we can do to reverse this state of affairs.

11. Parliament and its panels

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus:Gs2: Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues Arising out of these.

Context: There were speculation in the media that the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha is keen on amending the rules to give Department-related Standing Committees a fixed tenure of two years.

What are DSCs (Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees)?

- The Department-related Standing Committees were constituted in 1993.
- The Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees have a tenure of one year.
- There **are 24 Department-related Standing Committees**, each with a membership of 31 (10 of the Rajya Sabha and 21 of the Lok Sabha).
- Ministers cannot be members of these committees.
- They can accommodate 240 members of the Rajya Sabha and 504 members of the Lok Sabha.

How tenures were fixed?

- **No fixed tenure in Rajya Sabha:** The standard prescription relating to the constitution of those committees' states that the **committee shall hold office until**

a new committee is nominated and that the casual vacancies in the committee shall be filled in by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

- **One-year tenure for important committees in Lok Sabha:** According to the Lok Sabha rules, Most of the committees have tenure of one year, **except a few** for which no tenure has been prescribed.

What does the rule say?

- According to **the Lok Sabha Rules and the Rajya Sabha Rules**, the term of office of the “members” of the committees shall not exceed one year.
- It is the **term of office of the members** and not that of the committees per se that is one year.
- The tenurial issue has to be looked at against the backdrop of the fact that the **Rajya Sabha itself undergoes partial biennial renewal**, since one-third of its members retire every two years by virtue of clause (1) of **Article 83** of the Constitution.
- As far as the Lok Sabha is concerned, it has a fixed tenure of five years, unless sooner dissolved. Given these facts, Vice President’s suggestion is in consonance with the biennial partial reconstitution of the Rajya Sabha.

What are the challenges in changing the tenure?

- **Mismatch between election schedule:** There is mismatch between the election schedule of the Rajya Sabha (every two years) and the Lok Sabha (every five years)
- **Concurrence of both houses:** Only Rajya Sabha cannot amend the tenure alone. Since these are joint committees of the two Houses of Parliament, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha also has to concur.

What amendment are needed in the rules of the houses?

- **Different tenures:** Tenure of members can be two years for the Rajya Sabha members and for the Lok Sabha members, it may be coterminous with its life. Hence tenure of members can be amended and it should be in consonance with the tenure of the Houses.
- **Role of Presiding officer:** The Rules could also provide that casual vacancies may be filled in by the Presiding Officers. Presiding officers should also be empowered to reconstitute the membership of their respective Houses in the committees.
- **Members should not be forced to do double duty:** once a member is nominated to a committee, based on his expertise and/or preference, he should be allowed to continue till he retires or discontinues the membership in order that the committee is able to benefit from his experience and expertise.

There is a need to rethink the tenurial prescription for reconstitution of Department-related Standing Committees and make it more effective.

12. The Independence of the Supreme Court

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

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

Context- Some people have confused judicial independence with the tendency to strike down legislation or executive action.

What is the role of Judiciary?

- The Judiciary is the system of courts that interpret and applies law in legal cases in the name of the state.

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- The function of the judiciary is to be accountable by dispensing justice.
- Judicial independence goes hand in hand with judicial accountability.
- Judicial independence is one of the basic features of the Constitution of India.
- It is the guardian and protector of our fundamental rights.

What are the recent examples which demonstrate how the Judiciary stood contrary to the Government?

In Indian Constitution there is feature of Separation of Powers among the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary. So, that each of them may work without any interference from the outside. The following are the examples of judiciary independent verdicts that were not favourable to the government-

- Supreme Court struck down the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC).
- Supreme Court lifted the ban from Goa mining sector.
- Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of the Aadhaar, while affecting the then-nascent fintech industry.
- Supreme Court struck down the Reserve Bank of India's framework resolution plan for debt recovery which was proposed to ease the pains related to stranded assets.
- The quashing of a Central Vigilance Commissioner (CVC) appointment.
- The quashing of spectrum allocation or striking down allocation of coal mines.

Thus, observing the rule of law and calling out illegality is not bias. These verdicts were not a political decision instead they were an act of calling out the loot of India's resources.

How does the government intervene with the judiciary and violates separation of power?

Some politicians try to influence the independent feature of the judiciary in the name of "legitimate criticism. Such as-

- Issuing threats such as impeachment for deemed "misbehaviour".
- Imputing motives to judges for their decisions.
- Referring to the judge's caste.
- Saying that judiciary was subservient to the government.
- Toeing the party's lines or agendas in the judiciary's actions.

For Instances- The following are the prime examples of the government using judiciary for ulterior motives and creating doubt where none exists-

- a. Justice Loya case.
- b. Public Interest Litigation on Assam's detention centres.

Way Forward

The Supreme Court is an independent organ of the state, not a political organ. The need of the time is that people should be able to distinguish between a narrative of distrust being peddled for personal and political gains from reality. It is the duty of the court to observe the rules and laws while giving the verdicts and under no circumstances appease the aspirations of political proxies or lawyers for their personal ambitions. The Court should rule out strict laws to deal with the attacks on its integrity and independence.

13. Growing crisis of Indian federalism

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.

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Context- Federalism and India's democratic nationalism.

What were the features of nationalism before India achieved Independence?

1. Single state based on unified culture-

- The idea that a community with a strongly unified culture must have a single state of its own, bifurcated into two nationalisms one for Muslims and another for Hindus:
- **For example**, for Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League, Hindus and Muslims were separate nations and needed states of their own.
- **Consequences-** The primacy of Hindu identity potentially had adverse consequences not only for religious but also linguistic minorities, including those Hindus who viewed their mother tongue as important as their religion. For Hindu nationalists, Hindu identity permanently outweighed being Tamil or Punjabi.

2. State based on common culture-

- **Historical source** - Common culture was defined by shared historical experience, the struggle against British colonial rule, and developed through an interpenetration of ideas emanating from different cultural sources.
- It is secular; composite content is qualitatively different from Hindu or Muslim nationalisms.
- **Similarity with Hindu nationalism-** Common culture's basic form is not unlike Hindu nationalism. It too conceives common culture in terms of a strong idea of unity that marginalises or excludes other particular identities.

3. State based on common culture which belongs to everyone-

- **Coalescent nationalism-** Communities nourished by distinct, territorially concentrated regional cultures have the capacity to design states of their own as also educational, legal, economic, and other institutions. They possess self-governing rights.
- They give up independent national aspirations, seeing themselves as constituents of a larger, equally significant common culture with another state that belongs to everyone.
- **Conflicts in common culture-** Occasional conflicts between the common culture of the central state and distinct cultures of constituent states are admitted but mechanisms to prevent them are also created. This may be called "a coalescent nationalism consistent with a fairly strong linguistic federalism".

What were the views of Jawaharlal Nehru about ethno- religious nationalism?

- A federation structured along ethno-linguistic lines might tempt politicians to mobilise permanently on the basis of language and divert attention from issues of material well-being.
- Like religious identities, it might 'freeze' linguistic identities and increase the likelihood of inter-ethnic violence, encourage separatism and eventually lead to India's break up.

Which ideology is adopted as the official ideology with the rise of the Constitution and what are the reasons to do so?

Ideology-

- 1. Civic Nationalism-** When the Constitution came into force in 1950, India adopted unitary, civic nationalism as its official ideology.
- 2. Coalescent Nationalism-**
 - After some time India shifted its allegiance slowly to a system of states that rejected the wholesale absorption of ethnic identities into larger civic identity.

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- Soon a commission was set up to reorganise states on a linguistic basis. However, commission argued that justice requires the creation of partially self-governing states that recognise all major linguistic groups.

Reasons to adopt-

1. Civic Nationalism-

- Though a federal arrangement was accepted, the second tier of government was justified in functional terms not on ethical grounds of the recognition of group cultures.
- The security and unity of India were cited as the primary reason.
- A unitary mind-set shaped by the experience of a centralised colonial state was revived.
- A special commission concluded that language-based provinces were 'not in the larger interests of the Indian nation'.

2. Coalescent Nationalism-

- Creation of regional state governments improves administrative efficiency, deepens democracy, and alleviates anxieties of regional minorities induced by fear of linguistic domination.
- Only federalism can block language-based majoritarianism, contain conflicts and strengthen Indian nationalism.
- Only coalescent nationalism creatively combines claims of unity with claims of recognition of diverse cultures.

Way Forward

Centre needs to work on resolving the problems by deepening not abandoning coalescent nationalism. It should make sure that regions are treated respectfully and norms of democratic functioning works accordingly, only then the entire polity will work smoothly.

14. New strategy needed to Counter China

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: Gs2: India and its Neighbourhood

Context: In the wake of rising Chinese aggression across the LAC, a new strategy combining diplomatic and military means is needed to counter China.

How it started?

- China in March-April started to concentrate troops opposite Indian posts in Aksai China at Galwan, Finger posts and Depsang.
- By May-early June, they had consolidated close to 40,000 troops and accompanying artillery and armour.

What are the different views regarding border clash?

1st School of thought:

- **Territory expansion:** The Chinese exercise was a territorial snatch in Aksai Chin, which they believe is entirely theirs.
- **To teach a lesson to India:** India's firm stand on not conceding Aksai chin is seen as aggressive attitude. Indian Survey of India maps shows the entire Aksai Chin as Indian territory up to the **Johnson-Ardagh line**.

What is the Flaw in this interpretation?

- **Unresolved questions:** China has not clarified what is their version of LAC and talks between NSA and Chinese counterparts are also not made public. It shows China want this issue to be shifted to next generation.

What are implications of recent border skirmishes?

- **China Gained territory:** Militarily, the recent mobilisation of 40,000 troops, artillery and armour has gained approx. 800 metres at the western LAC.
- **For India:** Due to the recent expansion China has forced India to move forward three divisions to the western LAC (Line of Actual control). It is unlikely that China had thought of border clash for a tiny extension of their LAC.

2nd school of thought:

- **To lay down rules of world governance:** China is growing into perhaps the most powerful nation on earth, overtaking the actual US GDP by 2030.
- **India Standing against China:** India contest their entire southern border. India has also refused to join the Belt and Road initiative.
- **India seen as rivals:** India is also trying to create an anti-China maritime coalition and compete with them for influence in South East Asia and Africa. India is unsupportive of crackdown on Taiwan, Hong Kong and Xinjiang and moving ever closer to the United States.

Possible Implications of this interpretation:

- **Chinese political thought:** Chinese don't follow Voltaire, Rousseau, Adam Smith, Descartes, Diderot, Locke, Kant and Spinoza, which can lead to the concept of establishing a democratic secular republic like USA. **Secularism, democracy and the rights of man will play no part in Chinese foreign policy**
- **Domination:** Chinas follows a **hands-off policy** only with nations which are paying its tribute to China such as North Korea.

What India needs to do?

- **Deployment of troops to defend border:** If Chinese intention is to capture Indian territory, then India needs to strengthen border security.
- **Evolve new diplomatic and military strategy:** If the Chinese intention is to “teach us a lesson” or make us submissive. For example; strategy in India Ocean
- **Focus on larger picture:** After Galwan and Pangong Tso India needs to clearly approach the larger picture from a position of tactical inferiority.
- **Develop punitive capabilities:** India needs to develop punitive capability, which it seems could only be in the Indian ocean.

China wants India to accept Chinese superiority which is Chinese trait. India should not talk from the position of inferiority as it will not lead to equitable solution.

15. Disability issues

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-2- Society

Context: The differently-abled community offers a massive potential that can be tapped with the right steps.

Why was United Nations created? What are its values?

- **The United Nations (UN) was created to restore faith in the dignity and worth of humans**, and in the equal rights of women and men, almost 75 years ago.
- **Its fundamental values** suggested that in order to live sustainably, we must practice tolerance and endorse the values of equality.
- **Staying true to UN values:** It is important to bring marginalized communities from the peripheries back into the development mainstream.

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- **Importance of counteracting the cycle of oppression:** it is essential to achieve the greater equality which was promised many years ago.

How disabilities make life difficult for the affected?

- **Largest global minority:** According to the World Health Organization, nearly 15% of the world's population has some or the other form of disability, making disabled people the largest global minority.
- Continuous discrimination denies them equal access to education, employment, healthcare and other opportunities.
- **Capabilities considered essential for human development:** The stigma attached to persons with disabilities, compounded by a lack of understanding of their rights, makes it difficult for them to attain their valued “functioning”.
- **High risk of gender-based abuse:** Women and girls with disabilities are at a higher risk of experiencing sexual and other forms of gender-based violence.
- About 80% of the estimated one billion **persons with disabilities worldwide live in developing countries.**
- **73.6% of persons living with disabilities in India are outside the labour force.** Those with mental disabilities, women with disabilities and those in rural areas are the most neglected, according to the International Labour Organization.

What were the steps taken to deal with the worst-hit group (the disables) during the pandemic?

- **The COVID-19 pandemic has had its worst impact on marginalized communities.**
- For instance, students with disabilities have found it extremely difficult to access remote learning through digital platforms.
- **The UNESCO's 2019 State of the Education Report of India** acknowledges that **inclusive education is complex to implement** and requires a fine understanding of the diverse needs of children and their families across different contexts.
- **UNESCO joined its partners in the Global Action on Disability (GLAD) Network to raise awareness** about the need to put in place strategies to lessen the impact of school closures on learners with disabilities.
- **The implementation of the groundbreaking National Education Policy 2020** provides a historic opportunity to utilise the immense potential.
- India has made considerable progress in terms of putting in **place a strong legal framework and a range of programmes that have improved enrolment rates of children with disabilities in schools.**

Way forward

- Further measures are needed to ensure quality education for every child to achieve the targets of Agenda 2030, the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goal 4.
- With the right investments, youth with disabilities in India can also be the country's largest asset.

16. QUAD grouping - India, Japan, US and Australia.

Source - [The Hindu](#)

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

Context- As India faces China's challenge over the ground situation at the Line of Actual Control [LAC], the Quadrilateral will be useful but it will not be the answer to the challenges India is facing.

What is QUAD grouping?

1. **The quadrilateral formation includes-** Japan, India, United States and Australia.
2. **Purpose-** All four nations find a common ground of being the democratic nations and common interests of unhindered maritime trade and security.

What is the significance of QUAD?

1. India can use these partnerships for internal balancing and to build India's own capabilities.
2. QUAD is an opportunity for like-minded countries to share notes and collaborate on projects of mutual interest.
3. Members share a vision of an open and free Indo-Pacific.
4. Discuss cooperation on counter-terrorism, mentoring, assistance in disaster relief, airtime security, cooperation, development, finance and cyber security efforts etc.
5. QUAD can shape the future balance of power, even the present balance of power and try to restore deterrence in Asia, in the Indo-Pacific.

Is QUAD grouping helping India to counter China's aggregation at the LAC?

- No, India's presence in the QUAD will not deter china or the PLA from the transgressing the boundary as QUAD is not an alliance and will be fairly of limited use.
- However, to some extent, India may get support in matters like intelligence inputs or credible supplies of military hardware, but largely on its own when it comes to dealing with the Chinese challenge along the land border.

What are the different border hostilities china is involved in?

Beijing has been acting assertively on multiple fronts-

1. **India- China border conflict** - India's brawl with China in Ladakh's Galwan valley began as a military standoff in early May.
2. **China- Bhutan border conflict**- In 2017, ties between Bhutan and China flared up when Beijing tried to construct a road in Doklam, to which India objected. This resulted in a military standoff between two nuclear- armed nations that lasted for about 2 months.
3. **China- Nepal border conflict**- China's state- run Television Network claimed the Mount Everest as part of China and not Nepal.
4. **China's Maritime Conflict**- [with Taiwan, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam and Japan] - The South China Sea is one of the most important maritime trade routes with annual trade worth of \$ 3.5 trillion. Due to the deep resources, China has been claiming the waters based on "historic rights".

How does India's membership in multilateral grouping like SCO, BRICS and RIC work with being part of the four-nation Quadrilateral?

Multilateral grouping like RIC, BRICS and SCO provides a good rationale for more proactive engagement in the QUAD setting.

India's motives for being a part of multilateral grouping are-

Keep Russia on its side for defence and strategic reasons.

India does not want to leave a platform to the rivals [China and Pakistan].

These are the only few platforms to resolve or try to manage some contradiction with rivals.

Way forward-

India has to work with the like-minded countries, and that includes the U.S., Japan, Australia and many other countries. At the same time, need to recognize that what could achieve through the QUAD is limited; it's still work in progress. So, much more effort needs to be put in, to flesh out the idea of QUAD and to see how it can become an effective lateral grouping.

17. Unilateral response of federal governance during Covid-19

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

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 response to the Covid- 19 pandemic reflects the power, problems and potential of federalism in the country's polity.

What was the recent debate on the distribution of powers under the Seventh Schedule of Constitution?

Debate- If the Union government should contribute for health because it is nationally important, why should states not contribute for defence?

What is the prime focus of centre and state in response to the pandemic?

Centre-

- Achieving economies of scale in vaccine procurement,
- Knowledge production for setting standards and
- Guidelines for the states and mitigating inter-state externalities.

State-

- **Health crisis-** States continue to play the dominant role in the execution of the actual response to the health crisis. In other words, the fundamental principles of comparative advantage prevailed, but they were organised on the basis of certain functional roles and responses.

Thus, in spite of health being a state subject, the response to collective threats linked to the subject required some kind of organisation of federal responsibilities on a functional basis.

How can coordination between Centre and States be sustained on a long-term basis?

1. A typical response is to recommend shifting subjects to the Concurrent List to enable an active role for the Centre.
 - This is how the High-Level Group, constituted by the 15th Finance Commission, recommended shifting health from the State to the Concurrent List.
 - A similar recommendation was made earlier by the Ashok Chawla Committee for water.
2. States needs to play a dominant role during such pandemic and the Centre must expand its role beyond the mitigation of inter-state externalities and address the challenges of security and sustainability.

For Instance-

- The GST reforms are the most recent instance of such reworking of the Centre- state roles for a greater and collective goal.

Thus, the country's response to the pandemic has shown that carving out roles through consensus can address new challenges to federal governance.

Way Forward

The country needs consensus- building between the centre and the states. It has to allow sustained dialogue and deliberation. It is the time to revisit the proposal for an elevated and empowered Inter- State Council.

18. Data insecurity

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: Gs2: Important Aspects of Governance, Transparency and Accountability

Context: Recently, the government has set up an expert committee under the **National Cyber Security Coordinator** to examine the implications of digital surveillance on the privacy and personal data of Indian citizens.

Why committee was set up?

- **Recent cause:** An investigation by The Indian Express revealed how a Shenzhen-based big data firm, with links to the Chinese government, was systematically tracking over 10,000 prominent Indian citizens
- **Digitalisation:** The world is increasingly digital world where large quantities of seemingly unrelated data can be amassed and then deployed for other purposes.
- **Unrestricted use of personal data:** Personal data being compromised and finding its way into jurisdictions over which there is no control.
- **Era of “actionable intelligence”:** The scale at which the targeted tracking of Indian citizens is being undertaken from politicians, to bureaucrats, industrialists and civil society alludes to the possibility of this threat materialising.
- **To protect democracy:** In a liberal open democracy, data security concerns should be articulated and addressed in a transparent manner.
- **Right to privacy:** In the age of data there is need that the individual concerned have say over the flow of information.
- **Data security:** The concerns over data security are also in line with apprehensions that led to the Indian government’s decision to ban Chinese apps.
- **Global issue:** US President’s stance on TikTok underlines growing concerns across the world.

What the government should do?

- The government must frame a strategy to deal with the issue of data surveillance at multiple levels.
- Adopt norms of **cyber hygiene**.
- **Enforce strict protocols** on what information key government functionaries can share on social media platforms.
- Build the **institutional capacity** required to pre-empt disinformation campaigns which the collected information could be deployed for.
- **Build hybrid warfare strategy** to avoid social disharmony which discredit leadership and undermine institutions.
- Place a robust personal data protection framework with explicit provisions for seeking **consent on data sharing and for examining** and monitoring flow of information to third parties.

The necessary regulation needs to be made to protect individual rights after consulting all stakeholders and accountability must be assigned.

19. Gurushihya parampara and issues

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- Society

Context: The guru-shishya relationship in Indian music has a power imbalance and is inherently prone to abuse. It needs to be demolished.

How different are the practices in Hindustani music and its southern counterpart?

- The shocking allegations of **sexual abuse and harassment against (late) Ramakant Gundecha and Akhilesh Gundecha** have shaken the Hindustani music space.
- The world of Hindustani music, though more modern compared to its southern cousin is actually more patriarchal **and medieval in mindset.**
- **The pedestal on which gurus are placed by Hindustani musicians** is far higher than any seat given to their counterparts in Dakshin Bharat.
- Despite all the differences and petty politics between musicians, **the “tradition” of watching each other’s back is far more prevalent in the Hindustani world.**

What are the issues associated with the guru-shishya parampara ?

- Like most relationships, **the guru-shishya relationship is grounded in a power imbalance, but here, crucially, the inequality is celebrated.**
- **A need to be subservient to and indeed submit to, the master** is an unspoken necessity.
- **Structurally flawed:** students are forced to commit to hours of household chores just to receive those few moments of wisdom, it is celebrated as sacrifice and commitment and endurance.
- It is also true that **abuse increases exponentially when the student comes from an economically poor or socially marginalised community.**

What are the steps needed to be taken?

- The system must begin **with respect for students, and recognition of their independence and rights as individuals.**
- **“Humanise” gurus:** This is vital because the power structure is naturally tilted in favour of the guru.
- The parampara that demands obedience and unquestioning regard, only because someone is a guru, needs to be demolished.
- **A problematic area in Hindustani and Carnatic music is the informality in the learning.**
- This informality is **justified on the basis that it creates a unique, unconditioned space for learning.**
- Informality can take so many forms, sometimes resulting in episodes of incredible learning, while on other occasions, there are **just demands made by the guru because he is in a position to make them.**
- There is a lot to learn beyond the school-university-class framework, but **such an arrangement cannot be an illogical, uncaring, student on-call system.**

What are the positives in the gurushishya learning?

- The guru-shishya parampara provides intimate learning and sharing that goes beyond the syllabus.
- There are students and teachers who share a bond that goes beyond what the university demanded of them.
- There are **stories of great gurus and famous shishyas across disciplines and geographies.**

Way forward

- In the guru-shishya parampara , rarely can a shishya stand up against her or his guru and hope to survive another day.
- The problem with our concretised version is that this promise of magic is used as an excuse to normalise inequality.
- The system and its core structure should be safe, respectful, and non-abusive of, students.
- Irrespective of the nature of the guru, the system should provide security and strength and empower the student emotionally and psychologically to stand on her or his own.

20. US- Taliban Peace Pact

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

Context- The US officials and Taliban representatives have signed a final peace deal to end the United States's longest war, fought in Afghanistan.

What is the background of US and Afghanistan war?

- The war in Afghanistan was launched by the US in 2001 after the 9/11 attack. The US-led coalition aimed to overthrow the Taliban.
- More than 2,400 US troops have been killed during the conflict.
- About 12,000 are still stationed in the country. President Trump has promised to put an end to the conflict.

What does the US- Taliban peace deal comprise of?

1. **Troops withdrawal-** US and Taliban signed an agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan, which will enable the US and NATO to withdraw troops in the next 14 months.
2. **Taliban commitment-** The main counter-terrorism commitment by the Taliban is that Taliban will not allow any of its members, other individuals or groups, including al-Qaeda, to use the soil of Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States and its allies.
3. **Sanctions removal-**
 - UN sanctions on Taliban leaders to be removed by three months (by May 29, 2020) and US sanctions by August 27, 2020.
 - The sanctions will be out before much progress is expected in the intra-Afghan dialogue.
4. **Prisoner release-** The US-Taliban pact says up to 5,000 imprisoned Taliban and up to 1,000 prisoners from "the other side" held by Taliban "will be released" by March 10. This process took longer than originally foreseen but has now been completed.
5. **Ceasefire-**
 - It has been identified as another potential "trouble spot".
 - The agreement states ceasefire will be simply "an item on the agenda" when intra-Afghan talks start and indicate actual ceasefire will come with the "completion" of an Afghan political agreement.

What are the challenges ahead of India arising from this peace pact?

India's Dilemma

Due to the Taliban's coming to power, India faces a dilemma, between:

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- India should reconsider its current policy that a lasting political settlement in Afghanistan must come through an “Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan controlled process” (considering that the elected Afghan Government is hardly in control of the peace process).
- India might, consider the option of entering into direct talks with the Taliban. But, If India does so, it would constitute a major departure from its consistent policy of dealing only with recognized governments.

What are the interests of major powers in this agreement?

1. **US**- The peace talks provide U.S. President Donald Trump an exit opportunity weeks before his re-election bid.
2. **European Union**- It has made it clear that its financial contribution will depend on the security environment and the human rights record.
3. **China**- It can always lean on Pakistan to preserve its security and connectivity interests.
4. **Russia**- Blocking the drug supply and keeping its southern periphery secure from extremist influences is key.

Therefore, no major power is taking ownership for the reconciliation talks, but merely content with being facilitators.

Way Forward

The withdrawal of US forces has the probability of the creation of vacuum in the region and possibility of filling the void by terrorists and extremists. To ensure that regional security is maintained and Taliban does not dictate the nation, US and other stakeholders in the region like India, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia should come forward to aid Afghanistan to become politically stable for regional security and stability.

General Studies Paper - 3

General Studies - 3

1. Reducing the vulnerabilities of urban employment

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

Context- The contraction of the economy raises concern on the employment situation as the shrinking sectors are those that create the maximum new jobs in India.

What are impacts of COVID-19 on the economy?

- **GDP contraction-** India's economy shrank nearly 25 percent in last quarter, the most drastic fall in decades.
- **Public administration-** higher government spending was in the form of transfer payments rather than spending on goods and services, which resulted in a negative growth number.
- **Manufacturing and Services-** The sector has been in the negative zone (-39%) across the board due to the national lockdown since end of March.
- **Industries which have been hit harder —**
- **Travel or Entertainment (-47%)** - will still be in a gradual normalization process, and probably won't rebound completely until a vaccine is available.
- **Real estate (-50%)** - The present stress on home loans can hinder a revival in residential real estate.

What is the impact of lockdown on low-end informal jobs in India?

The pandemic and associated policy responses have exposed the severe vulnerabilities of urban low-end informal jobs; the share of vulnerable employment is higher in India as compare to the world.

Vulnerable employment- It characterized by inadequate earnings, low productivity and difficult conditions of work that undermine the basic rights of workers.

- GDP contraction and lack of demand in the economy, which results a significant dip in urban employment generation.
- In India, capital and labour are moving from low value-added activities in a sector to another sector, but not to higher value-added activities. This leads to a situation where a large proportion of the jobs being created is of poor quality (and is expected to remain so).

What are the possible solutions in securing the livelihoods of workers in urban areas?

1. Generate more jobs-

- The focus on urban employment generation programmes should be in coordination with local governments.
- A major local initiative would be to design and implement employment-intensive investment policies.
- Private investments need to be facilitated by conducive contractual relations between labour and capital.
- Small and micro enterprises, the fulcrum of industrialization, need extra support to balance the interests between labour and capital as neither have collective bargaining powers.
- Needs to launch of an urban employment scheme oriented toward building large-scale medical, health and sanitation infrastructure in cities and towns across India.

2. To reduce vulnerabilities by providing decent wage and some form of job security-

- It is important that MGNREGA be expanded by both increasing the budgetary allocations and the guaranteed minimum number of days of work.

3. Prioritize urban infrastructure-

- Infrastructure investments would spur employment, generate earnings and contribute to small enterprise formation.
- Construction of low-cost housing is another activity that can be carried out using labour-intensive methods, while yielding substantial collateral benefits for urban dwellers’.

Way forward-

Given the structure of the economy and demographic profile, Government needs to focus on reducing the vulnerabilities of urban informal jobs in the long run.

2. Economic trilemma- Capital inflows, High inflation and Currency appreciation

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

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

Context- Capital flows can bring numerous benefits to emerging markets, but they can also lead to macroeconomic imbalances.

What are the issues in front of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) with respect to capital inflow?

1. Macro-economic imbalances-

- **Currency appreciation-** A typical concern associated with capital inflows is that they lead to currency appreciation pressures— via inflation under fixed exchange rates, and via nominal appreciation under more flexible exchange rate regimes— resulting in overvalued exchange rates. Such appreciation raises competitiveness concerns and even if temporary, could do lasting damage to the export sector through “hysteresis” effects.
- **High inflationary-** A common concern of emerging market policy makers is that large inflows lead to economic overheating, and result in positive output gaps and high inflation.

What are possible causes for capital inflows, currency instability and high inflation?

a. Capital inflows-

- A net outflow of **foreign portfolio investment [FPI] due to the lockdown.**
- The combination of weak economic growth, lackluster domestic demand and low oil prices has shifted the current account balance from deficit into surplus. Imports have fallen more than exports.
- Capital has also been flowing to India in the form of **external commercial borrowing (ECB)** by Indian corporations.

b. Currency instability-

- **Capital flow-** Relaxation in the capital account and lack of intervention by the RBI in regulating foreign capital inflows are also the reasons. Mostly short-term in nature, these capital flows have played a major role in strengthening the rupee.
- Exchange rate appreciation will further damage the already hard-hit export sector.
- **Perception-** Positive growth prospects among major economies created expectations that the rupee would appreciate. This encouraged capital inflows, particularly into

the equity market. This was with the expectation that any rupee appreciation would also result in a proportionate increase in return on investment.

c. High inflationary-

- When the RBI buys dollars in the FX market, it sells rupees. This increases the domestic money supply and is therefore inflationary.

What are decisions taken by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to counter the COVID-19 impact on economy?

RBI opted following measure in order to provide relief for the ongoing pandemic in India-

1. Reduced its policy interest rate to negative levels in real terms-
 - By cutting the repo, reverse repo rate and reducing cash reserve ratio.
 - RBI also undertakes Long Term Repo Operation and allowing further liquidity with the bank.
2. Bought government securities to push down long-term interest rates-
 - RBI buys long-term government securities and sells short-term bonds in order to lower the yields on the longer end of the maturity spectrum.
3. Allowed large capital inflows, then intervened in the foreign exchange market to prevent the appreciation of the rupee.

However, these actions are incompatible and will eventually generate a serious policy dilemma.

Way forward

The constraints of the trilemma have tightened. The government and the RBI should step in to correct the misalignment in the exchange rate and allow the rupee to depreciate to move towards its true value. Moreover, RBI needs to give up either on its exchange rate objective or its inflation objective.

3. Income support for households and firms

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

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

Context - Income support to households and firms for recovery post-pandemic.

What is Brazil's Capped Government Expenditure Act- 2016?

Act- The amendment sets a cap on most federal expenditures for the next 20 years. This law effectively set a ceiling on government spending at around 20 per cent of GDP that can only be reviewed in 2026.

Outlays on healthcare, education, pensions, infrastructure, and defense will only be permitted to rise with the rate of inflation inevitably decreasing real spending per capita.

Purpose of the Act-

1. Proponents of the amendment point to the need to regain market confidence and keep inflation under control to avoid a future debt crisis.
 - **Market confidence-** It is linked with foreign investors and their proposed ability to generate jobs and income.
2. The spending cap sets a transparent fiscal anchor that restored macroeconomic stability.

What is income support and its advantages?

Income support- It is an income-related benefit for some people who are on a low income, but have a reason for not actively seeking work.

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The outbreak has caused broad and large economic impacts on firms and households, and expenditure policy responses face the task of addressing a number of issues rapidly and simultaneously by following measures-

1. It can protect, to varying degrees, household and SME balance sheets from the extensive damage.
2. Liquidity support for firms-
 - To allows employers to retain employees.
 - Companies accept reduces working hour.
 - Keep viable firms alive.
3. Income and in-kind support for the vulnerable, including the unemployed.
4. Preserving employment linkages.
5. Direct income support to jobless, freelancers and self-employed.
6. Facilitates post crisis recovery.

Target- To specific households and firms involves several tradeoffs that need to be carefully managed.

- **Protection-** Targeted policy measures focusing on the most impacted households and firms can provide better protection for a given spending envelope and help contain fiscal costs, which is especially important in countries with limited fiscal space.

Way forward

Appropriate economic measure now can have a much bigger and long-lasting impact when the pandemic has been brought under control and an economic recovery gets underway in earnest. Government needs to provide income support for households and firms now so that the recovery is not hamstrung by excessively damaged balance sheets.

4. Climate change and India

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-3- Environment

Context: The UN Secretary General has asked India to reduce emissions by 45% by 2030.

How did the UN put pressure on India?

- **Move in climate diplomacy:** At the Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), in New Delhi, it called on India to make no new investment in coal after 2020.
- While releasing **the latest climate report of the World Meteorological Organization**, it asked China and India too to reduce their emissions by 45% by 2030, at par with the developed countries.
- The advice was delivered after it was evident that **India, with the lowest per capita income among the G-20, is undergoing the worst economic contraction** .

How is India's track record in climate change?

- **Country's renewable energy programme is aspiring while its energy efficiency programme is delivering**, especially in the domestic consumption sector.
- **India is one of the few countries with at least 2° Celsius warming compliant climate action**, and one of those currently on track to **fulfilling their Paris Agreement commitments**.
- Despite the accelerated economic growth of recent decades **India's annual emissions, at 0.5 tonnes per capita, are well below the global average of 1.3 tonnes per capita**.
- China, the United States and the European Union (EU) are the three leading emitters in absolute terms, whose per capita emissions are higher than this average.

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- **Collective emissions:** India's **contribution by 2017 was only 4% for a population of 1.3 billion**, whereas the European Union, with a population of only 448 million, was responsible for 20%.

What then lies behind the UN chief's call to India to set aside coal right away?

- **The developed nations (excluding Russia and east Europe) have reduced their annual emissions by only 1.3%**, according to the UNFCCC between 1990 and 2017.
 - This amounts to practically nil, given the unavoidable errors in such accounting.
- **The global North has concealed the reality of its continued dependence on oil and natural gas**, both equally fossil fuels, with no timeline for their phase out.
 - Their commitments into the future set the world on a path for almost 3°C warming, **they have diverted attention by uncertain talk of "carbon neutrality" by 2050.**

What has been the First World's strategy?

- The first world countries **have turned to pressure the developing countries to bear the brunt of climate mitigation.** Their strategies include :
 - The **demonising of coal mining and coal-based power generation**
 - Promoting claims **that immediate climate mitigation would miraculously lower domestic inequalities**
 - **Ensuring climate adaptation** and promoting Third World natural resources as active sites of moderation and not adaptation
 - **Promoting theories of "de-growth"** or the neglect of industrial and agricultural productivity for the pursuit of climate change mitigation.
- All of these are accompanied by **increasing appeals to First World financial and development institutions to force this agenda on to developing countries.**
- **The UN secretary has rarely called out the U.S. for its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement**, or called out the EU nations for their long-term reliance on **gas and oil** while hiding behind their irresistible pretentious focus on coal.
- The UN Secretary has **been promoting the agenda of carbon neutrality by 2050** as national level goals applicable to all, **without any reference to global and international equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in climate action.**

What will be the consequences if India indeed ceases all coal investment from this very year?

- Currently, **roughly 2 GW of coal-based generation is being decommissioned per year**, which indicates that by 2030, India will have only 184 GW of coal-based generation.
- Meeting the 2030 **electricity consumption target of 1,580 to 1,660 units per person per year**, based on the continuation or a slight increase of the current decadal growth rate, **will require anywhere between 650 GW to 750 GW of renewable energy.**
- Currently, **manufacturing growth powered by fossil fuel-based energy is itself a necessity, both technological and economic**, for the transition to renewables.
- **70% to 80% of all generation capacity is possible through renewables depends on technology development** which includes improvements in:
- The efficiency of conversion of energy from its source into electricity.

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- The management of the corresponding electricity grids.
- The advancement in storage technologies.
- **Dependence on external sources: Lacking production capacity in renewable energy technologies and their large-scale operation**, deployment on this scale will expose India to increasing and severe dependence on external sources and supply chains.

Way forward

- The UN Secretary General, taken all together, amounts to asking for the virtual de-industrialisation of India, and stagnation in a low-development trap for the vast majority of its population.
- India must unanimously reject the UN Secretary General's call and restate its long-standing commitment to an equitable response to the challenge of global warming.

5. GST Compensation disagreement between the Centre and the States

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- **GS 3-** Government Budgeting.

Context- The onus would be on Centre to resolve this impasse with regard to compensation cess of GST reforms.

What is GST compensation?

- The Centre is obliged to pay to the States, for a period of five years, compensation for revenue shortfalls in return for their having ceded the power to levy the multiple taxes that were subsumed into the GST.
- The compensation is calculated based on the difference between the states current GST revenue and the protected revenue after estimating an annualized 14% growth rate from the base year of 2015-16.

What is current GST compensation situation?

1. **Pending payment-** GST compensation payments to states have been pending since April, with the pending amount for April-July estimated at Rs 1.5 lakh crore.
2. **GST revenue gap** - The GST compensation requirement is estimated to be around Rs 3 lakh crore this year, while the cess collection is expected to be around Rs 65,000 crore – an estimated compensation shortfall of Rs 2.35 lakh crore.

What were the Options given by the Center to the States?

Options made by the Centre-

Option 1 –

- To provide a special borrowing window to states, in consultation with the RBI, to provide Rs 97,000 crore at a “reasonable” interest rate and this money can then be repaid after 5 years by extending cess collection.
- A 0.5 percent relaxation in the borrowing limit under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management [FRBM] Act would be provided.

Option 2-

- To meet the entire GST compensation gap of Rs 2.35 lakh crore this year itself after consulting with the RBI.
- No Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act relaxation has been mentioned for this option.

Issues raised by the States-

1. Several States have rejected both options and some, including Tamil Nadu- have urged the Centre to rethink in view of their essential and urgent spending needs to curb the pandemic and spur growth.
2. Enforcing a cut in compensation and bringing in a distinction between GST and Covid-related revenue loss is unconstitutional.
3. The two options offered to the States would impose huge debts on the states and as a result many would not even be able to pay salaries.
4. States simply do not have the headroom to borrow money to make up for the GST shortfall as every single State has reached its FRBM [Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management] limit.

What are the expected reasons for Revenue shortfall for the fiscal year 2020-21?

1. **Corporate tax collection loss** - Companies in sectors such as airlines, hotels and consumer durables will show losses and therefore, pay less tax.
2. **Less income tax collection** - Large numbers of workers have lost employment and/or have faced salary cuts. Many private firms are also likely to incur losses. So, income tax collection will also be short by much more than 20%.
3. **Less import** - The Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) and customs duties will also decline with fall in import.
4. The production **of luxury and sin goods has been severely impacted** and they pay the high rate of tax — 18%, 28% and cess on top.
5. The direct tax/GDP per cent may be expected to fall from 5.5% last year to less than 4% this fiscal.

Way forward

Center needs to renege on its promise to find ways to compensate the state for loss of revenue. Only the Centre is in a position to do such massive borrowing as Reserve Bank has itself said that for the Central government to borrow would be both easier and simpler. Central government would pay 2% less interest than the states.

6. Market Failure

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: Gs3: Issues related to Direct and Indirect Farm Subsidies and Minimum Support Prices

Context: Recently, an allied party's Minister of NDA government has resigned in protest against the farmer Bills.

What was the subject matter in the bill?

- Bills seek to replace ordinances issued on key aspects of the farm economy — trade in agricultural commodities, price assurance, farm services including contracts, and stock limits for essential commodities.

What are the issues with the bill?

- **Fear of ending MSP (Minimum Support Prices):** Fears that the free market philosophy of the bill could put an end to MSPs for produce that has so far been centrally procured by the government.
- **Against cooperative federalism:** Several States have already liberalised agricultural marketing, amending their APMC Acts, and some have allowed regulated private commerce including direct marketing.

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- **No levy/fee:** provisions in the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, providing for unfettered commerce in designated trade areas outside APMC jurisdictions without levy of any fee.
- **Removing APMC's will not bring in private investment:** for example, Bihar removed the APMC system. The markets suffered loss of fee revenue but with no significant private investments in the sector.
- **Inaccessible APMC's:** The small farmers, who form the majority has access levels to markets under the APMC system at the rate of one for an area of 434.48 sq. km on average. It is below the recommendation of the National Commission on Farmers (NCF), at one market for 80 sq. km.

What needs to be done?

- Strengthen competition.
- Massively fund the expansion of the APMC market system.
- Remove trade cartels and provide farmers good roads, logistics of scale and real time information.
- Empower farmers through State Farmers Commissions recommended by the NCF, to bring about a speedy government response to issues.
- Bring strong institutional arrangements.
- Agriculture and markets are State subjects, and there should be no tinkering with the MSP and Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMC), that form the backbone of existing trading arrangements.

There is no guarantee that liberalisation bring investment. Also, government need to consider that **laissez-faire policy** may harm lakhs of unorganised small farmers, who have been remarkably productive and contributed to the economy even during a pandemic.