MONTHLY

EPIC!

Supplementary reading material for MGP and Current Affairs classes of ForumIAS Academy

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PREPARATION

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The fifth edition

Dear Forumites,

The fifth edition of EPIC! Magazine, comes at culmination of the Civil Services Preliminary Examination of 2020. For those aspirants, who have cleared the prelims should now focus on mains, and here EPIC! Magazine provides issue-based analysis of mains related topics. A common message to our aspirants is that one should not put their guard down in our journey to clear this exam. Therefore, don't waste any time in speculating about the marks in prelims and focus on the next step to consolidate your preparations. Add new content everyday so that, your knowledge becomes dynamic, relevant and reproducible for the examination.

EPIC! series of current affairs magazine provides a segregated yet complete monthly coverage of current affairs for civil services preparations.

Aggregating the various view points from our 9PM and 7PM initiatives, this edition contains interesting analysis of issues like hate speech, need for a new security strategy, delves deep in the doctrine of basic structure, understanding the present economic contraction and many more.

You can contribute to the topics you would like us to cover or provide your feedback by writing to us at feedback@forumias.academy.

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Farm Bills: The Step in Right Direction?

Syllabus: GS-3 Agriculture

In News: The Centre passed three Bills — the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill and Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill.

Brief Overview of the Agriculture Sector in India:

- *Agriculture's contribution to national output:* At the time of Independence, agriculture and allied activities accounted for around 54% of India's national income. As of 2019-20, it is less than 17% (in gross value-added terms).

- *Employment in Agriculture* According to latest PLFS Survey by NSSO, employment in agriculture accounts to 44% of the overall employment. The Committee on Doubling Farmers' Income (2017)-(Ashok Dalwai Committee) observes that the dependence of the rural workforce on agriculture for employment has not declined in proportion to the falling contribution of agriculture to GDP.

WHAT THE INDIAN FARMER OWNS, OWES AND EARNS

CHART 1: THE FARM WORKFORCE

Year	Total engaged in agriculture (% of workforce)	Agricultural labourers (% of agricltural workforce)
1951	69.70%	28.10%
1961	69.50%	69.50%
1971	69.70%	37.80%
1981	60.50%	37.50%
1991	59%	40.30%
2001	58.20%	45.60%
2011	54.60%	54.90%

CHART 2: INDEBTEDNESS BY LANDHLODINGS (JULY 2012-JUNE 2013)

Land owned (hectare)	Indebted farm household (lakhs)	Average loan amount (Rs)
Up to 0.01	10.02	31100
0.01-0.40	135.97	23900
0.41-1.00	152.16	35400
1.01-2.00	86.11	54800
2.01-4.00	56.10	94900
4.01-10.00	25.21	182700
10 & above	2.92	290300
All India	468.48	47000

CHART 3: INCOME AND INDEBTEDNESS

State	Farm households indebted (%)	Monthly income per household (Rs)
Andhra Pradesh	92.9%	5979
Bihar	42.5%	3558
Punjab	53.2%	18059
West Bengal	51.5%	3980
All India	51.9%	6426

CHART 4: TERMS OF TRADE (FARMER, NON-FARMER)

Values: 87.78 (2004-05), 84.77 (2005-06), 87.05 (2006-07), 92.22 (2007-08), 99.98 (2008-09), 100.13 (2009-10), 102.95 (2010-11), 97.27 (2011-12), 97.4 (2012-13), 98.6 (2013-14), 97.58 (2014-15), 96.96 (2015-16), 99.07 (2016-17), 97.94 (2017-18), 96 (2018-19(P))

CHART 5: PROCUREMENT & PRODUCTION, 2018-19

RICE

State	Produced (1000 tonnes)	% Procured at MSP
Punjab	16,050	70.62%
West Bengal	12,820	15.44%

WHEAT

State	Produced (1000 tonnes)	% Procured at MSP
Punjab	32,750	38.75%
Bihar	18,240	0.10%

CHART 6: MIGRATION OF FARMERS (Out-migrants)

State	Out-migrants
Uttar Pradesh	1,29,94,674
Bihar	79,49,853
Rajasthan	39,49,277

CHART 7: SHARE OF FOOD PROCESSING GVA IN TOTAL MANUFACTURING GVA (%)

Country	Share
India (2017)	9.7
Indonesia (2018)	35.5
New Zealand (2013)	34.3
USA (2018)	11.4
France (2018)	16.2

Source: Agriculture Statistics at a Glance 2019; Census 2011 (Chart 6); RBI (Chart 7)

- *Proportion of landless labourers:* It has increased from 28% (27 mn) in 1951 to 55% (144 mn) in 2011.

- *Size of Landholding:* 86% of all landholdings in India are small (between 1 and 2 hectares) and marginal (less than 1 hectare). The average size among marginal holdings is 0.37 ha.
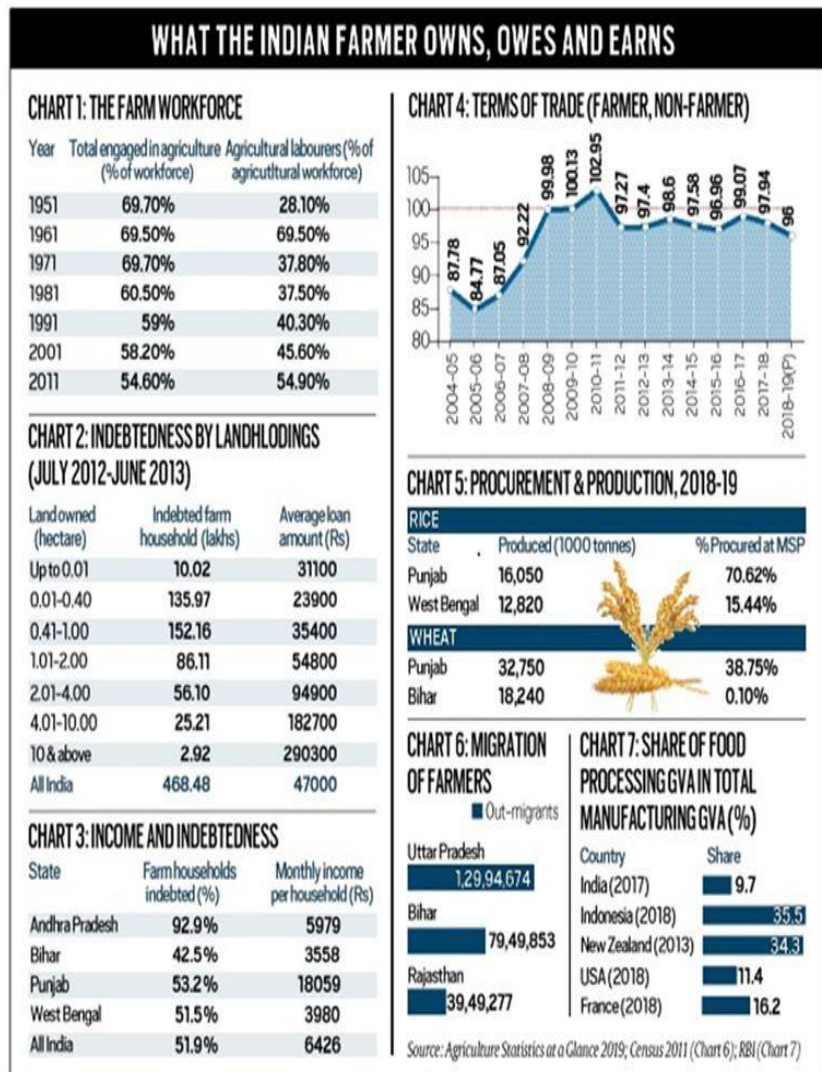
- *Average Income of farmers*: According to Dalwai committee, the average annual income of the farmer at the national level is estimated at `96,703 at the base year 2015-16, which is an extrapolation of the NSSO's 2012-13 estimates.
- *Terms of Trade between farmers and non-farmers*: It is the ratio between the prices paid by the farmers for their inputs and the prices received by the farmers for their output. If the ToT is less than 100, it means farmers are worse off. ToT rapidly improved between 2004-05 and 2010-11 to breach the 100-mark but since then, it has worsened for farmers.
- *Export Contribution*: India is among the 15 leading exporters of agricultural products in the world. Agricultural export from India reached US$ 28.93 billion in FY20.
- *Feminization of Agriculture*:

The Farm Bills at a Glance:
Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation), 2020
Aim: Break the monopoly of government-regulated mandis and provide farmers and traders freedom of choice of sale and purchase of Agri-produce.
Need of the Bill:
Farmers in India suffered from various restrictions in marketing their produce
- Most APMCs have a limited number of traders operating, which leads to cartelization and reduces competition.
- Undue deductions in the form of commission charges and market fees.
- Most farmers lack access to government procurement facilities and APMC markets. Small farmers face issues such as inadequate marketable surplus, long-distance to the nearest APMC markets, and lack of transportation facilities.
- Barriers existed in free flow of agriculture produce between various States owing to the prevalence of various APMC legislation enacted by the State Governments.

Key Features:
- *Trade of farmers' produce*:
  - It allows intrastate and inter-state trade of farmers' produce outside the physical premises of markets notified under State Agricultural Produce Marketing legislation.
  - In addition to mandis, freedom to do trading at farmgate, cold storage, warehouse, processing units etc.
- *Electronic trading*: It proposes an electronic trading in transaction platform for ensuring a seamless trade electronically.
- *Abolition of cess or levy for sale*: The farmers will not be charged any market fee, cess or levy for sale of their produce and will not have to bear transport costs.

Benefits:
- *One India, One Agriculture Market*: It promotes barrier-free inter-state and intrastate trade and commerce there by facilitating One India, One Agriculture Market. Earlier, barriers existed in free flow of agriculture produce due to the prevalence of different APMC legislations enacted by the State Governments.

- *Increment in Farmers Income:* The legislation will provide additional trading opportunities outside the APMC market yards. This will help farmers earn remunerative prices due to additional competition.
- *Efficient value chain:* The competition is expected to help build more efficient value chains in agriculture by reducing marketing costs, enabling better price discovery, improving price realization for farmers and, simultaneously, reducing the price paid by consumers.
- *Promotes choice of farmers:* The new legislation will create an ecosystem where the farmers and traders will enjoy freedom of choice of sale and purchase of agri-produce.
- *Balanced economy:* It will also help farmers of regions with surplus produce to get better prices and consumers of regions with shortages, lower prices.

Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020

Aim: To provide a legal contract for farmers to enter into written contracts with companies and produce for them.

Need for the Bill:

- *Agricultural Risks:* The Indian agriculture is characterized by fragmentation due to small holding sizes and issues such as weather dependence, production uncertainties and market unpredictability.
- *Lack of National Framework:* There is no national framework on farming agreements that protects and empowers farmers to engage with private players.
- *Presence of Intermediaries:* Due to presence of intermediaries between farmers and markets, farmers often don't get fair prices.

Key Features:

- *Farming agreement:* It provides for a farming agreement between a farmer and a buyer before the production or rearing of any farm produce.

- *Pricing of farming produce:* The agreement should mention the following:

    o The price of farming produce

    o For prices subjected to variation, a guaranteed price for the produce and a clear reference for any additional amount above the guaranteed price

    o process of price determination

- *Dispute Settlement:* A farming agreement must provide for a conciliation board as well as a conciliation process for settlement of disputes.

- *Protection to farmers:* Farmers have been provided adequate protection. Sale, lease or mortgage of farmers' land is totally prohibited and farmers' land is also protected against any recovery.

Benefits:

- **Promotion of Contract Farming:** The bill empowers farmers for engaging with processors, wholesalers, aggregators, wholesalers, large retailers, exporters etc without any fear of exploitation.
- **Addressing Agricultural Risks:** The legislation will transfer the risk of market unpredictability from the farmer to the sponsor.
- **Agriculture Modernization:** The bill enables the farmer to access modern technology and better inputs. This is of paramount importance for ensuring food security while practicing sustainable agriculture.
- **Attracting Private Investors in Agriculture:** The legislation will help attract private sector investment for building supply chains for supply of Indian farm produce to national and global markets, and in agricultural infrastructure.
- **Removal of Intermediaries:** The legislation will enable farmers to engage in direct marketing thereby eliminating intermediaries. This will help in full realization of price for farmers thus augmenting their income.
- **Promotion of Farmer Producer Organization (FPO):** The bill promotes the creation of FPO on a large scale and will help in creating a farmer-friendly environment for contract farming where small players can benefit.

Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020

It amends the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

Aim: To increase competition in the agriculture sector and enhance farmers' income. It also aims to remove fears of private investors of excessive regulatory interference in their business operations

Need for the Bill:

The Economic survey (2019-20) describes the Essential Commodities Act (ECA) as anachronistic and scarcity-era legislation irrelevant today.

- It discourages private investment in storage facilities as the ECA can put stock limits on any trader, processor or exporter.
- While India has become surplus in most Agri-commodities, farmers have been unable to get better prices due to lack of investment in cold storage, warehouses, processing and export as the entrepreneurial spirit gets dampened due to Essential Commodities Act.
- Farmers suffer huge losses when there are bumper harvests, especially of perishable commodities.
- It also leads to inflation in the lean season caused by distress selling due to lack of warehousing and storing facilities.

Key Features:

- **Regulation on food items:** Under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, the Government regulates the production, supply and distribution of certain commodities it declares 'essential' in order to make them available to consumers at fair prices. The bill removes

cereal, pulses, oilseed, edible oil, onion and potatoes from the list of essential commodities

- **Stock Limit:** It requires that imposition of any stock limit on agricultural produce must be based on price rise. A stock limit may be imposed only if there is: (i) a 100% increase in retail price of horticultural produce; and (ii) a 50% increase in the retail price of non-perishable agricultural food items.

Essential Commodities Act, 1955
- It aims to ensure smooth and easy availability of essential items to consumers.
- Under the act, the Government regulates the production, supply and distribution of certain commodities it declares 'essential' in order to make them available to consumers at fair prices.
- The list of items under the Act include drugs, fertilisers, pulses and edible oils and petroleum and petroleum products.

Benefits:

- *Improvement in Storage Facilities*: The current legal framework discourages private sector investment in storage, as the ECA 1955 can put stock limits on any trader, processor or exporter. The amendment will help boost investment in cold storages and modernization of the food supply chain.
- *Better Price Realization for Farmers*: It will provide more choices for farmers to trade their produce and prevent distress selling by the farmers due to lack of warehouses.
- *Benefit to Consumers*: Lack of storage facilities in the lean season leads to increase in prices for the consumers. The amendment will help control food inflation.
- *Addressing Food Wastage*: The amendment will help prevent wastage of Agri-produce that happens due to lack of storage facilities.
- *Promotion of Agri-Exports*: The amendment would provide for better agricultural exports leading to more forex earnings.

Issues and concerns associated with the Farm Bills:

General Concerns:

- *Undermining Cooperative Federalism*: Agriculture and markets are State subjects – entry 14 and 28 respectively. The Centre argued that trade and commerce in food items is part of the concurrent list- Entry 33. This move by the Centre is a direct encroachment upon the functions of the States and against the spirit of cooperative federalism enshrined in the Constitution.
- *Constitutionality of the Legislation*: As per Union of India v H.S. Dhillon (1972), one of the conditions under which constitutionality of parliamentary laws can be challenged is that it is a subject is in the State List. The recently introduced legislations do not mention, in the Statement of Objects & Reasons, the constitutional provisions under which Parliament has the power to legislate on the subjects covered.

- *Exclusion of discussion with various stakeholders*: The government has failed to have or hold any discussion with the various stakeholders including farmers and middlemen while formulating the legislations.

Issues with Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill:

- *Lack of regulatory oversight and reporting:* The bill provides for non-APMC markets but do not provide any mechanism for its regulation. There are concerns that lack of regulation might lead to unregulated trade detrimental to the primary purpose of providing market access to farmers. Further, it does not provide proper grievance redressal mechanism.
- *Loss in revenue for states:* The market fee, rural development fee, and arhatiya's commission are big sources of revenue for some states. With states not permitted to levy market fee/cess outside APMC areas under the new legislation, Punjab and Haryana could lose an estimated Rs 3,500 crore and Rs 1,600 crore each year respectively.
- *Fear over MSP*: According to critics, the dismantling of the monopoly of the APMCs is sign of ending the assured procurement of food grains at minimum support prices (MSP).
- *Setting Price:* APMC continues to set the reference price even for private players. In the absence of APMC, there will be no alternative for a large market that can actually set price signals. Global experience such as, the French dairy producers and the dairy farmers' co-operatives in the U.S suggest that buyer cartels will start fixing the market price.

Issues with Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020:

- *No mechanism for price fixation*: The bill provides protection to farmers against price exploitation, but does not prescribe the mechanism for price fixation. There are concerns that the free hand given to the private sector could lead to corpotirization of agriculture and farmer exploitation.
- *Unorganised nature of the farm sector*: Given the unorganised nature of the farm sector and farmers' lack of resources for a legal battle with private corporate entities, there are concerns that formal contractual obligations will eventually be detrimental for poor farmers in the country.
- *Lack of assurance about MSP*: The bill doesn't provide any assurance about Minimum Support Price (MSP) in the contract-farming. Critics have opined that there will be no declaration of MSP for all crops, determined by Swaminathan formula of C2 costs plus 50 per cent.
- *Fear of intermediaries*: Though the bill seeks to eliminate middlemen from the supply chain, the critics have raised concerns that middlemen will operate in the form of sponsors or farm service provider for contract-farming.
- *Deprivation of farmers from their land*: The legislation provides for "farming agreements" "with insurance or credit instrument". This will entail credit linkage with mortgaging of

farmer's land. There are concerns that in case the contract suffers a financial loss, a farmer might have to pay debt through their land.

- **Subjecting food security to world markets**: There are concerns that MNC food giants and their Indian collaborators will integrate Indian agricultural production with world markets. This will reduce the freedom of farmers and undermine food security.

- **Threat to India's food and political sovereignty**: There are concerns that companies will promote banned and dangerous GM seeds, terminator seed technology. This will erode India's seed sovereignty and threaten food and political sovereignty.

Issues with Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020

- **Undermining Food security**: Easing of regulation of food items would lead to exporters, processors and traders hoarding farm produce during the harvest season, when prices are generally lower, and releasing it later when prices increase. This could undermine food security since the States would have no information about the availability of stocks within the State.

- **Deregulation of food items**- As the bill removes cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potatoes from the list of essential commodities, it will deregulate the production, storage, movement and distribution of these important food commodities.

Suggested Reforms:

1. **Land Reforms**: As suggested by the Swaminathan Committee, land reforms is crucial for addressing framers distress. Ceiling-surplus and wastelands should be distributed to landless farmers. Further, diversion of prime agricultural land and forest to corporate sector for non-agricultural purposes should be prevented.

2. **Increasing Productivity in Agriculture**: There should be substantial increase in public investment in agriculture related infrastructure particularly in irrigation, drainage, land development, water conservation, research development and road connectivity.

3. **Augmenting MSP**: As suggested by the Swaminathan Committee, MSP should be at least 50% more than the weighted average cost of production. Arrangements for MSP need to be put in place for crops other than paddy and wheat. Also, millets and other nutritious cereals should be permanently included in the PDS.

4. **Agricultural Marketing Reforms:** The recommendations of Dalwai committee should be implemented in letter and spirit:

   - **Developing Hub and Spoke System** at back-end and front-end to facilitate and promote a new market architecture. This will help farmers avail services that empowers them to physically connect and supply to any market in the country of their choice.

   - **Marketing Intelligence System** to provide demand led decision making support system

   - **Farmer-centric National Agricultural Marketing System** by restructuring for a new market architecture, consisting of Primary Retail Agriculture Markets, Primary Wholesale Agricultural Markets and secondary & tertiary agricultural markets.

1. *Improvement in Input System*: It is important to improve input delivery mechanism and overall input efficiency (technologies, irrigation methods, mechanisation, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), Integrated Nutrient Management (INM), farm extension services)

2. *Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture*: Climate Resilient Agriculture, Rainfed Agriculture, Conservation Agriculture, Ecology Farming, Watershed Management System, Integrated Farming System, Organic Farming should be promoted.

3. *Agricultural Risk Assessment and Management*: This should include drought management, demand & price forecast, weather forecast, management of biotic stress, access to credit among farmers for farming operations; post-production finance to preventing distress sale.

GENERAL STUDIES-1

Slums: the curse of urbanisation

Syllabus: urbanization: their problems and their remedies

In news: — The Supreme Court of India ordered the removal of about 48,000 slum dwellings situated along the railway tracks in Delhi due to the issue of garbage littering along the tracks.

More in news

- The order was passed in the MC Mehta case, in which the Supreme Court had been passing directions from time to time since 1985 in issues related to pollution in and around Delhi.
- The court declared that "no interference, political or otherwise, should be there" against their removal.
- The court also directed stakeholders to prepare a widespread plan for removal of jhuggies (slum clusters).

What is a slum?

- Slum is a contiguous settlement where the inhabitants are characterized as having inadequate housing and basic services.
- UN-HABITAT has defined a slum household as a group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area who lack one or more of the following:
  - o Durable housing of a permanent nature that protects against extreme climate conditions.
  - o Sufficient living space which means not more than three people sharing the same room.
  - o Easy access to safe water in sufficient amounts at an affordable price.
  - o Access to adequate sanitation in the form of a private or public toilet shared by a reasonable number of people.
  - o Security of tenure that prevents forced evictions
- Census of India 2011 explained slums as residential areas where dwellings are unfit for human habitation by reasons of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangements and design of such buildings, narrowness or faulty arrangement of street, lack of ventilation,

light, or sanitation facilities or any combination of these factors which are detrimental to the safety and health.

What are the directions of the Supreme Court?

A three- judge bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra, relying on an affidavit filed by the railways observed that :

- There is a major presence of slums in close vicinity of the 140 km- long railway line in Delhi.
- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) had set up a special task force for the removal of intrusion from railway property
- There seems to be some political intervention against removal of such intrusions.

Thus, the court ordered that:

- State authorities to remove the jhuggi jhopri clusters in the railway safety zone.
- The court also stated that "no court shall grant any stay with respect to removal of the encroachments".
- Meanwhile, if any such order is granted then it won't be effective.
- These intrusions into railway property should be removed within three months and no interference, political or otherwise, should be there against the order.

What are the Fundamental flaws raised by the Residents?

1. **Principles of natural justice and due process of law-** The Court decided on the removal of jhuggi jhopris without hearing the plea of the people who reside there.

2. **Judicial precedents on the right to shelter-**The Court ignored its long- standing jurisprudence on the right to livelihood under article 21 and shelter upheld in various judgments. For example,

   - **Olga Tellis & Ors vs. Bombay Municipal Corporation & Ors. (1985).:** Supreme court held that the right to life also includes the "right to livelihood" and that no eviction shall take place without notice and hearing those affected.
   - **Chameli Singh vs. State Of U.P. (1995):** the Supreme Court recognised the "right to shelter" as a component of the right to life under Article 21 and freedom of movement under Article 19 (1) (e).

3. **State policies governing evictions**- The Court also failed to consider the policies and case laws on slum eviction and rehabilitation in Delhi. For example,

   - **Sudama Singh & Others vs Government of Delhi & Anr. (2010)** The High Court of Delhi held that prior to any eviction, a survey must be conducted and those evicted should have a right to "meaningful engagement" with the relocation plans.
   - **Ajay Maken & Ors. Vs Union of India & Ors. (2019) :** A case concerning the demolition of Shakur Basti on railway land, where the Delhi High Court invoked the idea of the "Right to the City" to uphold the housing rights of slum dwellers. This case led to the framing of a Draft Protocol for the 2015 Policy on how meaningful engagement with residents should be conducted.

Therefore, all this represents a dangerous turn of PIL jurisprudence.

Factors responsible for growth of slums:

- *Growing demand for* housing: The gap between growing demand for affordable urban housing and insufficient supply has encouraged the formation of slums. The housing gap of India during 2001 was at 24.68 million. Of this, 0.55 million were from Delhi and it constituted 2.23 per cent of the total housing shortage in India.

- *Limited access to financial resources*:

   The urban poor lack the access to formal financial resources to help them purchase new homes and occupy the marginal locations such as dumping grounds eventually becoming slum dwellers.
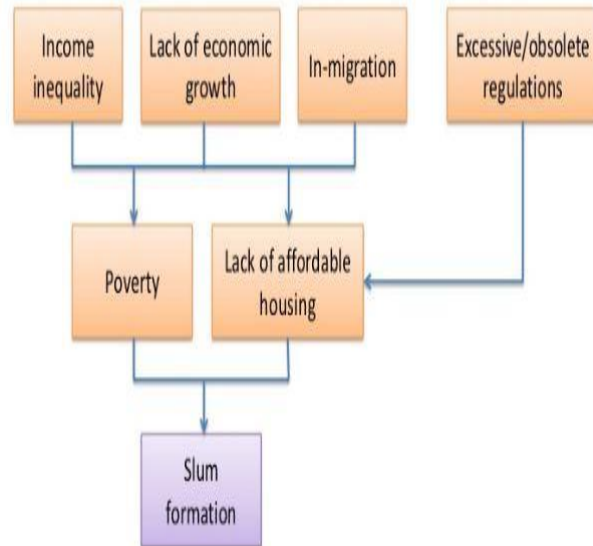
- *Rural- Urban Migration*: Urban centres lack necessary infrastructure to cope up with high influx of people which ultimately causes problems such as housing shortages, unemployment, and development of slums.

- *Poor Urban governance*: Failure on part of urban local bodies to incorporate slum dwellers as part of overall planning process along with obsolete urban planning regulations, slum dwellers tend to by pass laws to meet their housing needs.

Slums in India- Statistics:

- The census report identified 13.8 million households which equates about 64 million people are located in city slums nationwide.
- Dharavi has an area of just over 2.1 square kilometres and a population of about 1,000,000. It is the largest slum in India and is one of the most densely populated areas in the world.
- Out of 4,041 Statutory Towns in Census 2011 Slums reported from 2,543 Towns (63%).
- Largest number of slums reported from Maharashtra (21,359).
- 2,613 of India's 4,041 towns are classified as slums. In the territory of Delhi, where capital city New Delhi is located, 1.8 million of the 22 million residents live in 22 slums.
- People who are living in slums increased from 52 million in 2001 to 65.5 million 2011.

Problems faced by slum dwellers:

**1. *Lack of basic services/ amenities*: The slums are characterised by lack of access to sanitation facilities and safe water sources, absence of waste collection systems, electricity supply, drainage.

- For example, one slum in Bangalore is 12 times denser than the city average, housing 140,000 people per square kilometers.
- In another slum in Mumbai, more than 2,000 people lacked access to piped water.

These are sometimes supplemented by lack of surfaced roads and footpaths and street lighting. According to Census 2011, among the slums in India-

- o 58% have open or no drainage
- o 43% must bring water from outside their communities
- o 26% do not have access to clean drinking water
- o 34% have no latrine within premises; 19% open defecate
- o 2 electricity outages occur per day.

2. *Substandard housing*: Slum areas are associated with a high number of substandard housing structures, often built with non-permanent materials unsuitable for housing and in dilapidated conditions.

3. *Overcrowding*: Many slum dwelling units are overcrowded, with a large number of people sharing a one-room unit used for cooking, sleeping and living.

4. *Unhealthy living conditions and hazardous locations*: Unhealthy living conditions are the result of a lack of basic services, open sewers, lack of pathways, uncontrolled dumping of waste, polluted environments, etc. Further, slums come up in hazardous locations such as in proximity to industrial plants with toxic emissions or waste disposal sites.

5. *Perpetuating cycle of Poverty*: Slum conditions create barriers to human and social development. Low income characteristically means poor nutrition, elementary or no education, little or no medical care which undermines human capital development and slum dwellers are trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty.

6. *Social problems*: Slums are areas of social exclusion that are often perceived to have high levels of crime. Gender discrimination and violence towards women and children, substance abuse are rampant phenomena in slum areas.

7. *Lack of sanitation and hygiene facilities*: High population density, lack of proper toilets and close proximity of homes allow diseases to spread quickly Slum dwellers are at great risk of contracting water-borne and respiratory diseases.

Steps taken:

1. *Slum areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act, in the year 1956*: The act aimed at mechanical improvement or complete eradication of slums. It empowers the competent authority to declare any slum area in accordance with the definition, look into possibilities of improvement or eradicate slums.

2. *National Slum Development Programme (NSDP)*: Initiated in 1996, NSDP provided both loans and subsidies to states for slum rehabilitation projects on the basis of their urban slum population.

3. *Valmiki Ambedkar Malina Basti Awas Yozana (VAMBAY)*: Introduced in 2001, it focused on shelter for the urban poor, with 20% of total allocation for community sanitation facilities under the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA) program

4. *Basic Services to the Urban Poor (BSUP)*: BSUP was an important component of Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). BSUP aimed to provide basic services to urban poor in 63 of the largest cities in India by population.

5. ***Integrated Housing & Slum Development Programme (IHSDP)***: Integrated Housing & Slum Development Programme (IHSDP) was launched by GoI by merging the schemes of NSDP and VAMBAY. The objective of the scheme is to provide adequate shelter and basic infrastructure facilities to the slum dwellers in urban areas.

6. ***Interest Subsidy Scheme for Housing the Urban Poor (ISHUP)***: The Scheme envisages the provision of interest subsidy to economically weak section and Low-income groups to enable them to buy or construct houses.

7. ***Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY):*** Launched in 2013, the scheme focussed on bringing existing slums within the formal system and enabling them to avail of the same level of basic amenities as the rest of the town.

8. ***Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana- "Housing for All (Urban):*** Launched in 2015, the scheme seeks to provide central assistance to implementing agencies through States and UTs for providing houses to all beneficiaries by 2022. It incorporates the following:
   - "In situ" slum rehabilitation with participation of private developers using land as a resource. This approach aims to leverage the locked potential of land under slums to provide houses to the eligible slum dwellers bringing them into the formal urban settlement.
   - Promotion of Affordable Housing for weaker section through credit linked subsidy.
   - Affordable Housing in Partnership with Public & Private Sectors
   - Subsidy for beneficiary-led individual house construction/enhancement

9. ***The National Urban Housing & Habitat Policy:*** It seeks to promote various types of public-private partnerships for realizing the goal of "Affordable Housing For All' with special emphasis on the urban poor.

10. ***Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)*** was a massive city-modernisation scheme launched by the Government of India under Ministry of Urban Development.
    - It aims at creating 'economically productive, efficient, equitable and responsive Cities' by a strategy of upgrading the social and economic infrastructure in cities.

Challenges:

1. ***Delays in implementation of slum rehabilitation schemes***: In the absence of systematic land records measuring land ownership is difficult because of non-transparent deals and ownership conflicts between land-owning departments.

2. ***Illegal renting***: After slum residents are provided with free housing and full ownership rights, the free redeveloped units are illegally given on rent. Eventually, this is counterproductive to the goal of creating slum free cities.

3. ***Lack of coherent policy***: India lacks a comprehensive policy which define slums or define the desired end-state of slums or what encompasses "slum-free" city.

4. ***Environmental sustainability***: There are concerns about adding additional housing on an already forced municipal system. Such policies could put excessive burden on the city's civic amenities such as water and electricity.

Way Forward:

1. The focus should not only on building houses for the slum dwellers but also promoting livelihood options and social and economic infrastructure to develop the livelihood. Attention must be paid to income generation, transport and empowerment of the beneficiaries to redress possible future problems.

2. For effective urban planning, housing and population policies based on housing rights and the right to a clean environment must be established at all levels. These policies should be directed at inclusive cities and poverty alleviation.

3. The jhuggi residents need to employ a combination of political and legal strategies to protect their housing rights and ensure that no eviction or rehabilitation is conducted without their prior informed consent.

4. The infrastructural gap between rural and urban areas should be reduced. For ex, the objective of the National Rurban Mission is to stimulate local economic development, enhance basic services, and create well planned rurban clusters.
   - PURA aims for holistic and accelerated development of compact areas for providing livelihood opportunities and urban amenities to improve the quality of life in rural areas.

5. A three-pronged approach to Slum Free city should be adopted:
   - Provision of clear, free title to the residents, so that they enjoy the privileges of using property as a tangible asset.
   - To upgrade the infrastructure and services providing water, power, and sewage connections to individual homes, the collection of solid waste, street lighting and neighbourhood security and police support.
   - The creation of high-density, low income zoning that allows individual property owners to upgrade their homes without risk, rent out their properties to formal commercial establishments.

Gurushihya parampara: Emerging blots on tradition

Syllabus: Role of women and women's organization

In news: The guru-shishya relationship in Indian music is vulnerable to abuse.

More in news:

The allegations of sexual abuse and harassment against (late) Ramakant Gundecha and Akhilesh Gundecha have shaken the Hindustani music fraternity.

What is guru shishya parampara?

- The Guru-Shishya parampara has been an inevitable part of education in ancient Indian culture. This involved the tradition of a living and learning relationship between the Guru and the Student (Shishya), signifying the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual bonding between them.

- This strong bond between the Guru and the Shishya enables the Guru to become a mentor who leads the Shishya from ignorance to wisdom, and enlightenment.

- Guru-Shishya proximity thus is not only a part of our social order, but also a milestone in the life of a human being in society.

- The guru-shishya tradition was not just a pedagogical method, but a way of life. The disciple lived with, or in close proximity to, the guru, often suspending family ties and extending her duties beyond just the musical realm. In return, the guru was "responsible for guiding the disciple from ignorance or darkness to enlightenment,"
- It is not just the knowledge, technique, style or aesthetics of music which are transmitted in the Guru-Shishya Parampara, but a whole range of values, perception, vision, and indeed, a way of life.

Guru shishya parampara scheme

- Government of India and Department of Culture launched a Scheme called *'Guru Shishya Parampara Scheme'* through Zonal Cultural Centre to preserve and promote rare and vanishing art forms whether classical or folk/tribal.
- Objective of the scheme was to nurture the young talents to acquire skills in their chosen field of art through some financial assistance by the ZCCs in the form of scholarship under the guidance of Experts and Masters in these fields.
- This scheme has provided security to a large number of old and retired artistes. Most of the artistes covered under this scheme are from rural areas and teaching shishyas from within reasonable catchment area of their residence.
- A Monitoring Workshop-cum-Presentations of Gurus and Shishyas is organised for reviewing and evaluating the progress made in this direction. An Expert Committee comprising eminent Art Experts is constituted for this purpose.
- To implement this scheme, Great Masters (Gurus) of different art forms of constituent states of NZCC, who are capable to train the interested shishyas are identified.
- The committee is constituted to process, evaluate and recommend the candidature of expert (Guru) and each Guru is expected to train five to eight shishyas.
- A small scholarship is provided to the learner and an honorarium to the Master (Guru) as per the norms fixed by Ministry of Culture to motivate them, which are as follows:
  - Guru (Master): @ Rs.5000/- per month
  - Accompanist: @ Rs.2500/- each per month
  - Shishya: @ Rs.1000/- each per month

How different are the practices in Hindustani music and Carnatic music?
- The key differences between the Hindustani and Carnatic systems are:
  - Hindustani music is raga based while Carnatic is kriti-based.
  - Hindustani stresses pure notes versus the gamaka-based Carnatic ragas.
- 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 positives in the guru shishya 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.

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.
- Lack of evidences: Proof is hard to come by because assault takes place in closed rooms without security cameras or witnesses.
- Marginalisation of poor: 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 respect from the student, only because someone is a guru, it 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.

Reason behind inefficiency of laws and rules to prevent sexual harassment of women:

- *Under-reporting:* A recent report reveals that there is a 12% increase in the sexual offences. However, these number are still very less as compared to crime in the country. Women still not report cases of sexual harassment due to fear of society and thus culprit roam around without being punished.

- *Mindset:* Indian mindset is a major issue. People see sex still a taboo. Further patriarchal mindset downgrade women. Many women don't talk or report of sexual offence in starting which later become a major offence.

- *Objectification:* Women are still viewed as a property and is seen as honour of husband especially in rural areas. Many women don't report sexual offence because of honour of family and husband. This led to sense of confidence among culprit of not getting caught and punished and he further commits more crime.

- *Non-supportive corporate sector*: Mostly companies are not supportive of Internal complaint Committee. It is primarily because the companies only take sexual harassment prevention as a compliance and not something which is vital for women at their workplace. They tend to ignore that even their top performing managers could be at fault too. They do not cooperate by supporting the victim to save their image.

- *Loopholes in law*: Even law has a lot of loopholes. For example, under Sexual harassment at workplace act, the law states that there has to be an annual report that needs to be filed by companies, but there is no clarity with the format or filing procedure. The evidence to show that a company is compliant or not is also very subjective and needs clarity. The matter of noncompliance needs to be reported to a District Magistrate or district officer. In case of any absence, there is no clarity as to whom to approach next.

- *Dilemma of Dignity vs. livelihood*: When a woman files a complaint about sexual harassment, she is labelled as impure at workplace and society by many and is often discriminated. Filing a complaint is not easy and it often comes at the cost of losing a job or being branded a trouble maker.

- *Poor implementation of laws*: The Indian justice system has failed to investigate, prosecute, and punish the perpetrators and failed to provide effective redressal for victims. Especially state police attitude is not good in implementing laws against sexual crime. Many cases of misbehave with women by police has been reported.

- *Lack of political will*: Many times, sex crime against women is motivated politically to create an environment of tension and communal conflicts. E.g. raping of Dalit by upper caste member. Politicians do not take action to keep their support of a community or sect for votes. Perpetrators are also rarely held accountable due to lack of political will.

- **Lack of centralised database**: There exists no centralised mechanism to collect data on sexual harassment, which is why it is difficult to chart a trends analysis or pattern on harassment that women face.

Way forward

- 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.

GENERAL STUDIES-2

Hate speech: A misused freedom

Syllabus: Indian Constitution–significant provisions

In News- Sudarshan TV case will have several implications for the regulation of free speech.

What is Sudarshan News Case?

- Recently, the Supreme Court of India ordered a Hindi language television Channel, Sudarshan News, from continuing its broadcast as object of the programme is to criticize Muslim community.
- The show added a number of evidently false statements to against a particular community and reservation provided to them in civil service examination.
- Supreme Court remarks- It was deceptive to use the freedom of press to make sick allegations and base an attack on a religious minority community.

What is hate speech?

The term hate speech is understood as any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis their collective identity, be it race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexuality.

Hate speech threatens two key doctrines of democracy-

- The guarantee of equal dignity to all
- The public good of inclusiveness.

Criteria to identify hate speech:

1. The extremity of the speech.
2. Incitement
3. Status of the author of the speech.
4. Status of victims of the speech.
5. Potentiality of the speech.
6. Context of the Speech.

Regulation of Hate speech in India

- *Constitutional provisions:* Article 19(2) of the Constitution gives all citizens the right to freedom of speech and expression but subject to "reasonable restrictions" for preserving inter alia "public order, decency or morality".
- *Statutory provisions*: India prohibits hate speech by several sections such as Section 95 of CRPC Section 124A or Section 153A or Section 153B or Section 292 or Section 293 or Section 295A of the Indian Penal Code.

Various Causes of hate speech-

1. **Historical underpinnings-** Any historical enmity between various religious or societal groups can motivate them to do hate crimes. During independence struggle both communities were divided which still has impact. For example; the divide and rule policy.

2. **Vote bank politics:** Often vote bank politics, use various communal or emotional tools to garner vote of few groups by inciting hatred in them. They use false stories, news, etc to incite such incidents.

3. **Acceptance of hate by the society:** Sometimes society in general accepts hatred against a particular group or nation based on past experience of atrocities. E.g many groups see refugees or migrated people as their enemies and islamophobia in European countries.

4. **Illiteracy-** Lack of education prevents overall development of an individual. Still about 23% of population in India is illiterate. This prevents development of tolerance and understanding of individuality in them.

5. **Consensus in society:** Increasing unemployment lead to development of feeling of hatred against a particular group especially refugees and migrated one. People see them as an enemy and one who snatches their rights. This phenomenon is worldwide. For eg, thousands of people of the northeast living in Bangalore headed to Guwahati, following rumours of violence targeting them.

6. **Prejudice and bias-** Bias toward a particular group can be a reason for hate crimes. E.g 704 cases of crimes against Northeast people in Delhi in 3 years. It can incite hate crime against them without making any difference between culprit and innocent.

7. **Patriarchy-** This hold true mainly in case of hate crime against women. Honour killing of women is mainly due to patriarchal mindset where women are attached to one's falsified honour and women seen as an object tied to family respect.

   - For instance, in 2010 when Nirupama, a student of journalism, was killed by her family members in Jharkhand for planning to marry her boyfriend from another caste.

8. **Lack of strong laws-** lack of strong and clear laws, poor implementation results in low conviction rate. So, culprits are let to roam freely.

9. **Social media:** Fake news, propaganda is often invoked on social media against a particular group to destabilise a society. For example, Muzaffarnagar riots in 2013.

Challenges in regulating hate speech.

- *Freedom to speech-* Any regulations for social media content should follow globally accepted norms of freedom of speech and impartiality which is hard to apply with the restrictions on the content.

- *Independent Regulator-* An independent regulator can be misused in geographies where the idea of impartiality is used to the wish of the ruling regimes.

- *Privacy Regulation-* The introduction of privacy regulations such as the European Union's General data protection regulation (GDPR) signalled the fact that self-regulations of the platforms didn't work in the desired way.

Social Media & hate speech

Impact of social media: Social media spreads messages way faster than other forms of mass media.
- Nearly 60,000 posts are shared on Facebook in just one second across the globe.
- Nearly 8,00,000 messages are sent in just one second across WhatsApp.
- Almost 70,000 searches are made on Google in just one second.

How social media aids hate speech?
- *Unregulated Information sharing on platform-* As exposed in a report by an international media organisation, Facebook is symptomatic of a larger infection of unregulated information dissemination through social media.
- *Hate speech against Rohingya minorities-* A Reuters investigation found that Facebook didn't appropriately moderate hate speech and genocide calls against Myanmar's Rohingya minorities.
- *Prioritise business interest over common good-* It is even accused of conducting a psychological experiment on its user's emotions and more aspect of their personality. For example, Recently Facebook was accused of conducting a psychological experiment on its user's emotions and more aspect of their personality.
- *Insensible approach-* Google has been accused of delaying the removal of malicious content even after volunteer groups had reported it.

Committees on Hate Speech

T. K Viswanathan Committee recommendations.
- A committee headed by former Lok Sabha Secretary General T.K. Viswanathan submitted a report recommending stricter laws to curb online hate speech
- The panel was formed after Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, was scrapped by the Supreme Court in 2015.

Bezbaruah Committee
- The Bezbaruah Committee was constituted by the Centre in February 2014 in the wake of a series of racial attacks on persons belonging to the northeast
- Though the committee submitted its report in July 2014, the Home Ministry sent out letters to States for their opinion almost four years later, in February this year.

Laws against hate speech:
- Section 295A was also introduced to control series of communal violence. Whoever, with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class of citizens of India, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, insults or attempts to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of that class, shall be punished.

Hate crime in India:
- Studies of hate crimes in India show that they have **steadily risen over the past five years**.

- **Amnesty International India** documented 721 such incidents between 2015 and 2018. Last year alone, it tracked 218 hate crimes, which were against Dalits, Muslims, women, Christians, Adivasis, and transgenders.
- The more common hate crimes, they found, were **honour killings and 'cow-related violence**', that was rare earlier but has become more frequent over the past five years.
- According to **Hate Crime Watch**, crimes based on religious identity were in single digits until 2014, when they surged from 9 in 2013 to 92 in 2018.
- **Uttar Pradesh** topped the list of States with the largest number of hate crimes for the third year, followed by Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Bihar.
- The **Hate-Crime Watch** records that Muslims, who comprise 14% of India's population, were the victims in 62% of cases and Christians, 2% of the population, in 14% of cases. Hindus, constituting the majority or 80% of the population, were victims in 10% (25) of the cases. In many cases, the crimes were communal clashes prima facie motivated by a religious bias, where the victims' religious identity could not be clearly ascertained from the news reports.
- In 2018, the Supreme Court directed Central and State governments to make it widely known that lynching and mob violence would 'invite serious consequence under the law' **(Tehseen S. Poonawalla v. Union of India & Ors)**.
- In a May 2019 report, Human Rights Watch India pointed out that only some States had complied with the Supreme Court's orders to designate a senior police officer in every district to prevent incidents of mob violence and ensure that the police take prompt action. For ex, Manipur law against lynching. Those State governments that did comply, the report

What is blasphemy law?

Sacrilege: violation or misuse of what is regarded as sacred.

Blasphemy Law: Deals with the matter pertaining to lack of respect toward God, religion, a religious icon, or something else considered sacred.

Arguements for blasphemy law

- To value and respect for sanctity of the God, Religion and Religious belief.
- Religion affects the actions of human beings. Legal protection provided by state to protect religious belief and sentiments leads to stable society and governance.
- Most of the countries implement Blasphemy laws as a reasonable restriction for the maintenance of communal harmony.
- Blasphemy law is required by the states that have an official religion like Pakistan

Argument against blasphemy law

- Blasphemy has been described as irreverence towards God or Religion, however the term "Religion" itself lacks a proper definition for itself.
- Against the spirit of Fundamental right of Speech and Expressions. USA has no blasphemy law to protect freedom of speech and expressions.
- Blasphemy laws are incompatible with the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Blasphemy law is often be used as a tool for the majority to oppress the minority.

The allegations of blasphemy have been used by vigilante groups and non-state actors to justify and instigate incidents of interreligious violence

commented, did so only partially. In several instances, the police actually obstructed investigations, even filing charges against the victims.

Supreme Court Judgments

Ramji Lal Modi v. State of Uttar Pradesh

- The case challenged the constitutional validity of law.
- Case argues that Art. 19(2) only put reasonable restrictions but section 295 A casts its net much wider by criminalizing all speech that was intended to outrage religious feeling.
- A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Section 295 A
- Supreme court observed that section 295A did not cover all type of Insult but only intentional insults

The Superintendent, Central Prison, Fatehgarh v Ram Manohar Lohia

- Under this case supreme court observes that speech which is prohibited should have a direct connection to disrupt public order and it should not be just a remote connection
- This is contrary to previous judgment (Ram ji Lal Modi case) which gave the order that a slight connection of freedom of speech with public disorder fall under Section 295 A.
- Misuse of law in guise of protecting religion sentiments may inflict violence.

New Punjab law

- Under new proposed law any "injury, damage or sacrilege to Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Srimad Bhagwad Geeta, Holy Quran and Holy Bible with the intention to hurt the religious feelings of the people" a crime punishable with life imprisonment

Need for Law

- Several incidents took place in various part of Punjab related to sacrilege of Holy book of Sikhs.
- Existing provisions of the said Act in Section 295, 295A and 296 though deal with these matters but do not provide deterrent punishment for incidents

Issues with the law

- Protecting Holy book of one religion is anti-secular and discriminatory against other religion.
- Most importantly, section 295-A of IPC deals with religion and religious beliefs, punishment under section 295-AA explicitly for religious text would be disproportionate

Way forward-

- *Code of conduct*: the European Union has also established a code of conduct to ensure non-proliferation of hate speech under the framework of a 'digital single market.' It requires collaborative, independent and inclusive regulation that is customised to regional and cultural specifications while adhering to global best practices of content moderation and privacy rights.
- The Law Commission of India recommended that new provisions in IPC are required to be incorporated to address the issue of hate speech.
- *Punitive action*: The legislature and political parties should suspend or dismiss members who are implicated in hate crimes or practise hate speech. Strict disciplinary act should be taken against such individuals and parties.

- The electronic and print media should stop showing or publishing hateful comments and threats. Any act of incitement of hatred should be punished by cancelling license or through imprisonment or fine.
- **Imbibing values**: Values of tolerance and respect that are common to all religions should be preached and schools should revitalise courses on the directive principles of our Constitution.
- If the speech or statement or art of work have an element of incitement of hate, it should be treated as a hate speech under section 153(a) of IPC and not as a Blasphemy.

One Nation One Voter ID

Syllabus: Indian Constitution – features: Elections

In News: The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) held a meeting to discuss the possibility of preparing a common voters' list for elections to all local bodies, state assemblies and Lok Sabha.

Electoral Roll: For every constituency, there is a list of voters which is called electoral roll. In many states, the voters' list for the panchayat and municipality elections is different from the one used for Parliament and Assembly elections. In 2019, 89.78 crore people were registered to vote.

How are electoral rolls prepared?

- The Election Commission is charged with the responsibility of conducting polls to the offices of the President and Vice-President of India, and to Parliament, the state assemblies and the legislative councils.
- The State Election Commissions supervise municipal and panchayat elections. They are free to prepare their own electoral rolls for local body elections, and this exercise does not have to be coordinated with the EC.
- Currently, all states, except Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Odisha, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, adopt EC's rolls for local body polls.

What are the options in achieving One Voter ID?

- A constitutional amendment to Articles 243K and 243ZA that would make it mandatory to have a single electoral roll for all elections in the country.
- Persuade the state governments to tweak their respective laws and adopt the Election Commission's (EC) voters list for municipal and panchayat polls.

Constitutional Provisions:

- *Article 243K:* Election to the Panchayats. It gives the power of superintendence, direction and control of preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of elections to the SECs
- *Article 243ZA:* Elections to the Municipalities. It gives the power of superintendence, direction and control of preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of elections to the SECs.
- *Article 324(1)*: It empowers the EC to supervise, direct, and control the preparation and revision of electoral rolls for all the elections to Parliament and state legislatures
- *Article 326:* It guarantees right to vote to every citizen above age of 18 years.

Issues with the present voting system:

- **No national list of Voters**: At present, there is no national list of voters. The EC and State Election Commissions have separate electoral rolls which leads to discrepancies and add financial burden.
- **Exclusion of Voters from the List**: According to an initiative called Missing Voters, 120 million Indians were not on the voters' lists during 2019 General Elections.
- **Duplication and Voter Fraud**: In 2019, it was alleged that 'fake voters' constitute about 16% of the total electorate in Andhra Pradesh. Further, in about 20 lakh cases a voter with the same ID were on the electoral list in both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Such voter fraud and duplication have been reported from other states too.
- **Confusion among Voters**: non-conformity of preparation of electoral rolls by the EC and the SECs leads to the confusion among voters, since they may find their names present in one roll, but absent in another.
- **Duplication of work**: Preparation of a separate voters list causes duplication of the same task between two different agencies (EC and SECs), thereby duplicating the effort and the expenditure.
- **Political Exclusion of migrant workers**: According to Economic Survey 2017, internal migrant workers constitute about 13.9 crore. A 2011 study pointed out that 22% of seasonal migrant workers in India did not possess voter IDs or have their names in the voter list primarily due to lack proof of residence. Further, many seasonal migrants cannot afford to visit their villages during elections. This make migrant workers quasi-disenfranchised and forgotten voters.
- **Issues faced by Service voters**: Service voters, especially the armed force personnel posted in border areas and remote areas find it difficult to exercise their voting rights.
- **Low Voters Turnout**: In India's 2019 general election, a third of the 900 million people eligible to vote did not exercise their voting right. According to the government, the need for people to vote where they are registered leads to people avoid voting.
- **Issues with VVPAT**: Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) is an independent system attached to an EVM that allows the voters to verify that their votes are cast as intended. They are prone to malfunctioning due to extreme weather conditions and sensitivity to light, paper jamming, running of ink, running out of battery etc.

Types of Voters in India:

- **General electors**: Every citizen of India who has attained age of 18 years on the qualifying date can be registered as a general elector.
- **Overseas (NRI) electors**: A person who is a citizen of India and who has not acquired citizenship of any other country and is otherwise eligible to be registered as a voter and who is absenting from his place of ordinary residence in India
- **Service electors**: Those who have service qualification. They belong to Armed Forces or forces to which Army Act, 1950 are applicable or a person who is employed under the Government of India, in a post outside India.

How Technology can help fixing these issues?

The election commission held an online conference in collaboration with the Tamil Nadu e-Governance Agency ("TNeGA") and IIT Madras, and explored the possibility of using block chain technology for the purpose of enabling remote elections.

Advantages of Block-chain based Voting:

- *Increasing Voter Turnout*: It will allow voters registered in any part of the country to exercise their franchise even after they move cities
- *Benefit to Migrants:* It would benefit internal migrants and seasonal workers, who account for roughly 51 million of the population (Census 2011), and who have, faced considerable difficulties in exercising their democratic right of voting.
- *Benefit to Armed force Personnel:* Block Chain based remote voting would be useful for some remotely stationed members of the Indian armed forces.
- *Tamper-proof voting records*: A blockchain is immutable and will provide for a hassle-free auditing without the risk of tampering.

Concerns associated:

- *Need to visit designated booths*: Electors would still have to physically reach a designated venue in order to cast their vote.
- *Proxy Voting:* Block chain solutions rely heavily on the proper implementation of cryptographic protocols. Any shortcoming could lead to possibly unmasking of the identity and voting preferences of electors or allow an individual to cast a vote as someone else.
- *Prone to targeted Denial-of-Service attacks*: An attacker would be in a position to block traffic from the system and can effectively prevent or can delay the registration of votes.
- *Technical Issues*: Digitised systems may exclude and disenfranchise certain individuals due to flaws in interdependent platforms, flaws in system design and general failures caused by external factors.

Current models of voter portability

- *Service voters (government employees)* posted away from home can vote through the Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS). Through this system the service voters cast their vote on an electronically received postal ballot, from anywhere outside their constituency.
- *Classified service voters (e.g., military personnel)* can do so through their proxies i.e. they can nominate somebody to vote in their place.
- *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.

Suggested Reforms:

- *Voter Education*: It is important to generate the sense of responsibility towards civic duties, including duty to vote and the important role their votes play in the democratic

process. SVEEP (Systematic Voter's Education and Electoral Participation) initiative by EC is a step-in right direction.

- *Role of Media*: A range of media can be utilised for communication and reaching out to the potential voter population and ensure participation in electoral process. Mass media like Electronic (Radio, TV, Film), Print and Social media, local and folk media should be used for voter awareness.
- *Role of Influencers*: National and local icons should be used for enthusing and inspiring the disinterested citizens to vote.
- *Awareness among youth*: propaganda van should be used to popularise government's welfare schemes and visit colleges to persuade young voters to exercise their franchise.
- *Facilitating the Voter*: Greater participation of the public in elections can be guaranteed by making the process and procedures voter-friendly. Steps such as Greater participation of the public in elections can be guaranteed by making the process and procedures voter-friendly should be implemented in letter and spirit.
- *Incentives for Voters*: In Delhi, Petrol pump owners came up with the idea of giving a 50p discount on 1L petrol if you show the ink stain of voting. Such incentives for voters should be popularised.
- *Remote Voting*: The idea of online remote voting could be used for ensuring hassle free voting. The ECI has planned to roll-out an Aadhaar-linked voter-ID based solution to enable electors to cast their votes digitally from anywhere in the country.
  - o The Republic Party of Arizona used blockchain technology-based voting system Voatz. The officials used the mobile application-based solution for the May 2020 Convention of the Republic party during the pandemic.
  - o Russia used blockchain based voting for a referendum on constitutional reform at two pilot testing locations- Moscow and Nizhny Novgorod.
- *Voting Rights of Migrants*:
  - o The ECI should undertake substantial outreach measures using the network of District Collectorates.
  - o 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.
  - o On the lines of 'One Nation One Ration Card' the 'One Nation One Voter ID' can be arranged to ensure native ballot portability and empower migrant voters

An evolving Basic Structure

Syllabus: Indian Constitution—basic structure

In news: The passing away of Kesavananda Bharati, led to a debate on the famous doctrine of basic structure propounded by the Supreme Court.

Evolution of the Basic Structure Doctrine

- **1951**: ***The First Constitution Amendment Act, 1951:*** It was challenged in the Shankari Prasad vs. Union of India case. The Supreme Court held that the Parliament, under

Article 368, has the power to amend any part of the constitution including fundamental rights.

- **1964: *Sajjan Singh v. State of Rajasthan*:** The Constitution has "basic features" was first theorized in 1964, by Justice J.R. Mudholkar in the case of Sajjan Singh v. State of Rajasthan. He questioned whether the ambit of Article 368 included the power to alter a basic feature or rewrite a part of the Constitution.

- **1967: *Golak Nath vs State of Punjab case*:** The Supreme Court overruled its earlier decision. The Supreme Court held that the Parliament has no power to amend Part III of the constitution as the fundamental rights are transcendental and immutable.

- **1971:** The Parliament passed the **24th Constitution Amendment Act**. The act gave the absolute power to the parliament to make any changes in the constitution including the fundamental rights.

- **1971: *The 25th Amendment to the Indian Constitution*** curtailed the right to property, and permitted the acquisition of private property by the government for public use, on the payment of compensation which would be determined by the Parliament and not the courts

- **1973:** In *Kesavananda Bharti vs. State of Kerala case*, the Supreme Court upheld the validity of the 24th Constitution Amendment Act by reviewing its decision in Golaknath case. The Supreme Court held that the Parliament has power to amend any provision of the constitution, but doing so, the basic structure of the constitution is to be maintained.

- **1981: *Waman Rao case*:** The SC adhered to the doctrine and clarified that the doctrine would apply to constitutional amendments after April 24th 1973.

Note: Article 13: All laws should conform to Fundamental Rights.

What is the Basic Structure Doctrine?

- The "Basic Structure" doctrine is a doctrine made from judicial innovation specific to Indian context. The doctrine prescribes that certain features of the constitution are essential for the functioning of the state. Such features are beyond the limits of the amending powers of the Parliament.

- The word "Basic Structure" is not mentioned in the Constitution of India. The concept developed gradually with the tussle between the Parliamentary power to amend the constitution and judiciary's power to review such amendments.

- The concept was recognised for the first time in the Kesavananda Bharati case in 1973.

Important Supreme Court Judgements and List of Basic Structure Elements:

Supreme Court Judgement	Elements of Basic Structure
Kesavananda Bharati Case, 1973	Supremacy of the Constitution
	Republican and democratic form of government
	Secular character of the Constitution
	Separation of powers between the legislature, executive and the judiciary
	Federal character of the Constitution
	The mandate to build a welfare state

	Unity and integrity of the nation
	Sovereignty of the country.
	Freedoms secured to the citizens
	Equality of status and the opportunity
Indira Gandhi v. Rajnarain, Kihoto Hollohon case (Election Case), 1975	Rule of Law
	Free and Fair Elections
	India as a Democratic, Sovereign, Republic
	Secularism
	Judicial Review
Minerva Mills Case, 1980	Limited power of govt. to amend Constitution
	Judicial Review
	Harmony and Balance between Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles
Central Coal Fields Ltd. Case, 1980	Effective Access to Justice
L. Chandra Kumar Case, 1997	Powers of High Court under Articles 226 and 227
IR Coelho Case (IX Schedule Case), 2007	Rule of Law
	Separation of Powers
	Principles underlying Fundamental Rights
	Judicial Review
	Principles of Equality
National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India	Article 14 has been clearly stated to be a part of the basic structure of the Constitution

Significance of the Basic Structure Doctrine:
- *Limits the power of Parliament*: it acts as a limitation to the amending powers of the Parliament and safeguards the country from turning into a totalitarian or authoritative state.
- *Saving Constitution from Majoritarian Politics*: It is a testimony to the theory of Constitutionalism by limiting the power of a majoritarian government to undermine the Constitution's central ideals.
- *Upholds Separation of Powers*: It strengthens Indian democracy by delineating a true separation of power where Judiciary is independent of other two organs- Executive and Legislature.
- *Upholds Rights of Citizens*: By restraining the amending powers of the Parliament, it provides Basic Rights to Citizens which cannot be overruled.

- *Torch bearer*: The doctrine continues to be valued by Judiciary and is recurrently applied in significant cases such as the Indira Sawhney v. Union of India (1992), Kuldip Nayar Case (2006).
- *Harmony between Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy*: The basic structure holds that both fundamental rights and directive principles should go hand in hand helps to avoid the situation of conflict while enforcing DPSP and Fundamental rights.
- *Dynamic in nature*: Being dynamic in nature, it is more progressive and open to changes in time and political scenario.

Limitations of the Basic Structure

- *Textual illegitimacy*: The term Basic Structure has no mention in the Constitution. Therefore, the concept of the "basic structure of the Constitution" cannot be defined and there is no procedure mentioned for determining the elements of the doctrine.
- *Not immune:* The Basic Structure Doctrine was defeated within two years of the judgement when Indira Gandhi suspended all fundamental rights during the Emergency years (1975-1977)
- *Tyranny of the Unelected*: The doctrine gives the judiciary a power to impose its philosophy over a democratically formed government. It creates new doctrine using the basic structure like primacy of judiciary in selection – this is not practised anywhere.
  - o   For example, the Court recently relied on the basic structure to strike down the 99th constitutional amendment act (National Judicial Accountability Commission). The Bill was passed by two third majorities of both Houses of Parliament and 20 state legislatures
- *Subjectivity:* Since it is not codified, each judge is able to define the basic structure concept according to his own subjectivity. It is left to the wisdom of the SC judges to decide upon it on a case to case basis.
- *Regularly tweaking the doctrine*: Newer features have been constantly added to list that is "basic" which gives them the immunity that the basic structure enjoys. For example, the Right to Education was introduced by the 86th amendment in the form of Article 21A.
- *Prevents Political Reforms*: Necessity of amending the Constitution to meet the needs of a changing society even if it brings changes in the basic scheme of the Constitution is denied.
- *Jolt to fundamental rights chapter*: The basic structure has now frozen Part III of the Constitution but crucial fundamental rights were violated during 1950-51. For example, the First Amendment heavily diluted the rights to property and free speech and expression These valuable aspects of democracy cannot now be debated by Parliament.
- Doctrine does not cover ordinary legislation:
  - o   State of Karnataka v. Union of India: Only a constitutional amendment can be challenged on the ground of violation of the doctrine of basic structure, not an ordinary legislation.

o Kuldip Nayar v. Union of India: The doctrine of 'Basic Feature' in the context of our Constitution, thus, does not apply to ordinary legislation.

Suggested Reforms to Strengthen Basic Structure:

- *Upholding Constitutionalism*: All three organs of the government should work within the frameworks of the Constitution to uphold constitutional supremacy.
- *Amendment to Article 368*: There is a need to incorporate some important features by amending Article 368 of the Constitution to give a clearer idea on amending powers of the Parliament.
- *Decision on what constitutes Basic Structure*: Recognition of subject matters as basic structure should be decided by constitutional bench consisting at least 7 judges.

Conclusion: The Basic Structure Doctrine, though uncodified, maintains a balance between the rigidity and the flexibility of the Constitution. The judiciary has used the doctrine to the modern requirements of the legal system, as a tool for constitutional interpretation and for regulating the discretion of legislative authorities.

The idea of democracy

Syllabus: Indian Constitution—significant provisions

In News: A systemic transformation of democracy is taking place from within to its very opposite.

Democracy:

- The word democracy comes from the Greek word "demos", meaning people, and "kratos" meaning power.
- Democracy can be thought of as "power of the people": a way of governing which depends on the will of the people.
- According to UN, 'Democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives.'
- There are so many different models of democratic government around the world that it is sometimes easier to understand the idea of democracy in terms of what it definitely is not. Democracy:
    o Democracy is not autocracy or dictatorship, where one person rules;
    o Democracy it is not oligarchy, where a small segment of society rules.
    o Properly understood, democracy should not even be "rule of the majority", if that means that minorities' interests are ignored completely.
    o A democracy, at least in theory, is government on behalf of all the people, according to their "will".

Types of Democracy:

- There are two types of Democracy: (1) Direct democracy, (2) Representative democracy
- There are three systems of democracy: (1) Parliamentary democracy, (2) Presidential democracy, (3) mixed democracy.

Direct Democracy:
- It refers to a form of government wherein citizens directly take part in the administration of the government.
- Government policies are decided by the people themselves.
- Whole community forms the legislature.
- Its suitable for countries with small population. Example, Switzerland.

Representative democracy
- In this type of democracy, people vote for their representative, to represent them in the Parliament.
- The elected representatives take decisions on government policies on behalf of the people.
- The elected and few nominated people form the legislature.
- It is suitable for countries with large population. Example, India

Mixed democracy:
- Mixed government (or a mixed constitution) is a form of government that combines elements of democracy, aristocracy and monarchy, ostensibly making impossible their respective degenerations which are conceived as anarchy, oligarchy and tyranny.

Indian leaders' views on democracy
- *Mahatma Gandhi*: In his notion of democracy, "the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest.
- *Nehru on Democracy*: Democracy, if it means anything, means equality; not merely the equality of possessing a vote but economic and social equality."

Difference between the Parliamentary Form of Government and Presidential Form of Government

Presidential Form of Government	Parliamentary Form of Government
President is directly elected by the People	Prime Minister is from the majority party
President is Supreme	Central Legislature is supreme
Separation of Powers	Absence of Separation Powers Centralisation
Independent branches	Independent branches with Overlapping functions
President - Head of the State	President - Head of the State
President - Head of the Government	Prime Minister - Head of the Government
Individual Leadership	Collective leadership
President is not accountable to Congress	Collective and Individual Responsibility

Evolution of Democracy in India: Democratic ideas and institutions grew up in the context of the impact of British rule, the national movement and the development of post-independence polity.

Impact of the British Rule

- The ideas of democracy and nationalism started to take shape, in the beginning of nineteenth century.
- Colonial exploitation required a new economic and administrative infrastructure, which in turn set new social forces of production into motion.
- Out of these came a new social mobility, which allowed the growth of reformist, nationalist, liberal and democratic ideas.

Indian Democracy

- India is the world's largest democracy.
- We follow representative democracy
- Post-independence, India became a democratic nation in the year 1947.
- The citizens of India were given the right to vote (universal adult franchise) to elect their leaders.
- Five democratic principles enshrined in our constitution are – sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic and republic.

Indian Renaissance and Democracy

- The demand for the introduction of democratic and representative institutions in India dates back to the days of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Indian Renaissance.
- However, the Renaissance movement lacked the support of any prominent social class. It was confined to a tiny section of educated people.
- Later, the introduction of Western education in India was the most significant development in the growth of liberalism, democracy and nation building in the modern Indian context.
- It produced the leadership of the national movement. The organization of the Congress nationalist platform was achieved with the initiative of the educated elite.
- In fact, according to the early nationalists, the unity of the educated elite signified Indian national unity (Surendranath Banerjee).

The Nationalist and Democracy

- From the beginning the nationalist demanded the introduction of representative institutions within the framework of British rule. For example, they raised the slogans such as "Swaraj" and "Swadeshi".
- Morley Minto reforms of 1909 permitted a minority of indirectly elected members to the central legislative council and the majority of directly elected members to enter provincial councils. It also introduced the system of dyarchy in provinces.
- The Khilafat movement, civil disobedience movement, Non-cooperation movement have drawn a large section of Indian people in the struggle of democracy and freedom.
- In 1919, the British Parliament, pursuant to the Government of India Act 1919, passed the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, which introduced a bicameral legislature, a lower house

called the Central Legislative Assembly, and an upper house-like Council of State, for the first time.

- The Government of India Act 1935 laid the foundation for India's federal structure.
- Finally, the quit India movement and post-world war II social situation forced the transfer of power to the Indians.

Positive Aspects of democracy

- A democratic government is a better government because it is a more accountable form of government.
- In democracy, the rights and interest of every section of the people are safe guarded.
- It ensures freedom of speech, conscience, assembly, liberty and equality which are necessary for human development.
- Democracy improves the quality of Decision Making.
- Democracy provides a method to deal with differences and conflicts
- Democracy allows people to correct their own mistakes
- In a democracy, people rule themselves as leaders are elected by them.
- The greatest virtue of democracy is that it stands for unfettered development of the human spirit and free expression of the human mind.

Negative aspects of democracy

- It sometimes leads to establish majority view over minority view.
- It is very expensive form of government because elections have to be conducted periodically.
- It is difficult to prevent corruption and mal practices.
- It has been criticised by the critics as mobocracy, it produces quantity over quality.
- Consultation in a democracy from many people leads to delays and impedes decision making.

Performance of Democracy:

- The assessment of democracy depends on the indices used to indicate or measure it. There are mainly two models of indices regarding democracy. Procedural and Substantive.
- Procedural democracy is mainly concerned with the institutions and process of democracy.
- The Substantive democracy places the democratic institutions and processes in the societal context - civil society, rights, etc,
- The dominant opinion of the scholars studying the procedural democracy considers that democracy in India has been a success.
- According to those who study the substantive democracy do generally consider democracy in India as a failure.
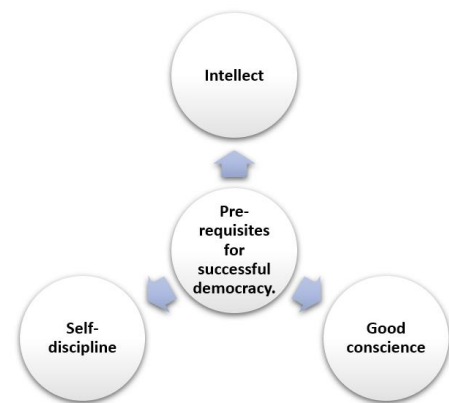
Conclusion: Democracy is as much a process as a goal, and only with the full participation of and support by the international community, national governing bodies, civil society and individuals, can the ideal of democracy be made into a reality to be enjoyed by everyone, everywhere.

Our Parliament: Deliberative or Majoritarian

Syllabus: Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business

In news: The decision to drop "Question Hour" during the Monsoon Session of Parliament, evoked serious concerns about the democratic functioning of the institution.

Brief Overview of the Indian Parliament:

The Parliament is the legislative organ of the Union government. The Indian Parliament comprises of the President and the two Houses - Rajya Sabha (Council of States) and Lok Sabha (House of the People). The President of India is the constitutional head of the executive. The Constitution describes the structure of parliament in Article 79.

Important Constitutional Provisions:

- *Article 79:* Constitution of Parliament.
- *Article 80:* Composition of The Council of States
- *Article 81:* Composition of The House of The People

Functions of the Indian Parliament

- *Legislative Functions:* The Parliament enacts legislations for the country.
- *Control of Executive and ensuring its accountability:* It is done through various parliamentary instruments like no-confidence motion, adjournment motion etc.
- *Financial Function:* Grant of resources to the government to implement its programmes are sanctioned by the Parliament.
- *Representation:* Parliament provides a platform to represent divergent views of members from different regional, social, economic, religious groups of different parts of the country.
- *Debating Function:* It is the highest forum of debate in the country.
- *Constitutional Functions:* It has the power to discuss and enact changes to the Constitution.
- *Electoral Functions:* It elects President and Vice President of India.
- *Judicial Functions:* It considers the proposals for removal of President, Vice President and Judges of Supreme Court and the High Court, punish members for breach of privileges.

Performance of the Parliament:

Lok Sabha:

- *Parliament Sittings:* Over the years, there has been a decline in the number of sittings of the Parliament. The Lok Sabha met for an average of 130 days in a year during the 1950s. However, these sittings reduced to 70 days in the 2000s.

- *Question Hour*: It allows Members of Parliament (MPs)to pose questions to ministers relating to government policies, and hold the government accountable for its actions. Between 2009 and 2014, Question Hour functioned for an average of 42% of its scheduled time. Between 2015 and 2019, the Lok Sabha could use just 61% of its total allotted time for Question Hour.

Short Duration & Half-an-Hour Discussions (1-15 LS)
* Not full term Lok Sabhas
■ Short Duration Discussions ■ Half-an-Hour Discussions

- *Less time spent on discussing budgets and bills:* the time spent on discussing the Budget has reduced from an average of 123 hours in the 1950s to 39 hours in last 10 years.
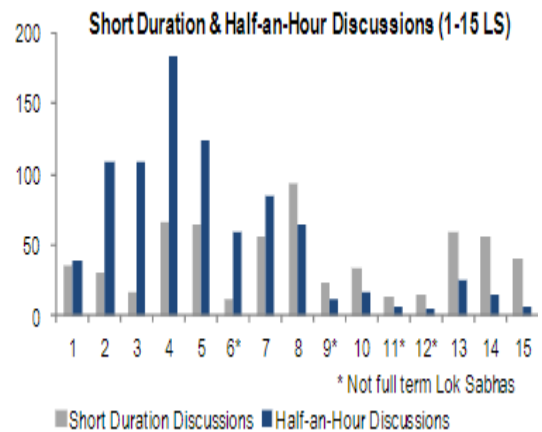
  o *Debates and Motions*: MPs raise issues of public importance in Parliament, and examine the government's response to problems being faced by citizens through two methods:

  o *Debate:* The number of debates has decreased over the years. (Check infographic)

- *Motion*: There is a declining trend of these motion being effectively used by the opposition. (See infographic)

- *Disruptions*: Between 2012-2016, disruptions resulted in loss of 30% of the time in the Lok Sabha and 35% of the time in the Rajya Sabha. In last budget session, the number of productive hours was 53 hours.

Adjournment Motions & No Confidence Motions (1-15 LS)
*Not full term Lok Sabhas
■ No. of Adjournment Motions ■ No Confidence Motions
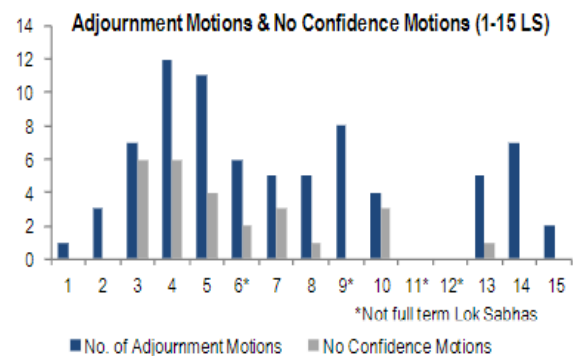
Rajya Sabha:

- *Sittings*: From 2014 to 2019, it held 18 sessions and 329 sittings and passed 154 Bills — which comes to less than one Bill in two sitting

- *Legislative Output*: In 2009-2014, it cleared 188 Bills and in 2004-09 it cleared 251 Bills.

- *Question hour*: The Rajya Sabha in 2015-19, used only about 40% of the total time available for question hour.

Parliamentary Committees:

Parliamentary standing committees are permanent and regular committees which are constituted from time to time in pursuance of the provisions of an act of parliament or rules of procedure and conduct of business.

They are two types of Parliamentary Committees:

- The Standing committees are elected or appointed periodically, and they work on a continuous basis. There are four types of Standing Committees, (i) Departmentally Related Standing Committees, (ii) Financial Committees, (iii) Other Standing Committees, and (iv) Administrative Committees.

- Ad hoc or select committees are created on a temporary basis as the need arises and they are dissolved after they complete the task assigned to them.

Performance:

- **Decrease in Sittings**: Over the year, sittings of most of the Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSC) have decreased.

- **Attendance of Members**: Success of the Committee system depends on the participation of Members. Between 2009 and 2014, in the 16 DRSCs serviced by the Lok Sabha, on average, only 49% members were present for meetings.

Figure 1: Number of sittings has declined for most Committees
Average number of committee sittings per year

- **Referring of Bills**: During the period of 16th Lok Sabha only 27% Bills were referred to Committees. This number is significantly lower than previous two Lok Sabhas.
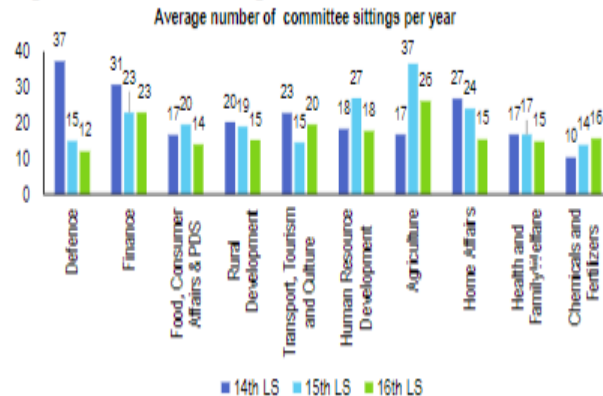
- **Other issues impacting the performance**:
  - **Politicisation**: Over the last few years, committee members have been following strict party lines in committee meetings.
  - **Lack of inclusion of experts**: Committees examine issues that are technical in nature. However, at present committees lack expertise and research support.
  - **Tenure for members**: At present, the members are nominated to a Standing Committee for one year. This hinders development of technical expertise on a particular subject and better deliberation.

Consequences of Deteriorating Performance of the Parliament:

- **Lower Legislative Business**: Low level of deliberation leads to poor representation of diverse viewpoints. The law becomes the representation of the majority rather than the entire parliament.

- **Poor Accountability**: Time lost due to disruptions reduces the time for question hour. This time loss is lost opportunity to hold the government accountable for its actions, resulting in unchecked government functioning.

- **Poor oversight of Executive**: The constitution under Article 75 (3), requires the parliament to make the executive accountable. The government's move to remove the Question Hour during the Monsoon Session of Parliament erodes this constitutional mandate.

- **Disruptions**: The Conference of Presiding Officers of Legislatures (2001), observed that, a major reason for MPs disrupting parliament was inadequate time to raise matters of concern in the Parliament.

- **Erosion of Legitimacy**: A low number of Parliament sittings undermines the legitimacy and public trust on the Parliament.

- **High Financial Cost:** According to official statistics, Parliament lost 49 hours in winter session 2017. This incurred a total loss of Rs 73.5 crore.

Reforms needed:

- **Increase the number of Minimum Sittings:** The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution has recommended that Lok Sabha should have at least 120 sittings in a year, while Rajya Sabha should have 100 sittings. Further, a calendar of sittings can be announced at the beginning of each year to help MPs plan better and reduce scope of postponement.

- **Self-conveying of Parliament:** At present, the Parliament does not have the power to convene itself and is convened by the President at least once in every 6 months. There should be a constitutional amendment to allow Parliament to convene at the request of a required number of MPs. This would allow the Parliament to address issues more promptly and during inter-session period.

- **Strengthening Opposition:** To improve government accountability in Parliament, the opposition in some countries such as the UK, Canada, and Australia forms a shadow cabinet. Under such a system, opposition MPs form an alternative Cabinet, and individual opposition MPs follow the work of each member of the Cabinet.

- **Strengthening Question Hour:** At present, the prime minister does not answer questions which require inter-ministerial expertise or relate to broader government policy. India should follow UK where Prime Minister's Question Time during which the Prime Minister answers question on the government's policies, across sectors.

- **Strengthening Discussions:** At present, the Speaker/Chairman determines whether to admit a discussion as a debate or a motion and there is always a tussle between the ruling party and opposition. A large group of MPs should be allowed to decide whether an issue should be introduced as a voting motion, or debate.

- **Addressing frequent disruptions**: A 'Parliamentary disruption index' should be constructed. Further, A 'code of conduct' for members of Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, state Assemblies and Councils should eb put forward to reduce disruptions.

- **Strengthening Parliamentary Committees:**
  - **Ensuring attendance of ministers before committees**: Presently, government officials depose before committees, and ministers are exempt from appearing before committees. India should follow UK's practice where Ministers are required to depose before committees:
  - **Increasing transparency**: Steps should be taken to ensure greater transparency of procedures of the committees. Parliaments in US and UK allow video recording of committee meetings to provide better transparency.
  - **Public Participation**: Public participation should be encouraged and institutionalised in the procedures of each committee.
  - **Establishing Oversight Committee**: a general oversight committee can be established to oversee the work of other permanent and ad-hoc committees. For

example, the US has established a Committee on Oversight and Government Reform specifically to perform oversight functions over the federal government.

- o **Research Support**: The members of the committee often lack technical expertise to address certain matters. Better research support should be provided to committees to enable better examination of issues.

Conclusion: The Parliament enables citizens of India to participate in decision making and control the government, thus making it the most important symbol of Indian democracy. Proper functioning of the Parliament is of utmost importance to uphold the basic tenets of democracy.

Demographic Dividend: A narrow opportunity

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

In News: India can achieve the goal of self-reliance (atma nirbharta) by enhancing the capability of youth.

About Demographic Dividend:

- According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), demographic dividend means the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population's age structure. The change in age structure is typically brought on by a decline in fertility and mortality rates.

- India has one of the youngest populations (62.5% of its population in the age group 15-59) in an aging world.

- The demographic dividend leads to an increased labour supply that will increase the production of goods and boost savings and investment on the other.

- **The first demographic dividend** occurs during the demographic transition process, when the working-age population increases as a share of the total population, and the percentage of both young and old dependents decreases.

- **The second demographic dividend** results from an increase in adult longevity, which causes individuals to save more in preparation for old age. This increase in savings can thus contribute to capital accumulation and economic growth.

Major findings of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on demographic dividend:

- **Demographic dividend phase in India:** Report says availability of demographic dividend in India, started in 2005-06 and will last till 2055-56 based on the following facts:

  - o **India's Population structure**: Close to 30% of India's population is in the age group 0-14 years. The elderly in the 60-plus age group are still a small proportion (8%) of the country's population. The working age group 15-59 years' accounts for 62.5% of India's population. The working-age population will reach the highest proportion of approximately 65% in 2036.

  - o **Regional variations in the degrees and timings of fertility decline:** Reports also highlight that demographic dividend is not available in all the states at the same time because Northern states are predominantly youthful whereas southern and western states are maturing.

Steps to be taken

- India has just a decade's time to realise the youth demographic dividend. So, the country **should launch an Indian Youth Guarantee (IYG) programme.**
  - **The European Union Youth Guarantee (EU-YG) launched a similar programme** in 2010 at a time when youth unemployment rates were soaring above 20%.
  - In order to **ensure gainful and productive engagement of youth**, functioning of an Indian youth Guarantee (IYG) initiative as an implementing framework with legal backing could help.
- *Youth Component Plan*: the plan could help in the allocating budgetary resources under a separate head on the lines of the **Special Component Plan for the Scheduled Castes and the Tribal Sub-Plan.**
- *IYG's goal*: young people graduating from college or losing a job either find a good quality job suited to their education and experience or acquire skills required to find a job through an internship within a fixed time period.
  - The district administration and local bodies should be incorporated by IYG for more effective outcomes.
  - Existing youth schemes and skilling infrastructure need to be merged and modernised.
- *The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)* has been very effective in providing rural livelihood security and social protection yet only about 4% of youth in the labour force have been impacted by it.
- *Implementation of rural youth employment programme alongside MGNREGA*: Even though, an urban youth employment programme will be a new involvement, the rural youth employment should be instituted alongside MGNREGA.

Dissatisfactory status of Indian youth

- According to the 2018 State of Working India Report the youth unemployment rate is at least 18.3% (3.47 crore youths)
- About 30% of youth fall under the 'neither in employment nor in education' category and 33% of India's skilled youth are unemployed
- The CMIE estimated a loss of 14 crore jobs in April alone of which 2.7 crore concerned youth.
- 50 lakh youth are expected to be entering the workforce annually.

Demographic dividend can be a demographic disaster:

- The growth benefit of a demographic dividend is not automatic. Much depends on whether the increase in working population can be trained, and enough jobs created to employ the 10 million more people who will join the labour force every year.
- *Substitute existing jobs*: While digital technologies may enable the creation of new products and more productive jobs, they may also substitute existing jobs.
- *Lack of skills*: India may not be able to take advantage of these opportunities, due to a low human capital base and lack of skills.

- **Lack of jobs combined** with a demographic dividend will increase the share of the population that is dependent on the working population increasing the economic insecurity of the elderly, as there will be fewer people generating wealth.

The youth development Index
- The Youth Development Index (YDI) in India serves as an advisory and monitory tool for youth development and helps recognise priority areas, gaps and alternative approaches specific to each State.
- YDI can be revisited and deployed to play a vital role in crafting a region-specific IYG.

Why India should focus on demographic dividend?
- **Economic growth:** Better economic growth brought about by increased economic activities due to higher working age population and lower dependent population. Demographic dividend has historically contributed up to 15 % of the overall growth in advanced economies.
- **To become a super power globally:** Demographic dividend has historically contributed up to 15% of the overall growth in advanced economies. For instance, Japan was among the first major economies to experience rapid growth because of changing population structure and emerge as an economic superpower.
- **Effective policy making:** Fine-tuning of the planning and implementation of schemes and programmes by factoring in population dynamics is likely to yield greater socio-economic impact and larger benefits for people.
- **Human capital of the world:** With more than 65% of the working age population, India will rise as an economic superpower, supplying more than half of Asia's potential workforce over the coming decades.

Various opportunities related to demographic dividend in India:
- **Labour supply:** The first benefit of the young population is the increased labour supply, as more people reach working age. However, the magnitude of this benefit depends on the ability of the economy to absorb and productively employ the extra workers.
- **Capital formation:** As the number of dependents decreases individuals save more. This increase in national savings rates increases the stock of capital in developing countries and provides an opportunity to create the country's capital through investment.
- **Female Human capital:** Decrease in fertility rates result in healthier women and fewer economic pressures at home. This provides an opportunity to engage more women in the workforce and enhance human capital.
- **Economic growth:** Another opportunity is produced by increased domestic demand brought about by the increasing GDP per capita and the decreasing dependency ratio. This leads to demand-driven economic growth. Growth, education, better economic security and a desire for more durable goods are the cause and consequence of young demographics.

- *Infrastructure*: Increased fiscal space created by the demographic dividend enables the government to divert resources from spending on children to investing in physical and human infrastructure.
- *Skilled workforce*: Most sectors of Indian economy would require a more skilled workforce than the present. It would be both a challenge and an opportunity for India to provide its workforce with required skill sets and knowledge to enable them to contribute substantially to its economic growth.
- *Migration*: It presents some opportunities that can arise from having demographic changes, particularly the demographic dividend and interstate migration to overcome labour shortage in some parts.

Challenges of demographic dividend in India:

- *Enhancing human capital*: According to ASSOCHAM, only 20-30 % of engineers find a job suited to their skills. Thus, low human capital base and lack of skills is a big challenge.
- *Low human development*: India ranks 130 out of 189 countries in UNDP's Human Development Index, which is shocking. Life expectancy at birth in India (68 years) is much lower than other developing countries.
- *Informal economy*: Informal nature of economy in India is another challenge in reaping the benefits of demographic transition in India.
  - Nearly 216 million people are engaged in the agriculture sector, are in the informal economy where not only they earn lower wages, but with little social security and few days of employment in a year.
- *Jobless growth*: There is a mounting concern that future growth could turn out to be jobless due to deindustrialization, de-globalization, the fourth industrial revolution and technological progress. As per the NSSO Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-18, India's labour force participation rate for the age-group 15-59 years is around 53%, that is around half of the working age population is jobless.
- *Asymmetric demography*: The growth in the working-age ratio is likely to be concentrated in some of India's poorest states and the demographic dividend will be fully realised only if India is able to create gainful employment opportunities for this working-age population.
- *Issue of tilted sex ratio*: Declining female labour force participation: According to data from the International Labour Organization and World Bank, India's female labour force participation rates have fallen from 34.8% in 1990 to 27% in 2013. Without women participation India can't dream of reaping demographic dividend.

Way Forward:

- *For states with less scope:*
  - UNFPA backs a differential approach in forward-looking policymaking and programme planning to join the demographic dividend opportunity in those states where the windows for opportunity are closing soon.
  - The focus in the states where the demographic dividend window is yet to open will have to be threefold such as addressing harmful practices such as child

marriage, access to quality sexual and reproductive health services and family planning services to all, and provisioning of health, education, life and vocational skills to all the young people.

- **Good governance:** Effective avenues for citizen input, well-functioning institutions, respect for the rule of law, low level of corruption, respect for property rights, sanctity of contracts etc. are important aspects of good governance that enable equal opportunity to all.

- **Building human capital**: Investing in people through healthcare, quality education, jobs and skills helps build human capital, which is key to supporting economic growth, ending extreme poverty, and creating a more inclusive society.

- **Skilling**: India's labour force needs to be empowered with the right skills for the modern economy. Government has established the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) with the overall target of skilling/ up skilling 500 million people in India by 2022.

- **Academic-industry collaboration**: Will help to synchronise modern industry demands and learning levels in academics.

- **Education**: Enhancing educational levels by properly investing in primary, secondary and higher education. India, which has almost 41% of population below the age of 20 years, can reap the demographic dividend only if with a better education system.

- **Health**: Improvement in healthcare infrastructure would ensure higher number of productive days for young labour-force, thus increasing the productivity of the economy. Success of schemes like Ayushman Bharat and National Health Protection scheme (NHPS) is necessary. Also, nutrition level in women and children needs special care with effective implementation of Integrated Child Development (ICDS) programme.

- **Job Creation**: The nation needs to create ten million jobs per year to absorb the addition of young people into the workforce. Promoting businesses' interests and entrepreneurship would help in job creation to provide employment to the large labour-force.

- **Urbanisation**: Schemes such as Smart City Mission and AMRUT needs to be effectively and carefully implemented.

Non-Communicable diseases: the rising burden

Syllabus: *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health,*

In News: As per lancet recent report, NCDs killed over 40 million people in a year across the world, making up seven out of ten deaths globally

What is the status of cancer in India?

- **Cancer cases in 2020**: India recorded 13.9 lakh cancer cases in august 2020, according to the reports of the Indian council of medical research (ICMR) and research of national cancer registry programme (NCDIR).

- **Steady rise in cancer cases**: According to 2017 report, between 1990 to 2016 ,India's cancer burden increased 2.6 times and deaths due to cancer doubled.

- *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.
- *Improvements*: The country has improved in areas such as personal hygiene, which are distant drivers of cancer.

What causes cancer 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.
- *Averting risk factors:* Nearly **50-60 per cent of cancer cases can be avoided** by tackling the known risk factors effectively.
- A *multi-sectoral approach:* Reducing potential risk factors by community empowerment with the help of government, private doctors and civil society to increase health knowledge and promote positive behaviour can go a long way.
  - Initiatives such **as FSSAI's new labelling and display regulations and drug price control** can encourage inter-sectoral and multi-sectoral action.
  - **FSSAI** is responsible for protecting and promoting public health through the **regulation** and supervision of food safety.
  - The drug price control order provides the list of **price**-controlled **drugs**, procedures for fixation of **prices** of **drugs**, method of implementation of **prices** fixed by the government.
- *Improved awareness:* To prevent the stigma attached to the disease, awareness about the disease needs to be increased.
- *Strengthen 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 are the steps taken 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.
  - Sustainable Development Goal target of 3.4 (SDG target 3.4 is to reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by a third by 2030, relative to 2015 levels).
- **Government programmes:**
  Aushman bharat, swachh bharat abhiyan, poshan abhiyaan, pradhan mantri janaushadhi pariyojana are some of the programmes introduced by the government.

- **Health initiatives:** 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.

The Indian States Disease Burden Initiative on Non-Communicable diseases:

- The Indian States Disease Burden Initiative is a joint initiative of Indian Council of Medical Research, Public Health Foundation of India and Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation in collaboration with the Union health ministry.

A non-communicable disease is a non-infectious health condition that cannot be spread from person to person. It also lasts for a long period of time. This is also known as a chronic disease. A combination of genetic, physiological, lifestyle, and environmental factors can cause these diseases.

Purpose of report:

- The purpose was to produce an open-access, public good knowledge base, which has the potential of making fundamental and long-term contributions to improving health in every state the country.
- This has huge implications for policymakers because it means that one health policy and uniform health schemes may not be workable for all the states.

Key findings of the Indian state's disease burden initiative:

- *Increasing burden of non-communicable diseases:* The study has found that every State in India has a higher burden from non-communicable diseases and injuries than from infectious diseases.
- *Major causes of NCDs:*
  o The contribution of non-communicable diseases to health loss fuelled by unhealthy diets, high blood pressure and blood sugar- has doubled in India over the past two decades.
  o Air pollution and tobacco smoking continue to be major contributors to health loss.
  o Lifestyle diseases like heart and chronic respiratory diseases now kill more people than communicable ones like tuberculosis or diarrhoea in every state in India, including the most backward.
- *State of poorer states:* The report has pointed out that the least developed states that recently transitioned are tackling with a higher burden of NCDs while they continue to have a high burden of infectious and maternal child diseases.
- *Prevalent NCDs:* The other non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in the top 10 individual causes of death included chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), stroke, diabetes, and chronic kidney disease.
- *Communicable diseases:* Communicable diseases such as diarrhoeal diseases, lower respiratory infections, and tuberculosis, and road injuries and suicides were also in the top 10 causes of death.

Challenges to curb the disease:

- **Change in Overall disease pattern:** The biggest change is seen in the overall disease pattern in the country.
    - In 1990, 61% of the total disease burden in India was attributed to communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases.
    - This figure has dropped to 33% in 2016.
    - At the same time, the contribution of non-communicable diseases (heart disease, cancers, respiratory diseases, neurological disorders) has risen to 55% from 30% in 1990.
- *Two-pronged challenge:*
    - **One size fits all approach:** The large-scale variation in the disease patterns across the country means that one health policy and uniform health-related schemes are unlikely to work in all the states.
    - The persistence of communicable diseases and malnutrition means that efforts to tackle these maladies have to be scaled up.
- *Wide variation between states:* Kerala had the lowest disease burden due to malnutrition in India, but even that was 2.7 times higher per person than in China.

    - Though life expectancy at birth has improved at the national level, inequalities in life expectancy between states continue which range from 66.8 years in Uttar Pradesh to 78.7 years in Kerala for females, and 63.6 years in Assam to 73.8 years in Kerala for males in 2016.

Epidemiologic transition
- Epidemiologic transition describes changing patterns of population distributions in relation to changing patterns of mortality, fertility, life expectancy, and leading causes of death.
- It is generally believed that epidemiologic transitions prior to the 20th century (i.e., those that took place in today's industrialized countries) were closely associated with rising standards of living, nutrition, and sanitation.

- *Economy-health linkage mismatch:* The states performing better on economic parameters such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa and Punjab have become hubs of non-communicable diseases.
- *Persistence of communicable diseases:* Communicable diseases and malnutrition continue to bother people in most parts of the country. States like Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Uttarakhand are the worst affected.
- *Air Pollution:* The contribution of air pollution to disease burden has remained high in India between 1990 and 2016, with levels of exposure among the highest in the world.
    - The burden of household air pollution has decreased during this period due to decreasing use of solid fuels for cooking.
    - Outdoor air pollution has increased due to a variety of pollutants from power production, industry, vehicles, constructions, and waste burning.

- *Malnutrition:* The disease burden due to child and maternal malnutrition has dropped in India substantially but still it is the single largest factor responsible for 15% of the total disease burden in India in 2016.
- *Proportion of deaths:* The proportion of all deaths in India due to communicable, maternal, neonatal and nutritional diseases reduced from 53.6% in 1990 to 27.5% in 2016, while those due to non-communicable diseases increased from 37.9% to 61.8%, and those due to injuries changed from 8.5% to 10.7%.

The 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.
- According to a study published in The Lancet eating fibre-rich foods reduces the incidence of NCDs like coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and colorectal cancer by 16% to 24%.
- It also helps in lowering bodyweight, systolic blood pressure and total cholesterol.

Regulating foreign contributions

Syllabus: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors

In News: Recently, Foreign Contribution Regulation (Amendment) Bill 2020 was introduced in the Lok Sabha. The Bill amends the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010.

What is FCRA?

- *Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act*: It is an act of Parliament enacted in 1976 and amended in 2010 to regulate foreign donations and to ensure that such contributions do not adversely affect internal security.
- *Coverage*: It is applicable to all associations, groups and NGOs which intend to receive foreign donations.
- *Who cannot receive foreign donations?*
   o Members of the legislature and political parties, government officials, judges and media persons are prohibited from receiving any foreign contribution.
   o However, in 2017 the FCRA was amended through the Finance Bill to allow political parties to receive funds from the Indian subsidiary of a foreign company or a foreign company in which an Indian holds 50% or more shares.
- *Registration:* It is mandatory for all such NGOs to register themselves under the FCRA. The registration is initially valid for five years and it can be renewed subsequently if they comply with all norms.
- *Purpose of Foreign contribution*: Registered associations can receive foreign contributions for social, educational, religious, economic and cultural purposes. Filing of annual returns on the lines of Income Tax is compulsory.
- *Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) New Rules*:

- o In 2015, the MHA notified new rules which required NGOs to give an undertaking that the acceptance of foreign funds is not likely to prejudicially affect the sovereignty and integrity of India or impact friendly relations with any foreign state and does not disrupt communal harmony.
- o It also said all such NGOs would have to operate accounts in either nationalised or private banks which have core banking facilities to allow security agencies access on a real time basis.

Key provisions:

- *Prohibition to accept foreign contribution*:
  - o Include certain public servants in the prohibited category for accepting foreign contribution. These include: election candidates, editor or publisher of a newspaper, judges, government servants, members of any legislature, and political parties.
  - o The Bill adds public servants to this list. Public servant includes any person who is in service or pay of the government, or remunerated by the government for the performance of any public duty.
- *Transfer of foreign contribution*: Under the Act, foreign contribution cannot be transferred to any other person unless such person is also registered to accept foreign contribution.
- *FCRA account*: The Bill states that foreign contribution must be received only in an account designated by the bank as FCRA account in such branches of the State Bank of India, New Delhi. No funds other than the foreign contribution should be received or deposited in this account.
- *Definition of persons*: The FCRA 2010 allows transfer of foreign contributions to persons registered to accept foreign contributions. The term 'person' under the Bill includes an individual, an association, or a registered company.
- *Regulation:* The Act states that a person may accept foreign contribution if they have obtained a certificate of registration from central government or obtained prior permission from the government to accept foreign contribution. **The bill makes Aadhaar mandatory for registration**.
- *Restriction in utilisation of foreign contribution:* The Bill gives government powers to stop utilisation of foreign funds by an organisation through a "summary enquiry".
- *Reduction in use of foreign contribution for administrative purposes*: The bill decreases administrative expenses through foreign funds by an organisation to 20% from 50% earlier.
- *Surrender of certificate*: The Bill allows the central government to permit a person to surrender their registration certificate.

Need for such amendments:

- *To monitor Misuse of funds*: In Parliament, the government alleged that foreign money was being used for religious conversions. For instance, in 2017, the government barred American Christian charity, Compassion International.

- *To prevent loss to the GDP*: An official report quantifying the GDP losses allegedly caused by environmental NGOs was prepared during NPA period, indicating a foreign conspiracy against India.
- *To enhance transparency and accountability*: The annual inflow of foreign contribution has almost doubled between the years 2010 and 2019, but many recipients of foreign contribution have not utilised the same for the purpose for which they were registered or granted prior permission under the said Act.
- *To regulate NGO's*: Many persons were not adhering to statutory compliances such as submission of annual returns and maintenance of proper accounts.

Concerns associated with the recent amendments

- *Over-regulation of NGO*: New regulations put excessive conditions on civil society organisations, and educational and research institutions that have partnerships with foreign entities.
- *Lack of Consensus*: The amendments were not discussed with the stakeholder and passed with limited discussion in Parliament.
- *Against Constitutional rights*: According to the International Commission of Jurists, new law is incompatible with international obligations and India's own constitutional provisions on rights.
- *Incompatible with international laws*: The United Nations Human Rights Council resolution on protecting human rights defenders says that no law should criminalize or delegitimize activities in defence of human rights on account of the origin of funding.
- *Discourage social work*: Thousands of NGOs serve extremely disadvantaged sections. Only presumption of guilt against them all, followed by control, restricts their scope of voluntary actions.
- *Selective barriers*: The over-regulation appears to be towards selected categories of global ideas and ideals such as environmentalism, human rights and civil liberties.
- *Reduce investments and technology flow*: As a growing economy, India has been proactive in seeking global capital and technology. Strict rules governing FCRA will impact investments.
- *Against Indian cultural ethos*: Prime Minister has often cited the ancient Indian ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam as the framework for its global engagement. New rules do not go well with India's legitimate ambitions to be a global player.
- *Additional cost of compliance*: Every FCRA-registered NGO will have to open an FCRA-marked bank account with a designated branch of State Bank of India in New Delhi. Around 93% of FCRA NGOs are registered outside Delhi, and will now have to open a bank account in the capital.
- *Lowering the cap on administrative expenses*: The micro-management and cost structures vary from project to project. It is difficult for NGOs whose work revolves around advocacy rather than projects. In 2018-19, there were 1,328 NGOs whose administrative expenses exceeded 20% of their total foreign funds.

What can be the way forward?

- Delink religious propagation and conversions from the question of foreign funding.
- There are adequate laws against conversion by inducement. It cannot be decided against the touchstone of the source of funds, native or foreign.
- Seamless sharing of ideas and resources across national boundaries is essential to the functioning of a global community.
- The government must commit itself to the ancient Indian ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam as the framework for its global engagement and should not be hostile against the NGOs who criticize government for their working.

Civil societies supplements government works and works at the grass root level. Civil societies should not be discouraged unless there is reason to believe the funds are being used to aid illegal activities.

Labour reforms: a much-needed reform

Syllabus: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors

In News: Lok Sabha has cleared three labour code Bills viz the Industrial Relations Code Bill, 2020, Code on Social Security Bill, 2020 and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code Bill, 2020.

Provisions in Indian constitution related to Labour

- *Article 246*: Under the Constitution of India, Labour is a subject in concurrent list which allows both centre and states to enact laws.
- *Article 43A (42nd amendment)*: It directs state to take steps to ensure workers participation in management of industries.
- *Article 23 (Fundamental right):* Prohibits forced labour.
- *Article 24 (Fundamental right):* Prohibits child labour below age of 14 years, in factories, mines and other hazardous occupations.

Need for Labour reforms in India

- *Dispute resolution:* Simplification of archaic laws and revamping the adjudication process will pave the way for early resolution of disputes.
- *Missing middle*: India has **fewer large firms** relative to gross domestic product (GDP) than China, Malaysia, South Korea and Thailand.
- *Slow corporate growth:* slow corporate growth led to slow economic growth and a situation where only 77 mid-sized firms became large between 2012 and 2018.
- *Reduce delays*: Due to **cumbersome procedure**, it takes 1,445 days to enforce a contract in India. However, in South Korea it takes 290 days.
- *To provide social security to contractual workers*: Workers of small unorganised sector as well as in-formal sectors remain outside the social security arrangements. India has over 90 per cent informal workers (defined as those without any social insurance). India is an outlier among low-middle income countries in this regard.
- *Consolidation and simplification*: Since Labour is a subject in concurrent list, more than 40 Central laws and more than 100 state laws currently govern them.

- *To improve the skill capacity of the labour*: Lack of enough skilled workers is a common concern raised by the employers in defence of their inability to hire more. They resort to contract employment. The proportion of formally skilled workers in India is extremely low, at 4.69% of total workforce, compared to 24% in China, 52% in the US, 68% in the UK, 75% in Germany, 80% in Japan and 96% in South Korea
- *To improve Gender gap*: India has low female labour force participation.71% of men above 15 years are a part of the workforce as compared to just 22 percent women (Labour Force Survey)
- *To raise the Low labour Productivity*: Existing labour laws encourage a low scale of manufacturing, as many laws apply only when businesses have a certain number of workers, thus dragging productivity.
- *To enhance ease of doing business*: As per world bank India's labour laws are amongst the most restrictive in the world. Approximately there are over 200 state laws and close to 50 central laws. For instance, job security in India is so rigid that, firms employing over 100 workers cannot fire employers without government's permission

Labour Codes on wages Bill, 2019

Objectives of the bill

- The bill seeks to consolidate laws relating to wages by replacing- Payment of Wages Act, 1936; Minimum Wages Act, 1948; Payment of Bonus Act, 1965 and Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.
- To formulate a statutory National Minimum Wage for different regions. The economic survey 2018-19 had also mentioned that a national mandatory minimum wage is a requirement.

Key Features

- *Defined Wages appropriately*: it removes the multiplicity of wage definitions leading to significantly reduce in litigation as well as compliance cost for employers.
- *Uniform wages*: The Bill stipulates to link minimum wages only to factors such as skillset and geographical location. This would bring down the number of minimum wage rates across the country to 300. These labour Codes seek to **universalise the right to minimum wage** of workers, presently available to only about 30% of the workforce engaged in the scheduled employments.
- *Extends to all sectors*: It seeks to universalizes the provisions of minimum wages and timely payment of wages to all employees irrespective of the sector and wage ceiling.
- *National Floor Level Minimum Wage*: To be set by the Centre and will be revised every five years, while states will fix minimum wages for their regions, which cannot be lower than the floor wage.

Concerns

- The bill does not define "who is a worker" clearly.
- The calculation of the level of minimum wage by an expert committee is at variance with ILO parameters.

- A 'national minimum wage' is a good idea, but its computation is cause for concern. Instead of a single national minimum wage, the bill proposes multiple minimum wage structure at different geographical zones.

Labour Code on Industrial relations, 2020

Objectives of the bill

- It aims to create greater labour market flexibility to encourage entrepreneurs to engage in labour-intensive sectors and to improve ease of doing business in India.
- It would consolidate three laws i.e. Trade Unions Act, 1926; Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946 and the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947.

Key Features

- ***Contract workers***: It seeks to allow companies to hire workers on fixed-term contract of any duration. Fixed term employment refers to workers employed for a fixed duration based on a contract signed between the worker and the employer.
- ***Reduced Threshold***: Companies employing up to 300 workers will not be required to frame rules of conduct for workmen employed in industrial establishments. Presently, it is compulsory for firms employing up to 100 workers.
- ***Dispute redressal***: It provides for setting up of a two-member tribunal (in place of one member) wherein important cases will be adjudicated jointly and the rest by a single member, resulting speedier disposal of cases.
- ***Regulation for Trade Unions***: Introduces a feature of 'recognition of negotiating union' under which a trade union will be recognized as sole 'negotiating union' if it has the support of 75% or more of the workers on the rolls of an establishment.
- ***Statutory benefits***: Underlines that fixed-term employees will get all statutory benefits on a par with the regular employees who are doing work of the same or similar nature.
- ***Regulates strikes***: As per the bill, the workers in factories will have to give a notice at least 14 days in advance to employers if they want to go on strike. Presently, only workers in public utility services are required to give notices to hold strikes.
- ***Re-skilling Fund***: Proposes setting up of a "re-skilling fund" for training of retrenched employees. The retrenched employee would be paid 15 days' wages from the fund within 45 days of retrenchment.

Concerns

- The Industrial Relations Code of 2019 has curtailed the right to form unions and accord them powers of representation.
- It takes away the negotiating rights of trade unions as it would be difficult for any one group to manage 75% support.
- It will give tremendous amounts of **flexibility to the employers** in terms of **hiring and firing**, dismissal for alleged misconduct and retrenchment for economic reasons will be completely possible for all the industrial establishments employing less than 300 workers.

Labour Code on Social Security & Welfare, 2017

Key Features

- *Consolidation of multiple laws*: It will replace nine social security laws, including Maternity Benefit Act, Employees' Provident Fund Act, Employees' Pension Scheme, Employees' Compensation Act, among others.
- *Universalizes social security*: Social security has been extended to those working in the unorganised sector, such as migrant workers, gig workers and platform workers.
- *Covers Agricultural workers*: For the first time, provisions of social security will also be extended to agricultural workers also.
- *National Social Security Board*: It proposes a National Social Security Board which shall recommend to the central government for formulating suitable schemes for different sections of unorganised workers, gig workers and platform workers.
- *Social security organisations*: The Bill provides for the establishment of several bodies to administer the schemes. These include a Central Board to administer the provident fund schemes and national and state-level Social Security Boards to administer schemes for unorganised workers.
- *Social security fund*: The Bill proposes setting up a social security fund using corpus available under corporate social responsibility.
- *Reducing employee PF contribution:* The bill provides for an option for reducing provident fund contribution (currently at 12% of basic salary) to increase workers disposable income.
- *Gig Workers*: The bill states that the central or state government may notify specific schemes for gig workers, platform workers, and unorganised workers to provide various benefits, such as life and disability cover.
- *Exemption*: Under the bill the central government is empowered to exempt selected establishments from all or any of the provisions of the code and makes Aadhaar mandatory for availing benefits under various social security schemes

Concerns

- Does not provide for uniform definition on "social security".
- There is no dedicated central fund. The proposed corpus will be split into numerous small funds creating a multiplicity of authorities and confusion.
- There is no clarity on how the proposed dismantling of the existing and functional structures, such as the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) with its corpus of ₹10 lakh crore will be handed over to a government.

Labour Code on Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions, 2018

Key Features

- *Consolidation of laws*: It will amalgamate 13 labour laws including the Factories Act, 1948; the Mines Act, 1952; the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970 etc.
- *Mandatory registration*: All establishments covered by the Code must be registered with registering officers
- *Advisory Bodies*: The bill provides for the setting up of Occupat ional Safety and Health Advisory Boards by the central and state governments at the national and state level.

- *Annual health check-up*: It has been made mandatory in factories and its charge will be borne by the employers.
- *Duties of employers*: Appointment letters for all workers (including those employed before this code), underlying their rights to statutory benefits.
- *Policy on Working Hours*: Overtime work must be paid twice the rate of daily wages. Female workers, with their consent, may work past 7pm and before 6am, if approved by the central or state government.
- *Leave policy*: No employee may work for more than six days a week. Workers must receive paid annual leave for at least one in 20 days of the period spent on duty.
- *Working conditions and welfare facilities*: The employer is required to provide a hygienic work environment with ventilation, comfortable temperature and humidity, sufficient space, clean drinking water, and latrine and urinal accommodations.

Way Forward
- Reforms should be made with **consensus of all stakeholders** -The workers, their unions, and employers and their associations etc.
- Any reform should strive to increase the **trust between workers and employers.**
- There is a need for a **national policy for domestic workers** at the earliest, to recognise their rights and promote better working conditions.
- To achieve the objective of training the 10 million apprentices, the government should form **National Apprenticeship Corp** by merging the Regional Directorate of Skill Development and the Entrepreneurship and Board of Apprenticeship Training.

Media: the fourth pillar of democracy
Syllabus: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability
In News: Media trials in the Sushant Singh Rajput case has raised questions on the status of media as the fourth pillar of democracy.
Trial by Media
- **Trial by media** is a phrase that became popular in the late 20th century and early 21st century. It describes the impact of television and newspaper coverage on a person's reputation by creating a widespread perception of guilt or innocence before, or after, a verdict in the court of law.
- Various Judges of Court have criticized the trial by the media as it leads to **psychological variation** while giving any degree.
- **Media trial is against Right to fair trial**; for instance, In 2015, Jasleen Kaur, a woman from Delhi posted a photo of a man, Sarvjeet Singh, on Facebook and accused him of sexual harassment.
    o Four years later, the man was held innocent by the Delhi court and was acquitted of all the charges.

Media as the fourth pillar of democracy.

- Media plays an important role in keeping democracy alive and thriving. It is a connecting link between government and citizens in a way it provides information about deeds, policies and inefficiencies of government to the citizens.
- Media as a fourth pillar it plays an important role in democracy reaching its true meaning. The term was first coined by **Thomas Caryle**.

Role of media in connecting government and citizens:

- *Source of information:* An unbiased information is important for a democracy and its growth. Media helps in providing critical information to citizens. E.g data on economy, health, education etc.
- *Educate:* Media is important to educate people on issues that are of utmost importance for society. E.g Increasing number of rape cases are threat to society. It is important to report the exact number of cases and help in sensitising the society.
- *Awareness:* Media makes society aware of their democratic rights and media helps in maintaining checks and balances.
- *Ensuring Justice:* Media plays an important role in ensuring justice and benefits of the government policies reaching the weaker sections of the society. For example, some famous criminal cases that would have gone unpunished but for the intervention of media, are Priyadarshini Mattoo case, Jessica Lal case, Nitish Katara murder case and Bijal Joshi rape case.
- *Watchdog:* Media reporting on public affairs and investigations into wrongdoing in the administration of public affairs is must for a healthy democracy. This includes exposing frauds or corruption cases that personally benefit politicians. This help citizens to vote the best government defeating corrupt and dishonest government.
  - Cobrapost published Operation Janambhoomi (the conspiracy behind the demolition of the Babri Masjid), in which they brought to light the conspiracy behind the events of 6 December 1992.
- *Good Governance:* Media plays an important role in audit of the government policies and spending. An unbiased media is important for transparent reporting.
- *Accountability:* An informed citizen can question the government policies based on facts and figures which ensures accountability and answerability.
- *Dissemination of government policies:* Media is important for spreading and disseminating various government policies and initiatives. E.g. media played an important role in spreading awareness about Swachh Bharat and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao.

What is Freedom of press?

- In India, freedom of the press has been treated as part of the freedom of speech and expression guaranteed by **Article 19(1) (a)** of the Constitution.
- The Indian constitution guarantees the **"freedom of speech and expression"** as a fundamental right of every citizen of India.

Restrictions on the freedom of press:

- The restrictions that apply to the "freedom of speech and expression" also apply to the "freedom of press and media".
- **Article 19(2),** provides reasonable restrictions on the following grounds:
- In the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India.
- Security of the state, public order, decency, or morality, or in relation to contempt of courts, defamation,
- Freedom of press is not absolute in India.

Why is freedom of press necessary?

- It acts as a check on Government and Administrators.
- The duty of a free press is to raise voice against any social ill or wrong.
- It works towards strengthening the sovereignty and integrity of a nation.
- It helps in building an environment where the people of the country can cultivate unity and harmony.
- A free press is fundamental to a democratic society
- The press provides the platform for a multiplicity of voices to be heard.
- At national, regional and local level, it is the public's watchdog, activist and guardian as well as educator, entertainer and contemporary chronicler.
- It is helpful in strengthening democracy.
- In India, the media have played a key role in providing information to the people about social and economic evils.

Supreme Court verdicts on the freedom of speech

- **In Romesh Thapar v. State of Madras**, the Supreme Court acknowledged, "Freedom of speech and of the press lay at the foundation of all democratic organisations".
- **In Indian Express Newspapers v. Union of India**, the Supreme Court emphasized the importance of freedom of the press in these words:
  - The expression freedom of the press has not been used in Article 19 but it is understood within Article 19(1)(a). The expression means freedom from interference from authority, which would have the effect of interference with the content and circulation of newspapers. There cannot be any interference with that freedom in the name of public interest.
- In **Tata Press Ltd. V. Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd.** the Supreme Court held that a commercial advertisement or commercial speech was also a part of the freedom of speech and expression.
- In India, freedom of the press has been treated as part of the freedom of speech and expression guaranteed under the constitution in **Brij Bhushan and Another vs the State of Delhi, AIR 1950 and Sakal papers(P) Ltd vs Union of India, AIR 1962.**

What needs to be done to secure freedom of press?

- The Supreme Court is the "Upholder and Protector of the Constitution. An independent judiciary that upholds the constitutional guarantee of media freedom is an important safeguard for this fundamental right.

- Media self-regulation along with strong institutions such as media ombudsman as well as complaints and appeals committees, make it possible for ethics to be adhered to.
- A regulatory body comprising both of media persons and government bodies should be established to give media a fair play and check its arbitrariness at the same time.
- Reform should come from within the media especial from senior editors and journalists. They should start exposing cases of fake news, conflict of interest, making the working of press more transparent.

The legislative backup for PCI (Press council of India) to give it more power for regulation is also required.

What are the challenges that Indian media is facing today?

- *Freedom of press*: Instances like in the case of NDTV shutdown for reporting during Pathankot attack, weak whistle –blower protection act, defamation suits etc have restricted the freedom of press.
- *Paid News*, a nexus between media persons and politicians seems to have taken firm roots in India. For example: fake opinion polls during election.
  o The Election Commission is reported to have identified more than 1,400 cases of paid news between 2009 and 2013.
- *Biasness of reporters*, editors etc have dented the image of news channels and newspapers.
- *Corporate and political lobbying and ownership*: Most of the media houses are owned or funded by corporate companies which may have their own political inclinations, this kills the neutral coverage of the news.
- *Yellow journalism*: Unnecessary sensationalization of issues to fetch TRP meddles with the real content of news. For example, the live coverage of 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai.
- *Weak regulation*: only a self-regulating body like PCI (Press Council of India) has little power or legislative backup to regulate the press.
- *Advent of digital media*; There is a fight for exclusivity of news merely to meet higher engagements without checking the authenticity of the news.
- *Media trials*: Often the media declares the verdict immediately after an allegation. This is contempt of court and also violates the right to reputation of an accused who later gets evicted.

Regulation of media in India

- *The PCI was established under the PCI Act of 1978* for the purpose of preserving the freedom of the press and of maintaining and improving the standards of newspapers and news agencies in India.
- *Functions*: The functions of the PCI include among others :
  o Helping newspapers maintain their independence;
  o Build a code of conduct for journalists and news agencies;
  o Help maintain "high standards of public taste" and foster responsibility among citizens;

- o Review developments likely to restrict flow of news.
- *Limitations on the powers of the PCI:*
  - o The PCI has limited powers of implementing the guidelines issued. It cannot penalize newspapers, news agencies, editors and journalists for violation of the guidelines.
  - o The PCI only overviews the functioning of press media. That is, it can enforce standards upon newspapers, journals, magazines etc and It does not have the power to review the functioning of the electronic media like radio, television and internet media.
- *Process of self-regulation by television channels*: The NBA has devised a Code of Ethics to regulate television content.
  - o The News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA), of the NBA, is empowered to warn, reprimand, censure, express disapproval and fine the broadcaster a sum upto Rs. 1 lakh for violation of the Code.
  - o The Advertising Standards Council of India has also drawn up guidelines on content of advertisements. These groups are governed through agreements and do not have any statutory powers.
- *Draft Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill, 2006*: The Bill made it mandatory to seek license for broadcasting any television or radio channel or program.
  - o It also provides standards for regulation of content.
  - o It is the duty of the body to ensure compliance with guidelines issued under the Bill.

India: A stakeholder in Afghan peace process?
Syllabus: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
In news: Recently, intra-Afghan talks commenced in Doha.
Afghan peace process: The Afghan peace process comprises the proposals and negotiations that were aimed at ending the ongoing civil war between the Taliban and Afghanistan government.
Background- The USA-Taliban pact-
- US and Taliban signed an agreement for "Bringing Peace to Afghanistan" in February 29, 2020
- It will enable the US and NATO to withdraw troops in the next 14 months
- It also provides for removal of UN and US sanctions on Taliban leaders
- Taliban on its part committed to 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
- However, the pact is silent on other terrorist groups – such as anti-India groups Lashkar-e-Toiba or Jaish-e-Mohammed.

Developments in Afghan peace process

- Recently, the United Nations Secretariat held a meeting of the "6+2+1" group on regional efforts to support peace in Afghanistan.
- "6+2+1" group consists of 6 countries sharing border with Afghanistan (China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan),2 global players (U.S.A, Russia) and Afghanistan.
- India was left out of the Afghan peace process citing, India doesn't share border with Afghanistan though India's Pok region (along Wakhan Corridor) shares land border with Afghanistan.
- Recently, India participated in the inaugural session in intra-Afghan peace talks after being invited by the Qatari government on the recommendation of the Afghan government.

India's position on Taliban

- India refused to recognise the Taliban regime of 1996-2001 and rather supported the 'Norther Alliance' in fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan.
- India has long held the position of dealing only with the elected government in Kabul, and has always considered the Taliban a terrorist organisation backed by Pakistan
- India supports an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled peace process
- Kandahar Hijack of 1999 and Taliban's proximity to Pakistan's deep state has also hampered the Indo-Taliban relations

Factors that should needs to be considered during intra-Afghan talks:

- **Fragmented Polity**: The balance of Afghan society and polity which was shaken in 1973 with the monarchy's departure has never been restored need to be discussed.
- **Instability**: The country has witnessed the overthrow of the monarchy, a nationalist dictatorship, communist rule, the mujahideen era, the Taliban's Islamic Emirate and the current Islamic Republic.
- **Sovereignty**: It has also experienced almost three decades of the presence of foreign forces and outside interference, especially from Pakistan.
- **Social factors**: There are sharpening ethnic divides, extremist ideologies and theologies in Afghanistan. Furthermore, Large migration to foreign lands, internal displacement, spread of narcotics and violence has worsened the situation.
- **Concerns of Youth**: over the past 15 years, a section of Afghan urban youth linked to the world through the social media wants more open systems within an Islamic framework.

Impact of US troops withdrawal on India:

- **Security situation**: Weaker American presence in Afghanistan would embolden local militant groups such as the Taliban, whose influence could subsequently spread to neighbouring Pakistan and Kashmir.
  - A report by the U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) assessed that "The Taliban is calibrating its use of violence to harass and

undermine the ANDSF [Afghan National Defense and Security Forces] and the Afghan government.

- **Regional connectivity and related economic concerns**: India's investments of billions in Afghanistan (India is Afghanistan's largest contributor of development assistance in the region) and plans to connect with Central Asia would be jeopardized if Taliban, being supported by Pakistan, gains ground. For example, the building of Afghanistan's Parliament, reconstruction of the Salma dam and establishment of an electricity transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul etc

- **Regional instability**: Sudden American withdrawal might create a civil war like situation as various regional stakeholders (China, Russia and Pakistan) will try to reshape the battlefield in accordance with their own strategic priorities, which will hamper India's long gestated efforts at building Afghanistan.

- **Isolation of India**: India's displeasure with Taliban is explicit and India was supported by US on this, but post US announcement of withdrawal most of the other stakeholders, like Russia and US, have simply ignored and isolated India's views and have engaged with Taliban and its sponsors in Pakistan in finding a solution.

Concerns for India:

- **India's Exclusion**: Despite being a key player in Afghanistan's development and peace process, India was not the part of the US-Taliban agreement and left out of "6+2+1" group.

- **Lacks legitimacy**: India's position that only an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and Afghan-controlled process can be allowed is a principled one, but has no support or legitimacy. Kabul, or the Ashraf Ghani government does not lead, own or control the reconciliation process today.

- **No India – Taliban ties**: The Taliban perceives India as a hostile country, as India had supported the anti-Taliban force Northern Alliance in the 1990s.

- **Taliban and terrorism nexus**: India is concerned about the links of terror groups like JeM, LeT with Taliban. A UN report has said that LeT, JeM fighters are co-located with Taliban's.

- **The Citizenship (Amendment) Act issue**: The move to offer fast track citizenship to only Afghan minorities have made a large section of Afghanistan's majority-Muslim cut off from India.

- **Failed Diplomacy**: India neither succeeded in strengthening its ties with Kabul nor opened links with the Taliban while all other major powers were doing engaging both Kabul and Taliban separately.

What should be the Role of India in Afghan peace process

- First, India should press for its inclusion in "6+2+1" dialogue to claim its legitimate role in the Afghan peace process

- Given India's regional and global positions, India should try to engage with all the key players in Afghanistan, including the government, political forces, society and the Afghan body politic.

- With Taliban gaining ground in the country and getting international legitimacy India should try to engage in direct talks with Talibans separately.
- India should commit itself to play more active role, other than economic and humanitarian, in the peace process.
- India must give a diplomatic push to the coalition of regional powers, namely Iran and Russia   for ensuring peace in Afghanistan after US exit.

India's role is 'key' to the peace in Afghanistan. In the interests of Afghanistan and the region, India should stress for a successful peace talks that their failure would be catastrophic for the Afghan people and the region.

GENERAL STUDIES 3

The Perils of slowdown

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

In News: The current economic contraction is different from what India has experienced earlier, that's why government needs to borrow and spend more.

Economic contraction in past:

BoP crisis-1957-58: During 1957-58, India's Balance of Payment deteriorated owing to a negative GDP growth rate of 1.2 percent and a record increase in import bill which swelled by more than 50 per cent between 1955 and 1957.

Severe drought-1966: Subsequent wars in 1962 against china and 1965 war against Pakistan followed by two severe droughts affected Indian economy (during 1966 & 1967).

Energy Crisis- 1973: Oil embargo proclaimed by the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) on nations perceived as supporting Israel during the Yom Kippur War led to oil shortages. During this period India's oil import bill rose from $414 million in 1972-73 to $900 million till 1973-74.

Oil Shock leading to BoP crisis-1979-80: witnessed the second global oil shock following the Iranian Revolution.

Slowdown: Growth fell from 8 per cent in 1999-2000 to an average of 4.5 cent during the next three years. However, India has never experienced negative economic growth since 1979-80.

Major Reason for slow growth in past: Economic contraction in past were due to "supply side" issues. Previous contractions in India's GDP were majorly due to- weak monsoon and energy crisis.

Statistics related to current economic contraction:

- Reports released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) showed that the Indian economy had contracted by 23.9 per cent in Q1 of 2020-2021 compared to a growth of 5.2 per cent in Q1 of 2019-2020.
- Gross value added (GVA) for the country declined by 22.8 per cent, manufacturing by 39.3 per cent, and mining by 23.3 per cent. Gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) contracted 52.9%, electricity 7 per cent, and construction activities 50.3 per cent.
- As per various agencies, there will be real GDP decline of 5-10 per cent for 2020-21. It would be the country's first ever not triggered/accompanied by an agricultural or a BOP crisis.

Current economic contraction is purely economic problem and different in following ways-

- *Agriculture sector witnessing growth:* No shortage of food
    - Rabi crop harvest improved and ongoing kharif season is expected to perform better.
    - Public cereal stocks increased at 94.42 million tonnes.
- *Surplus in some sector:* Current account registered BOP surplus in January-March 2020 quarter (first in 13 years). Merchandise trade account recorded surplus for the first time after January 2002.
- *Rise in savings:* Aggregate deposits with commercial banks as of July 31 were Rs 14.17 lakh crore or 11.1 per cent higher than last year.
- *Increase in Forex reserves:* Foreign exchange reserves were at an all-time high of $538.19 billion rising by $60.38 billion since end-March the lockdown.
- *Western style demand slowdown leading to recession:* due to decrease in consumption and investment demand.
- *Fall in demand:*
    - Decrease in household expenditure due to loss of income.
    - Employed persons and businesses are saving more.
    - Businesses reducing capacity, investing less, reducing staff strength and conserving cash.
    - *Impact:* Decrease in consumption and investment will contract the economy further leading to reduction investment as well.
- *Crisis faced by banks due less credit demand:* Deposits are increasing (11.1 per cent). However, the corresponding credit growth has been just Rs 5.37 lakh crore or 5.5 per cent.
- *Fall in trade and investment:* As per UNCTAD, the world trade will shrink by around one fifth this year, foreign direct investment (FDI) flows by up to 40 per cent, and remittances will drop by over $100 billion.

Challenges in the revival of economy:

- *Limited fiscal space:* Narrowing fiscal space for the government makes it difficult to enable spending. Government has limited fiscal space due to increase in fiscal deficit to 4.6 per cent in 2019-20

- ***Twin balance sheet:*** the problem of overleveraged balance sheets for banks and corporates on the other.
- ***Ineffective Monetary Policy:*** The limitation of the government on the fiscal front has made all efforts on the monetary side by the Reserve Bank of India ineffectual.
- ***Requires high growth:*** To achieve zero growth, i.e. similar output as last year, the GDP for the next three quarters should clock an average of almost Rs 40 lakh crores, which would require double-digit quarterly growth figures — a feat only achieved in the best growth years prior to 2008.
- ***Need huge investment:*** to manage a contraction less than 10 per cent over the current financial year, the economy would require an addition of more than Rs 35 lakh crores on an average each quarter for the remaining quarters.
- ***Rising urban unemployment:*** Urban unemployment in recent months was almost in double digits. As per the latest statistics from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), about 21 million salaried jobs have been lost between April and August.
- ***Permanent income loss:*** As per Trade and Development Report 2020 report, the contraction in the Indian economy due to the pandemic-led disruptions may disappear, but the contraction registered in 2020 is likely to translate into a permanent income loss.
- ***Vicious cycle of falling incomes and poor demand:*** When incomes fall sharply, private individuals cut back consumption. When private consumption falls sharply, businesses stop investing. Since both of these are voluntary decisions, there is no way to force people to spend more and/or coerce businesses to invest more in the current scenario.

Way forward:

- ***Government needs to increase public spending:***
  - ***Increase borrowing:*** Fiscal deficit has increased but between 2007-08 and 2019-20, the Centre's outstanding debt-GDP ratio has come down from 56.9 to 49.25 per cent and liabilities of state also fell from 74.6 to 69.8 per cent. Governments can borrow at rates below nominal GDP growth.
  - ***Less cost of borrowing:*** yields on 10-year Indian government bonds have softened from 6.5 to 5.9 per cent and even more for states — from 7.9 to 6.4 per cent — despite massive fiscal slippages.
  - ***Learning from past:*** The weighted average cost of Central borrowings more than halved from 12.01 per cent in 1997-98 to 5.71 per cent in 2003-04 and the then government resorted to borrowing.
- ***Increase capital expenditure:*** The capital expenditure multipliers for both Centre and state governments are much higher than the revenue expenditure multipliers.
- ***Efficient subsidy and social spend:*** The government can save 1% of GDP by higher subsidy efficiency and savings in admin expenses.
- ***Reforms in Power sector:*** Cost reflective tariffs with targeted subsidies to agriculture and household can save 0.3% of GDP.
- ***Higher tax buoyancy:*** A simplified GST structure is the need of the hour which can garner 0.65% of GDP.

Urban Unemployment: an emerging crisis.

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

In News: 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.

Analysts now expect a deeper contraction in India's GDP in FY21

GDP forecasts for FY21 (year-on-year change, in %)   Earlier/Now

	Earlier/Now
Edelweiss	-4/-6.5
Bank of Baroda	-5/-6.8
CARE Ratings	-6.4/-8-8.2
S&P Global	-5/-9
Fitch	-5/-10.5
DBS	-6/-10.5
SBI	-6.8/-10.9
Nomura	-6.1/-11
Moody's	-4/-11.5
India Ratings	-5.3/-11.8
Goldman Sachs	-11.8/-14.8

Source: Mint research

What are impacts of COVID-19 on the economy?

1. **GDP contraction**- India's economy shrank nearly 25 percent in last quarter, the most drastic fall in decades.

2. **Public administration**- Government spending in the form of transfer payments was higher than spending on goods and services, which resulted in a negative growth number.

3. **Manufacturing and Services**- The sector has been in the negative zone (−39%) across the board due to the national lockdown since end of March.

4. **Industries which have been hit harder —**
   a. Travel or Entertainment (−47%) — It will still be a gradual normalization process, and probably won't rebound completely until a vaccine is available.
   b. Real estate (−50%) — The present stress on home loans can hinder a revival in residential real estate.

5. **Vulnerable employment**-The share of vulnerable employment is higher in India as compared to the world. It is characterized by inadequate earnings, low productivity and difficult conditions of work that undermine the basic rights of workers.
   a. GDP contraction and lack of demand in the economy has resulted in a significant dip in urban employment generation.
   b. 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 has lead to a situation where a large proportion of the jobs being created is of poor quality (and is expected to remain so).
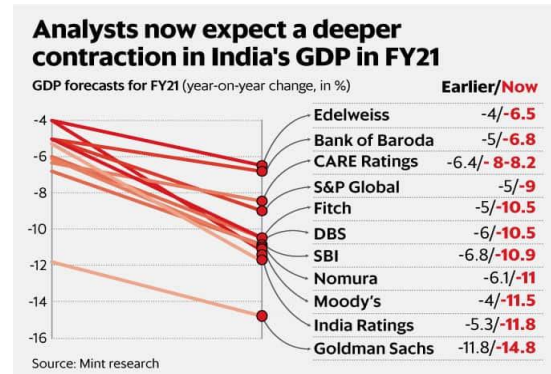
What are the possible solutions in securing the livelihoods of workers in urban areas?

- **Generate more jobs**-
   o The focus on urban employment generation programmes should be in coordination with local governments.
   o A major local initiative would be to design and implement employment-intensive investment policies.
   o Private investments need to be facilitated by conducive contractual relations between labour and capital.
   o 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.

- o Needs to launch of an urban employment scheme oriented toward building large-scale medical, health and sanitation infrastructure in cities and towns across India.
- *To reduce vulnerabilities by proving decent wage and some form of job security-*
  - o It is important that MGNREGA be expanded by both increasing the budgetary allocations and the guaranteed minimum number of days of work.
  - o Universal basic income- It is a government program in which every adult citizen receives a set amount of money on a regular basis. The goals of a basic income system are to improve poverty and replace other need-based social programs that possibly require greater official involvement.
- *Prioritize urban infrastructure-*
  - o Infrastructure investments would spur employment, generate earnings and contribute to small enterprise formation.
  - o 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'.
- *Is there a need for an Urban Employment Guarantee Programme ?*
  - o According to Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) report of the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), the unemployment problem is aggravated in India especially in cities and towns. More than half of the outlay goes to rural India.
  - o Economic impact of the lockdown has been largely an urban India impact.
  - o Nutcracker scenario for a host of businesses — demand destruction on a massive scale one hand, and lack of enough labour to restart production/operations

  - o As per the PLFS 2017-2018, open unemployment stands at a historic high of 6.1 per cent, and unemployment among educated youth has reached 20 per cent.
  - o Unemployment in urban areas at 7.8 per cent is higher than the unemployment rate in rural areas (5.3 per cent).
  - o Indian towns and cities continue to be plagued by the prevalence of low-wage, poor quality, informal work.
  - o PLFS data show that despite a rise in the prevalence of regular-salaried work, just over 50 per cent of the urban workforce remains either self-employed or in casual wage work.

Brief history of urban employment schemes

- *Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY)* launched in 1997 provided employment to the unemployed and underemployed urban poor through self-employment and wage employment.
- The SJSRY was replaced by the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM) in 2013. This programme, and its subsequent version, laid more emphasis on self-employment and entrepreneurship than on wage employment.
- *Yuva Swabhiman Yojana*: The newly elected government in Madhya Pradesh recently announced a 100-day urban job guarantee scheme, the Yuva Swabhiman Yojana, which provides urban youth with varying educational qualifications with a wide set of job.
- *Ayyankali Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme* (AUEGS): Since 2010, Kerala has been running a programme called the Ayyankali Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme (AUEGS) which guarantees 100 days of wage-employment to an urban household for manual work
- *Green New Deal:* In the United States of America, 'Green New Deal' proposals provide for a 'Green Job Guarantee' which enshrines 'a legal right that obligates the federal government to provide a job for anyone who asks for one and to pay them a liveable wage'.

  o In the context of the present employment crises, it is worthwhile considering to introduce an employment guarantee programme in urban areas. The scheme, which is similar to MGNREGS, would provide minimum livelihood security to the poorest of the poor in the urban areas.
  o Centrally funded programmes like the Smart Cities Mission and Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) have disproportionately focused on development of bigger towns and cities. Such programs help in the development of small cities and towns.

Benefits of an Urban Employment Guarantee Programme :

The proposed programme seeks to address the following key problems

- Employment guarantee schemes are generally self targeting and demand-driven. In a country like India with scarce income data, an employment guarantee programme circumvents the complicated process of identifying beneficiaries.
- An employment guarantee has the potential to foster active citizenry. It enhances engagement in democratic decision-making through public meetings and public hearings. On the one hand, it would increase people's political capacities in community building and on the other it strengthens local accountability.
- The programme can generate a new set of 'green jobs' that can strengthen the capacity of ULBs as well as promote sustainable urban development.
- Such a programme would give urban residents a statutory right to work and thereby ensure the right to life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.

- It increases demand by raising incomes directly, and indirectly in the informal sector, by improving the fallback position of workers.
- Address issue of Underemployment and low wages in the informal urban workforce
- Check migration to large cities from small and medium towns
- Such programme can bring in much-needed public investment in towns to improve the quality of urban infrastructure and services
- Prevent ecological degradation of urban spaces
- Employment guarantee enables people to contribute productively to the creation of useful public goods and services.
- This is on a line similar to the highly successful programmes on urban livelihoods in China and some developed nations in the West.

Challenges

- The basic premise of a healthy rural to urban economic transformation is to transfer workers from low-skill and low-productivity professions to high-skill jobs. It would be extremely difficult for an urban employment guarantee scheme to ensure this.
- *Increase Migration from Rural to Urban areas*: A potential problem with an employment guarantee programme for urban areas is that it may increase migration from rural areas.
- *Crowding out private sector* employment can have other repercussions too, such as the Jharkhand scheme.
- *Identification of beneficiary*: It would be difficult to prove domicile status as per state laws as well as identification of actual beneficiary.
- *Fund*: Successful implementation of scheme require huge fund. This may create extra burden on state and centre
- *Different from MGNREGA*: Urban unemployment is different from rural. In urban area unemployment is primarily among skilled and semi-skilled.

Impact of migration in India:
- *Economic impact*: Migrants contribute to the India's gross domestic product (GDP). Their ambition and enthusiasm to improve their livelihood help in economic growth. Migration could affect the overall economy of the city through remittances.
- *Social impact*: The tendency to live within own group and community is responsible for establishment of enclaves within cities. While diversity is healthy for a city, it can also pose a risk to social cohesion, cultures and traditions, and to a certain extent to the safety and security of residents. It can lead to social tension associated with xenophobia and discrimination.
- *Political impact*: Transnationalism allows global connectedness. Transnational migrants have the capacity to transform cities into global centres through the impact they have on individuals, firms and other organizations via their worldwide connections. It also allow responsible government due to increased global awareness of rights.
- *Impact on urban infrastructure and services*: Migrants move to cities, can put further pressure on the already stressed infrastructure. Migration affects the demands on urban infrastructure and services in both the place of origin and the place of destination. The rapid population growth results in difficulty to cope with insufficient infrastructure and the needs of all the people.
- *Education and employment*: Soaring immigration directly affects the availability of places in primary schools, and lead to increase in class sizes and adding classrooms. Lack of such resources poses big issues for their governments, undermining efforts to keep class sizes down and to provide school places for all children.
- *Healthcare*: The presence of infectious diseases in migrants causes concern for cities. Migrants with pre-existing health conditions can strain cities' healthcare systems. Further poor slum conditions lead to health issues and epidemic like dengue in urban areas.
- *Transportation*: One of migrants' primary concerns is how to avail themselves of public transportation services. In developing cities, where a significant portion of migrants lives in slums, streets are not even wide enough to accommodate vehicles, including emergency vehicles.
- *Energy*: Migration also affects energy consumption and CO2 emissions. It put stress on electricity and fuel demand.
- *Sanitation and waste*: Migration can exacerbate the challenges of managing sewage in a city given the growth of the population, but the city cannot always meet the demand due to insufficient capacity.

Way Ahead

The few steps involved in the rollout of such a programme are:
- *Passage of a National Urban Employment Guarantee Act* — This Act will legally bind the state to provide a fixed number of days of work for all eligible people who apply under the programme, lay down the governance structure for administering the programme, and provide accountability mechanisms for its operation.

- *Creation of a Ministry of Employment* – This programme be administered by a newly created Ministry of Employment under the Government of India. Such a Ministry will be responsible for all matters related to employment generation including the administration of MGNREGA.
- *Establishing functionaries for administering the programme* — The Central and state governments have to hire, through an open process, a set of dedicated staff who are responsible for administering this programme as well as staff responsible for accountability measures under this programme.
- *Right to timely grievance redressal:* proactive transparency and accountability structures such as mandatory periodic social audits and public hearing through a designated independent unit, as well as a mandatory grievance redressal architecture.

Future of Work

Syllabus: Effects of liberalization on the economy

In news: The Covid-19 pandemic is pushing he world into a Technology 4.0-transformed "future of work" much earlier than anticipated in the ILO's Centennial Declaration of 2019.

Current Status of Work: According to ILO,

- *Job Creation:* The job creation has been positive from 1991 to 2016, however, growth in job has remained below the population growth. The total employment in 2016 stood at 3.2 billion.
- *Female Labour Force Participation*: The female labour participation has increased considerably over the past years and at presents stands at 49% (27% below that of males)
- *Working Poverty:* The share of employed persons in emerging and developing countries living in extreme poverty (i.e. living with their families on less than US$1.90 per person per day) fell from over 50% in 1991 to just over 10% in 2016.
- *Employment of Youth*: Between 1999 and 2019, despite the global youth population increasing from 1 billion to 1.3 billion, the total number of young people engaged in the labour force decreased from 568 million to 497 million.
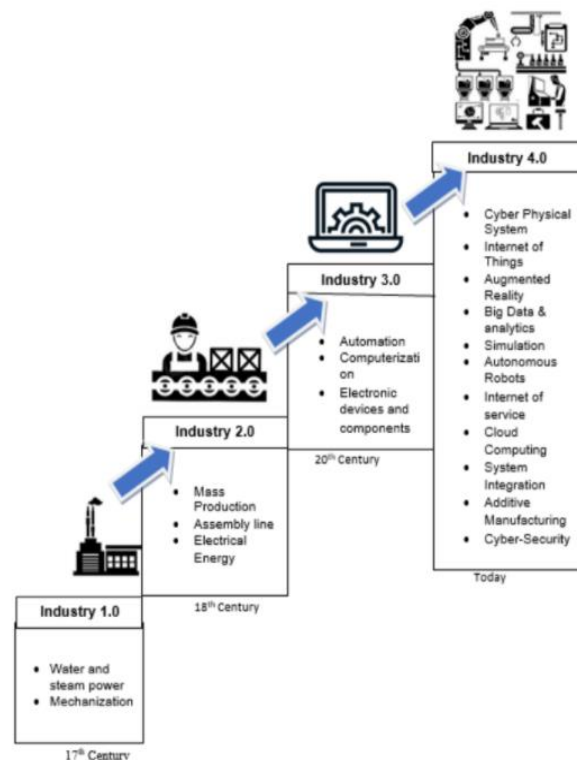
What is Industrial Revolution 4.0?

Industry 4.0 refers to the fourth industrial revolution related to manufacturing and chain production. It is driven by breakthroughs in digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, 3D printing, the IoT, Big Data etc.

The Drivers of Change:

- **Technological breakthroughs:** New technological innovations such as Big Data, 3-D printing, artificial intelligence and robotics is bringing transformative impact on the nature work.

- **Demographic Changes:** the world's population is ageing, putting pressure on business, social institutions and economies. The shortage of a human workforce in a number of rapidly-ageing economies has necessitated automation.

- **Rapid urbanisation:** The UN projects that by 2050, the world's urban population will increase by some 72%. Rapidly growing cities have become drivers of a new industrial revolution.

- **Shifts in global economic power:** Power shifting between developed and developing countries with a large working-age population will attract investments and become a driving force for the future of work.

- **Resource scarcity and climate change:** According to the report Global Trends 2030, demand for energy and water is forecast to increase by 50% and 40% respectively by 2030. Jobs in alternative energy, new engineering processes, product design and waste management and re-use will be created.

Recent Trends of Employment in India:

- **Continued Presence of Informal Economy:** Nearly 90% of India's workforce belongs to the informal sector.

- **Contractualization of employment:** The share of contract workers in total employment in India increased from 15.5% in 2000-01 to 27.9% in 2015-16. The share of directly hired workers fell from 61.2% to 50.4% over the same period.

- **Gig Economy:** It is characterised by short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs. It often involves connecting with customers through an online platform. Example: Delivery boys of app-based food, consultants, bloggers. In India, there are about 3 million gig workers — temporary workers including independent contractors, online platform workers, contract firm workers and on-call workers.

Challenges to the Future of Work: Industry 4.0

- **Low Job Creation:** Job creation has not been sufficient to absorb the growth in the number of people seeking jobs. As of 2016, there were some 198 million jobless people globally who have been actively seeking employment

- **Poor Quality Employment:** Globally, nearly 43% of employed people were in own-account or contributing family work which is often characterized by low pay, informality and limited social security.

- **Income inequality:** ILO observes that although workers have become increasingly productive, the benefits of their work have increasingly accrued to capital income and to those at the top of the income distribution.
- **Gender Pay gap:** Though female labour force participation has increased the gender pay gap remains a major concern with women still being paid 20% less than men.

Organization	Estimates
University of Oxford	47% of workers in US at high risk of having jobs replaced by automation
PricewaterhouseCoopers	38% of jobs in US, 30% of jobs in UK, 21% in Japan and 35% in Germany at risk of automation
ILO (Chang and Huynh)	ASEAN-5: 56% of jobs at risk of automation in next 20 years
McKinsey	60% of all occupations have at least 30% technically automatable activities
OECD	OECD average: 9% of jobs at high risk. Low risk of complete automation but substantial share (between 50% and 70%) of automatable tasks at risk
Roland Berger	Western Europe: 8.3 million jobs lost in industry against 10 million new jobs created in services by 2035
World Bank	Two-thirds of all jobs in developing countries are susceptible to automation

- **Digital Divide:** Only 53.6% of all households have internet access. In emerging countries, the share is only 15%. Given the rapid technological advancements, digital divide remains a key challenge for skill development and employment opportunities.
- **Impact of Technology on Employment**: There are fears that technological development will lead to job destruction. Automation could be harmful for labour-intensive industries in India such as textiles, finance, construction, hospitality, travel, tourism, media, electronics, mining, agriculture, transportation and entertainment.
  - The Indian ICT sector is susceptible to AI/robots replacing workers in its major IT export markets.
  - The retail sector, the largest employer of lower skill youth, is job shedding as e-retail accelerates and human jobs in logistics, warehousing and delivery services are being robotised.

Way Forward:
- **Universal Labour Guarantee:** All the countries should pledge to provide a universal labour guarantee that protects fundamental workers' rights, an adequate living wage, limits on hours of work and safe and healthy workplaces
- **Lifelong Learning:** It is important to provide a universal entitlement to lifelong learning that enables people to acquire skills and to reskill and up skill.
- **Investment to support Work Transition**: Investments in the institutions, policies and strategies that will support people through future of work transitions should be increased.
- **Agenda for Gender Equality**: It is important to strengthen women's voice and leadership, eliminating violence and harassment at work and implementing pay transparency policies in order to achieve gender equality.
- **Social Protection**: A guaranteed social protection from birth to old age that supports people's needs over the life cycle should be provided
- **Governance for Digital Platforms**: An international governance system for digital labour platforms should be established to protect minimum rights of workers
- **Sustainable Work:** Incentives are required to promote investments in key areas for decent and sustainable work- in areas of green, rural economy, small and medium enterprises

- *Human centric business and economic Model:* Distributional dimensions of growth, the value of unpaid work performed in the service of households and communities and the externalities of economic activity, such as environmental degradation should be taken into account for a human centric business and economic Model

- *Roadmap for India:* India should adopt Chard Dham Roadmap for steering technological change.

  o *Gyaan Dham:* a national observatory for scoping the tech-to-work equation and its trajectory should be established. Databases on existing and future trends, sector by sector, needs to be created.

  o *Kaushalya Dham:* It means nurturing "human capabilities" for Tech-Economy 4.0 work. To meet labour market needs, potential skill gaps must be closed through the NEP and comprehensive training infrastructure.

  o *Suniyojan Dham:* It involves transformative investments in multi-stakeholder ecosystems to empower the youth and women through future-of-work transitions.

  o *Samajik Nyaya Dham*: It means ensuring a just transition through a new social compact among all stakeholders and a universal social protection floor. A human-centred and equity-based approach in future labour market policies and standards is needed.

  o *Upakram Dham*: It involves taking special initiatives enabling India to leverage the world's third-largest ICT workforce to pole-vault into Tech4 excellence. India's diversity, scale for neural net, data richness, huge base of engineers, mathematicians and coders of AI available or trainable at scale, and decent ecosystems in ICT metros are critical assets.

DISCOMs: A bleeding institution

Syllabus: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways

In News– The financial hole into which the DISCOMS have fallen will deepen in light of COVID.

Power Sector in India:

- Three stages of electric power supply: generation, transmission and distribution.
- The power sector in India is mainly governed by the Ministry of Power.
- **Generation sector:**
  o Electricity is generated at thermal, hydro or renewable energy power plants, which are operated by either state-owned companies such as NTPC Ltd or private companies (also called Independent power producers or IPPs) such as Tata Power or renewable companies such as ReNew Power or Greenko.
  o As far as generation is concerned it is mainly divided into three sectors these are Central Sector, State Sector, and Private Sector.
- **Transmission Sector:**
  o India's regional grids (Northern, Eastern, Western, North-Eastern, and Southern) are currently integrated into one national grid.
  o The transmission segment is dominated largely by state-owned companies such as Powergrid Corp, which operate the grid.

- o Each state has a State Transmission Utility (STU) along with private transmission companies which are responsible for setting up intra-state transmission projects.
- o Companies like Power System Operation Corporation (POSOCO) along with National, Regional and State Dispatch Centres (NLDC, RLDC, SLDC) work in tandem to ensure grid security and balance.
- o Transmission lines are constructed between transmission substations located at electric generating stations.
- o Transmission lines may be supported overhead on towers, or they may be underground. They are operated at high voltages.
- **Distribution System**:
  - o The distribution system connects the transmission system to the customer's equipment.
  - o It consists of **Power Distribution Companies (Discoms)** responsible for the supply and distribution of energy to the consumers (industry, commercial, agriculture, domestic etc.).
  - o This sector is the weakest link in terms of financial and operational sustainability.
  - o Discoms essentially purchase power from generation companies through power purchase agreements (PPAs).
  - o Discoms are unable to make timely payments for their energy purchases from the generators due to payment delays from consumers.
  - o This gap/shortfall is met by borrowings (debt) and government subsidies.
  - o This increases the Discoms' cost of borrowing (interest) is inevitably borne by the consumer.

India's Energy Basket

Thermal (Coal + Gas) 79.1%
Total: 1,110.40
Imports from Bhutan (0.5%)
Nuclear Power
3.2%
Renewable Power
5.6%
Hydropower 11.6%

Total in billion units
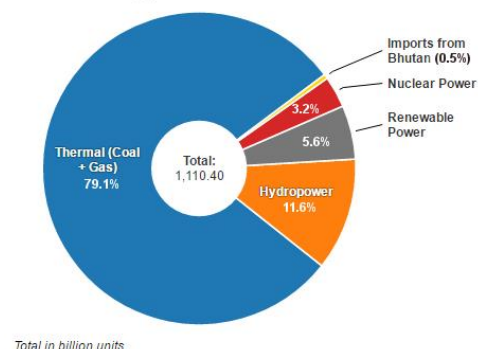
Statistics related to Power Sector:
- India is the world's third largest producer and third largest consumer of electricity.
- The national electric grid in India has an installed capacity of 372.693 GW as of 31 August 2020.
- Renewable power plants, which also include large hydroelectric plants, constitute 35.94% of India's total installed capacity.
- As per the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) estimates, by 2029-30 the share of renewable energy generation would increase from 18 per cent to 44 per cent while that of thermal is expected to reduce from 78 per cent to 52 per cent.
- At an electricity-GDP elasticity ratio of 0.8, electricity will continue to remain a key input for India's economic growth.

Challenges faced by the Energy Sector:

- *Fuel insecurity:* Coal supplies by CIL is restricted to around 65% of actual coal requirement by coal based thermal plants, leading to increased dependence on imported coal with the cascading result of high-power generation costs.
- *High Transmission & Distribution Losses:* India's aggregate technical and commercial losses average about 32% of electricity which is very high as compared to those developed countries (6-11%).
- *Humongous out-standing debts:* Populist tariff schemes, mounting AT&C losses and operational inefficiencies have adversely affected the financial health of State Discoms.
- *Out dated Power Plants and Transmission network*: This is the main reason for low growth and transmission rate in electricity generation and transmission during the recent years.
- *Rising cost of production and less procurement of Power by States:* Increasing power generation costs due to limited fuel availability, poor financial health of State Discoms, high AT&C losses have contributed in suppressed demand projections by State Discoms.
- *Interstate Disputes:* Due to interstate water disputes there is no availability of water all the times to operate hydro plants. Interstate disputes also restrict the excess power exchange between the states.
- *Project delays:* the lending rates have increased significantly from the time of project appraisal resulting in project cost overrun and hence higher end tariffs.
- *Policy Paralysis:* The micro level policies governing the fuel cost pass-through, mega power policy, competitive bidding guidelines are not in consonance with the macro framework like The Electricity Act 2003 and the National Electricity Policy.
- *Lower per capita consumption*: India's per capita power consumption, about 1149 kilowatt-hour (kWh), is among the lowest in the world. (China-4475 kWh per person per year, USA-12,071 kWh per person per year)

Current situation of State Electricity Distribution Companies DISCOMS in India:

- *Unprecedented cash flow problems*-The losses of DISCOMS had reduced in 2016-18, have nearly doubled in 2019 to INR 28,036 crore.
- *No improvements in AT & C losses:* DISCOMS have also missed the FY 2019 UDAY target to bring down their aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses to 15 %.
- *Lack of government support:* The finance minister allocated Rs 1.25 lakh crore to DISCOMS in her Rs 20-lakh crore stimulus package. This is roughly the amount the government portal, PRAAPTI, indicates are the dues owed by DISCOMS to the power generators.
- *Cross- subsidisation*: Electricity price for certain segments such as agriculture and the domestic category is cross-subsidized by the industries and the commercial sector. This affects the competitiveness of industry.
- *Multiple conditions on DISCOMS:* to avail the benefits of 'Special Long Term Transition Loan to Discoms for COVID-19' the discoms should submit an "unconditional and irrevocable" guarantee from the respective State governments with due approval from the State Finance Departments before the first disbursement.

- *High average cost of supply and realisable revenue (ACS-ARR) gap* : the average cost of supply and realisable revenue (ACS-ARR) gap was supposed to be eliminated by FY19, it remains as high as Rs 0.25 per unit.
- *Failure of UDAY schemes*: the discoms failed to collect the full cost that they pay for power — the same issue that had led to the floundering of the previous two schemes.
- *Inadequate tariff hikes*: Currently, only four states — Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka — had recorded an ACS-ARR below 0.
- *Decrease in demand*: electricity demand fell by 16 per cent in the first quarter of the current financial year.

What is UDAY scheme?

- Launched in November 2015, the Ujjwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) was designed to turn around the precarious financial position of state distribution companies (DISCOMS).
- The state governments took over 75 % of the debt of their DISCOMS, issuing lower-interest bonds to service the rest of the debt.
- In return, DISCOMS were given target dates (2017-19) to meet efficiency parameters like reduction in power lost through transmission, theft and faulty metering.
- It empowers DISCOMs with the opportunity to break even in the next 2-3 years. This is through four initiatives.
  o Improving operational efficiencies of DISCOMs;
  o Reduction of cost of power;
  o Reduction in interest cost of DISCOMs;
  o Enforcing financial discipline on DISCOMs through alignment with State finances
- *Successes of the scheme*:
  o Of the 28 states that implemented it, 10 have shown either reduced losses or profits in FY '19.
  o Most of the states registered an improvement in reducing the ACS-ARR gap and in bringing down AT&C losses.

Proposed reforms in Power Sector:

- *Draft Electricity Act (Amendment) Bill 2020:*
  o To ensure that renewable energy tariffs are not changed by the states after execution of contracts, and electricity regulatory commissions have more teeth to enforce power purchase agreements between projects and distribution companies (discom).
  o It seeks privatisation of discoms (distribution companies) by way of sub-licensing & franchisees.
  o According to the draft, state commissions will determine tariff for retail sale of electricity without any subsidy under Section 65 of the Act and the tariff should reflect the cost of supply of electricity and cross-subsidies to be reduced.
  o It seeks to eliminate the cross-subsidies in retail power tariff.
  o The State governments will directly subsidise whichever category they want to, through direct benefit transfers.
  o State regulators will henceforth be appointed by a central selection committee.

- o The establishment of a centralised Electricity Contract Enforcement Authority whose members and chairman will again be selected by the same selection committee referred to above.
- o It proposes that the ECEA would adjudicate on matters regarding performance of obligations under a contract related to sale, purchase or transmission of electricity.
- o It proposes to empower load dispatch centres to oversee the payment security mechanism before scheduling dispatch of electricity, and suggested a National Renewable Energy Policy for the promotion of generation of electricity from renewable sources.
- o It seeks to set up National Selection Committee instead of the separate Selection Committee (for appointment of Chairperson and members of State Electricity Regulatory Commissions-SERCs).
- o It is proposed to increase the strength of APTEL to at least seven to facilitate quick disposal of cases.
- o To improve quality of supply, an option is proposed to be provided to Discoms to authorise another person as a sub-license to supply electricity in any particular part of its area, with the permission of the State Electricity Regulatory Commission.
- *Atal Distribution System Improvement Yojana (Aditya)* :
  - o It aims to cut electricity losses below 12%. The scheme aims to ensure continuous supply of power, by privatizing state-run discoms and negating tariff gaps.
  - o India's average aggregate technical and commercial loss are currently at 21.4%.
  - o Prepaid smart meters will be made mandatory across the power distribution chain, including 250 million households.

Way forward

- *Clearing dues*– The stakeholders involved in the electricity value chain (generators, transmission companies, DISCOMS, consumers, regulators and state governments) to clear their dues to each other, the DISCOMS would look much stronger.
- *Efficiency*– The AT&C (aggregate transmission and distribution losses) losses need to go down, and billing and collection efficiencies should go up. A reduction in Transmission & Distribution losses by 1% would result in a saving in capacity by about 800 MW.
- *Infrastructure development*: Old and inefficient plants and lines need to be replaced or renovated and modernized to achieve the electricity production and demand target.
- *Amendments to the Electricity Act 2003*: To encourage privatisation of discoms and move towards direct benefit transfers for subsidies.
- *Smart meters*: Compulsory prepaid smart metering across the power distribution chain, including 250 million households.
- *Financial discipline*: Suspension of licenses in case of non-availability of adequate power supply arrangements.

Need of the hour is a multi-pronged and networked overhaul of the DISCOM sector and in particular the regulatory structure and deliverables.

The economics of Carbon Tax

Syllabus: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation.

In News: China has recently announced that it would balance out its carbon emissions with measures to offset them before 2060.

Carbon Tax:
- A carbon tax is a fee imposed on the burning of carbon-based fuels (coal, oil, gas).
- It is a way to have users of carbon fuels pay for the climate damage caused by releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. It works on the 'the polluter pays' principle.
- After economic reforms and carbon emissions have increased because of high growth in the Indian economy.
- The aim of carbon tax is to set a price on the carbon content of goods & services to discourage their use.
- Carbon tax becomes a powerful financial hindrance that motivates switches to clean energy across the economy, simply by making it more economically fulfilling to move to non-carbon fuels and energy efficiency if it is set high enough.
- Carbon taxes effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Economists generally argue that carbon taxes are the most efficient and effective way to curb climate change, with the least adverse effects on the economy.
- India imposed a Carbon tax of Rs 50 per ton of coal produced and imported, in 2010.
  - In 2014, it was increased to Rs 100.
  - In 2015, it was further increased to Rs 200.
  - Currently, the carbon tax is Rs 400 per ton

What is the significance of taxing carbon?
- *Rising extreme events*: Record heat waves in Delhi, floods in southwest China, and catastrophic forest fires in California this year are indicative of the existential danger from global warming. Carbon dioxide, CO_2, is a greenhouse gas, and there is scientific consent that greenhouse gases emitted from human activity are an important source of global warming.
- *Climate change induced disasters*: India ranks fifth in the Global Climate Risk Index 2020. Between 1998 and 2017, disaster-hit countries reported $2.9 trillion in direct economic losses, with 77% resulting from climate change, according to a United Nations report.
- *Carbon dioxide is the major contributor to global warming*: It was 414 parts per million in August 2020 because of past accumulation. One half of it comes from the three top carbon emitters. They need to drive de-carbonisation. India is the world's fourth largest emitter of CO_2 according to CICERO.
- *National interest*: It is needed to take stronger action before 2030, leading to no net carbon increase by 2050. India has committed to 40% of electricity capacity being from non-fossil fuels by 2030, and lowering the ratio of emissions to GDP by one-third from 2005 levels.

- o India's pledge under the Paris Agreement is to reduce the carbon intensity (see below) of its economy by 33-35% by 2030, compared to 2005 levels.
- **Cost effective**: Carbon taxes offer a potentially cost-effective means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- **To combat air pollution**: Air pollution is one of the biggest public concerns in world and India today. For example (Of the most polluted cities in the world, 21 out of 30 were in India in 2019. The health impacts of pollution represent a heavy cost to the economy.)
  - o Around 91% of the world's population lives in places where air quality levels exceed WHO limits.
  - o Ambient air pollution accounts for an estimated 4.2 million deaths per year due to stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, acute and chronic respiratory diseases.
- Emissions can be curbed only if people move away from polluting fossil fuels and adopt greener forms of energy. To achieve this we need carbon tax.

Effectiveness of carbon tax

- **Encourage non-renewable energy**: India can be among the first movers in the developing world in taxing and switching from carbon-intensive fuels (like coal).
- **Fiscal gain**: A carbon tax at $35 per tonne of CO_2 emissions in India is estimated to be capable of generating some 2% of GDP through 2030.
- **Reduce GHG emissions**: Carbon tax can reduce greenhouse gas pollution by between 80 and 90 million tonnes by 2022.
- A part of the carbon revenue thus generated can be used for a systemic overhaul of the energy mix and in promotion of green energy.
- Energy mix needs to be remodelled through investments in clean renewable energy and low-emissions bioenergy.
- It raises the level of energy efficiency by investing in building retrofits, grid upgrades, and industrial efficiency using green technology.
- Energy requires an additional 1.5% of GDP annually over the next two decades. This amount can be obtained by the carbon tax, which will be a revenue-neutral policy with no Implications on the fiscal deficit.
- High price of the materials or energy source according to their carbon content will induce households, including the rich, to shift towards greener alternatives.
- It will provide more employment since the employment elasticity in greener forms of energy is higher than those in fossil fuel-based energy.
- A significant part of more than 3% of India's GDP currently spent on pollution-induced diseases will come down.

How can carbon tax help in reducing air pollution?

1. **Reduced consumption**: As the tax makes using dirty fuels more expensive, it encourages businesses and individuals to reduce consumption and increase energy efficiency. It checks the use of fossil fuel.
2. **Increase in use of alternative energy sources**: The alternative energy such as solar, hydro and wind energy are costlier than the fossil fuel energy. The carbon tax on fossil fuel

makes the alternative energy competitive to the fossil fuel resulting in more use of alternative clean energy.

3. **Revenue Generation**: Carbon tax offers social and economic benefits. It increases revenue while simultaneously promoting objectives of climate change policy. The revenue can be used for socio-economic purposes like health and education and also on efforts to reduce pollution. It can make the correct use of fund availability for programmes like afforestation.

4. **Better air quality**: Carbon tax helps in reducing consumption leading to less emissions. This will help to protect the environment and ensure good quality air in cities especially cities like Delhi and Kanpur.

5. **Clean energy investment**: The clean energy tax will help to finance a National Clean Energy Fund (NCEF). All the money raised by the tax can help subsidise environmental programs and clean energy. It will also help India to promote the flagship programmes like International solar Alliance, Start-up India and Make in India by reducing use of non-renewable fossil fuels.

Issues related to Carbon Tax:

- **Regressive in nature**: Carbon tax is inherently regressive as it puts a burden on the poor. The poor in India contribute the least to climate change and face the maximum brunt of carbon tax through rise in prices of various commodities and services.

- **Increased production costs**: Imposing carbon tax has a direct effect of increasing the production cost which can seriously hamper our competitiveness in international markets as well as domestic production. Indian exports and small-scale industries are affected by increase in input costs. Production may shift to countries with no or lower carbon taxes.

- **Issue of appropriate carbon tax**: There is no particular methodology to exactly calculate carbon emission. Thus, a higher carbon tax and how much to be levied is subjective and debatable.

- **Irrational**: India's emissions are still very low with only 1.8 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per capita (much lower than the world average of 4.2 tonnes), according to CICERO Center for International Climate Research. Per capita electricity consumption is half of the world's average, thus imposing a high carbon tax is not rational.

Problems with the global carbon tax:

- It will penalize incremental carbon emissions rather than those that have already been spewed into the atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution.

- A homogenous global carbon tax will, in effect, impose costs on developing countries rather than those that have been responsible for most of the existing stock of pollution.

- Taxes are part of national social contracts that emerge out of very specific conditions that cannot necessarily be replicated on a global scale.

Is Carbon tax regressive?

- Though Carbon tax is inherently regressive it has the following advantages.

- Implementation of carbon tax and utilizing the proceeds for pollution control and augmenting health budget is a rational way to help poor. By implementing it in conjunction with broader health and energy policy.
- It can help in redistribution and helping poor to ward off the negative impact of climate change.
- The carbon tax can be a Pigovian Tax which balances the marginal social costs such as disease etc. and additional emissions.

Carbon tax will help in achievement of goals under Paris Agreement to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

Carbon Tax and the recent report by IMF
- IMF in a recent report says, "The world needs a massive carbon tax in just 10 years to limit climate change".

Observations in the IMF Policy Paper
- The world needs a massive carbon tax in just 10 years to limit climate change.
- The international organization suggests a cost of $75 per ton by 2030.
- The global average carbon price is $2 a ton — a small fraction of the estimated $75 a ton price that is estimated to be consistent with a 2 C warming target.
- Increasing the price of carbon is the most efficient and powerful method of combating global warming and reducing air pollution.

The IMF team argues that such a Pigouvian tax will help limit global warming to 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, as embedded in the 2015 global climate change agreement in Paris.

A Pigovian (Pigouvian) tax is a fee which is assessed against private individuals or businesses for engaging in activities that create adverse side effects. Adverse side effects are those costs which are not included as a part of the product's market price. The Pigovian tax is meant to discourage activities that impose a net cost of production onto third parties and society as a whole.

What is the way forward?
- *Pricing carbon*: build on small steps such as plans by large companies to price carbon, government incentives for electric vehicles, and an environmental tax in the 2020-21 budget.
- *Encourage alternative sources of energy* should be used as the present store of Coal and Petroleum will be completely exhausted within a few years. The alternative sources may be Atom derived energy or the energy from natural resources like air, water, Sunlight etc.
- *Emission trading*: setting a maximum amount of allowable effluents from industries, and permitting those with low emissions to sell their extra space. For instance, carbon trading in China and EU and the regional greenhouse gas initiative in the U.S. northeast.
- *Imposing a carbon tariff*: Reducing the domestic carbon content of production alone would not avert the harm if imports remain carbon-intensive.

- **Diplomatic multilateral engagements**: Big economies like India should also use their global diplomacy and financial capabilities to forge a climate coalition.

Data: The New Common

Syllabus: Science and Technology- developments and their applications.

In News: Open access to public data is essential for policy analysis and evidence-based policymaking.

Data and related concepts in brief

- **Data**: Information in raw or unorganized form that has been translated into a form that computers can process.
- **Personal data**: It refers to the data set that carries information that is specific to you. It covers your demographics, your location, your email address and other identifying factors.
- **Big Data**: The term Big Data, represents the increasing amount and the varied types of data that is now being gathered as part of data collection.
- **Open government data**: it refers to publishing data collected by government in its entirety such as, spending records, health-care measures, climate records, and farming and agricultural produce statistics.
- **Principle of Open data charter**: It is based on the principles that the data collected at public expense must belong to the people. It calls upon the government to disseminate public data in open digital formats.
- **Data Localisation:** Localisation mandates that companies collecting critical data about consumers must store and process them within the borders of the country.
- **Principles of Data sharing**: Openness, Flexibility, Transparency, Quality, Security and Machine-readability.

Importance of data in digital economy:

- **Economic growth**: In a digital economy, data is the central resource. Data is being considered as a nation's new wealth. It acts as fuel to the digital economy.
- **Better targeting of existing policies**: for example, in agriculture, remote sensing and digital land parcel identification systems allow countries to grant direct subsidies to farmers and to enforce other regulatory measures related to the sustainability of agriculture
- **Supporting science and innovation:** Research is increasingly data intensive, making access to data a key enabler for science and innovation.
- **Inclusive growth through SME access to new data**: for example, e-Commerce is proving to be a game changer for SME participation in global value chains.
- **Disaster management:** Data generated from geo Informatics remote sensing platforms can contribute to early warning system for Disasters. This can help in the development of effective strategies and contribute to minimize the potential effects of disasters.

However, it is important to employ data fruitfully and capture its value to ensure a good rank in the emerging new global geo-economic and geo-political hierarchy.

Importance of data sharing:

- **Collaboration**: Data sharing encourages more connection and collaboration among the different governmental bodies, public and other stakeholders.
- **Good governance**: Sharing data increases data circulation and use within the community there by encouraging better transparency, enabling reproducibility of results.
- **Smart People**: Data sharing creates more informed citizenry there by fostering creativity, inclusivity, empowerment and participation.
- **Technology driven innovation**: Data sharing paves the way to develop technology-led innovations which can unlock massive economic value, thereby benefitting even the poorest of poor, the under-represented and the marginalised.

Data Sharing in India:

- **NITI Aayog's AI strategy**: it focuses on the issue of more data sharing within the country and better access to data for domestic businesses.
- **National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP):** NDSAP aims to provide an enabling provision and platform for proactive and open access to the data generated by various Government of India entities.
- **Open Government Data (OGD) Platform India (data.gov.in)**. It is a platform for supporting Open Data initiative of Government of India. It intends to increase transparency in the functioning of Government and also open avenues for many more innovative uses of Government Data to give different perspective.
- **Kris Gopalakrishnan committee on non-personal data**: It recommended for mandatory sharing of non-personal data, as it may be useful for Indian entrepreneurs to develop new and innovative services or products to benefit citizens

Concerns in India:

- **Potential of Open data is largely unused**: For example, Data collected under census and socio-economic census are either not open or unused in unusable formats.
- **Data sets shared are fragmented and not comprehensive**: Data sets released by governments are often inconsistent, incomplete, outdated, published in non-machine readable or inconsistent formats, include duplicates, and lack quality (or any) metadata, thereby reducing re-usability.
- **Issues of Data management, storage and privacy:** collating the details of 1.21 billion people based on different parameters is a monumental task.
- **Timely dissemination of structured data**: For example, the National Crime Research Bureau is yet to release crime data from 2017.

Measures to address concerns: 5C framework

- **Completeness**: The first step is to ensure completeness of data stacks opened for use either through machine-readable formats or direct application programme interfaces (APIs)
- For example, soil data cards will have data on all relevant aspects as well as current emerging technologies such as Blockchain and the Internet of Things to provide the opportunity to automate data collection
- **Comprehensiveness:** This is essential for a data stack or various data sets. Currently, data sets shared in India are somewhat disjointed and not comprehensive

- For example, a comprehensive agri-data set would have digitised data sets on soil data, rainfall, crop production as well as market rates
- *Clustering*: This would mean combining data sets which can lead to the creation of applications such as farm insurance from weather, soil and crop cycle/sale data
- *Building anchor cases or use-cases*: It will encourage data usage. A case in point is Aadhaar/identity data which has seen exponential growth.
- *Setting up a comprehensive governance framework*: It includes an open data council with cross-sector representation to monitor, regulate and build usage after proportionate oversight.

Key recommendation of the Kris Gopalakrishnan committee on non-personal data
- The non-personal data generated in the country can be allowed to be harnessed by various domestic companies and entities.
- To set up a new authority which would be empowered to monitor the use and mining of such non-personal data.
- Treat data as infrastructure, or 'commons', so that data is widely available for all businesses.
- The committee recommends a new legislation, because ensuring and enforcing data sharing will require sufficient legal backing.
- 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.

Categories: The committee has classified non-personal data into three main categories:
- *Public Non-Personal Data*: All the data collected by government and its agencies such as census, data collected by municipal corporations on the total tax receipts in a particular period or any information collected during execution of all publicly funded works
- *Community Non-Personal Data*: Any data about a set of people who have either the same geographic location, religion, job or other common social interests. For example, the data collected by ride-hailing apps, electricity distribution companies among others.
- *Private non-personal data*: It can be defined as those which are produced by individuals which can be derived from application of proprietary software or knowledge.

Need of control and regulation of Community Data:
- Community data gives a basis of detailed and deep intelligence about a community.
- These data sets will help to map consumer biases and ensure targeted delivery of services. It will unlock the doors of economic value and innovation in the country.
- Community Data can be used to manipulate people regarding various aspects of life from being in politics, electoral behaviour, social, economic etc. For example, Uber in transport sector and Amazon in consumer goods.
- Very few corporations have vertically integrated all the digital components involved in delivery of any digital service thus leading to creation of monopolies.
- Dominant digital corporations are building exclusive control over any sector's data as their key business advantage.

Data is crucial, it is a fundamental right for the public in a democracy to be informed. So, the government must ensure the implementation of policy measures and encourage the analysis of public data to make informed policy decision.

A New Security strategy

Syllabus: Security challenges and their management.

In News: The COVID-19 pandemic, a troubled economy and Chinese belligerence on the northern borders have truly delivered a "triple whammy" on India. India needs an overarching national security vision.

The Pre-1999 Security System:

- The procedures established to deal with national security immediately after independence in 1947 were based on a framework recommended by Lord Ismay (Lord Mountbatten's Chief of Staff) to the government of newly independent India.
- The main pillar of this system was **the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC)** under the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) of the armed forces to provide integrated intelligence assessments on defence-related matters to the COSC and the Union Cabinet.
- JIC's mandate was widened to **include both internal and external threats** to national security.
- Political decisions on security issues were taken by the **Cabinet** or its relevant committee.
- In August 1990, the government set up a **National Security Council (NSC)** to evolve an integrated approach to national security policymaking.
- The task force headed by **K.C. Pant**, was requested to recommend an appropriate national security management system.
- Based on the recommendations of the task force, the government constituted an NSC in April 1999, with the Prime Minister, Home Minister, Defence Minister, External Affairs Minister, Finance Minister, and Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission as its members.
- NSC's purpose was to promote **integrated thinking and coordinated application** of the political, military, diplomatic, scientific and technological resources of the State to protect and promote national security goals and objectives.
- **National Security Advisory Board (NSAB)** been constituted in December 1998, as an advisory body of eminent persons outside the government to render advice on national security issues referred to it by the NSC.
- A National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) was set up to assist the NSC, NSAB and SPG. It also inherited the intelligence integration role of the JIC, which merged into the NSCS.

Post-Kargil Development:

- The Cabinet Secretariat Resolution of 16 April 1999 stated that the NSC shall have a National Security Advisor, who shall function as the channel for servicing the NSC.

- The government constituted the **Kargil Review Committee (KRC),** headed by a strategic analyst, K. Subrahmanyam, to review the events leading up to the Kargil War and to recommend measures to safeguard against such armed intrusions.
- The government then constituted a **Group of Ministers (GoM) in April 2000** to review the national security system in its entirety, focusing on external and internal threats.
- In May 2001, the **Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) approved all the recommendations**, except the one on the institution of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), which the CCS felt needed consultation with 'various political parties'.
- Intelligence Coordination Group (ICG), a Technology Coordination Group (TCG) and the National Technical Facilities Organisation were established (National Technical Facilities Organisation was renamed the National Technical Research Organisation [NTRO] in 2004).
- The ICG's role was **to provide 'systematic intelligence oversight'**, take decisions on the allocation of resources to the intelligence agencies, task them and evaluate their output, on the basis of the feedback from the users of the intelligence.
- The TCG was to **oversee the technical intelligence (TECHINT)** capabilities of the intelligence agencies and coordinate their acquisition of 'new, costly, major strategic facilities/ equipment', to maximise their technical capabilities,
- **Multi-Agency Centre (MAC),** set up by the government in 2001, Real-time dissemination of relevant intelligence to law enforcement agencies was to be the responsibility of the Multi-Agency Centre (MAC),
- National Intelligence Grid (**NATGRID**) was established after the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks.
- The purpose of NATGRID was to connect diverse databases, covering telecommunications, Internet usage, property transactions, financial transfers, immigration records, air and rail passenger information and tax returns, to create a strong analytic base for generating early warning of terrorist activities or organised crime. This combined data would then be made available to central intelligence, investigative and tax authorities.
- An **FIU** (Financial Intelligence Unit) was set up in 2004 to monitor major cash transfers, cross-border financial movements, suspicious property transactions and international financial flows with possible terror linkages.
- In January 2003, the CCS approved the appointment of a Commander-inChief (C-in-C) of the **Strategic Forces Command (SFC)** and authorised the first articulation of **India's nuclear doctrine.**
- It confirmed the existence of a **Nuclear Command Authority (NCA**), comprising a Political Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, and an Executive Council, chaired by the NSA, to provide inputs for decision making and execute the directives of the Political Council, which is the sole body that can authorise the use of nuclear weapons
- The posts of Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and the NSA were separated in 2004, but the NSA continued to be a part of the Prime Minister's Office.
- The NSA was to assist the Prime Minister on foreign policy, defence, atomic energy and space issues.

Review and restructuring after 2017-18:
- In 2017, the NSAB initiated an exercise in collaboration with NSCS to review the system.
- The NSCS is consequently being expanded, to induct domain experts from within and outside government.
- Its work is now organised in four verticals, three headed by Deputy NSAs and the fourth, the military vertical, headed by a Military Adviser of the same rank.
- An anomaly created in 1999 has been corrected in 2018, with the reconstitution of the SPG, with NSA as its Chairman.
- A Defence Planning Committee (DPC) was notified by the MoD in April 2018. It was chaired by the NSA and included the three service chiefs, the defence, foreign and expenditure secretaries and the Chief of IDS.
- In October 2018 a Defence Space Agency (DSA) was constituted as a platform for integration and optimal use of space resources.
- In June 2019, the CCS approved the contours of the DSA, which would include representatives of the armed forces, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), and would be tasked with developing a range of platforms to protect Indian assets in space.
- Establishment of a Defence Cyber Agency to develop measures and strategies to defend India's military assets, including critical infrastructure, against cyber threats.
- The functioning of the NSAB has also been reviewed to see how it could be made more responsive to the needs of the national security establishment.
- In January 2019, a diversity of domain expertise has been introduced in NSAB, including (among others) foreign and strategic affairs (including neighbourhood experience), intelligence, internal security, international commerce, finance and emerging technologies.
- In 2019, Centre approved the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and the Department of Military Affairs as the fifth department within the Ministry of Defence.
- The CDS will be a four-star General/Officer who will act as the Principal Military Advisor to the Defence Minister on all tri-services (Army, Navy and Indian Air Force) matters.

Kargil Review Committee:
- The intelligence agencies should be tasked as per the requirements of security agencies.
- There should be close coordination to plug intelligence voids and agencies should be equipped with modern technological tools, even while avoiding unnecessary duplication of expensive, sophisticated technical equipment.
- Such equipment could be centrally procured and used as a common resource by all concerned agencies.
- Recommended broadening the mandates of the Economic Intelligence Council (EIC) and the Central Economic Intelligence Bureau (CEIB), as well as setting up a Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) to monitor currency flows linked to organised crime or terrorism

GOM:
- The GoM had recommended in 2001 that a comprehensive review of the national security management should be undertaken after five years.
- The GoM also recommended fundamental reforms to the system of higher defence management, including: the appointment of a CDS; development of a holistic long-term defence perspective plan, based on rigorous inter- and intra-service prioritisation.
- Creation of a tri-service Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA); and a progressive delegation of decision-making powers to service headquarters, which would become an 'Integrated Headquarters' of the Ministry of Defence (MoD), rather than 'Attached Offices'.

Naresh Chandra commitee:
- In 2011, the government appointed a task force, headed by the then Chairman of the NSAB, Naresh Chandra, to review the system and suggest course corrections as may be required
- The appointment of a Permanent Chairman of COSC (instead of a CDS, on which the members of the task force could not reach a consensus).
- Some suggestions for better integration of the service headquarters and the MoD (unfinished business of the GoM recommendations.
- Improvement of intelligence coordination; and a coherent strategy to source and obtain secure access to critical raw materials for the civilian and defence industries.
- New post of Intelligence Advisor to assist the NSA and the National Intelligence Board on matters relating to coordination in the functioning of intelligence committee.
- Amendment to Prevention of Corruption Act to reassure honest officers, who take important decisions about defence equipment acquisition, so that they are not harassed for errors of judgement or decision taken in good faith.

D B Shekatkar:
- It recommended creating 3 integrated theatre commands:
  - Northern command for the China border.
  - Western command for the Pakistan border and
  - Southern command for the maritime borders.
- As the Northern and Western commands have land borders, Army General could head it owing to their expertise. The southern command could be headed by a Navy Admiral
- The Indian armed forces currently have 17 commands.
- An integrated theatre command envisages a unified command of the three Services, Closure of Military Farms and Army Postal Establishments in peace locations.
- Enhancement in standards for recruitment of clerical staff and drivers in the Army.
- Improving the efficiency of the National Cadet Corps.
- Recommended a roll-on defence budget to have enough capital expenditure available for modernisation as against the present practice of surrendering unspent capital budget at the end of each financial year.

Arun Singh committee on Defence Expenditure:
- It recommended first genuinely integrated Long-Term 15-year Defence Plan.

National Security strategy:

- A national security strategy is a synthesis of foreign, defence, internal security, economic and other policies.
- Formulation of every element of the strategy needs inter-departmental consultations before political decisions are taken; thereafter, it needs coordination to ensure an all-of-government approach to its implementation.

National Security Doctrine:

- **National Security Doctrine** is a stated principle of government policy mainly in foreign or military affairs.
- The difference between doctrine and strategy is that doctrine is only prescriptive in nature; strategy is descriptive — it describes on a broad perspective on how resources are to be used to achieve some goal.
- It is an intellectual exercise involving **multiple stakeholders** in the government, armed forces, academia and think tanks backed by a rigorous iterative process.
- A country's national security policy is determined by many factors, including external threats, geography, political culture, military capabilities, economic needs and public opinion.
- Unlike many other countries, India does not publish a formally articulated National Security Strategy or National Security Doctrine or a White Paper on National Defence.

Need of National Security Strategy:

- India's internal and *external security environment* has changed considerably. Eg; Indo pacific vision of USA, String of perals strategy of China, Galwan valley and Doklam stand offs and Uri and Pulwama misadventures of Pakistan.
- Great power relations are in a state of flux. Eg; dominance of China in South China Sea , US-China rivalry.
- Global commons in space, oceans and cyber are being contested.
- The nature of military conflict has transformed, with space, cyber and electronic systems reinforcing conventional and nuclear forces.
- *Artificial intelligence*, *quantum computing* and other technologies are finding ever-new applications, which are lethal in the hands of terrorists and enemy forces. But their use by defence forces and security agencies could gain them decisive advantages in war and counter-terrorism.
- Social media is a powerful tool for both terrorism and counter-terrorism.
- Cybercrime, sub-national movements, inter-state and inter-regional disputes, demographic disruptions, agrarian distress, food and water security need study, analysis and proper response.
- India needs to thinks about strategic affairs in a systematic, consistent and coherent manner instead of ad hoc arrangements and 'raw wisdom'.

Significance of National Security strategy:

- It would enable government to address the crucial issue of coordination required to formulate and address new security challenges.

- It helps to protect and promote national interests pertaining to security and dissuades adversaries from attempting to play mischief.
- It provides guidance to all stakeholders on policies related to national security. It helps in identification of the military, economic, diplomatic resources needed to meet the challenges.
- It offers reassurance to the citizens that the government has initiated appropriate protective measures to safeguard national security.
- It makes a State's actions predictable. This is useful for reassuring neighbours, including adversaries.

Way forward:

- **"Make in India" in defence**: creating appropriate investment conditions for industry and a defined exports regime.
- **Inter-ministerial coordination**: Matching defence capacities to strategic threats and ambitions requires consultations between the foreign, defence and finance ministries.
- **National Security vision**: The vision must be suitably mandated for the government and the politicians to follow, give guidance and ensure political oversight for every stakeholder to chart their own course.
- **Structural reforms**: Give more powers to the NSC and its subordinate organisations, such as the Strategic Policy Group.
- **Reimagine NSA's role**: NSA plays a vital role in national security however currently he has no legal powers as per the government's allocation of business rules. The K.C. Pant Task Force in the late 1990s had recommended the creation of an NSA with the rank of a Cabinet Minister.
- **Powerless NSC:** The National Security Council (NSC) set up in 1998 almost never meets. It is primarily because NSC is an advisory body, with the Cabinet Committee on Security being the executive body.
- **Fix accountability**: the NSA's powers have increased over the years, but he is not accountable to Parliament.
- **Defence manufacturing**: It needs a cultural change in the way the DRDO is currently operating" to improve domestic defence production.
- **Conflict resolution**: There is a need to initiate structured programmes that bring together civil society members, family groups, educationists, religious teachers and even surrendered terrorists in an effort to roll back radicalisation.

POLITY

Roles, limitations of Select Committees and other parliamentary panels

News: In the current Lok Sabha, 17 Bills were referred to committees.

Facts:

- *Parliamentary Committees:* They are established to study and deal with various matters that cannot be directly handled by the legislature due to their volume.
- *Constitutional Provision:* Indian Constitution mentions two kinds of parliamentary committees under Article 118 (1) of the constitution-
  - Standing Committees
  - Ad Hoc Committees
- *Classification of committees in Parliament on basis of their work, their membership and the length of their tenure:*
  - *Departmentally related Standing Committees:*
    - These are committees that examine bills, budgets and policies of ministries. DRSCs were first formed in 1993.
    - There are 24 such committees and between them, they focus on the working of different ministries.
    - Each committee has 31 MPs, 21 from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha.
    - They have a tenure of one year, then they are reconstituted and their work continues throughout the term of a Lok Sabha.
    - These members are to be nominated by the Speaker of Lok Sabha or the Chairman of Rajya Sabha respectively.
    - Ministers are not members; key committees like those related to Finance, Defence, Home etc are usually chaired by Opposition MPs.
  - *Joint Parliamentary Committees (JPC)*: They are constituted for a specific purpose, with MPs from both Houses.
  - *Select Committee*: They are formed for examining a particular Bill and its membership is limited to MPs from one House. Example: In 2019, Rajya Sabha referred the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019 to a Select Committee of 23 of its MPs from different parties.
- *When does a committee examine a Bill?* A bill can reach a committee for examination in three ways:
  - When the minister piloting the Bill recommends to the House that his Bill be examined by a Select Committee of the House or a joint committee of both Houses.
  - If the minister makes no such motion, it is up to the presiding officer of the House to decide whether to send a Bill to a departmentally related Standing Committee.

- o A Bill passed by one House can be sent by the other House to its Select Committee.
- **Result of sending a bill to a Committee:**
  - o The committee undertakes a detailed examination of the Bill. It invites comments and suggestions from experts, stakeholders and citizens. It then provides a report recommending measures to strengthen the bill.
  - o The report of the committee is of a recommendatory nature.

SC lets telecom firms stagger AGR payments over 10 years

News: The Supreme Court has said that telecom operators could pay their adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues to the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) over the next 10 years starting April 1,2021.

Facts:

- **What is AGR?** Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) is the annual license fee (LF) and spectrum usage charges (SUC) that telecom operators are charged by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT).
- **How is it calculated and what's the contention?** As per DoT, the charges are calculated based on all revenues earned by a telco – including non-telecom related sources such as deposit interests and asset sales. On the other hand, telecoms insist that AGR should comprise only the revenues generated from telecom services.
- **What's the issue now?**
  - o In 2005, Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) challenged the government's definition for AGR calculation.
  - o In 2015, the TDSAT (Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal) stayed the case in favour of telecom companies and held that AGR includes all receipts except capital receipts and revenue from non-core sources such as rent, profit on the sale of fixed assets, dividend, interest and miscellaneous income.
  - o However, setting aside TDSAT's order, the Supreme Court in 2019 upheld the definition of AGR as stipulated by the DoT.

Where are the funds collected through cess parked?

News: The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, released its latest audit report of government accounts.

Facts:

- **What is the current issue?**
  - o The Union government withheld in the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI) more than ₹1.1 lakh crore out of the almost ₹2.75 lakh crore collected through various cesses in 2018-19.
  - o Centre retained ₹47,272 crore of GST compensation cess in the Consolidated Fund instead of crediting it to the GST compensation fund.
- **What is the impact?**

- o Centre retaining GST compensation cess undermines the purpose of this particular cess which is to help recompense States for the loss of revenue on account of their having joined the GST regime.
  - o The share of revenue to the Centre's from cess had risen to 11.88% of the estimated gross tax receipts in 2018-19, from 6.88% in 2012-13. This increasing share of cess in the Union government's tax receipts has a direct impact on fiscal devolution.
- **What is a Cess?**
  - o A cess is an earmarked tax that is collected for a specific purpose and ought to be spent only for that.
  - o Cess may initially go to the CFI but has to be used for the purpose for which it was collected.
  - o Cess collections are supposed to be transferred to specified Reserve Funds that Parliament has approved for each of these levies.
  - o Every cess is collected after Parliament has authorised its creation through an enabling legislation that specifies the purpose for which the funds are being raised.
  - o Article 270 of the Constitution allows cess to be excluded from the purview of the divisible pool of taxes that the Union government must share with the States.
  - o The government has levied 42 cesses at various points in time since 1944.

Additional Information:

Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG):
- It is a constitutional body established under Article 148 of the Constitution of India.
- *Purpose*: CAG audits all receipts and expenditure of the Government of India and the state governments, including those of bodies and authorities substantially financed by the government.
- *Appointment*: CAG is appointed by the President of India following a recommendation by the Prime Minister.

OBC sub-categorisation: findings, progress by a panel so far

News: Government appointed Commission has been examining sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBC) for almost three years now.

Facts:
- **What is sub-categorisation of OBCs?** OBCs are granted 27% reservation under the central government. The sub-categorisation is needed as only a few affluent communities among the Central List of OBCs have secured a major part of this reservation.
  - o Hence, sub-categorisation would ensure equitable distribution of representation among all OBC communities.

- *Who is examining sub-categorisation?* The Commission to Examine Sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes was appointed in 2017. It is headed by retired Delhi High Court Chief Justice G Rohini.
- *What are its terms of references?* The terms of reference of the commission includes:
    o To examine the extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation among the castes or communities included in the broad category of OBCs with reference to such classes included in the Central List;
    o To work out the mechanism, criteria, norms and parameters in a scientific approach for sub-categorisation within such OBCs;
    o To take up the exercise of identifying the respective castes or communities or sub-castes or synonyms in the Central List of OBCs and classifying them into their respective sub-categories.
    o To study the various entries in the Central List of OBCs and recommend correction of any repetitions, ambiguities, inconsistencies and errors of spelling or transcription.

Pointly For Polity

1. *Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB):* The Election Commission of India (ECI) organized an International Webinar on the Theme "Issues, Challenges and Protocols for Conducting Elections during COVID-19: Sharing Country Experiences' marking its completion of one year of Chairmanship of A-WEB. A-WEB is largest association of Election Management Bodies (EMBs) worldwide. At present A-WEB has 115 EMBs as Members & 16 Regional Associations/Organisations as Associate Members.
2. *Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda Bill, 2020:* The bill aims to merge three institutes into one integrated centre which will be called the Institute of Teaching and Research in Ayurveda. It will be based in Jamnagar, Gujarat. It will be statutory in nature and the first Ayurveda institution to be given the status of institution of national importance.

POLICY

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh unveils Defence Acquisition Procedure – 2020

News: The Defence Minister has unveiled the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) – 2020

Facts:

Key Features:

- *Notify a List of Weapons/Platforms for Ban on Import*: Relevant incorporation has been done in the DAP to ensure that NO equipment as mentioned in the list is procured ex import post timelines notified.
- *New Category of Buy (Global – Manufacture in India*): The new category incorporates 'manufacture of either the entire/part of the equipment or spares/assemblies/sub-assemblies/Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility for the equipment, through its subsidiary in India.

- *Revised Offset Guidelines*: The Offset guidelines have been revised, wherein preference will be given to manufacture of complete defence products over components and various multipliers have been added to give incentivisation in discharge of Offsets.
- *Project management unit*: Setting up of a project management unit (PMU) has been mandated to support contract management. The PMU will facilitate obtaining advisory and consultancy support in specified areas to streamline the acquisition process.
- *FDI in Defence Manufacturing*: Provisions have been incorporated like a new category 'Buy (Global — Manufacture in India)', to encourage foreign companies to set up manufacturing through its subsidiary in India.
- *Enhancement in Indigenous Content (IC)*

Category		DPP 2016	DAP 2020
Buy (Indian-IDDM)	Min 40%	Min 50%	
Buy (Indian)	Min 40%	Indigenous design — Min 50% Otherwise – Min 60%	
Buy & Make (Indian)	Min 50% of Make	Min 50% of Make	
Buy (Global – Manufacture in India)		Min 50% of Buy plus Make	
Buy (Global)		Min 30% for Indian vendors	

Additional Information:
- DAP 2020 is the renamed iteration of the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP). The first DPP was promulgated in the year 2002.
- The DAP remains in place for a period of five years. The last DAP was issued in 2016.

Lok Sabha passes several bills including National Forensic Science University Bill 2020

News: The Lok Sabha has passed National Forensic Science University Bill 2020, Rastriya Raksha University Bill, 2020 and Bilateral Netting of Qualified Financial Contracts Bill, 2020.

Facts:

National Forensic Science University Bill, 2020: It establishes National Forensic Science University as an institute of national importance.

- The proposed university would facilitate and promote studies and research and help achieve excellence in the field of forensic science along with applied behavioural science studies, law, criminology and other allied areas.

Rashtriya Raksha University Bill, 2020: It seeks to provide for the establishment of the Rashtriya Raksha University, Gujarat.

- *Key objectives of the University:*
  o providing dynamic and high standards of learning and research,

o providing a working environment dedicated to advancing research, education and training in the domain of policing.

Bilateral Netting of Qualified Financial Contracts Bill, 2020: It seeks to provide a legal framework for bilateral netting of qualified financial contracts which are over the counter derivatives contracts.

Additional Information: Bilateral netting: It refers to offsetting the claims arising from dealings between two parties to determine the net amount payable or receivable from one party to the other

Aircraft (Amendment) Bill 2020

News: The Rajya Sabha has passed the Aircraft (Amendment) Bill 2020

Facts:

- It seeks to amend the Aircraft Act, 1934 which regulates the manufacture, possession, use, operation, sale, import and export of civil aircrafts, and licensing of aerodromes.

Key Features:

- It provides statutory status to 3 bodies under ministry of civil Aviation. These include:
    o Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)
    o Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS)
    o Aircraft Accidents Investigation Bureau (AAIB).
- The bill adds air navigation services to the list for which the central government can make rules. The other matters include registration of aircraft, regulating air transport services, and prohibition of flight over any specified area.

Additional Information:

- **Directorate General of Civil Aviation:** It is the regulatory body in the field of Civil Aviation, primarily dealing with safety issues. It is responsible for regulation of air transport services and for enforcement of civil air regulations, air safety, and airworthiness standards.
- **Bureau of Civil Aviation Security**: It lays down standards and measures with respect to security of civil flights at international and domestic airports in India.
- **Aircraft Accidents Investigation Bureau**: It is responsible for classification of "Safety Occurrences" involving aircraft operating in the Indian Airspace into Accidents, Serious Incidents and Incidents.

Prime Minister launches Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, e-Gopala mobile app

News: The Prime Minister digitally launched the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) and also inaugurated the e-Gopala app.

Facts:

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY):

- It is a flagship scheme for focused and sustainable development of the fisheries sector in the country as a part of the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.

- *Nodal Ministry*: Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries.
- *Aim:*
  o Enhance fish production by an additional 70 lakh tonne and increase fisheries export earnings to Rs.1,00,000 crore by 2024-25.
  o Double the incomes of fishers and fish farmers.
  o Reduce post-harvest losses from 20-25% to about 10%.
  o Generate an additional 55 lakhs direct and indirect gainful employment opportunities in the fisheries sector and allied activities.
- *Investment and Duration:* An estimated investment of Rs. 20,050 crores for a period of 5 years from financial year (FY) 2020-21 to FY 2024-25 in all States/Union Territories.
- *Components:* The scheme has two components — Central Sector Scheme (CS) and Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS).
- *Other significant Features*:
  o The scheme Adopt 'Cluster or Area-based Approaches' and create fisheries clusters through backward and forward linkages.
  o It focuses especially on employment generation activities such as seaweed and ornamental fish cultivation.

e-Gopala App:
- It is a comprehensive breed improvement marketplace and information portal for direct use of farmers.
- *Features*: The app will provide solutions on the aspects of:
  o Managing livestock including buying and selling of disease-free germplasm in all forms (semen, embryos, etc.).
  o Availability of quality breeding services (Artificial Insemination, veterinary first aid, vaccination, treatment, etc.).
  o Guiding farmers for animal nutrition and treatment of animals using appropriate ayurvedic medicine/ethnoveterinary medicine.
  o Providing a mechanism to send alerts and inform farmers about various government schemes and campaigns in the area.

India Post launches Five Star Villages Scheme
News: Department of Posts launched Five Star Villages Scheme.
Facts:
- *Aim:* To ensure universal coverage of flagship postal schemes in rural areas of the country by increasing public awareness and reach of postal products and services.
- *Schemes Covered under the Five Star scheme include*:
  o Savings Bank accounts, Recurring Deposit Accounts, NSC / KVP certificates
  o Sukanya Samriddhi Accounts/ PPF Accounts
  o Funded Post Office Savings Account linked India Post Payments Bank Accounts
  o Postal Life Insurance Policy and

- o Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana Account / Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana Account.
- *Rating System:* One Scheme is equal to one star of rating. Therefore, if a village attains universal coverage for four schemes from the above list, then that village gets four-star status and so on.
- *Pilot Implementation:* The scheme is being launched on pilot basis in Maharashtra; based on the experience here, it will be implemented nation-wide.
- *Implementation:* The scheme will be implemented by a team of five Gramin Dak Sevaks who will be assigned a village for marketing of all products savings and insurance schemes of the Department of Posts.
  - o This team will be headed by the Branch Post Master of the concerned Branch Office.

Union Cabinet approves Mission Karmayogi

News: The Union Cabinet approved the Mission Karmayogi - National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB).

Facts:

- *Mission Karmayogi:* It is a nationwide programme to lay the foundation for capacity building of civil servants so that they remain entrenched in Indian Culture while they learn the best practices across the world.
- *Aim:* To prepare Indian civil servants for the future by making them more creative, constructive, imaginative, proactive, innovative, progressive, professional, energetic, transparent and technology enabled.
- *How will Mission Karmayogi unfold?*
  - o *iGOT Karmayogi:* The mission will be delivered by Integrated Government Online Training-iGOT Karmayogi Platform. It will act as a launchpad for National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building to enable a comprehensive reform of the capacity building apparatus at the individual, institutional and process levels.
  - o *Human Resources Council:* It will be set up under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister comprising select Union Ministers, Chief Ministers who will provide strategic direction to the task of Civil Services Reform and capacity building.
  - o *Coordination Unit*: It will be headed by Cabinet Secretary consisting of select secretaries and cadre controlling authorities.
  - o *Capacity Building Commission:* It will include experts in related fields and global professionals. This commission will prepare and monitor annual capacity building plans and audit human resources available in the government.
  - o *Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV):* It will be a "not-for-profit" company under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013. It will own and manage iGOT-Karmayogi platform to create and operationalise the content, market place and manage key business services of iGOT platform.

- *Funding*: To cover around 46 lakh central employees, a sum of Rs 510 crore will be spent over a period of 5 years from 2020-21 to 2024-25. The expenditure is partly funded by multilateral assistance to the tune of $50 million.

Govt announces 3rd phase of 'Back to Village' programme in J&K

News: Jammu and Kashmir Government announced the third phase of ambitious Back to Village(B2V) programme.

Facts:

- *Back to Village(B2V) programme*: The programme aims to involve the people of the state and government officials in a joint effort to deliver the mission of equitable development. It also aims to energize Panchayats and direct development efforts in rural areas through community participation.

- *Four main goals*:
  o energising panchayats.
  o collecting feedback on delivery of government schemes and programmes.
  o capturing specific economic potential.
  o undertaking assessment of needs of villages.

- *Phases*:
  o Phase I: To understand the people's grievances and demands.
  o Phase-II: It focused on the devolution of powers to panchayats and tried to understand how these panchayats are functioning and what are the grievances and demands
  o Phase-III: It has been designed on the format for grievance redressal.

- *Features*:
  o As part of the programme, each gazetted officer will be assigned a gram panchayat where he/she will interact and obtain feedback from the panchayat representatives about their concerns, developmental needs and economic potential of the area.
  o The feedback obtained will help the government in needs assessment and subsequently to tailor the various central and state government schemes/programmes in improving delivery of village-specific services and making the village life better in terms improved amenities and economic upliftment.

Pesticides Management Bill, 2020 will hurt farmers' livelihood, say experts

News: The Pesticides Management Bill (PMB), 2020 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha in March 2020. It seeks to replace the Insecticides Act, 1968.

Facts:

- *Aim*: To protect the interest of farmers and ensure they get safe and effective pesticides.
- *Key Features*:

- o *Information to Framers*: Farmers would be empowered to get all information regarding the available pesticides, their strength, weaknesses, and risks from the dealers
- o *Registration:* Any person who wants to import, manufacture, or export pesticides would have to register under the new bill and provide all details regarding expected performance, efficacy, safety, usage instructions
- o *Compensation*: Provision to provide compensation if there is any farm loss because of low quality or spurious pesticides
- o *Information for public:* All the information regarding the available pesticides would be available in the public domain, in all languages in digital format.

Additional Information: The Insecticides Act, 1968 currently governs the registration, manufacturing, export, sale and use of pesticides in India.

New science policy: institutes to be rated on support for women staff

News: The Department of Science and Technology is developing a framework to rate and rank science institutes depending on the proportion of women employed. It will be part of the New Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2020.

Facts:

- It is fifth Science and Technology Policy.
- *Track I:* It involves an extensive public and expert consultation process through Science Policy Forum, a dedicated platform for soliciting inputs from larger public and expert pools during and after the policy drafting process.
- *Track II*: It comprises experts-driven thematic consultations to feed evidence-informed recommendations into the policy drafting process. 21 focused thematic groups have been constituted for this purpose.
- *Track III:* It involves extensive intra-state and intra-department consultation with Ministries and States.
- *Track IV:* It constitutes an apex level multi-stakeholder consultation.

Women in Science: According to the Task Force on Women in Science, set up by the government in 2005,

- There has been a growth in enrolment of women at the university level, from 10.9% in 1950-51 to 39.4% in 2000-2001.

- There are huge regional differences with women representing over 50% enrolment in Goa, Kerala, Pondicherry and Punjab, and less than 35% in Bihar, Rajasthan, Odisha and Arunachal Pradesh.

Additional Information:

Vigyan Jyoti:

- *Nodal ministry*: Ministry of Science & Technology (DST).
- *Coverage*: The programme covers girl students from grade 9 to 12.
- *Aim:* To create a level-playing field for the meritorious girls in high school to pursue Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) in their higher education and become self-reliant.

GATI:

- GATI Stands for Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI).
- *Aim*: To develop a comprehensive Charter and a framework for assessing Gender Equality in STEM.

Lok Sabha passes the Major Port Authorities Bill, 2020

News: Lok Sabha has passed the Major Port Authorities Bill, 2020. The bill seeks to replace the Major Port Trusts Act, 1963.

Facts:

- *Objective:* The Bill seeks to provide for regulation, operation and planning of major ports in the country and provide greater autonomy to these ports.
- The bill aims to reorient the governance model in central ports to landlord port model in line with the successful global practice.
- *Key Features*:
  - o Board of Major Port Authority: The bill provides for the creation of a Board of Major Port Authority for each major port. These Boards will replace the existing Port Trusts. It also empowers the Board of Port Authority to raise loans and issue securities for the purposes of the capital expenditure and working capital requirements of such port authority.
  - o *Adjudicatory Board*: It seeks to constitute an Adjudicatory Board for adjudication of disputes among major ports, Public Private Partnership concessionaries and captive users.

- o *Tariff Authority for Major Ports (TAMP)* has now been given powers to fix tariff which will act as a reference tariff for purposes of bidding for PPP projects. PPP operators will be free to fix tariff based on market conditions.
- o *Corporate Social Responsibility*: It provides for the provision for Corporate Social Responsibility measures within the port limits.

Additional Information: India has 12 major ports— Deendayal (erstwhile Kandla), Mumbai, JNPT, Marmugao, New Mangalore, Cochin, Chennai, Kamarajar (earlier Ennore), V O Chidambarnar, Visakhapatnam, Paradip and Kolkata (including Haldia), Vadhavan in Maharashtra

Bill to amend FCRA is an attempt by government to target critics: Oppn

News: Foreign Contribution Regulation (Amendment) Bill 2020 was introduced in the Lok Sabha. The Bill amends the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010.

Facts:

Key provisions:

- *Public servants included in the prohibited category*: FCRA 2010 prohibits certain persons to accept any foreign contribution. These include: election candidates, editor or publisher of a newspaper, judges, government servants, members of any legislature, and political parties. The Bill adds public servants to this list.
- *Transfer of foreign contribution:* Under the Act, foreign contribution cannot be transferred to any other person unless such person is also registered to accept foreign contribution. The Bill amends this to prohibit the transfer of foreign contribution to any other person.
- *Aadhaar for registration:* The Act states that a person may accept foreign contribution if they have obtained a certificate of registration from central government or obtained prior permission from the government to accept foreign contribution. The bill makes Aadhaar mandatory for registration.
- *Restriction in utilisation of foreign contribution:* The Bill gives government powers to stop utilisation of foreign funds by an organisation through a "summary enquiry".
- *Reduction in use of foreign contribution*: The bill decreases administrative expenses through foreign funds by an organisation to 20% from 50% earlier.

Additional Information:

Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010: It regulates the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contribution by individuals, associations and companies.

Lok Sabha passes Bill to bring cooperative banks under RBI supervision

News: The Lok Sabha has passed Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2020. The Bill proposes amendments to the Banking Regulation Act, 1949

Facts:

- *Aim:* to bring cooperative banks under the supervision of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

- *Need:* The absence of regulatory oversight by RBI on par with commercial banks has contributed to the poor performance of co-operative banks.
- *Key Features:*
  - The Banking Regulation Act does not apply to certain co-operative societies such as primary agricultural credit societies and co-operative land mortgage banks. The Bill amends this to state that the Act will not apply to: (i) primary agricultural credit societies and (ii) co-operative societies whose principal business is long term financing for agricultural development.
  - The Bill allows RBI to initiate a scheme for reconstruction or amalgamation without imposing a moratorium.
  - The Bill provides that a co-operative bank may issue equity, preference, or special shares on face value or at a premium to its members or to any other person residing within its area of operation.

Additional Information:

Co-operative Banks: These are financial entities established on a co-operative basis and belonging to their members. This means that the customers of a co-operative bank are also its owners.

Types:

1. *Primary Co-operative Credit Society*: The primary co-operative credit society is an association of borrowers and non-borrowers residing in a particular locality.
2. *Central Co-operative Banks*: These are the federations of primary credit societies in a district and are of two types-those having a membership of primary societies only and those having a membership of societies as well as individuals.
3. *State Co-operative Banks*: The state co-operative bank is a federation of central co-operative bank and acts as a watchdog of the co-operative banking structure in the state. The state co-operative banks lend money to central co-operative banks and primary societies and not directly to the farmers.
4. *Land Development Banks*: The Land development banks are organized in 3 tiers namely; state, central, and primary level and they meet the long-term credit requirements of the farmers for developmental purposes.
5. *Urban Co-operative Banks*: The term Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs), have not been formally defined. It refers to primary co-operative banks located in urban and semi-urban areas.

Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill, 2020

News: Government of India has introduced "The Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Bill, 2020" in the Lok Sabha.

Facts:

- *Aim:* To regulate the assisted reproductive technology (ART) clinics and the assisted reproductive technology banks, prevention of misuse, safe and ethical practice of assisted reproductive technology services.
- *Key Provisions of the bill:*

- o **National Board**: It shall lay down code of conduct to be observed by persons working at ART clinics, to set the minimum standards of physical infrastructure, laboratory and diagnostic equipment and expert manpower to be employed by clinics and banks.
- o **Regulatory Boards at State Level:** The States and Union Territories shall constitute the State Boards and State Authorities. It shall have the responsibility to follow the policies and plans laid by the National Board for clinics and Banks in the State.
- o **National Registry and Registration Authority**: It will maintain a Central database and assist the National Board in its functioning.
- o **Punishment:** The bill also proposes for a stringent punishment for those practising sex selections, sale of human embryos or gametes, running agencies/rackets/organisations for such unlawful practices.

Additional Facts:

Assisted reproductive technology (ART): It includes medical procedures used primarily to address infertility. It involves procedures such as In Vitro Fertilization (IVF), gamete donation, intrauterine insemination (IUI) among others.

Pointly For Policy

1. **KRITAGYA:** It is hackathon planned by Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) under National Agricultural Higher Education Project. It aims to promote potential technology solutions for enhancing farm mechanization with special emphasis on women friendly equipments.

2. **Vaishvik Bhartiya Vaigyanik (Vaibhav) Summit**: It will be organized by Department of Science and Technology and Defence Research and Development Organization. It aims at developing mechanisms for involving Indian Diaspora working in top universities and R&D organisations across the world, to further enhance the knowledge-base of Indian Research and Academic Institutions.

3. **KIRAN:** It is a 24/7 toll-free mental health rehabilitation helpline launched by Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. It can be called from landline and mobile phones across the country at the number 1800-599-0019.

4. **AICTE-SPICES (Scheme for Promoting Interests, Creativity and Ethics among Students):** Launched by Ministry of Education, it aims to promote healthy co-curricular activity amongst the students for their all-round development.

5. **SAROD-Ports (Society for Affordable Redressal of Disputes – Ports):** Launched by Ministry of Shipping, it aims to provide an Affordable Dispute Redressal Mechanism for all kinds of disputes of the maritime sector with the panel of technical experts as arbitrators.

6. **Atma Nirbhar Bharat ARISE-Atal New India Challenges**: Launched by Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog, it aims to promote applied research and innovation in Indian MSMEs and start-ups. Under this programme, NITI Aayog has announced 15 new challenges for India's startups and MSME ecosystem to address.

7. **National Immunogenicity & Biologics Evaluation Center (NIBEC):** It is a first of its kind centre in the country developed for evaluation of the immunogenicity of vaccines & antiviral properties of drugs/preparations. It has been established jointly by Bharati Vidyapeeth University through its constituent unit Interactive Research School for Health Affairs (IRSHA) and BIRAC-DBT through National Biopharma Mission.

8. **Rashtriya Poshan Mah**: The third Rashirtya Poshan Mah was celebrated in September under POSHAN Abhiyan (PM's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment). It aims to encourage Jan Bhagidaari in order to create a Jan Andolan for addressing malnutrition amongst young children and women and to ensure health and nutrition for everyone.

9. **Entrepreneurs in Residence (EIR**): The Department of Science & Technology (DST) secretary has launched a brochure featuring EIR under the National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations (NIDHI) programme. EIR aims to inspire the best talents to be entrepreneurs, to minimise the risk involved in pursuing start- ups and to partially set off their opportunity costs of high paying jobs.

10. **COVID-19 Ignition Grants**: It is an initiative by the U.S.-India Science and Technology Endowment Fund (USISTEF) to support promising joint U.S.-India S&T based entrepreneurial initiatives to address the COVID-19 challenge.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

US-India 2020 Summit
News: Indian Prime minister delivered a special keynote address at the US-India 2020 Summit.
Facts:

- **US-India 2020 Summit:** The summit was organized by the US India Strategic and Partnership Forum (USISPF).
- **Aim:** To focus on key areas of India-US bilateral cooperation including strategic energy ties, trade and investment, healthcare, collaboration in fintech, technology and India's position in the global supply chain.
- **Theme:** US-India: Navigating New Challenges.

  Additional Facts:
- **USISPF**: It is a non-profit organization established in 2017.
  - **Objective:** To strengthen India-US bilateral and strategic partnership through policy advocacy in the fields of economic growth, entrepreneurship, employment-creation and innovation.

India Attends Key Meeting Of BIMSTEC
News: India attended a Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of BIMSTEC under the chairmanship of Sri Lanka to discuss ways to deepen cooperation among the member nations and holding of the next summit of the grouping.
Facts:

- *Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC):* It is a regional organization founded in 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration.
- *Aim:* To create an enabling environment for economic development; accelerate social progress and promote collaboration on matters of common interest in the region.
- *Members:* It comprises seven Member States: five deriving from South Asia, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and two from Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Thailand.
- *Headquarters:* Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- *First Summit:* The First Summit Meeting of the Heads of the BIMSTEC Countries was held in Bangkok, Thailand in 2004.
- The Fourth Summit was held in Kathmandu, Nepal in 2018.

73rd session of WHO South East Asia Region

News: The 73rd session of WHO South East Asia Region was held under the Chairmanship of Minister of Health, Thailand.

Facts:

- *WHO South East Asia Region (SEAR):* It was established at the First World Health Assembly in 1948.
- *Objective:* To address persisting and emerging epidemiological and demographic challenges in the South East Asia Region.
- *Member States:* It has 11 Member States - Bangladesh, Bhutan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste.
- *Regional Office:* New Delhi.
- *Programmes:* The Region has eight flagship priorities.
    o Measles and rubella elimination
    o preventing non-communicable diseases
    o reducing maternal, under-five and neonatal mortality
    o universal health coverage with a focus on human resources for health and essential medicines
    o combating antimicrobial resistance
    o scaling up capacities for emergency risk management
    o eliminating neglected tropical diseases and accelerating efforts to end TB.

Israel, UAE and Bahrain sign Abraham Accord

News: Israel Prime Minister and foreign ministers of the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain signed the historic **Abraham Accord** which is the first Arab-Israeli peace deal in 26 years.

Facts:

- *What does Abraham Accord say?* As per the accord, the UAE and Bahrain will establish embassies, exchange ambassadors, cooperate and work together with Israel across a range of sectors including tourism, trade, healthcare and security.
- *Previous agreements:* Earlier, there were only two peace deals signed between Israel and the Arab States in more than a quarter of a century: **a)** Egypt was the first Arab State to sign a peace deal with Israel in 1979 **b)** Jordan had signed a peace pact in 1994.

Hardening stance, China rejects Ladakh UT, raises 1959 claim line

News: China said it does not recognise the Union Territory of Ladakh and is opposed to the construction of Indian infrastructure there.

Facts:

India- China Border Dispute:

- The border dispute can be grouped into three different sectors: The Eastern, Central and Western.
- *Eastern Sector:* The disputed boundary in the Eastern Sector of the India-China border is over the McMahon Line. It was formerly referred to as the North East Frontier Agency and is now called Arunachal Pradesh.
- *Middle Sector:* The states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand shares border with Tibet (China).
- *Western Sector:*
    - The dispute pertains to Johnson line and McDonald Line. The Johnson's line (proposed in 1865) shows Aksai Chin in Jammu and Kashmir i.e. under India's control whereas McDonald Line (proposed in 1893) places it under China's control.
    - Currently, Line of Actual Control (LAC) separates Indian areas of Jammu and Kashmir from Aksai Chin.
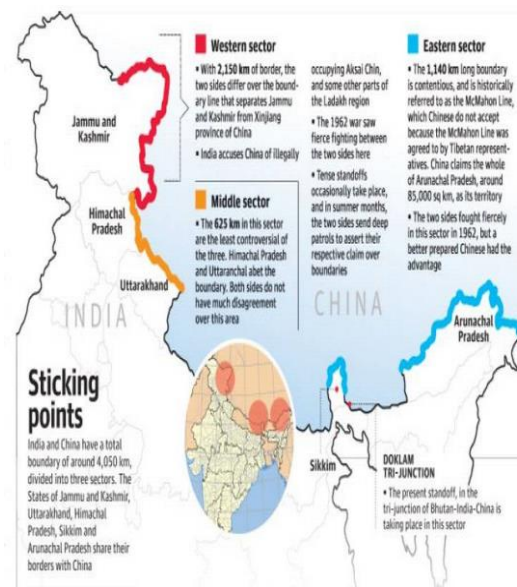
IBSA grouping issue joint statement calling for UNSC reforms

News: External Affairs Minister of India has chaired the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Foreign Ministers meet.

Facts:

- The countries called for accelerated and comprehensive reforms of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

- They also agreed to extend their support to African Union in accordance with the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration.
- **Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte declaration:** It was adopted by the African Union in 2003 to call for at least 2 permanent and 5 to 2 non-permanent UNSC seats to be given to African countries at UNSC.

Additional Facts:

IBSA: It is a unique Forum that brings together India, Brazil and South Africa. The grouping was formalized and named the IBSA Dialogue Forum when the Foreign Ministers of the three countries met in Brasilia in 2003 and issued the Brasilia Declaration.

Cooperation in IBSA is on three fronts:

- Forum for consultation and coordination on global and regional political issues.
- Trilateral collaboration on concrete areas/projects, through fourteen working groups and six People-to-People Forums for the common benefit of three countries and
- Assisting other developing countries by taking up projects in the latter through IBSA Fund.

IBSA Fund: It was established in 2004 and became operational in 2006 to support projects on a demand driven basis through partnerships with local governments, national institutions and implementing partners.

Pointly For International Relations

1. **New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty):** Russia rejected US terms and conditions on New START treaty. It is a nuclear arms reduction treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation. It was signed in 2010. The treaty limits the US and Russia to possess a maximum of 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers well below Cold War caps.

2. **Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services Agreement**: It has been signed by India and Japan. The agreement allows the militaries of the two countries to use each other's bases and facilities for repair and replenishment of supplies.

3. **Indo-Pacific trilateral dialogue**: The first Indo-Pacific trilateral dialogue was held between India, Australia and France. It sought to build strong bilateral ties that the three countries share with each other and synergise their respective strengths to ensure a peaceful, secure, prosperous and rules-based Indo-Pacific Region.

ECONOMY

RBI releases revised Priority Sector Lending (PSL) guidelines

News: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released revised priority sector lending (PSL) guidelines to augment funding for COVID-19 impacted companies.

Facts:

- **Aim:** To align Priority Sector lending with emerging national priorities and bring sharper focus on inclusive development.
- **Key Revised PSL Guidelines:**

- o Bank finance for start-ups (up to ₹50 crore), loans to farmers for installation of solar power plants for solarisation of grid connected agriculture pumps and loans for setting up Compressed BioGas (CBG) plants have been included as fresh categories eligible for finance under the priority sector.
- o The targets prescribed for "small and marginal farmers" and "weaker sections" are being increased in a phased manner.
- o The loan limits for renewable energy have been doubled and for improvement of health infrastructure, credit limit for health infrastructure (including those under 'Ayushman Bharat') has been doubled.

Additional Facts:

- *Priority Sector lending (PSL):* It means those sectors which the Government and RBI consider as important for the development of the basic needs of the country and are to be given priority over other sectors. The banks are mandated to encourage the growth of such sectors with adequate and timely credit.
- Under this, Commercial banks including foreign banks are required to mandatorily earmark 40% of the adjusted net bank credit for priority sector lending.
- Regional rural banks and small finance banks will have to allocate 75% of adjusted net bank credit to PSL.
- *Categories:* a) Agriculture b) Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises c) Export Credit d) Education e) Housing f) Social Infrastructure g) Renewable Energy and h) Others.

Limit imposed on total rewards under Merchandise Exports from India Scheme

News: Government of India has decided to cap export incentives under Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS) at Rs.2 crore per exporter on outbound shipments made during September-December, 2020.

Facts:

- *Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS):* It was introduced in the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2015-20.
- *Objective*: To offset infrastructural inefficiencies and associated costs involved in exporting goods which are manufactured in India including products manufactured by the MSME Sector.

- The Government of India has announced a new WTO-compliant scheme called Remission of Duties or Taxes on Export Product (RoDTEP) which will replace MEIS scheme starting 1 January, 2021.

Additional Facts:

- ***Remission of Duties or Taxes on Export Product (RoDTEP):*** The scheme aims to reimburse taxes/ duties/ levies at the central, state and local level which are currently not being refunded under any other mechanism, but which are incurred in the process of manufacture and distribution of exported products.
  - o Finance ministry has set up a committee under the chairmanship of former commerce secretary GK Pillai to finalise the rates under RoDTEP that will allow reimbursement of all embedded taxes including local levies paid on inputs by exporters.

Overall FDI rises 10% in FY20, but money coming in from Cayman Islands jumps 305%

News: Reserve Bank of India released the data on the Foreign direct investment (FDI) into India.

Facts:

- Singapore and Mauritius remained the major source countries accounting for about 50% of total FDI flows in 2019-20.
  - o They were followed by the Netherlands, the Cayman Islands, US and Japan.
- The FDI from Cayman Islands has jumped 305% to $3.49 billion during 2019-20, as against $863 million in 2018. The main activity of FDI was the financial services.

FDI INFLOWS (IN $ MILLION)

Year	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Total	37,366	38,744	42,629
Singapore	9,273	14,632	12,612
Mauritius	13,415	6,570	7,498
The Netherlands	2,677	2,519	5,295
Cayman Islands	1,140	863	3,496
USA	1,973	2,823	3,401

Source: RBI

- Most of FDI equity flows went to the services sector including communication services, retail and wholesale trade, financial services, computer and business services and the manufacturing sector.

Kamath committee picks 26 sectors for loan restructuring, says RBI

News: Reserve Bank of India released the K V Kamath-led Committee report and has broadly accepted its recommendations.

Facts:

- **Background:** RBI had formed a five-member committee under the chairmanship of KV Kamath to make recommendations on the financial parameters and the sectors to be considered for the one-time restructuring of loans impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic.
- **What did the committee recommend?** The committee has recommended five financial ratios for 26 sectors which could be factored by lending institutions while finalizing a resolution plan for a borrower.

THE 26 SECTORS

Power, Construction, Iron & steel manufacturing, Roads, Real estate, Trading-wholesale, Textiles, Chemicals, Consumer durables/-FMCG, Non-ferrous metals, Pharmaceuticals manufacturing, Logistics, Gems & jewellery, Cement, Auto components, Hotels, restaurants and tourism, Mining, Plastic products manufacturing, Automobile manufacturing, Auto dealership, Aviation, Sugar, Port & port services, Shipping, Building materials and Corporate retail outlets.

5 KEY RATIOS TO BE CONSIDERED

- Total outside liabilities/adjusted tangible net worth
- Total debt/EBITDA
- Current Ratio: Current assets divided by current liabilities
- Debt service coverage ratio
- Average debt service coverage ratio

Additional Information:

Key ratios to be considered:

- Total Outside Liabilities/ Adjusted Tangible Net Worth: It is a measure of a company's financial leverage calculated by dividing the total liabilities of the company by the total net worth of the business.
- Total Debt/ EBITDA: The debt to Ebitda ratio indicates how well a company can service its loans and other liabilities, with a lower ratio implying better capability.
- Current Ratio: It is current assets divided by current liabilities
- Debt Service Coverage Ratio: It is a measurement of a firm's available cash flow to pay current debt obligations.
- Average Debt Service Coverage Ratio

Union Minister declares EASE 2.0 Index Results

News: Union Finance Minister has felicitated the best performing banks on EASE Banking Reforms Index.

Facts:

- **EASE Banking Reforms Index:** EASE stands for 'Enhanced Access and Service Excellence'. It was launched in 2018 with the aim to institutionalize clean and smart banking.
    - **EASE 2.0** further progresses the reforms built in EASE 1.0 by making the reforms journey irreversible, strengthening processes and systems and driving outcomes.
- **Prepared by:** The index is prepared by the Indian Banking Association (IBA) and is commissioned by the Finance Ministry.
- **Parameters:** It ranks Public Sector Banks across six themes namely **a)** Responsible banking **b)** Customer Responsiveness **c)** Credit offtake **d)** PSBs Udyamitra for MSMEs **e)** Deepening Financial Inclusion and Digitisation and **f)** Ensuring Outcomes-Governance/HR.

Key Takeaways:

Top 3 banks in each theme

Top 3 banks for EASE 2.0 Index	Theme 1: Responsible Banking	Theme 4: UdyamiMitra for MSMEs
• Bank of Baroda • State Bank of India • Oriental Bank of Commerce	• Bank of Baroda • State Bank of India • Punjab National Bank	• Oriental Bank of Commerce • State Bank of India • Union Bank of India

Top 3 banks in improvement from March baseline	Theme 2: Customer Responsiveness	Theme 5: Deepening FI & Digitalisation
• Bank of Maharashtra • Central Bank of India • Corporation Bank	• State Bank of India • Oriental Bank of Commerce • Bank of Baroda	• Bank of Baroda • Canara Bank • Punjab National Bank

	Theme 3: Credit Off-take	Theme 6: Governance and HR
	• Oriental Bank of Commerce • Union Bank of India • State Bank of India	• State Bank of India • Bank of Baroda • Punjab National Bank

Note : Only banks with ≥80% of total weight for a theme applicable for them are considered for ranking

Additional Facts:

Doorstep Banking Services by Public Sector Banks (PSBs): It is a part of EASE (enhanced access and service excellence) reforms that aims to provide convenience of banking services to the customers at their doorstep.

What is the basis of MSP? How is it fixed, and how binding is it?

News: Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020 does not provide any safeguards for the continuance of the existing minimum support price (MSP)-based procurement regime.

Facts:

- MSP is the minimum price paid to the farmers for procuring food crops. It is announced by the Government at the beginning of the sowing season.
- There are two objectives of the Minimum Support Price system (a)To prevent distress sale by the farmers in case of a bumper crop and (b)To procure the grains for public distribution by fair price shops.
- They are recommended by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) and approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs. Food Corporation of India (FCI) is the nodal agency for procurement along with State agencies.
- The Centre currently fixes MSPs for 23 farm commodities — 7 cereals (paddy, wheat, maize, bajra, jowar, ragi and barley), 5 pulses (chana, arhar/tur, urad, moong and masur), 7 oilseeds (rapeseed-mustard, groundnut, soyabean, sunflower, sesamum, safflower and nigerseed) and 4 commercial crops (cotton, sugarcane, copra and raw jute)

- There is no law mandating their implementation. The only crop where MSP payment has some statutory element is sugarcane. Sugarcane pricing is governed by the Sugarcane (Control) Order, 1966 issued under the Essential Commodities Act.

Additional Information:
- *Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020*
  o Trade of farmers produce: It opens up agricultural marketing outside the notified Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) for farmers and also removes barriers to inter-State trade.
  o Electronic Trading: It seeks to permit the electronic trading of farmers produced in the specified trade area.
- *Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP):* it is an attached office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. It is not a statutory body set up through an Act of Parliament.

Poinlty For Economy
1. *Force majeure clause (Act of God):* It is an exception to the Law of Contract that releases the party of its obligations to an extent when events beyond their control take place and leave them unable to perform their part of the contract.
2. *The Global Economic Freedom Index 2020*: Released by Fraser Institute in Canada, the report measures the 'economic freedom' or the ability of individuals to make their own economic decisions in a country, by analysing policies and institutions of these countries. India has been ranked 105 in the index.
3. *States Start-up Ranking 2019*: The exercise was conducted by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). Gujarat has topped the rankings.
4. *Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP) ranking of states,2019*: The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) conducts the exercise for all States and Union Territories under the BRAP. Andhra Pradesh topped the rankings.

ENVIRONMENT

Project Dolphin: Why it is important to save a declining river species
News: Prime Minister announced Project Dolphin on Independence Day
Facts:
Project Dolphin:
- The project is aimed at the conservation of the Gangetic Dolphins — both riverine as well as the oceanic dolphins in India.
- Significance: Aquatic life is an indicator of the health of river ecosystems. As the Gangetic dolphin is at the top of the food chain, protecting the species and its habitat will ensure conservation of aquatic lives of the river.

Gangetic river dolphin:
- The Gangetic river dolphin inhabits the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems of Nepal, India, and Bangladesh.

- Being a mammal, the Ganges River dolphin cannot breathe in the water and must surface every 30-120 seconds. Because of the sound it produces when breathing, the animal is popularly referred to as the 'Susu'.
- *Population*: 1,272 dolphins in Uttar Pradesh and 962 in Assam in 2019
- *Threats*: construction of dams and barrages, and increasing pollution
- *IUCN Red List:* Endangered
- *CITES:* Appendix I.

Conservation Measures for Gangetic Dolphin:

- *Wildlife Protection Act:* Gangetic Dolphin is protected under Schedule I of the Act. Further, Vikramshila Ganges Dolphin Sanctuary was established in Bihar under this Act.
- *Conservation Plan*: The government also prepared The Conservation Action Plan for the Ganges River Dolphin 2010-2020, which "identified threats to Gangetic Dolphins and impact of river traffic, irrigation canals and depletion of prey-base on Dolphins populations".
- *National Aquatic Animal*: In 2009, National Ganga River Basin Authority, declared the Gangetic river dolphin as the national aquatic animal. The National Mission for Clean Ganga celebrates October 5 as National Ganga River Dolphin Day.

Glacier retreat in Himalayas to cause water crisis: study

News: A study commissioned by the Observer Research Foundation, has found that the retreat of glaciers in the Himalayan Hindu Kush region is affecting the surface water and groundwater availability in the region.

Facts:

Himalayan Hindu Kush region

- It is famously known as the earth's "third pole" as it forms the largest area of permanent ice cover outside the North and South Poles.
- It spans Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
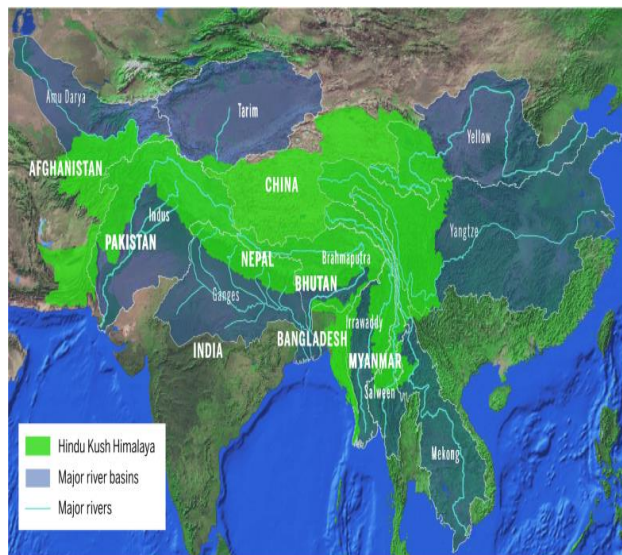
In a first, eight Indian beaches recommended for 'Blue Flag' eco-label

News: Union Environment Ministry has announced that the Indian Government has recommended eight Indian beaches for the "Blue Flag" certification.

Facts:

- The eight beaches are Shivrajpur in Gujarat, Ghoghla in Daman & Diu, Kasarkod and Padubidri beach in Karnataka, Kappad in Kerala, Rushikonda in Andhra Pradesh, Golden beach of Odisha and Radhanagar beach in Andaman and Nicobar.
- *Blue Flag certification:* It is a certification that can be obtained by a beach, marina or sustainable boating tourism operator and serves as an eco-label.
- *Who gives the certification?* The certification programme is run by international, non-governmental, non-profit organisation FEE (the Foundation for Environmental Education) based in Copenhagen, Denmark.
- *Origin:* The programme was started in France in 1985 and has been implemented in Europe since 1987 and in areas outside Europe since 2001.
- *Criteria:* The certification is based on 33 stringent criteria in four major heads (i) Environmental Education and Information (ii) Bathing Water Quality, (iii) Environment Management and Conservation and (iv) Safety and Services in the beaches.
- *Country with the highest Blue Flag Certification:* Spain has the highest number of Blue Flag beaches followed by Greece and France.

Global Initiative to reduce Land Degradation and Coral Reef program

News: Global Initiative to reduce Land Degradation and Coral Reef program has been launched at G20 Environment Ministers Meet.

Facts:

- *Global Initiative to reduce Land Degradation*: It aims to strengthen the implementation of existing frameworks to prevent, halt and reverse land degradation within G20 member states and globally taking into account possible implications on the achievement of other SDGs.

- *Global Coral Reef R&D Accelerator Platform*: It is an innovative action-oriented initiative aimed at creating a global research and development(R&D) program to advance research, innovation and capacity building in all facets of coral reef conservation.

Additional Facts:
- *Land Degradation*: It is any reduction or loss in the biological or economic productive capacity of the land resource base.
- *Corals*: They are small (0.25-12 inches), soft-bodied marine organisms. They live in colonies called reefs that they build using a limestone skeleton(calicle) lying at their base.
- *G20*: It is an international group initially founded in 1999 after the Asian financial crisis as a forum for finance ministers and central bank governors of 19 countries and the European Union.

Krishna-Godavari (KG) basin, an excellent source of fuel methane

News: According to a study by the Pune-based Agharkar Research Institute (ARI) of the Science & Technology Ministry, Krishna-Godavari (KG) basin holds a massive reserve of methane hydrate and a rich source of cleaner natural gas.

Facts:

- *Methane*: It is a clean and economical fuel and is a major constituent of natural gas. Compared to other hydrocarbon fuels, methane produces less carbon dioxide for each unit of heat released.

- *Methane Hydrate*: It is a solid clathrate compound in which a large amount of methane is trapped within a crystal structure of water forming a solid similar to ice.

- *How Methane Hydrates are formed?* It is formed when hydrogen bonded water and methane gas come into contact at high pressures and low temperatures in oceans.

- *Significance of Methane Hydrate:* It is estimated that one cubic meter of methane hydrate contains 160-180 cubic meters of methane. Hence, even the lowest estimate of methane present in the methane hydrates in the KG Basin is twice that of all fossil fuel reserves available worldwide.

Additional Information: The Krishna Godavari Basin: It is a proven petroliferous basin of continental margin located off the coast of Andhra Pradesh.

Global CO2 emissions to fall by up to 7% in 2020 due to Covid-19

News: United in Science 2020 report has been released by the UN Secretary General.

Facts:

- *About the report*: The report aims to bring together the latest climate science related updates from a group of key global partner organizations — World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Global Carbon Project (GCP), UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (UNESCO-IOC), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), UNEP and the Met Office.

Key Takeaways:

- *Greenhouse Gas Concentrations in the Atmosphere Report (World Meteorological Organization):* Atmospheric CO2 concentrations have shown no signs of peaking and have continued to increase to new records.
- *Global Fossil CO2 emissions Report (Global Carbon Project):* CO2 emissions in 2020 will fall by an estimated 4% to 7% in 2020 due to COVID-19 confinement policies. The exact decline will depend on the continued trajectory of the pandemic and government responses to address it.
- *Emissions Gap Report (UN Environment Programme):* It showed that the cuts in global emissions required per year from 2020 to 2030 are close to 3% for a 2 °C target and more than 7% per year on average for the 1.5 °C goal of the Paris Agreement.
- *State of Global Climate Report (WMO and UK's Met Office):* The average global temperature for 2016–2020 is expected to be the warmest on record, about 1.1 °C above 1850-1900, a reference period for temperature change since pre-industrial times and 0.24°C warmer than the global average temperature for 2011-2015.
- *The Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate Report (IPCC):* Human induced climate change is affecting life-sustaining systems, from the top of the mountains to the depths of the oceans, leading to accelerating sea-level rise, with cascading effects for ecosystems and human security.

Additional Facts:

- *Global Carbon Project*: It is an organisation established in 2001 to quantify global greenhouse gas emissions and their causes. Its projects include global budgets for three dominant greenhouse gases — carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide — and complementary efforts in urban, regional, cumulative, and negative emissions.
- *UNESCO-IOC*: It was established in 1960 as a body with functional autonomy within UNESCO. It is the only competent organization for marine science within the UN system.

Union Minister launches Climate Smart Cities Assessment Framework (CSCAF 2.0) and Streets for People Challenge

News: Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs(I/C) has launched Climate Smart Cities Assessment Framework (CSCAF) 2.0 along with the 'Streets for People Challenge'.

Facts:

Climate Smart Cities Assessment Framework (CSCAF):

- *CSCAF:* It is an assessment framework launched in 2019 by the Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs(I/C) on climate relevant parameters.
- *Objective:* To provide a clear roadmap for Indian cities towards combating climate change while planning their actions within the city including investments.
- *Sectors:* The framework has 28 indicators across five categories namely (i) Energy and Green Buildings; (ii) Urban Planning, Biodiversity and Green Cover; (iii) Mobility and Air; (iv) Water Resource Management and (v) Waste Management.

- *Implementation:* The Climate Centre for Cities under National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) is supporting the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) in implementation of CSCAF.

Streets for People Challenge:
- *Aim:* To inspire cities to create walking-friendly and vibrant streets through quick, innovative and low-cost measures.
- *Bodies Involved:* Smart Cities Mission under MoHUA has partnered with Fit India Mission under Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports along with the India program of the Institute for Transport Development and Policy (ITDP) to support the challenge.
- The challenge will not be limited to the 100 Smart Cities as all cities with a population of over 5 lakh and capital cities can apply.

UN report flags changes in food system to boost climate action
News: World Wildlife Fund (WWF), UN Environment Programme (UNEP), EAT and Climate Focus has released a report titled "*Enhancing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for Food Systems*".
Facts:
Aim: To help policymakers adopt food systems solutions and set more ambitious targets and measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit global warming to 1.5 degree Celsius which will in turn improve biodiversity, food security and public health.

Additional Facts:
- **WWF:** It is an international non-governmental organization founded in 1961 to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature. Headquarters: Gland, Switzerland.
- *Climate Focus*: It is a pioneering international advisory company committed to the development of policies, methodologies, programmes and projects that mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- **EAT:** It is a non-profit startup dedicated to transforming our global food system through sound science, impatient disruption and novel partnerships.
- *Paris agreement*: It was adopted at the UNFCCC COP21 held in Paris in 2015.It aims to keep global temperature rise in the 21st century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Climate crisis could displace 1.2 billion people by 2050: Report
News: Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) has released the inaugural edition of the report titled "Ecological Threat Register (ETR)".
Facts:
- *About the report:* The report measures the ecological threats countries are currently facing and provides projections to 2050.
Key Highlights from the report:

- About 1.2 billion people could be forced to leave their homes in the next 30 years as natural disasters like droughts, hurricanes and monsoons continue to increase in intensity due to global heating.
- 19 countries with the highest number of ecological threats are among the world's 40 least peaceful countries including Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Chad, India and Pakistan.
- Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa are the regions facing the largest number of ecological threats.
- The countries with the largest number of people at risk of mass displacements are Pakistan, followed by Ethiopia and Iran.
- By 2040, a total of 5.4 billion people — more than half of the world's projected population will live in the 59 countries experiencing high or extreme water stress including India and China.

Additional Facts: Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP): It is the world's leading think tank headquartered in Sydney, Australia. It released reports such as the Global Peace Index and Global Terrorism Index.

Pointly For Environment

1. *Water Heroes" contest*: Launched by Ministry of Jal Shakti, it aims to reach out to people with the important message of water conservation and management. Under this, entries are invited to share their success stories on water conservation.

2. *Sonneratia alba or mangrove apple*: Maharashtra is set to become the first state in the country to declare Sonneratia alba as a state mangrove tree species. It is an evergreen mangrove tree in the family Lythraceae. It grows naturally in many tropical and subtropical areas from East Africa to the Indian subcontinent, southern China, the Ryukyu Islands, Indochina, Malesia, Papuasia, Australia and the Western Pacific region.

3. *World Solar Technology Summit (WSTS)*: It was organised by International Solar Alliance (ISA) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry(FICCI). It aims to bring together key stakeholders to discuss the highlights of solar technologies, cost-wise; technology-wise, technology transfers, challenges and concerns in the field.

4. *Sandalwood Spike Disease*: India's sandalwood trees, particularly of Karnataka, are facing a serious threat with the return of the destructive Sandalwood Spike Disease (SSD). It is characterized by huge reduction in leaf size which is also accompanied by stiffening and reduction of internode length.

5. *Green Term Ahead Market (GTAM):* Launched by Ministry of Power, it is an alternative new model introduced for selling off the power by the renewable developers in the open market without getting into long term PPAs. It aims to benefit buyers of RE through competitive prices and transparent and flexible procurement. Sellers will also be benefitted by getting access to Pan India Market.

What is Solar Cycle 25, announced by NASA and NOAA scientists recently?

News: Scientists from NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) have announced their predictions about the new solar cycle called Solar Cycle 25 which they believe has begun.

Facts:

- ***What is Solar Cycle:*** It is the cycle that the Sun's magnetic field goes through approximately every 11 years.
    - ***Solar Minimum:*** It is the beginning of a solar cycle or when the Sun has the least sunspots.
    - ***Solar Maximum:*** It is the middle of the solar cycle or when the Sun has the most sunspots.
- ***Why do scientists track solar activity?*** Scientists track solar activity because it can have effects on Earth. For example, when charged particles from coronal mass ejections (CMEs) reach areas near the Earth, they can trigger intense lightning in the skies referred to as auroras.
    - This can interfere with the power grids which can cause electricity shortages and power outages.
- ***How do scientists track solar activity?*** Scientists track a solar cycle by using sunspots, which are the dark blotches on the Sun that are associated with solar activity.

Additional Facts:

- ***Sunspots:*** It is an area on the Sun that appears dark on the surface and is relatively cooler than the surrounding parts.
    - ***Significance:*** These spots some as large as 50,000 km in diameter are the visible markers of the Sun's magnetic field which forms a blanket that protects the solar system from harmful cosmic radiation.
- ***Solar Flares:*** When a Sunspot reaches up to 50,000 km in diameter it may release a huge amount of energy that can lead to solar flares.

Potential sign of alien life detected on inhospitable Venus

News: Scientist discovered a gas called phosphine in Venus's atmosphere that indicates microbes may inhabit the planet.

Facts:

Phosphine:

- It is a colourless and smelly gas.
- It is known to be produced only through biological process, and not through any naturally occurring chemical process. It can also be the produced in the underbelly of volcanoes or meteorite activity.

Venus:

- Venus is closest planet to Earth. It is the second planet from the sun.
- It is similar in structure but slightly smaller than Earth.
- Venus is wrapped in a thick, toxic atmosphere that traps in heat. Surface temperatures are 880 degrees Fahrenheit (471 degrees Celsius).

India aims to achieve 100 MT coal gasification target by 2030: Union Minister

News: Union Coal Ministry has organised a webinar on Coal Gasification and Liquefaction. During the webinar, Union Minister has said that India aims for 100 million tonnes (MT) coal gasification by 2030.

Facts:

- *Coal Gasification:* It is the process of producing syngas—a mixture consisting primarily of carbon monoxide (CO), hydrogen(H_2), carbon dioxide (CO_2), natural gas (CH_4) and water vapour(H_2O)—from coal and water, air and/or oxygen.
- *Applications:*
  - The syngas can be used in a variety of applications such as in the production of electricity and making chemical products such as fertilisers.
  - The hydrogen obtained from coal gasification can be used for various purposes such as making ammonia, powering a hydrogen economy or upgrading fossil fuels.
  - Methane or natural gas extracted from coal gasification can be converted into LNG for direct use as fuel in the transport sector.
- **Concerns:** Coal gasification is one of the more water-intensive forms of energy production. There are concerns about water contamination, land subsidence and disposing of waste water safely.

Additional Facts:

- *Coal Liquefaction*: It is a process in which coal is converted into liquid fuels or petrochemicals. There are several processes used to accomplish this task, the two most common being the "indirect route" and the "direct route".
- *Indirect Route*: It is composed of 2 steps:
  - First, coal is gasified with steam and oxygen to produce a synthesis gas (syngas), which is then cleaned to rid of dust, tar, and acid gases.
  - The second step reacts the synthesis gas with a catalyst in the Fischer-Tropsch process which converts the syngas into a range of hydrocarbon fuels such as gasoline, diesel and methanol.
- *Direct Route:* In this, coal is pulverized and reacted with a catalyst, then hydrogen is added under high pressures and temperatures in the presence of a solvent to produce a raw liquid fuel. This raw fuel requires refining in order to yield acceptable transportation fuels.

Explained: How NASA is planning to send humans to the moon again by 2024

News: NASA published the outline for its Artemis program.

Facts:

- ARTEMIS stands for Acceleration, Reconnection, Turbulence and Electrodynamics of the Moon's Interaction with the Sun.
- *Objectives:*
  - o Establishing of lunar outpost
  - o Investigating the Moon's resources and how they might be exploited
  - o Using Moon as a base to explore Mars and further into deep space
  - o Broaden commercial and international partnerships
  - o Inspire a new generation and encourage careers in STEM.
- *Parts of the Program:*
  - o Artemis I: to be launched in 2021 and involves an uncrewed flight to test the SLS and Orion spacecraft.
  - o Artemis II will be the first crewed flight test and is targeted for 2023.
  - o Artemis III will land astronauts on the Moon's South Pole in 2024.

Additional Information:

Previous Moon Missions:

- In 1959, the Soviet Union's uncrewed Luna 1 and 2 became the first rover to visit the Moon.
- In 1969, Neil Armstrong became the first human to step on the Moon as part of NASA's Apollo 11 mission.
- In 2008, India's first lunar program Chandrayaan 1 was launched.
- In 2009, USA began a new series of robotic lunar missions with the launch of the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) and the Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite (LCROSS).

Pointly For Science and Technology

1. *Novichok*: German government said that Russia's opposition leader, Alexei Navalny has been poisoned with a Novichok nerve agent. The name Novichok means "newcomer" in Russian and applies to a group of advanced nerve agents developed by the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s.
2. *Brucellosis*: Thousands of people in China tested positive for brucellosis after a leak at a biopharmaceutical company. Also known as Malta fever or Mediterranean fever, it is a bacterial disease caused by various Brucella species which mainly infect cattle, swine, goats, sheep and dogs. Humans generally acquire the disease through direct contact with infected animals, by eating or drinking contaminated animal products or by inhaling airborne agents. Person-to-person transmission is rare.
3. *FELUDA:* It is the acronym for FNCAS9 Editor Linked Uniform Detection Assay. It is a low-cost paper strip test which can detect the presence of coronavirus within an hour. It uses indigenously developed CRISPR gene-editing technology to identify and target the genetic material of SARS-CoV2. It has been developed by CSIR IGIB and TATA Sons.
4. *Himalayan Chandra Telescope*: It is located at the Indian Astronomical Observatory (IAO), Mt. Saraswati, Digpa-ratsa Ri, Hanle, Ladakh. It is remotely operated using a dedicated satellite

communication link from the Centre for Research & Education in Science & Technology (CREST), Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bangalore.

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NSO reports: "Household Social Consumption: Education in India" and Household social consumption related to health"

News: National Statistical Office (NSO) has released a report on "Household Social Consumption: Education in India" and "Household social consumption related to health".

Facts:

Key takeaways from Household Social Consumption: Education in India:

- Overall literacy rate in India is about 77.7%.
- In rural areas, the literacy rate is 73.5% compared to 87.7% in urban areas.
- The male literacy rate is higher at 84.7% compared to 70.3% among women.
- Kerala has the highest literacy rate at 96.2% followed by Delhi (88.7%), Uttarakhand (87.6%), Himachal Pradesh (86.6%) and Assam (85.9%).
- Andhra Pradesh featured at the bottom with a rate of 66.4%, followed by Rajasthan (69.7%) and Bihar (70.9%).
- **Digital Divide in Education**
  - Across India, only one in ten households have a computer — whether a desktop, laptop or tablet.
  - Delhi has the highest Internet access, with 55% of homes having such facilities.

Key takeaways from "Household social consumption related to health"

- **Full Immunisation:** Across the country, only 59.2% of children under five years are fully immunised.
  - Full immunisation means that a child receives a cocktail of eight vaccine doses in the first year of life: the BCG vaccine against tuberculosis; the measles vaccine; the oral polio vaccine (OPV), DPT/pentavalent vaccine to protect a child from diphtheria among others.
- **State wise:** Manipur (75%), Andhra Pradesh (73.6%) and Mizoram (73.4%) recorded the highest rates of full immunisation. On the other hand, Nagaland has only 12% children who received all vaccinations followed by Puducherry (34%) and Tripura(39.6%).
- **Government Hospitals:** The vast majority of these vaccinations 95% in rural India and 86% in cities were carried out in government health facilities and primary health centres.

125th Birth Anniversary celebrations of Shri Viswanatha Satyanarayana

News: The Vice President inaugurated the 125th birth anniversary celebrations of Sri Viswanatha Satyanarayana.

Facts:

- Viswanatha Satyanarayana (1895-1976): He was a 20th century Telugu writer. He was the first writer to impart a true Teluguness to the Ramayana. His works included poetry, novels, dramatic play, short stories and speeches, covering a wide range of subjects.
- *Significance:* Through his works, he had highlighted the importance of imparting learning in the mother tongue, preserving culture and protecting nature.
- *Important works:*
    - In 1970, he was awarded the prestigious Jnanpith Award for his seminal work, Ramayana Kalpavruksham. He was the first Telugu writer to receive this award.
    - His novel Veyipadagalu was also translated into Hindi by former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao as Sahasraphan.
    - Other works include Ramayana Kalpavruksham (Ramayana the wish-granting divine tree), Kinnersani Patalu (Mermaid songs).

Rogan arts connect during COVID-19

News: The centuries old tradition of Rogan art is facing an unprecedented challenge due to pandemic.

Facts:

- *Rogan Art*: The word Rogan means "Oil" in Persian. It is an art of cloth printing practiced in the Kutch District of Gujarat.
- *Origin:* The art was started by the Khatris, a Muslim community who came to India from Sindh, Pakistan.
- *Process*: In this art, Castor oil is heated and cast into cold water and the thick residue is then mixed with natural colours. Then, using a stylus or blocks, this resultant paint is meticulously transferred on to a cloth to make floral, animal (peacock) and geometric patterns.

'Moplah rioters' not freedom fighters: report

News: A report submitted to the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) in 2016 had recommended the delisting of Wagon Tragedy victims and Malabar Rebellion leaders from a book on martyrs of India's freedom struggle.

Facts:

- Malabar rebellion also known as the Moplah rebellion was an armed revolt by the Mappila Muslims of Kerala in 1921.
- It was started as a resistance against the British colonial rule, the prevailing feudal system and in favour of the Khilafat Movement but ended in communal violence between Hindus and Muslims.
- *Main Leaders of the Rebellion:* Variyankunnath Kunjahammed Haji, Sithi Koya Thangal and Ali Musliyar

- The British government responded with aggression bringing in Gurkha regiments to suppress the rebellion and imposed martial law.
  - ***Wagon Tragedy***: A noteworthy event of the British suppression was the wagon tragedy when approximately 60 Mappila prisoners on their way to prison, were suffocated to death in a closed railway goods wagon.

COVID-19 to push 47 mn women to poverty, widen gender gap: Report

News: UN Women and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has released a report titled *"From Insights to Action: Gender Equality in the wake of COVID-19"*.

Facts:

- ***What the report says***? The report says that the coronavirus pandemic and its fallout will likely push 47 million more women into poverty, reversing decades of progress to eradicate extreme poverty.
- The projections estimated that by 2021, for every 100 men aged between 25 and 34 living in extreme poverty, there will be 118 women. The gap is further expected to widen to 121 women per 100 men by 2030.

Additional Facts:

- ***UN Women***: It is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. It was established in 2010.
- ***Objectives:***
  - To support inter-governmental bodies such as the Commission on the Status of Women in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms.
  - To hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality including regular monitoring of system-wide progress.
- ***Commission on the Status of Women (CSW):*** It was established in 1946 as a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- ***Beijing Declaration***: It was a resolution adopted by the United Nations (UN) at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.
  - It sets strategic objectives for the advancement of women and gender equality in 12 critical areas of concern like women and health, women in power and decision-making, the girl-child, women and the environment.
- ***Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)***: It was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

Ministry of Tourism organises a webinar "Hampi- Inspired by the past; Going into the Future"

News: Ministry of Tourism has organised a webinar titled Hampi- Inspired by the past; Going into the future under Dekho Apna DeshWebinar series.

Facts:

- *Hampi*: It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in east-central Karnataka.
- *Origin*: Its name is derived from Pampa which is the old name of the Tungabhadra River on whose banks the city is built.
- *Significance*: It was the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire in the 14th century.
- *Trade*: By 1500 CE, Hampi-Vijayanagara was the world's second-largest medieval era city after Beijing and probably India's richest at that time, attracting traders from Persia and Portugal.
- *Architecture*: The buildings predominantly followed South Indian Hindu arts and architecture dating to the Aihole-Pattadakal styles. They also used elements of Indo-Islamic architecture in the Lotus Mahal, the public bath and the elephant stables.
- *Important Monuments*:
  - Virupaksha temple (It is dedicated to Virupaksha, a form of Lord Shiva)
  - Hemkunta Hill, south of the Virupaksha temple contains early ruins, Jain temples and a monolithic sculpture of Lord Narasimha, a form of Lord Vishnu.
  - Vittal temple built in the 16th Century, is now a World Heritage monument. The columns of the temple are so balanced that they have a musical quality.
- *Defeat*: The Vijayanagara Empire was defeated by a coalition of Muslim sultanates; its capital was conquered, pillaged and destroyed by sultanate armies in 1565, after which Hampi remained in ruins.

Famous art of 'Etikoppaka' dolls finds mention in PM's "Mann ki Baat"

News: The famous art of 'Etikoppaka' dolls of Visakhapatnam district was mentioned in the Prime Minister's "Mann ki Baat" programme.

Facts:

- *'Etikoppaka' dolls*: Etikoppaka is a small village on the banks of Varaha River in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh.In 2017, the Etikoppaka toys acquired a Geographical Indications (GI) tag.
- *Features*: Toys are made of soft wood and lacquer color.Coloured with natural dyes derived from seeds ,lacquer, roots and leaves. The way of toy making is also known as turned wood lacquer craft.

Poinlty For Social

1. *The Levels and Trends in Child Mortality: Report 2020*: It has been released by UNICEF, WHO, Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the World Bank Group. In India, the under-five mortality rate has declined to 34 in 2019 from 126 in 1990. The infant mortality rate has declined from 89 in 1990 to 28 in 2019.

2. **NSS REPORT: TIME USE IN INDIA- 2019**: It provides a framework for measuring time dispositions by the population on different activities. Only 38.2% of the population participates in "employment and other related activities", spending 429 minutes (7 hours and 9 minutes) on an average each day. There is a wide gender disparity, with only 18.4% women participating in employment activities compared with 57.3% men.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy in Defence Sector

News: Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry has issued the revised Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy in Defence Sector.

Facts:

Present Position:

Sector/Activity	% of Equity/ FDI Cap	Entry Route
Defence Industry subject to Industrial license under the Industries (Development & Regulation) Act,1951 and Manufacturing of small arms and ammunition under the Arms Act, 1959	100%	Automatic up to 49%. Government route beyond 49% wherever it is likely to result in access to modern technology or for other reasons to be recorded.

Revised Position:

Sector/Activity	% of Equity/ FDI Cap	Entry Route
Defence Industry subject to Industrial license under the Industries(Development & Regulation) Act,1951 and Manufacturing of small arms and ammunition under the Arms Act, 1959	100%	Automatic up to 74%. Government route beyond 74% wherever it is likely to result in access to modern technology or for other reasons to be recorded

Other Conditions:

- *Fresh Licensees*: FDI up to 74% under automatic route shall be permitted for companies seeking new industrial licenses.
- *Existing Licensees*: Infusion of fresh foreign investment up to 49% in a company not seeking industrial license will require mandatory submission of a declaration with the Ministry of Defence in case change in equity/shareholding pattern or transfer of stake by existing investor to new foreign investor for FDI up to 49% within 30 days of such change.
  - FDI beyond 49% from such companies will require Government approval.

- **License:** Licence applications will be considered by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce & Industry in consultation with the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of External Affairs.
- **Security Clearance**: Foreign investment in the sector is subject to security clearance by the Ministry of Home Affairs and as per guidelines of the Ministry of Defence on grounds of National Security and Government reserves the right to review any foreign investment in the Defence Sector that affects or may affect national security.

HC asks Centre to decide on control over Assam Rifles

News: The Delhi High Court has ordered the Centre to take a call on the issue of bringing Assam Rifles out of the dual control of the Home Ministry (MHA) and the Defence Ministry (MoD).

Facts:

- The Assam Rifles is one of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) in India.
- It was formed in 1835 as a militia called the 'Cachar Levy' to primarily protect British Tea estates and their settlements against tribal raids.
- The force operates in the North Eastern part of India and complements the Indian Army in countering the insurgency and guarding the borders.
- It is under the administrative control of the Home Ministry and operational control of the Indian Army.

Additional Information:

- There are seven CAPF in India. They are a) Assam Rifles (AR), b) Border Security Force (BSF), c) Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), d) Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), e) Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), f) National Security Guard (NSG) and g) Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).

DRDO successfully tests Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle

News: Prime Minister has congratulated Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) for the successful flight of Hypersonic Test Demonstration Vehicle (HSTDV).

Facts:

- **HSTDV:** It is an unmanned scramjet demonstration aircraft for hypersonic speed flight.
- **Working**: The HSTDV cruise vehicle is mounted on a solid rocket motor, which will take it to a required altitude and once it attains certain Mach numbers for speed, the cruise vehicle will be ejected out of the launch vehicle. Subsequently, the scramjet engine will be ignited automatically.
- **Purpose:**
  - It can be used as a carrier vehicle for hypersonic and long-range cruise missiles.

- ○ It has multiple civilian applications including missiles of the future for air defence, surveillance besides in the development of energy-efficient, low cost and reusable satellite-launch vehicles.
- **Developed by**: It has been developed by the Indian Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- **Significance:** India has become the fourth country after the United States, Russia and China to develop and successfully test hypersonic technology.

Additional Facts:

Ramjet: It is a form of air-breathing jet engine that uses the vehicle's forward motion to compress incoming air for combustion without a rotating compressor.

- **Working:** Fuel is injected in the combustion chamber where it mixes with the hot compressed air and ignites. A ramjet-powered vehicle requires an assisted take-off like a rocket assist to accelerate it to a speed where it begins to produce thrust.
- **Drawback**: Ramjets work most efficiently at supersonic speeds around Mach 3 (three times the speed of sound) and can operate up to speeds of Mach 6. However, the ramjet efficiency starts to drop when the vehicle reaches hypersonic speeds.

Scramjet: It is an improvement over the ramjet engine as it efficiently operates at hypersonic speeds and allows supersonic combustion. Thus, it is known as Supersonic Combustion Ramjet or Scramjet.

What is the Special Frontier Force or Vikas Battalion?

News: The Special Frontier Force (SFF) unit referred to as Vikas Battalion has been instrumental in occupying some key heights on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China in Ladakh to thwart any occupation by the Chinese troops.

Facts:

- **Special Frontier Force (SFF):** It was raised in the immediate aftermath of the 1962 Sino-India war. It was a covert outfit which recruited Tibetans (now it has a mixture of Tibetans and Gorkhas) and initially went by the name of Establishment 22.
- **Nodal Ministry:** STF falls under the purview of the Cabinet Secretariat where it is headed by an Inspector General who is an Army officer of the rank of Major General. The units that comprise the SFF are known as Vikas battalions.
- **Are SFF units' part of the Army?** Strictly speaking, the SFF units are not part of the Army, but they function under operational control of the Army. The units have their own rank structures which have equivalent status with Army ranks.
- **Major Operations by SFF:** There are several operations in which SFF units have taken part over the years. They took part in operations in the 1971 war, Operation Blue Star in Golden Temple Amritsar, Kargil conflict and in counter-insurgency operations in the country.

Pointly For Internal Security

1. **Djibouti Code of Conduct/ Jeddah Amendment (DCOC/JA):** India has joined Japan, Norway, the UK and the US as Observers to the DCOC/JA. It was established in 2009. It is a grouping

on maritime matters aimed at repression of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Western Indian Ocean Region, the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. It comprises 18 member states adjoining the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, the East Coast of Africa and Island countries in the Indian Ocean Region.

2. **ABHYAS**: Recently, it was successfully flight-tested. It is a High-speed Expendable Aerial Target which provides a realistic threat scenario for practising weapon systems. It is capable of fully autonomous flight and runs on a gas turbine engine. It is designed and developed by Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE), DRDO.

3. *Passage Exercise:* Royal Australian Navy and Indian Navy are conducting PASSEX in Eastern Indian Ocean Region. It is an exercise done between two navies to ensure that the navies are able to communicate and cooperate in times of war or humanitarian relief. The Indian Navy had recently conducted similar passing exercises with the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force, French Navy and US Navy.

4. *Defence India Startup Challenge*: Ministry of Defence launched the Defence India Startup Challenge (DISC 4). It is an initiative by the Defence Innovation Organization in partnership with Atal Innovation Mission. It aims at supporting Start-ups/MSMEs/Innovators to create prototypes and/or commercialize products/solutions in the area of National Defence and Security.

5. *Pinaka:* It is a multiple rocket launcher produced in India and developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation for the Indian Army. The system has a maximum range of 40 km for Mark-I and 75 km for Mark-II, and can fire a salvo of 12 HE rockets in 44 seconds.

6. *Hybrid Warfare:* It is a military strategy which employs political warfare and blends conventional warfare, irregular warfare and cyberwarfare with other influencing methods such as fake news, diplomacy, lawfare and foreign electoral intervention

MISCELLANEOUS

Retrospective taxation: the Vodafone case, and the Hague court ruling

News: The Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague has ruled that India's retrospective demand of Rs 22,100 crore as capital gains and withholding tax imposed on Vodafone for a 2007 deal was in breach of the guarantee of fair and equitable treatment.
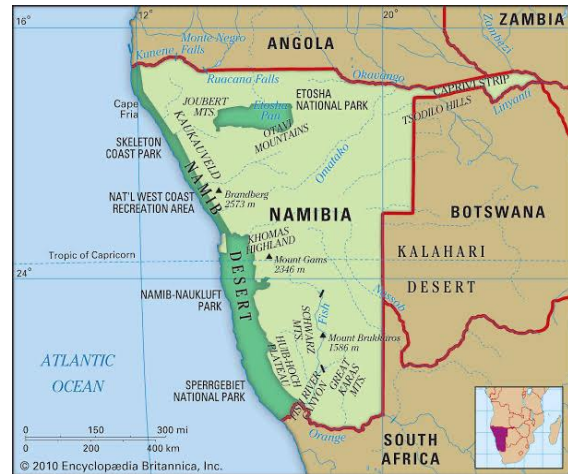
Facts:

- Retrospective taxation allows a country to pass a rule on taxing certain products, items or services and deals and charge companies from a time behind the date on which the law is passed.
- Countries use this route to correct any anomalies in their taxation policies that have, in the past, allowed companies to take advantage of such loopholes.

NASA images capture wet and dry cycles in Namibia's Etosha Pan

News: United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has captured images depicting the wet and dry cycles of **Etosha Pan** in Africa.

Facts:

- **Etosha Pan:** It is a large endorheic salt pan forming part of the Kalahari Basin in the north of Namibia. The pan is mostly dry but after a heavy rain, it will acquire a thin layer of water which is heavily salted by the mineral deposits on the surface.
- **Protection:** It is protected as part of Etosha National Park, Namibia's second-largest wildlife park. It is also designated as a Ramsar wetland of international importance.

Additional Facts: *Endorheic Basin:* It is a closed drainage basin that retains water and allows no outflow to other external bodies of water such as rivers or oceans but converges instead into lakes or swamps, permanent or seasonal, that equilibrate through evaporation.

Greenland's Largest Glacier Crashed into The Sea

News: A massive chunk of ice of the Nioghalvfjerdsfjorden glacier has broken off because of warmer temperatures in Greenland.

Facts:

- Nioghalvfjerdsfjorden glacier sometimes referred to as "79 N Glacier is located in Northeast Greenland. It is the Arctic's largest ice shelf.

Additional Facts: *Other Glaciers in News*:
- **Thwaites Glacier**: It is located in western Antarctica and flows into Pine Island Bay, a part of the Amundsen Sea.
- **Okjökull (Ok glacier):** It was a glacier located in western Iceland on top of the shield volcano Ok. It is the first glacier lost to climate change in the world.

Big blow to China as Thailand scraps KRA canal project

News: Thailand has announced that it has decided to scrap a Chinese led-KRA canal project.

Facts:

- **Kra Canal** also known as Thai Canal or Kra Isthmus Canal refers to a proposed canal project that aims to connect the Gulf of Thailand with the Andaman Sea across the Kra Isthmus in southern Thailand.

- **Significance:** The canal would provide an alternative to transit through the Straits of Malacca and shorten transit for shipments of oil to Japan and China by 1,200 km.

Additional Facts:

- *Strait of Malacca*: It is a narrow, 890 km (550 mi) stretch of water between the Malay Peninsula (Peninsular Malaysia) and the Indonesian island of Sumatra.
- It serves as the main shipping channel between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean and is one of the most important shipping lanes in the world.

Brazil's Pantanal Wetland Is Burning Out of Control

News: Pantanal Wetland is currently suffering its worst fires in more than two decades with nearly 12% of its vegetation reportedly already lost.

Facts:

- *Pantanal Wetland*: It is a natural region encompassing the world's largest tropical wetland area and the world's largest flooded grasslands.
- *Location*: It is located mostly within Brazil but it extends into portions of Bolivia and Paraguay.
- *Significance*:
  - In 2000, part of this ecoregion, the 'Pantanal Conservation Area' representing 1.3% of the Brazilian Pantanal was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List.
  - In the same year, a part of Pantanal Wetland was named as UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The Pantanal Biosphere Reserve is home to a diversity of flora and fauna that is particularly valuable containing at least 4,700 described species.
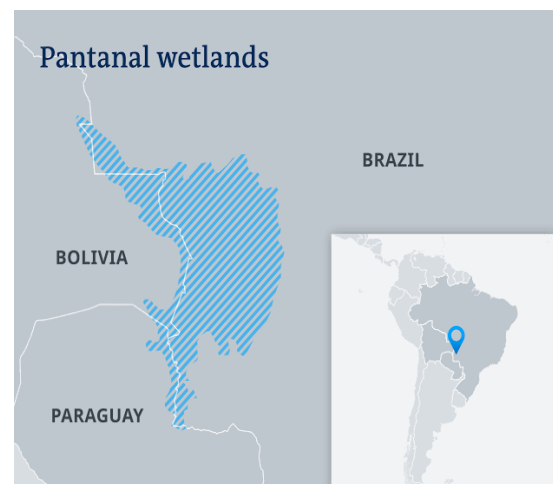
An ancient temple's transition over years of neglect

News: Kakati Devi temple has been converted into an abode of local Goddess 'Balusulamma' (Goddess Durga).

Facts:

- The temple was built by emperor Ganapati Deva, ruler of Kakatiya dynasty in 13th Century. Ganapati Deva is the first king who introduced the worship of Kakati Devi into the coastal region of Andhra and outside the dominions of his kingdom.
- The temple is located in Dharanikota near present Andhra Pradesh capital Amaravathi.

- Features of Kakati Devi idol: Seated in Padmasanam with eight hands and possesses eight different special attributes never found in the contemporary shrines of the Kakatiya period.

Additional Information: Kakatiya dynasty: Kakatiya dynasty (1163–1323) was a South Indian dynasty whose capital was Orugallu (Warangal). The Kakatiya rulers traced their ancestry to a legendary chief named Durjaya.

Why International Literacy Day is observed on September 8

News: International Literacy Day is celebrated across the globe on the 8th of September.

Facts:

- *International Literacy Day:* It was declared in 1966 at the 14th Session of UNESCO's General Conference.
- *Aim:* To raise awareness and remind people of the importance of literacy as a matter of dignity and human rights.
- *Theme:* "Literacy teaching and learning in the COVID-19 crisis and beyond".

Additional Facts:

- *Global Education Monitoring Report 2020*: It has been released by UNESCO to monitor progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on education as well as other education-related points in the SDG Agenda. Theme: "Inclusion and education: All means all".
- *SDG 4:* It aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030.
- *Incheon declaration*: It is a declaration on education adopted at the World Education Forum in Incheon, South Korea in 2015.
- *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):* It is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) based in Paris, France. India has been a member of the UNESCO since its inception in 1946.

Pointly For Miscellaneous

1. *Smart City Index, 2020*: It is released by Institute for Management Development (IMD) in collaboration with Singapore University for Technology and Design (SUTD). Hyderabad was placed at the 85th position (down from 67 in 2019)
2. *Global Innovation Index (GII), 2020*: It is released jointly by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Cornell University and INSEAD Business School. India has been ranked 48th.
3. *MEDBOT:* It is a remote-controlled medical trolley developed by Indian Railways to deliver food, medicines to COVID-19 patients.
4. *World's Largest Solar Tree*: CSIR-CMERI has developed the World's Largest Solar Tree which is installed at CSIR-CMERI Durgapur, West Bengal. Solar Tree is a structure incorporating

solar energy technology on a single pillar, like a tree trunk. It may be a solar artwork or a functional power generator.

5. ***Rakshak***: It is a medical aid robot that aims to assist the hospital staff in the Covid-19 patient care. It has been designed by Central Railways.

6. ***Air Suvidha Portal***: It is a web portal which aims to provide a contactless service to international fliers who have a connecting flight from Delhi to other states. It has been developed by Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) in collaboration with the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Health and Family Welfare and External Affairs.

7. ***Real Mango Software***: It is an illegal software developed for cornering confirmed Railway reservation over the IRCTC (Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation).

8. ***Mukhyamantri Shramik Yojana***: It is a job guarantee scheme of Jharkhand government under which urban workers will demand 100 days of work.

9. ***Hindi Diwas***: It is celebrated every year on 14th September. It marks the day when in 1949, that the constituent assembly adopted Hindi written in Devanagari as the official language of India.

10. ***KN Dixit Committee***: An expert committee headed by K.N. Dikshit has been set up. The committee will conduct holistic study of origin and evolution of Indian culture since 12000 years before present and its interface with other cultures of the world.

11. ***Committee to probe China Watching***: The government has set up an expert committee under the National Cyber Security Coordinator. The committee will evaluate the implications of the digital surveillance by Data Information Technology Co. Limited and assess any violations of law and submit its recommendations within thirty days.