

9pm

Compilation

1st to 7th November, 2020

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General Studies Paper - 1

General Studies - 1

1. Nutrition fallout in wake of pandemic

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- GS 1-Population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism.

Context - The COVID-19 crisis has affected the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Scheme, threatening the food security of children from underprivileged communities.

What are the key findings of recent Global Hunger Index (GHI) report?

Alarming situation for India-

- India has been ranked at 94 among 107 countries in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2020. The country's score of 27.2 is the worst among BRICS countries, and inferior to Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal.
- India's child wasting rate was extremely high at 20.8% – the highest.
- The child stunting rate in India was 37.4 %,
- The child wasting was at 17.3 %.
- The undernourishment rate of India was at 14% and child mortality at 3.7 %.
- India already far out in terms of achieving the 'Zero Hunger' goal.

What are the impacts of pandemic on food security of child?

Food security concerns due to pandemic-

- 1. Losing school meals-** A real-time monitoring tool estimated that as of April 2020, the peak of school closures, 369 million children globally were losing out on school meals, majority were in India.
 - For children from vulnerable households, their only proper meal is the one they get at school.
- 2. Inefficiency in policy implementation-** The Government of India announced hot-cooked mid-day meal or dry ration for eligible school-going children even during pandemic. However, States were still struggling to implement this.
 - Dry ration distributions in lieu of school meals were irregular and started only in late May.
 - The offtake of grains under MDMS from FCI during April and May, 2020 was 22%, lower than the corresponding offtake during April and May, 2019.
- 3. Children engaging in labor activity** to supplement the fall in family incomes in vulnerable households.
 - There is a risk that some children may not even return to schools when they reopen.

What are the possible solutions required?

- 1. Diverse diet-** Nourishment through a diverse diet that includes fat, protein and micronutrients.
- 2. Link local farmers with MDMS** - Smallholder farmers can supply cereals, vegetables and eggs to local schools, which could diversify production and farming systems, transform rural livelihoods and the local economy, and fulfill the 'Atmanirbhar Poshan'.
 - Locally produced vegetables and fruits may be added to the MDMS, also providing an income to local farmers.
- 3. New Initiatives under MDMS-** School Nutrition (Kitchen) Garden under MDMS to provide fresh vegetables for mid-day meals.

4. **Awareness program-** The adequate awareness about of the availability of the scheme related to MDMS is needed for its proper implications.
5. The missed mid-day meal entitlement for April-May should be provided to children as dry ration with retrospective effect.

Way forward-

- With continuing uncertainty regarding the reopening of schools, innovation is similarly required to ensure that not just food, but nutrition is delivered regularly to children.
- Strict measures are needed to ensure that the Public Distribution System (PDS) is accessible to all, especially the vulnerable.

2. LGBT community rights

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS 1- Society

Context- Issues and Challenges of same sex marriages in India.

What is Solicitor General Verdict on same sex marriage?

Same-sex marriages are neither a part of “our culture” nor a part of the law, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the Delhi High Court Monday, opposing a petition demanding marriage rights for the gay community under the Hindu Marriage Act 1955.

What is the history of same sex marriage in India?

Same-sex marriages are not a new phenomenon in India.

- Hindu scriptures define marriage as the union of ‘two souls’ and the same scriptures also define that a soul has no gender. It is only the human bodies that possess a gender.
- These scriptures are a major source of Hindu Law including the Act. The Act merely codifies the Hindu law and doesn’t try to erode the values imbibed within the Holy Scriptures.
- The 11th-century Sanskrit text, the Kathasaritsagara, provides the same explanation for cross-class and cross-caste couples who want to marry.

What are difficulties faces by LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] community?

1. **Legal recognition-** Same-sex marriages are not legally recognized in India.
 - **For example-** Recently, a PIL was filed in the High Court of Delhi seeking declaration to the marriage rights of the gay community under the **Hindu Marriage Act, 1955**.
 - The petitioner avers that the Act allows marriages between “two Hindus” without any discrimination between heterosexual and homosexual couples.
 - But still, gay couples can’t get married and register the same under the Act.
2. **Deprived in Rights** - The rights enjoyed by opposite-sex couples are not enjoyed by same-sex couples. They are prohibited from those rights. For example-
 - The lack of a legal structure around their relationship became increasingly stark when they tried to bring each other on as nominees in insurance and financial plans, just as a married couples did.
 - Most male-female married couples take for granted that the day after they marry, they can open a joint account, make health and funeral-related decisions for each other, and inherit each other’s property.

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3. Families violently separated the same sex couples, often driving them to suicide.
4. **Racial Discrimination**- Additionally, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people suffer from social and economic inequalities due to continuous discrimination.

Way forward-

- Countries around the world have legalized same-sex marriages. The world is heading towards progressive LGBTQ rights. Therefore, it is time to join the many democracies which recognize the right of a citizen to marry anyone she chooses.

3. Alimony Guidelines

Source-[The Hindu](#)

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

Context – The Supreme Court has laid down the guidelines for payment of maintenance in matrimonial cases.

What are the impacts of early marriage?

- a) **Health issues** - Girls are married off early and bear children long before they should. This triggers a state of poor maternal health and is one of the root causes of high levels of child stunting and wasting in India.
 - b) **Dependency** - Since girl brides are not able to complete their education, they remain dependent and underpowered which acts as a big hurdle towards achieving gender equality.
- There is also the possibility of a marriage not working out for varied reasons, leaving the girl or young woman in extreme distress because often she is not financially independent.

What did the Court say?

As per the Supreme Court guidelines-

- Deserted wives and children are entitled to alimony/maintenance from the husbands from the date they apply for it in a court of law.
- A violation would lead to punishments such as civil detention and even attachment of the property of the latter.
- The plea of the husband that he does not possess any source of income ipso facto does not absolve him of his moral duty to maintain his wife, if he is able-bodied and has educational qualifications, the court declared.
- Both the applicant wife and the respondent-husband have to disclose their assets and liabilities in a maintenance case.
- Other factors such as “spiraling inflation rates and high costs of living” should be considered, but the wife should receive alimony which fit the standard of life she was used to in the matrimonial home.
- **Overlapping jurisdiction under different enactment**- Husband doesn't have to pay maintenance in each of the proceedings under different Maintenance laws.
- The Court also added how an “**order or decree of maintenance**” may be enforced under various laws and Section 128 of the CrPC.

Why such a judgment?

- Usually, maintenance cases have to be settled in 60 days, but they take years, in reality, owing to legal loopholes.

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- The top court said women deserted by husbands are left in dire straits, often reduced to destitution, for lack of means to sustain themselves and their children.
- Despite a plethora of maintenance laws, women were left empty-handed for years, struggling to make ends meet after a bad marriage.

What are the other laws where women can make a claim for alimony in India?

1. Maintenance under the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956.
2. Child maintenance under section 125 CrPC.
3. Maintenance under Section 26 of Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.
4. Protection of Women from the Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

Way forward-

Maintenance laws have been enacted as a measure of social justice to provide recourse to dependent wives and children for their financial support, so as to prevent them from falling into destitution and vagrancy.

ForumIAS

General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies - 2

1. Shifting trajectory Indian foreign policy

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

Context- The significance of 3rd India-USA 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue and the shifting trajectory of India foreign policy.

What are the key highlights of 3rd India-US 2+2 dialogue?

1) The USA reiterated its support to India in defending its territorial sovereignty in the background of the ongoing stand-off between India-China.

It also referred to the greater threats posed by China in the Indo-Pacific region and by the Covid-19 pandemic in general.

2) **Signing of the BECA-** India signed the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) for Geo-Spatial Cooperation, which marked India's entry as a full member into the select category of nations entitled to receive highly classified U.S. defence and intelligence information.

BECA is one of the four foundational military communication agreements between the two countries. The other three are:

- * GSOMIA- General Security of Military Information Agreement.
- * LEMOA- Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement.
- * COMCASA- Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement.

Other Steps Taken:

- * Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Technical Cooperation in Earth Observations and Earth Sciences.
- * Agreement to extend the duration of the MoU on the Global Center for Nuclear Energy Partnership.
- * Agreement on the electronic exchange of customs data.
- * Letter of intent regarding cooperation in traditional Indian medicines.
- * Discussions on the status of Afghanistan and support for its peace process.

What are the issues related with signing of BECA agreement?

1) **Compromising strategic autonomy-** India prides itself on maintaining strategic autonomy, by synchronizing its systems with those of the US, it will enable the US to enter its decision-making loop.

2) **India's Aversion to Alliance System-** From the perspective of the US, in order to counter China, it would want India to be getting close to an alliance system. By appending its signature India has signed on to becoming part of the wider anti-China 'coalition of the willing'.

3) **Impact on China-India relations-** India's willingness to sign foundational military agreements with the U.S., would suggest that India has made its choice, which can only exacerbate already deteriorating China-India relations.

4) India has effectively lefts its previous policy of neutrality, and of maintaining its equidistant from power blocs.

What are the challenges for India with recent foreign policy shift?

1) **India and the Taliban challenges-** The challenge would be for India to stay relevant in Afghanistan, with the recent developments in Taliban issue. India must decide how a

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shift in policy at this time would serve India's objectives in Afghanistan, considering the tremendous investment it has made in recent decades to shore up democracy in that country.

- 2) **India's balancing with SCO**- India has to act as a willing partner of regional cooperation that is led by China and Russia while assuring that India doesn't reflect its increasing strategic convergence with the USA.
- 3) **India-Russia relations**- It is the combination of a changing regional order, closer Russia-China ties and India's alignment with the United States and other like-minded countries to manage Beijing's rise that has the potential to create hurdles for India-Russia cooperation in the Asia.
- 4) India needs to devote greater attention to try and restore India-Iran ties which have definitely frayed in recent years.

Way forward-

India-Russia ties- This is one relationship which India will need to handle with skill and dexterity, as it would be a tragedy if India-Russia relations were to deteriorate at a time when the world is in a state of disorder.

2. Repopulation of prisons during pandemic is dangerous.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs2: issues in functioning of the Criminal Justice system

Context: Recently, the Delhi's high-powered committee (HPC) for the decongestion of prisons directed that the undertrials and convicts must return to prisons from early December.

Background of the issue

- Given the contagious nature of COVID-19 and overcrowding in prisons, the court ordered for depopulation of prisons.
- The court ordered state governments to form HPCs to determine the criteria for release.
- Following the Supreme Court order, in March 2020, India's prisons released convicts on emergency parole, and undertrials on interim bail.

Why have prison populations increased during a pandemic which necessitated decongestion?

- High number of lockdown-related arrests reveals that policing priorities have been misplaced and a public health crisis has been treated more as a law and order issue.
- For example, arrests made during the first three phases of the lockdown, unusual number of arrests under Excise Act (15.8 per cent) and the Public Gambling Act.
- Reduced court capacities due to the pandemic, have impaired the access to bail for arrested persons.
- The adoption of a virtual court system also aggravated judicial delays.
- Failure of the criminal justice system (Police, courts and prisons) to work in an integrated manner towards the decongestion even during this pandemic.

What are the causes for the historically burdened prison system?

- The problem of over-arrests and inherent problems of policing have never been addressed.
- Reforms to reduce the undertrial prison population have not been implemented effectively.

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- High representation of undertrials in the total prison population (55-90 per cent) is a major cause of concern.

With Global health experts not signalling an end to the COVID-19 pandemic, the call for the inmates to safely return to prisons is entirely misplaced and dangerous.

3. Examining Examinations

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-2- Education

Context: Need of an education system that encourages children to question and learn.

What are the problems with our current examination system?

- **The cut-throat nature of our examination system** celebrates the success of a few and creates unhealthy competition.
- This leads to an excessive amount of stress in children who are physiologically, psychologically and emotionally not ready to handle it.
- There is a wealth of information and insight about a **student's potential and ability that cannot be captured in a report card.**
- **Exams in India focus on grades rather than on what is learnt.** This is also why students choose careers in domains where they have scored well in, rather than fields that they are interested in.

How will NEP 2020 help in holistic learning?

- **The New Education Policy 2020 places emphasis on holistic and collective learning** rather than having one main exam determines a student's fate.
- **Students are to be evaluated based on their performance in different classes,** the first two years of primary school are to be test-free from 2021.
- **Report cards will no longer include the class and level rankings** at both primary and secondary levels.
- **Board exams will cover a range of subjects and test only core concepts.** Students can take exams on two occasions during an academic year.
- In order to track students' progress throughout their school years, exams will be conducted in classes III, V, and VIII and **a common national exam will be introduced for students applying to the 60-odd universities in the country.**
- **This will regulate how universities are run and will also "set higher standards and build rigour into the education system".**
- Such changes will help create a **holistic learning environment that is safe, supportive, and provide opportunities to learn** and excel in non-academic as well as academic domains.

What are the requirements for successful implementation of NEP?

- **Extraordinary efforts in the training and professional development of teachers.**
- **The implementation of technology-based solutions and processes** that can supplement teacher training and bring in scalable, sustainable and measurable change.

Way forward

- The primary motive of school education should be to impart knowledge, values, and skills that will help develop necessary life skills to be successful.
- With successful private and public collaboration, the NEP's visions for early childhood to higher education, professional education to vocational education, and teacher training to professional education can be realised.

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4. Serological surveys

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

Context: The Indian Council of Medical Research conducted two serosurveys: May 11 to June 4 and August 17 to September 22.

What is serological survey?

- Serological surveys are used to detect the prevalence of antibodies against COVID-19/any diseases.
- Their purpose is to measure the proportion of a population already infected as evidenced by prevalence of antibody against the disease.

How serological surveys are carried out?

- Statisticians stratify the population and select a random sample from all strata so that the prevalence figure obtained is representative of the whole population.
- Random samples are tested from the entire population then, the data are extrapolated to the whole population.

Why antibody is tested?

- Antibodies are the evidence of the host's response to virus infection.
- Their presence in the blood-serum confirms past infection.

Why the data derived from serosurveys must be interpreted with caution?

- **Issue with Asymptomatic cases:** Asymptomatic cases constitute more than 80% of those infected with the virus. In people with asymptomatic infections, these antibody levels decline over time and become undetectable by 60 days after proven infection.
- **Swift disappearance of S2 antibodies:** In a study on exposure-prone healthcare workers in Tennessee, nearly half the subjects with S2 antibodies became negative in two months.
- **Inaccuracy:** The latent period between infection and the appearance of a detectable antibody is about four weeks. Those who got infected recently before the survey may not be covered.
- If taken at face value, serosurveys may not reflect the true level of antibodies prevalence.

What is the way forward?

- The predicted herd immunity level needed to end the epidemic was 60%. In India, according to the serological surveys, half of the herd immunity level required to end the epidemic was already reached by mid-September.
- However, during the festival the Governments must enforce strict norms regarding crowding, especially inside buildings.
- This will ensure safety of the individuals, family members particularly senior citizens.

5. Post-Quad era

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora.

Context: Future possible rearrangement of the global structures will have major consequences for India's economic prosperity and technological future.

What are the likely changes?

- **Expansion of the Five Eyes forum with inclusion of India:** Recently India was invited to join the Five Eyes meeting earlier this month in Tokyo on communications security.
- **The growth of “Quad Plus”:** Brazil, Israel, New Zealand, South Korea, and Vietnam can be added along with the existing Quad members.
- **Emergence of league of democracies:** To address a wide range of issues, including the defence of shared values, commerce, corruption, taxation, climate change and digital governance.
- **Emergence of the ideas of the “free world:** New international coalitions will be formed to address the emerging challenges from China.
- **Expansion of G-7:** It will have new nations like Australia, India, Russia and South Korea.
- **Coalition of 10 democracies, including India:** it will contribute to the construction of secure 5G networks and reduce the current dependence on China.
- **Demand to reform the global trading system:** it has been distorted by Chinese success in subverting it.
- **Reforming the global trade rules:** Moving away from the free trade and more focus on self-reliance. For example, American industrial policy and “Buy American” strategy and India’s “Atmanirbhar Bharat”.
- **Development of Clean Network:** Clean Network is a broader effort among like-minded countries to build secure technology ecosystems. It eliminates untrustworthy vendors from telecom systems, digital apps, trans-oceanic cables and cloud infrastructure.

What are the opportunities for India?

- **India will engage more closely with Japan and Australia:** it will help in developing resilient supply chains to reduce the reliance on China.
- **Opportunities for responsible development of AI:** France and Canada have invited India to join the Global Partnership on artificial intelligence a collaboration of 15 countries.

The post-Quad era opens a new phase in which India, for the first time, can help shape global institutions.

6. NEP 2020: Analysis

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-2- Education

Context: The National Education Policy 2020 underestimates the problem of settling the three systems of education in India.

More on news:

- For education to fulfil its social role, it must respond to the specific setting in which the young are growing up. India has sufficient experience of attempts made from the national level to influence systemic realities on the ground.

Examine the evolution of centre-state relations in the field of education?

- There is a huge history of strong recommendations made by national commissions and of provincial resistance.
- States had their own social worlds to deal with, and they often preferred to carry on with the ways they became familiar with in colonial days.

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- **A prime example is the continuation of intermediate or junior colleges in several States** more than half a century after the Kothari Commission gave its much acclaimed report.
- The Constitution, in its original draft, treated the States as the apt sphere for dealing with education.
- **Central Advisory Board of Education:** One hundred years ago, the Central Advisory Board of Education was created to co-ordinate regional responses to common issues.
 - **The 'recommended' character of this administrative device meant that the Board served mainly as a discussion forum.**
- **India chose to have a Ministry of Education at the Centre** and its role was to clear aims and standards, or to pave the road to nation-building and development.
- After independence, a more substantial scope of the **Centre's activities in education emerged in the shape of advanced institutions** in professional fields and schools specifically meant for the children of civil servants transferrable across India.
- Such institutions received higher investment than the States could afford.
- The same was for national-level resource institutions which guided policy and encouraged new practices.
- **When the national policy was drafted, it stressed on national concerns** and viewpoint without referring to provincial practices that directed strong divergence.
- **Private sector had begun to push both public policy and popular perceptions** of education. The force of this push can be measured from the difference between the 1986 policy and its own action programme published six years later.
- **The rapidly expanding and globalising urban middle class** had already begun to split from the public system, posing the question of why education cannot be sold if there are willing buyers.

Discuss the various systems of education in India.

- **Central System:**
 - **There is a Central system, running an exam board** that has an all-India reach through affiliation with English-medium private schools catering to regional elites.
 - **The Central system also includes advanced professional institutes** and universities that have access to greater per capita funding than what their counterparts run by the States can afford.
- **State system:**
 - **The second system which also features provincial secondary boards** affiliating schools teaching in State languages.
- **Private system:**
 - **The third system is based on purely private investment.** Internationally accredited school boards and globally connected private universities are part of this.
- **An attempt was made under the Right to Education (RTE) Act** to bridge the gap between the first two systems. The RTE is a parliamentary law, providing a set of standards for elementary education and a call to private schools to provide for social justice via the quota route.
- **Coordination among the three systems** has proved unmanageable, even in purely functional terms.

Way forward

- We need a systemic vision: both for recovery from institutional decay and for future progress.
- Gradations of failure will have to be determined first and their causes studied before remedial steps are planned.

7. Academic freedom

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- Polity

Context: India's dull score on the Academic Freedom Index reflects the issues troubling the country's education system.

What were the findings of academic freedom index?

- **India has scored noticeably low** in the international Academic Freedom Index (AFI) with a score of 0.352, which is closely followed by Saudi Arabia (0.278) and Libya (0.238).
- The AFI of India has dipped by 0.1 points in the last 5 years.
- Countries like Malaysia (0.582), Pakistan (0.554), Brazil (0.466), Somalia (0.436) and Ukraine (0.422) have scored better than India.
- **Uruguay and Portugal top the AFI**, with scores of 0.971 each, followed closely by Latvia (0.964) and Germany (0.960).
- **The AFI has cited the 'Free to Think:** Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project, to suggest that the political tensions in India may have something to do with declining 'academic freedom'.
- **The police brutality against students at Jamia Millia Islamia** University and Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi, and their being labelled as anti-nationals, has raised concerns about the state of academic freedom.

What are the claims in NEP 2020?

- **The NEP 2020 claims that it is based on principles of creativity and critical thinking** and envisions an education system that is free from political or external interference.
- For instance, the policy states that faculty will be given the "freedom to design their own curricular and pedagogical approaches within the approved framework, including textbook and reading material selections, assignments and assessments".
- **It suggests creating a National Research Foundation (NRF)**, a merit-based and peer-reviewed research funding, which will be governed, independently of the government, by a rotating Board of Governors consisting of the very best researchers and innovators across fields.
- **The new education policy aims at repairing the educational system** in the country and making "India a global knowledge superpower", with a new system that is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal-4 (SDG 4).
- **It also emphasises universal access to schools for all children**, raising the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), and ending the rise of dropout rate in India.

What were the components used in evaluating AFI scores? Examine India's performance.

- **The AFI used eight components to evaluate the scores:**
- Freedom to research and teach
- Freedom of academic exchange and dissemination

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- Institutional autonomy
- Campus integrity
- Freedom of academic and cultural expression
- Constitutional protection of academic freedom
- International legal commitment to academic freedom under the International Contract on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Existence of universities
- **India has not done well in components like institutional autonomy**, campus integrity, and freedom of academic and cultural expression and constitutional protection of academic freedom.
- **Most universities in the country are subjected to unwanted interference** from governments in both academic and non-academic issues.
- **Majority of appointments, especially to top-ranking posts like that of vice-chancellors**, pro vice-chancellors and registrars, have been highly politicised.
- **Such political appointments choke academic and creative freedom**, and also lead to corrupt practices, including those in licensing and accreditation, thus promoting unhealthy favouritism and nepotism in staff appointments and student admissions.
- **This reflects a 'rent-seeking culture'** within the academic community.

Way forward

- The NEP 2020 aims to de-bureaucratise the education system by giving governance powers to academicians.
- It also talks about giving autonomy to higher education institutions by handing over their administration to a board comprising academicians. This may help de-bureaucratise the education system and reduce political interference to an extent.

8. DBT Scam

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs2: E-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential

Context: Central scholarship scam underlines need to tighten checks and balances in DBT architecture, fix accountability

Background

- An investigation by a newspaper has uncovered a nexus of middlemen, government employees and bank staff were involved in cheating students from minority communities of a centrally funded scholarship in Jharkhand.
- It was found that the officials have bypassed the verification processes and have misused the DBT funds sanctioned by the Union Ministry of Minority Affairs.

What is the need for direct benefit transfer?

- Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) was perceived as a solution for the persistent problem of social welfare and subsidy schemes by elimination of middlemen.
- The use of Aadhaar seeding ensures that nobody else can claim the share of the benefits by impersonation or any other means.
- The recent incident has proved that having a Unique Identification Number (UIN) is no guarantee against being robbed of scholarships, pensions and other welfare entitlements.

How DBT funds are being misappropriated?

- Bank officials and school staff's steal user IDs and passwords to divert benefits from schools that never applied for any grant.

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- Middlemen compel parents to forego a big share of their children's dues.
- Institutions overstate records to apply for scholarship funds.

There is need to find effective solutions to strengthen DBT schemes so that social welfare funds and subsidies will reach the intended beneficiaries.

9. Power of ECI

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Powers, Functions and Responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

Context: Power of Election commission of India to enforce poll norms and clean campaigns.

Background of the issue

- Former Madhya Pradesh chief minister, Kamal Nath, while campaigning for a by-election to the Madhya Pradesh Assembly recently used the derogatory word "item" for a BJP woman candidate.
- Following this, the ECI revoked the star campaigner status for Kamal Nath.
- The Supreme Court has recently stayed the order issued by the Election Commission of India (ECI) revoking Kamal Nath's status as the star campaigner of the Congress party.

What is star campaigner status?

- It is a privilege given to few candidates. The expenditure incurred on the campaign by those from the list of star campaigners is not included in the expenditure of the candidate concerned.
- It ensures that some leaders can charter helicopters and travel extensively to cover more territory and constituencies without breaching any individual candidate's spending limit.

Why the court stayed ECI's order?

- Section 77 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, which relates to a candidate's election expenditure, empowers the political party to decide itself who its "leaders" are and list of 'star campaigners' to the election authorities.
- It is against the right to campaign without incurring electoral expenditure on the candidates' account.
- Stating that the EC has no power to withdraw the status of star campaigner submitted by political parties the Supreme Court stayed the Election Commission's order.

What were the arguments made by ECI?

- The ECI has cited the clause in the MCC (non statutory) that bars candidates from resorting to "criticism of all aspects of the private life, not connected with the public activities" of other leaders and party workers.
- Also, the ECI has made reference to the Supreme Court's observation that when laws are absent, the ECI can invoke its residuary power to meet an infinite variety of situations that cannot be foreseen by lawmakers.

What is the way forward?

- The ECI needs to be empowered to revoke the status of a campaigner, if there is an apparent breach of campaign norms or the Model Code of Conduct.
- ECI's power to enforce poll norms and clean campaigns should not be abridged.

10. Freedom of Media

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs2: Role of Civil Services in a Democracy.

Context: The arrest of television anchor and editor-in-chief of Republic Television Arnab Goswami for alleged abetment to suicide.

Why the arrest is seen as political vendetta?

- First, the editor-in-chief of Republic Television, Arnab Goswami was very critical of the Maharashtra state government on several issues
 - On the migrant crisis.
 - He alleged a communal angle in the lynching of three men in Palghar district.
 - He accused the Mumbai police commissioner and the Maharashtra chief minister of collusion in an alleged cover-up of the Sushant Singh Rajput suicide case.
- Second, recently Republic TV was accused of a TRP scam and a case was booked with the FIRs naming several in Republic's newsroom.
- Third, Goswami has been arrested in a case in which the Maharashtra police had filed a closure report last year citing lack of evidence.

All these incidents reinforce the suspicion that the police are working with partisanship.

How it affects democracy?

- Attack on media persons for political vendetta reduces the spaces for dissent and freedom of speech. For example, journalists being booked under draconian laws of sedition or UAPA in some states.
- It will only lead to the polarisation of the public space and further reduces the scope for independent journalism.

Media ensures dissemination of truth, holds the powerful to account, speaks for the weak and those without a voice. Its sanctity must be protected for the democracy to thrive.

11. Weakened fiscal capacity of States

Source-[The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- **GS 2-** Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

Context- With various measures the Centre government has reduced of the fiscal resource capacity of the States.

What are the reasons of weakened fiscal capacity of States?

1. **Impact of Implementation of GST on States-** Since implementation, the Goods and Services Tax appears to have reduced the resource-generating capacity of States and has contributed to worsening inter-State inequality
2. **Centre undermines fiscal capacity of States-**
 - A. **Cutbacks in devolution** - Centre has systematically cut the share of States in taxes raised by the Union government.
 - Between 2014-15 and 2019-20, the States got ₹7,97,549 crore less than what was projected by the Finance Commission.
 - B. **Shrinking of divisible pool-** Centre has reduced the pool of funds to be shared with the States by shifting from taxes to cesses and surcharges.
 - The Constitution allows the Centre to levy cess and surcharge which the Centre need not share with state governments.

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- When taxes are replaced with cesses and surcharges, consumer pays the same price. But the Union government keeps more of that revenue and reduces the size of the divisible pool. As a result, the States lose out on their share.

C. GST shortfall-

- **The GST Compensation Act, 2017** guaranteed States that they would be compensated for any loss of revenue in the first five years of GST implementation, until 2022, using a cess levied on sin and luxury goods.
 - However, the economic slowdown has pushed both GST and cess collections down over the last year, resulting in a 40% gap last year between the compensation paid and cess collected.
3. Central grants are also likely to drop significantly this year.
- For instance, ₹31,570 crore was allocated as annual grants to Karnataka. Actual grants may be down to ₹17,372 crore.

What are the Impacts of colossal borrowing on States?

- **Repayment burden** will overwhelm State budgets for several years.
- **Budget issue** - After paying loans and interest, salaries and pensions, and establishment expenses, nothing left for development and welfare.
- The fall in funds for development and welfare programmes will adversely impact-
 - The livelihoods of crores of Indians.
 - The economic growth potential cannot be fully realized.
 - Adverse consequences will be felt in per capita income, human resource development and poverty

Way forward-

- The systematic weakening of States serves neither federalism nor national interest. Therefore, The Centre must take several steps to ensure an adequate flow of resources to states.
- Centre must immediately clear all its pending dues to state governments.

12. Low labour force participation (LFP) of Indian women

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs2: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Human Resources.

Context: The issue of the low labour force participation (LFP) of Indian women.

What are the factors limiting women's labour force participation?

- Women's inability to work outside the home is hampered mainly due to the predominant responsibility for domestic chores and unpaid care work.

Scenario of Indian women's labour force participation

- **Historical evidence:** Historically, women's LFP has increased when the time cost of domestic/unpaid care work is reduced, or is shared more equally with men, or made more compatible with market work.
- **Unequal gender divisions:** India has among the most unequal gender divisions.
 - Women spend between five to 10 times more times on housework compared to men.
- **Female LFPR:** Despite falling fertility and rapidly rising female education levels, India's female LFP has not only been persistently low, but has registered a decline over the last 15 years.

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- **Multifarous reasons:**
 - Women unwillingness to work despite opportunities
 - A lack of suitable jobs,
 - Fractured nature of work especially in rural areas, and
 - Inaccurate measurement of their work is still debatable.
- **LinkedIn report:** According to a recent report from LinkedIn, Indian women participation in paid work increased because of “work from home” (WFH) that allowed them to combine their domestic and employment responsibilities.

Way forward

- Meaningful work should be provided to women that will be equal to their rising educational qualifications.
- Need to ensure conducive and enabling conditions (transportation, toilets, regularity) etc to facilitate women’s participation in work force.
- Need to reduce the burden of domestic chores and care work, along with increase in paid work opportunities to raise women’s participation in the labour force

India to realise its true potential of gender dividend, it is essential for paying attention to job creation with a gender equity lens.

13. China occupied Kashmir

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

Context- The history of china occupied Kashmir and the significance of Sino-Pakistan agreement of 1963.

What is China’s dual politics in Kashmir?

- In August 2019, following the dilution of Article 370 and removal of special status for Jammu and Kashmir, China said it was “seriously concerned about the current situation in Jammu Kashmir”.
- However, China refrained from voicing its opposition to Pakistan's announced move to accord "provisional provincial status" to Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

China did not issue a statement on Pakistan’s move to change the status of Gilgit-Baltistan, a disputed region where China is also carrying out projects under its China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) plan, which India has opposed.

What is 1963’s Sino-Pakistan Agreement?

Sino-Pakistan Boundary Agreement of 1963, Pakistan illegally ceded 5,180 sq. km in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir to China.

- The agreement is not recognized as legal by India, which also claims sovereignty over part of the land.

Significance of the agreement-

- Pakistan compromised India’s traditional frontier along the Kun Lun range to the north-west of the Karakoram Pass.
- And also enabled China to extrapolate a claim line eastwards along the Karakoram Range in Ladakh.
- This collusion allowed China to claim the whole of Aksai Chin in which it had no historical presence.

What is the history of China occupied Kashmir?

Changing the frontiers - China exploited the 'Great Game' between British India and Russia in the late 19th century and pitched its territorial claims far beyond the traditional frontiers of Xinjiang.

- **In 1869** - After Mir of Hunza defeat in 1869 at the hands of the joint forces of the Maharaja of Kashmir and the British, the Chinese tried to co-opt him in their scheme while giving him refuge.
- **By 1890**- China had started asserting its presence in the valleys between the Kun Lun and the main Karakoram Range.
- **By 1891**- Chinese had quietly moved south of the Kun Lun range to consolidate their presence at Shahidullahand then they moved further south to Suget, and thereafter, showed up at the Karakoram pass.
- **In 1936** - The Mir of Hunza was asked by the British to abandon his rights, but the Shaksgam valley and the Aghil range remained with the Mir of Hunza. This remained the traditional frontier of British India until independence, inherited by India following J&K's accession in 1947.

14. The Indo-Pacific journey

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- International Relations

Context: The Indo-Pacific region is crucial in Indian foreign policy.

Where do we geographically place the Indo-Pacific?

- **India has used 'indo-pacific' in joint statements** with a series of partner countries, including the United States, Australia, France, Indonesia, Japan, and of course the United Kingdom.
- The Ministry has recently set up an **Indo-Pacific Division as well as an Oceania Division**, and placed them under the same Additional Secretary level officer. This is a sign of India's commitment to this critical geography.
- **For India, the Indo-Pacific is that vast maritime space** stretching from the western coast of North America to the eastern shores of Africa.
- India's great religious traditions, such as **Buddhism, spread far and wide in the Indo-Pacific**. Some of the oldest and most impressive Hindu temples are found in Vietnam, remnants of the Cham kingdom.
- A thousand years ago India's greatest coastal empire, the Cholas, sent maritime expeditions and trading ships as far east as Sumatra, ancient China, and Abbasid empire in what is today Iraq.
- Sea-borne trade with Africa and with the Gulf states have been constants of Indian economic life.

How has India strived to utilise the geo-strategic potential of Indo-Pacific?

- **The Indo-Pacific ocean system carries an estimated 65 per cent of world trade** and contributes 60 per cent of global GDP. Ninety per cent of India's international trade travels on its waters.
- India's Indo-Pacific strategy was spoken by Prime Minister in a speech in Singapore in 2018 as **the SAGAR doctrine (Security and Growth for All in the Region)**
- India plans to support the building of a **rules-based regional architecture resting** on seven pillars. These are:
 - Maritime security
 - Maritime ecology

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- Maritime resources
- Capacity building and resource sharing
- Disaster risk reduction and management
- Science, technology and academic cooperation
- Trade connectivity and maritime transport
- We have wanted to **strengthen security and freedom of navigation** in the Indo-Pacific by becoming a net security provider.
 - For instance, in peacekeeping efforts or anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden.
 - In the past six years, India has provided coastal surveillance radar systems to Mauritius, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Myanmar and Bangladesh.
 - All of these countries also use Indian patrol boats, as do Mozambique and Tanzania.
- **Defence training programmes have increased.**
 - Mobile training teams have been deputed to 11 countries from Vietnam to South Africa, as well as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar in our immediate neighbourhood.
- **The Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre** for the Indian Ocean Region has enhanced maritime domain awareness among partner countries.
- **HADR missions in the Indo-Pacific** in recent years have included Operation Rahat in Yemen in 2015; when India rescued and evacuated 6,710 persons, including 1,947 citizens of over 40 other countries.
- **The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)**, co-founded by India and the United Kingdom in 2019. CDRI is key to India's regional and global commitment to taking on climate change.
- **India has also promoted and contributed to infrastructure**, connectivity, economic projects and supply chains in the region, always prioritising the needs of the host community and the ethic of equity, environmental sustainability and social viability.
- **International partnerships:** India has **created partnerships and mechanisms with countries** the opportunities, concerns and stakes of which intersect with ours.
 - **Networks such as Quad, with India, the United States, Japan and Australia** as participants, and the India-Japan-US, India-France-Australia and India-Indonesia-Australia trilateral arrangements offer cases in point.

Way forward

UK' has characteristic wisdom and prodigious institutional memory, we hope too that the UK's strategy will approximate India's own and long-standing Indo-Pacific vision.

15. Foreign policy changes in Joe Biden's administration

Source: [The Hindu](#)

GS2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora.

Context: Expected foreign policy changes that Joe Biden will bring to India-U.S. relations if he wins the presidential elections.

What are the changes expected?

On Afghan policy:

- In September 2009, Joseph Biden who was the then vice president of Obama's administration was tasked with building an alternative plan to Afghanistan, to

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present to U.S. Generals who were pushing for influx of up to 400,000 troops to win the war in Afghanistan.

- Mr. Biden suggested that, the U.S. need not send more troops, instead it needed to pull out, and focus on a five-point agenda for what he called “Counter-terrorism Plus”.

On Relation with Pakistan:

- Mr. Biden will favour a policy of engagement with Pakistan in order to deal with the Taliban.
- Also, Biden Pakistan relation is expected to be in good will as Pakistan has accorded him with one of its highest civilian honours, the Hilal-e-Pakistan.

On U.S. policy with India:

- Mr. Biden and Mr. Trump foreign policy may not differ as much. For example, both favoured exiting troops from the Afghan base. For India, this would mean the continuity over the U.S. policy with India, during Biden’s tenure.
- It is also likely that Mr. Biden will build on the military foundational agreements with India, strengthen military cooperation and push the sale of U.S. military hardware

On Indo Pacific:

- Though Mr. Trump owned the Indo-Pacific policy, the policy owes its origins to the Obama-Biden administration that first focused on “Asia-Pacific” in order to build a coalition to counter Chinese inroads in the region.

On India - US Trade:

- It’s more unlikely that Biden will try to restore India’s Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) status for exporters, but he might push for signing up a mini-trade deal with India which has been in talks for long.

On visas to Indians:

- Mr. Biden understands the value of Indian immigrants to the U.S., and the importance of India’s outsourcing industry to the U.S. He has already assured Indian-Americans in this front.

On Civil rights and democracy:

- It will be one of the frictional areas in India- US relation given India’s pending review by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.
- Also, his co-associates have been particularly vocal in several issues against Indian administration. For example, Jammu-Kashmir issue, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, communal and caste-based violence, actions against non-governmental organisations and media freedoms.

Mr. Biden’s foreign policy owes much significance considering Mr. Trump’s pull-out from the multilateral world order, including the World Health Organisation, UNESCO, and Human Rights Council, agreements such as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the Iran nuclear deal and the Paris Climate Accord. He is also expected to take concrete measures to strengthen the rules-based international order

16. GST levy on mobility aids

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections of the population by the Centre and States

Context: The GST levy on mobility aids places a prohibitive burden on the ability of disabled citizens to lead a dignified life

Background

- Recently, in **Nipun Malhotra vs. Union of India case** the Supreme Court of India heard brief arguments on the constitutional validity of the levy of Goods and Services Tax (GST) on mobility aids used by disabled citizens.
- According to the petitioner, the tax imposed on the products such as wheelchairs, tricycles for the disabled, braille paper and braille watches was discriminatory.
- But the Court adjourned the case stating that its power to review the decision of imposing tax was constrained by the **principle of separation of powers**.
- It suggested that the GST council (the governing body) is responsible for determining which products are taxed, and at what rate and its decisions are final.
- However, until the advent of the GST, mobility aids were almost entirely immune from indirect taxes.
- In virtually every State, exemptions were granted on the payment of value-added-tax on such goods. The GST did away altogether with this exemption.

Why should the Supreme Court review the legitimacy of the taxes levied?

- **Protecting the Fundamental rights:** Taxes have a direct bearing on society. The nature and rate of tax imposed on a product have direct consequences on a person's freedom and on a person's right to be treated with equal care and concern.
- **Promotes inequality:** The tax places a prohibitive burden on the ability of disabled citizens to access the most basic goods, to lead lives with dignity.
- **To validate the legitimacy:** When the GST Council reject the petitioner's plea, it would be irrational of the Court not to test the legitimacy of the levy.
- **International Precedence:** The top courts in Canada and Colombia have recently come up to examine whether or not an imposition of a tax violates a fundamental right.
- **Does not affect separation of powers:** Taxing laws are very much similar to ordinary laws where judiciary has the power of judicial review and it doesn't obstruct legislative and executive competence.

What were the reasons provided by government to impose GST on mobility aids?

- According to the government, relieving mobility aids from taxation, will disincentivise domestic manufacturers.
- In the absence of a levy of GST on the final product, the manufacturer will be burdened with input taxes. Since it cannot claim any credit for those taxes paid.
- So, the prices of the final product would have to be higher, otherwise the manufacturer will be placed in a relative position of disadvantage to foreign makers.
- The 5% concessional GST rate will result in a win-win situation for both the users of such devices, the disabled persons, as well as the domestic manufacturers of such goods.

Why the arguments given by government is not satisfactory?

- First, many other essential products are exempted from GST. For example, in July 2018, following a sustained campaign, the levy imposed on female personal hygiene products (tampons and sanitary pads) was removed.

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- Second, the Parliament has other ways to ensure that domestic manufacturers, for example, it can exempt firms from paying taxes on inputs on the condition that such inputs will be used to manufacture mobility aids.

Taxation, is just a tool intended to augment general welfare. The GST Council can learn from the good practices of Canada and Australia and grant a complete exemption on the levy imposed on mobility aids.

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General Studies Paper - 3

General Studies - 3

1. Air India Strategic Sale

Source: [Indian Express](#)

GS3: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, And Railways etc

Context: Recently, the Government of India announced few changes to facilitate the sale of Air India.

Background

- As part of the strategic disinvestment, the government initiated for the complete disinvestment process of debt burdened Air India.
- Before the start of the current financial year, Air India had more than Rs 60,000 crore as debt and with the coming of the pandemic, debt burden is getting accumulated.
- Due to increasing debt burden, the Government has been pushing for the strategic sale of Air India.
- Following the failure to receive a single bid in the first attempt the government has initiated the disinvestment process of Air India for the second time.

What are the new changes?

- Earlier, the government had mandated a fixed level of debt i.e. 23,286.50 crore to be taken by buyers along with the sale.
- The government, through its recent announcement will now allow the prospective bidders the flexibility to decide the level of debt they wish to take on while buying the airline.
- Second, the winning bidder will have to deposit at least 15 per cent of the bid amount in cash with the government ahead of the share transfer.
- Also, the government has extended the deadline from October 30 to December 14 to allow potential bidders to carefully evaluate the new terms and conditions.

Whether the latest changes would be enough to attract the buyers?

- **Lack of buyers:** Most best bidders who are affected by the pandemic are now struggling to survive themselves.
- **Unattractive Aviation sector:** Estimates suggest that most airlines will struggle to be financially viable even in 2021 fearing the second wave of COVID infections.

2. Platform workers and their issues

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

Context- The new labour codes passed by Parliament recently acknowledge platform and gig workers as new occupational categories in the making.

What are the provisions for platform worker in the labour code and issues with them?

Definition of Platform work according to new law-

- * "Platform work" has been defined as a work arrangement outside of a traditional employer employee relationship in which organisations or individuals use an online platform to access other organisations or individuals to solve specific problems or to

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provide specific services or any such other activities which may be notified by the Central Government, in exchange for payment.

- * Platform worker has been defined as a person engaged in or undertaking Platform Work.

What are the issues with new labour code?

- 1) There are no guarantees for better and more stable days for platform workers, even though they are meant to be 'the future of work'.
- 2) The Code has drawn criticism from platform workers' associations for failing to delineate it from gig work and unorganized work.
- 3) The code does not state which stakeholder is responsible for delivering what quantum of welfare.
- 4) The terms 'gig worker', 'platform worker' and 'gig economy' not defined with in connection with their wages.

Discuss the role of platform worker amidst the pandemic.

- * Platform workers were responsible for delivery of essential services during the pandemic at great personal risk to themselves.
- * They have also been responsible for keeping platform companies afloat despite the pandemic-induced financial crisis.

Way Forward

- * A tripartite effort by the State, companies, and workers to identify where workers fall on the spectrum of flexibility and dependence on platform companies is critical.
- * **The Way forward** for platform workers is through a socio-legal acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of work in the gig economy, and the ascription of joint accountability to the State and platform companies for the delivery of social services.

3. RBI's governance

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

Context- RBI has to answer to Parliament why it misses the inflation target and what plans do they have to control inflation.

What is Inflation targeting and what happen when RBI fails to meet inflation target?

1. Inflation targeting involves using monetary policy to keep inflation close to the agreed target. RBI and Government of India signed a Monetary Policy Framework Agreement in February 2015.

- As per terms of the agreement, the objective of monetary policy framework would be primarily to maintain price stability (inflation targeting), while keeping in mind the objective of growth.
- **Target given to MPC:** The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) MPC was given the target of keeping inflation at 4% +/- 2%. This meant that inflation should be between 2% and 6%.

2. Condition for failure of inflation target - A breach of the tolerance level for three consecutive quarters will constitute a failure of monetary policy.

- **In such case-** RBI have to send a report to the central government stating reasons and the remedial actions it proposes to initiate, and an estimate of the time-period

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within which it expects to achieve the inflation target through the corrective steps proposed.

- **Aim-** To enhance transparency and accountability of the central bank.

What was the reason proposed by RBI for the breach of inflation target?

- **Lack of Data due to lockdown-** The MPC is of the view that there was a break in the consumer price index (CPI) series since inflation data for April and May was imputed and not collected by visiting the markets by NSO surveyors. It was rather estimated by the NSO.

However, Prices could be collected from the urban markets and villages after lockdown restriction were lifted and non-essential activities partially restored.

Way forward-

- The central bank needs to answer three questions — why it has failed to achieve its target; what remedial measures it would take to bring inflation back within the target range; and by what time.
- Transparency can enable more informed decision-making within the government, greater public scrutiny of the RBI's performance, and an improved inflation-targeting regime.

4. Divestment in fossil fuels

Source: [The Hindu](#)

GS3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

Context: The divestment movement against fossil fuels.

What do you mean by Divestment movement in Fossil fuels?

- Divestment is the process by which money put into stocks and bonds of certain companies is withdrawn. A divestment is the opposite of an investment.
- For example, recently Goldman Sachs announced that it would no longer finance new oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and coal mines such as mountain-top mining
- In this case, divestment has been directed against companies that extract, refine, sell and make profits from fossil fuels.
- The purpose is to restrict fossil fuel companies' ability to function to limit their impact on climate change.
- As of 2019, it is estimated that more than \$11 trillion in assets has been committed to divestment from fossil fuels.

What is the role of Climate activist in divestment process?

- Systematic organised drives for divestment from fossil fuel companies have been undertaken by a large network of activists including Rainforest Action Network, 350.org, Go Fossil Free, university students and faculty etc.
- They systematically attacked equity, investments, loans, or credit, available to the fossil fuel industry.

What are the challenges?

- After the Paris Agreement of 2015, where countries agreed to try to limit average global warming to well below 2°C, global banks continue to finance the fossil fuel industry.

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- Finances has been increasing to fossil fuel sub-sectors such as oil from tar sands, Arctic oil and gas etc. For example, coal power financing led by Chinese banks.
- Companies might be divesting not for ethical reasons but because it considers fossil companies to be risky.

What is the way forward?

- India's contribution to the stock of greenhouse gases is less than two tonnes of CO₂/capita.
- Yet, with the costs of production and storage of renewables are falling policymakers should utilise this opportunity and foresee to make a just transition away from coal in the near future.
- This process will be complex and necessarily involve many sectors and activities including land restoration, local jobs, and timely transfer of storage technologies for renewable energy, apart from dealing with entrenched vested and political interests

5. India's income crisis

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-3- Economy

Context: India has an incomes crisis: incomes of people in the lower half of the pyramid are too low.

What are the solutions to this income crisis?

▪ The solutions economists propose are:

- **Free up markets: Markets should be freed up** for agricultural products so that farmers can get higher prices; and freed up for labour to attract investments as without adequate incomes, people cannot be a good market for businesses.
- **Improve productivity: Improvement of 'productivity' is key to economic progress.**
 - Productivity is a ratio of an input in the denominator and an output in the numerator. The larger the output that is produced with a unit of input, the higher the productivity of the system.
- **Apply technology**

These fundamentals of economics must be re-examined when applied to human work.

▪ Strategies for improving labour productivity:

- Labour productivity as a universal measure of the productivity of an economy: The number of people in the system (the country/ the economy) is the denominator, and the gross domestic product the people produce is the numerator.
 - They can take the organisationally more difficult route of increasing the total output of the factory while maintaining the number of workers. This may **require adding more machines and technology to increase the capacity of workers** to increase total output.
 - **Employers can enhance their workers' skills** and create a culture of improvement in the factory, where workers and managers cooperate to improve the capability of their system, and squeeze more output from limited capital resources.
 - **This is the strategy of 'total quality management'**, with which Japanese companies reduced their costs and improved the quality of their products.

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- Japanese invested in their workers; and the workers were the companies' 'appreciating assets' as they grew their capabilities as well as contributed to the improvement of the total productivity of their enterprises.
- **The lazy management strategy for improving productivity** is to reduce the denominator, i.e. the number of workers. Hire them when times are good, and fire them when the company cannot compete any more.
- Governments of countries cannot apply the 'hire and fire' strategy to improve a nation's productivity that companies can.

What are the steps to be taken?

- Workers provide the economy with the products and services it needs. In return, **society and the economy must create conditions whereby workers are treated with dignity** and can earn adequate incomes.
- **The government must regulate contracts** between those who engage people to do work for their enterprises, even in the gig economy.
- **An authority on industrial policy and international trade**, advocates reforms that will induce firms to employ more numbers of less skilled workers is required.
- **The government should push innovation** in more socially beneficial directions to increase rather than replace less skilled workers.

Way forward

- The power balance must shift. Small enterprises and workers must combine into larger associations, in new forms, using technology, to tilt reforms towards their needs and their rights.

6. Cancer treatment – Palliative care

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS 3 -Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Context- The present diversion of healthcare facilities and resources to COVID-19 has increased anxiety and confusion among people with cancer.

What are the issues with dealing in cancer in a wake of COVID-19 pandemic?

- **Treatment disruption-** The uncertainty about treatment continuation due to the virus spread was stressful.
- **Halt in Cancer screening programmes-** These programmes are so vital for picking up cancer early in order to save lives, have ground to a halt.
- **Transportation-** With public transportation closure and authorities questioning the reason for traveling has become a complete nightmare for patients to access any type of health-care services.
- **Fear virus transmission-** Patients have developed fear of the coronavirus that they are unwilling to go to hospitals.
- This is because of low immunity, often aggravated by treatments, as well as existing co-morbidities since cancer, by and large, is a disease of older people.

What are the possible solutions of dealing cancer?

- **Early recognition-** Early detection through vaccination and preliminary screening is very important. Cancer survivorship owes its rising numbers largely to advances in early detection and treatment.

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- The majority of people who come for treatment to a cancer centre in India come with advanced disease. The figure is nearly 70 per cent.
- **Awareness programmes-** These programmes are required to create awareness about the dangerous effect of tobacco products and cancer causing chemicals.
- **Palliative care:**
 - Palliative care is specialized medical care for people living with a serious illness. This type of care is focused on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of the illness.
 - It is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with a life-threatening illness.
 - It involves prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual.

What is the way forward?

- **Adaption of palliative care-** healthcare providers must find ways to prevent cancer, screen those at heightened risk and mitigate the adverse effects of treatment by making palliative care a part of cancer treatments from the beginning and must find mention in public health policy and be integrated into clinical care from the primary health care level upwards.

7. Infra investment

Source: The Live Mint

Syllabus: GS-3- Economics

Context: Ministry of statistics and programme implementation (MOSPI) has released its latest report incomplete infrastructure projects.

What were the problems highlighted in the MOSPI report?

- **Inadequate data:** The latest report showed that of a current total of 1,661 incomplete infrastructure projects, each costing above ₹150 crore, delays were assessable only for 754 projects on which timing data were available.
 - 70% were delayed (539 projects), with an average delay of three-and-a-half years.
- **Stated reasons for delay:** Reasons include land acquisition and green clearance.
 - Projects are expected to stimulate both supply and demand through wages paid to construction labour.
- **Delayed payments:** Payments by governments (both Centre and states) to vendors of all types, not just construction contractors, are delayed. It is commonly estimated that these dues amount to ₹2 trillion at a minimum.
- **Domino effect:** Fiscal failure to pay on time has a domino effect on the financial sector. The unpaid vendor has to borrow more to cover enhanced working capital requirements.
 - For instance, the default of Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (ILFS) in September 2018, when the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had to move quickly to prevent a financial meltdown.
- **Poor reporting:** The MOSPI report mentions the repeated failure of projects to report milestones, which would have helped reveal the true cause of delay.
- **Overall effect:**
 - The medium-term fiscal plan required under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) legislation has become a mere statement where the fiscal shortage is not the true left over.

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- Governments take on more expenditure commitments for future years than they know can be put up within the fiscal deficit path committed to. If payment dues exceed, they are simply delayed.
- Many infrastructure companies are unwilling to engage with governments because of payment delays.

What are the steps to be taken?

- **The fiscal system is deeply in need of reform**, towards multi-year budgeting of committed expenditures, and calculation of deficits as a serious remaining rather than as a priority in itself to which expenditures will be shaped.
- Former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan has warned that without **“relief” payments** the potential growth rate of the economy would be seriously reduced. Hence relief payments are required.

Way forward

- Nothing would raise the potential growth rate of the Indian economy as much as a one-time payment of all past dues, and a **credible commitment to future payments on time**.
- The Centre should give interest-free loans to states with bullet payment after 50 years. The funds “are to be used for new or ongoing capital projects needing funds and / or settling contractors’/ suppliers’ bills on such projects”.

8. Crucial expertise of CAPFs

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-3- Security

Context: The diverse experience of security forces has helped greatly in combating COVID-19.

Discuss the role of CAPFs during the pandemic?

- **Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) carry out the task of overcoming the disaster**, by not only carrying out rescue and relief operations, but also by moderating the pains and problems arising out of the disaster.
 - **CAPFs comprise the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)**, Border Security Force, Central Industrial Security Force, Sashastra Seema Bal, Assam Rifles and the ITBP.
- **Role played by the CAPFs:**
 - **Setting up Quarantine centres:** Even before covid-19, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) had already set up its 600-bed quarantine centre in Chawla on the outskirts of New Delhi.
 - **Quarantine assistance:** Out of the 324 Indian passengers in the first batch that arrived in New Delhi from China’s Wuhan, 103 were quarantined at the ITBP Centre.
 - **Coordinated response:** The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had roped in specialists from the Safdarjung Hospital to coordinate with ITBP officials.
 - Similarly, The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had directed the CAPFs to establish 5,400-bedded quarantine centres with 75 isolation wards, spread over 37 centres across the country.
 - **Testing and Training:** Immigration officials entrusted with conducting COVID-19 tests of the passengers arriving in New Delhi were trained by the NDRF.

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- The NDRF has trained over 30,000 personnel in disaster management across the country.
- **Role of Disaster Response Forces:** The NDRF has been carrying out rescue and relief operations, and is also training the State Disaster Response Forces personnel in all States.
- **Relief work:** A sum of ₹10 crores was sanctioned for the CRPF by the MHA to carry out relief work for those displaced in the aftermath of the lockdown.
- **Expertise and SOPs:** The expertise acquired by ITBP personnel and the Standard Operating Procedure prepared by the ITBP came handy for the States and other police forces in establishing their own quarantine centres and COVID-19 hospitals.
 - For instance, a 10,000-bed quarantine centre was established in Chhatarpur in New Delhi by the ITBP, where over 10,000 patients have been treated till now, according to ITBP spokesperson.

What steps can be taken?

- **There is a need to expand the strength of trained personnel.** Personnel can be deployed at quarantines centres after short term courses.
- A proposal mooted by NITI Aayog last year, to conduct **a bridge course for dentists to solidify them eligible for the MBBS degree**, could be revived, and such doctors could be on stand-by to help in such emergency crises.

It is these CAPF personnel who give an impression of existence of government administration even in the remotest corners of the country. Their versatile experience can be utilised to the nation's advantage.