

**9pm**

# **Compilation**

**26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2020**

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# General Studies Paper - 1

## General Studies - 1

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### 1. Uniform Civil code

**Source:** The Indian Express

**Syllabus:** GS-1- Society

**Context:** All states must be brought into the mainstream of family laws as there is no justification for keeping some chosen groups of Indian citizens always tied down to family laws.

**Does the provision of Article 44 of the Constitution of India only targets inter-personal diversity in family law?**

- **This has always been the general belief** among the custodians of state authority, including the judiciary.
- **Ignoring the words “throughout the territory of India”** at the end of the article, they have always understood it as an order only for the abolishment of the traditional personal laws and their replacement by a common family law Act.
- The preliminary sections in all central family law Acts enacted by Parliament since Independence declare that they will apply to **“the whole of India except the state of Jammu and Kashmir.”**
- **Other exceptions:**
  - A new provision was added in 1968 in all these Acts, stating that **“nothing herein contained shall apply to the Renoncants** in the Union Territory of Pondicherry.”
  - None of these Acts applies in Goa, Daman and Diu.
  - **No parliamentary legislation will replace the customary law** and religion-based system for its administration in Nagaland and Mizoram unless so demanded by the local legislatures under Articles 371A and 371G.
- These exceptions regulate the extent of all central laws from the **Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 up to the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act of 2019.**

**What is the origin of separate personal laws across states?**

- **In Goa, Daman and Diu, the Portuguese rulers had recognised** locally dominant personal laws by the name **“native customs and usages”**, were separately compiled for the three territories and given the force of law by royal verdicts issued from Lisbon.
- **The Portuguese Civil Code of 1867** was extended to these places in 1869, with a clause that native customs and usages will be safeguarded “so far as they are not varying with morality or public order.”
- **The new laws of civil marriages and of canonical marriages** were also extended to the three territories, but with a similar protective **provision for the local customary laws.**
- **After Independence, the Goa, Daman and Diu Administration Act of 1962 maintained the status quo** by laying down that “all laws in force” there earlier shall continue to apply until and unless amended or revoked by a capable authority.
- The exclusionary provision relating to Jammu and Kashmir found in the central family law Acts had **originated from Article 370 of the Constitution.**

**Who were renoncants?**

1. In Puducherry, during the French rule, the native population had been given an option to choose between the personal laws then in force there and the Code Napoleon of 1804, and those who had opted for the latter were called renoncants (renouncers).
2. After independence, the Pondicherry (Laws) Act of 1968 extended all the central family law Acts, but each with a condition that they would not apply to the renoncants.

**Way forward**

- Bringing Jammu and Kashmir into the country's mainstream of family laws is an exercise that needs to be undertaken also for Goa, Daman and Diu, Puducherry, Nagaland and Mizoram, where the present situation is opposite to the constitutional policy of uniformity in family law.
- The citizens' fundamental rights to equality before law and equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Constitution call for a similar action in respect of these territories as well.

# General Studies Paper - 2

## General Studies - 2

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### 1. India-US Relations

**Source:** Indian Express

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

**Context:** A look at how India-U. S bilateral relationship has evolved during the tenure of different U.S Presidents and its highs and lows.

#### More in News

- The Indian diaspora being one of the most successful expatriate communities in U.S wants a closer bonding between India and U.S
- In 2020, India-U. S bilateral ties have grown in recent years on account of China's aggressive behaviour.

#### How India-U. S relation evolved over the years?

**India-U. S relations were at all-time high during John F Kennedy and George W Bush administration:**

##### John F Kennedy, in the 1960s:

- Kennedy was a firm supporter of India in positioning India as a democratic counterweight to a totalitarian China in Asia in the 1960s
- Even Kennedy had proposed an equivalent of a "Marshall Plan" for India funded by NATO allies and Japan to help India win the race against China.
- During his tenure, India received unprecedented economic assistance, and military aid during the 1962 Sino-India war
- Kennedy also played a role, in restraining President Ayub Khan of Pakistan from opening a second front against India during the Sino-Indian war
- The US-India relationship may have taken a different course during the difficult 1960s and 1970s had Kennedy not been assassinated in 1963, and Nehru not died in 1964.

##### George W Bush, in the 2000s

- He ensured the success of the nuclear deal between India and the United States. The agreement mainstreamed India's nuclear programme.

**Worst phase of India's relations with the US was during Richard Nixon and Clinton administration**

##### Richard Nixon in the 1970s:

- Nixon administration was well known for the pro-Pakistan tilt in the 1970s.
- During this period India departed from its Non-Aligned posture, signed the 1971 Indo-Soviet treaty as a response to the continuing US tilt towards Pakistan and the beginnings of a Washington-Beijing alliance

##### Clinton years in the 1990s:

- The Clinton years witnessed dip in India and the US bilateral relations.
- India was pressurised to "freeze, rollback and eliminate" its nuclear programme and to settle Kashmir dispute with Pakistan.
- The U.S administration, even questioned Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India.

American Presidents can make a real difference to bilateral ties, including on trade, on immigration policies, and larger strategic issues. The upcoming US Presidential election (Biden vs. Trump) has enormous significance to India.

## 2. Non-alignment in multipolar framework

**Source-** The Indian Express

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

**Context-** India can play a constructive role in evolving a multipolar and just world order

### What are the different phases of world order?

India's advocacy for autonomy (& non-alignment) in making foreign policy choices in world order over decades.

1. **Bipolar** (1947 to 1991) - Era of Cold War where world was divided in two camps one headed by USA and other headed by erstwhile USSR.
  - During this phase India adhered to the principle of Non Alignment.
2. **Unipolar** (1991 to 2008) - With disintegration of USSR, USA became the sole super power.
  - In this phase India reached out to engage with US, Israel and ASEAN countries more intensively.
3. **Multipolar** at present times where there are big powers and several middle powers.
  - In this phase of transitional geopolitics, India's policy of Non-Alignment has turned into Multi Alignment.

### What are the reasons for India to rethink its approach to Strategic autonomy?

1. **Rise of China-**
  - China as the workshop of the world made many established western powers insecure of their status.
  - **Trade war-** This has resulted in a trade and strategic war between China and the US, without caring for the real interests of the people and environment, which will tend to have disastrous consequences for most of the world and global population.
2. **Indo-China conflict-** The tension at the Western Sector of the India-China border claimed lives from both sides and exposed the unresolved conflicts between the two neighboring Asian giants.
3. **Annexation of West Bank** - Donald Trump backed Israel's plan at annexing the West Bank is the newest in a long series of forcing dispossession and stateless on Palestinians.

These issues have brought the discussion around global power dynamics to the fore even when the world population is gripped with disease, sorrow, trauma and mass unemployment.

### What is the significance of Indian foreign policy?

- India's priorities have tilted towards the US and the neoliberal framework.
  - **Increasing risk-** The US is trying to drag India into its conflict with China to protect the US interests in the Asia-Pacific region.
  - **Impact other interests-** The trade deals done to please the US have resulted in the loss of livelihood, agricultural land, opportunities and hard-won labor rights of Indian working classes.

### What are the needs of current situation?

1. **Global need-**
  - The world needs today are international relations based on the principles of mutual respect, concern and cooperation and population involvement.
  - To come together to build public health and education infrastructure.



## 2. Revival of Non-alignment-

- India should reject both the unipolarity of the 1990s and the bipolarity of the current system dominated by the US and China.
  - India should live up to its independent non-aligned credentials and play a constructive role in evolving a more inclusive, multipolar and just world order.
- 3. India as a Non-permanent UNSC member-** India should use its UNSC chair to represent nations hitherto unrepresented or underrepresented at the high table and continues the tradition of speaking for the marginalized.

### Way forward-

- India and China should engage in a meaningful dialogue to resolve the border dispute.
- India should strive to make the world more inclusive, just and sensitive to the environment.
- India pursuing an independent foreign policy is not only essential for the country or the South Asian region, it can have a bearing on deprived populations of the world.

## 3. Changing nature of India – US relationship

**Source-** The Indian Express

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

**Context-** The 2+2 dialogue between India-US comes in the backdrop of a structural shift and turbulence in the global economic order.

### What is 2+2 Dialogue?

It is a format of dialogue where the defense and foreign ministers or secretaries meet with their counterparts from another country. 2+2 Ministerial is the highest-level institutional mechanism between the two countries.

- **Main focus-** Countering China's aggression on LAC front, improving bilateral relations and Shift in great power politics as well as turbulence in the international economic order intensified by the coronavirus pandemic.
- First US-India 2+2 dialogue was held in New Delhi in September 2018.

### India's recent global meetings

1. **QUAD grouping** -The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue has its roots in the Core Group of four senior diplomats representing the USA, Japan and Australia with a shared objective to ensure and support a free, open and prosperous" Indo-Pacific region.
  2. **Five eye grouping**- India's first-ever participation, in a meeting of the exclusive Five Eyes grouping that facilitates intelligence-sharing among the US, Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand.
  3. **Malabar exercise**- It is an annual trilateral naval exercise between the navies of India, Japan, and the US which is held alternately in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.
- **Australia inclusion**- The move will bolster the ability of India, Australia, Japan and the United States to work together to uphold peace and stability across the Indo-Pacific region.

### What are the differences with current India-US relation than that during UPA years?

1. **India-china relations**- Huge military crisis on the northern borders with China. During initial years of India-US relations, Delhi avoided closer security ties with the US in deference to Beijing's sensitivities.

2. **COVID-19 Pandemic-** The coronavirus has sharpened the US debate on the dangers of excessive economic interdependence on China.
  - India has begun to reduce its commercial ties to Beijing in response to the PLA's Ladakh aggression.
  - This has created a new conversation between India and the US on rearranging global supply chains away from China.
3. **Sharing technology-** The focus on critical technologies like artificial intelligence that promise to transform most aspects of modern life including security, political economy and social order.
  - Two decades ago, both India and US focused on resolving the legacy issues surrounding the technologies relating to nuclear weapons and missiles.

#### What is the significance of 2+2 dialogue?

1. **Trade issues-** Delhi and Washington continue to have many differences over bilateral trade. U.S. should be pushed on resolving trade issues with India and perhaps commit to restoring India's Generalized System of Preferences status for exporters.
2. **Indo-Pacific-** On the maritime sphere, discussions will include strengthening ties in the Indo-Pacific region and also include discussions on how free nations can work together to thwart the threats posed by the People's Liberation Army.

#### Way forward-

The overarching framework that has emerged across different US administrations in the last two decades helps India to manage potential difficulties and take advantage of new opportunities.

As the regional and global order faces multiple transitions, the incentives for Delhi and Washington to sustain and advance India-US partnership are stronger than ever before and will continue into the next administration.

#### 4. Board exams in education

**Source:** The Indian Express

**Syllabus:** GS-2- Education

**Context:** Delhi University announced the first list of admission into undergraduate programmes earlier this month and the cut-offs reached 100 per cent mark in some courses offered by a few colleges.

#### What is the state of higher education in India?

- **According to the most recent All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE 2018-19)**, Delhi's gross enrolment ratio (GER) is 46.3 per cent, this means that almost every second youth in Delhi between the age of 18 and 23 is enrolled in a higher education programme.
- **According to India's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for 2030** and the National Education Policy 2020 target, we are aiming to ensure 100 per cent enrollment across our school stages, from pre-primary to the secondary stage.
- **There will be a further rise in applications for higher education programmes** for which the NEP 2020 has set a target of 50 per cent by 2035 which would mean an additional 35 million seats to be created in HEIs across the country.
- Rise in unemployed graduates due to poor education quality and absence of skills in youth.

- There is a mismatch in the ratio of colleges and regulating universities leading to regulator challenges. For ex- 40000 colleges being regulated under by 1000 universities.

#### **How will multidiscipline HEI improve Higher education ecosystem?**

- NEP 2020 recommends moving into a multi-disciplinary HEIs. This would improve the education ecosystem in the following way:
- This will offer undergraduate and **graduate programmes in every district of the country.**
- Each such institute will aim to have 3,000 or more students.
- Improve access to higher education and will also make HEIs viable.
- Provide access to 70 million students when the GER of Higher education reaches 50 per cent.
- This will also allow for closing down of thousands of poor quality HEIs, which trap unsuspecting students, leading to a large number of non-entrepreneurial, unskilled and unemployable graduates.

#### **What is the alternative to cut-offs?**

- School leaving marks have been inefficient in assessing the overall performance of a student. An alternative system should include:
- School-leaving certificates should contain a collection of assessments, including a student's performance across the secondary level (Classes IX to XII).
- Inclusion of class assignments and tests in the assessments will ensure development of students' portfolios.
- The process of admission to higher education should also assess whether the prospective student has developed the attributes for pursuing higher education.

#### **Way forward**

- NEP 2020 envisages assessment reform at the school level, which would make the board exams redundant, and also a common entrance for the liberal arts-based higher education system, which only assesses an applicant's preparedness to pursue a university education. We need to go with these reforms at the earliest.

### **5. Climate Change and Gendered Vulnerabilities**

**Source-** The Hindu

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

**Context-** Due to the pandemic, India has an opportunity to build climate resilience and address gender equality issues.

#### **How India can tackle widening inequalities?**

The recovery is offering India two golden opportunities:

- To build climate resilience for the most vulnerable by ensuring that stimulus measures are green.
- To meaningfully address long-standing gender equality issues.

#### **What are effects of pandemic on vulnerable groups?**

- Most affected groups- Overburdened healthcare systems and frontline health workers lives and livelihoods impacted. The poor, Adivasis, migrants, informal

workers, sexual minorities, people with disabilities and women all face a greater brunt than most.

- Vulnerable groups, especially women bear a heavier burden of climate change, due to social inequalities that limit them.
- Climate change, in turn, widens socio-economic gaps, trapping communities in a vicious cycle.

### What are the measures needed to tackle climate change?

Women and marginalized groups, by virtue of their position and roles, are a fountain of solutions to tackle climate change.

1. **Green investment**- The Indian government has invested huge amount in COVID-19 recovery. These recovery packages in green jobs will improve lives and environment.
  - These green investments ought to be reflected across agriculture, urban planning, energy and the health sectors and in climate-resilient civil works, including under MGNREGA.
2. **Equipping women with skills**- It is critical to leverage women knowledge, capacities and skills towards adapting to and mitigating climate change.
  - The initiative like Disha, a UNDP supported by the IKEA Foundation energize local economies, reduce carbon emissions, enhance climate resilience and disrupt social norms and behaviors that restrict women's participation in the workforce.
  - **For Example**- By training young rural women for the maintenance of solar pumps will introduce clean energy and reduce production cost.
  - Accelerating the transition to renewable energy will lower carbon footprints and provide sustainable livelihoods to poor women.

### Way forward-

- Recognizing the important contributions of women as decision makers, stakeholders, educators, careers and experts across sectors and at all levels can lead to successful, long-term solutions to climate change.
- Women have proven to be leading the way towards more equitable and sustainable solutions to climate change. Across sectors, women's innovations and expertise have transformed lives and livelihoods, and increased climate resilience and overall well-being.

## 6. Social and Health Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

**Source:** The Hindu

**Syllabus:** Gs2: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

**Context:** Lessons learnt from Covid19 and measures to counter its impact.

### What is the Social and Health Impact of the Pandemic?

- **Wasting:** A recent modelling study showed that, the prevalence of wasting in children can increase by 10% to 50% due to the reduction in coverage of essential services.
- **Maternal death:** There can be 60% increase in maternal deaths due to the non-availability of interventions like the administration of uterotonics and antibiotics, and clean birth environments.
- **Nutrition:** With a huge number of children depend on school meals the pandemic has adversely affected access to nutritious food.
- **Increase in Domestic Violence:** In India, a third of women reported that they had experienced domestic violence but less than 1% sought help from the police.

- **Women:** Work and livelihood of women is much affected than men as more women work in informal economy than men. It has resulted in decreased income by over 60%, thereby pushing a greater number of women into extreme poverty.
- **Disruption of services:** Important services such diagnosis and treatment of non-communicable diseases, cancer diagnosis and treatment, TB case detection etc have been disrupted.

#### What needs to be done?

- **The package of essential services:** Governments should provide essential services that include response to violence against women.
- **Gender analysis and gender-responsive public health policies:** We need to work on the availability of data that is disaggregated by sex and age.
- **Ensure financial protection:** Out-of-pocket expenditure forces 100 million people to fall into extreme poverty every year. A health coverage scheme, like Ayushman Bharat, or through private health insurance can ensure financial stability.
- **Emphasis on digital technology:** using digital platforms to provide telemedicine for example, government's e-Sanjeevani platform or to train healthcare workers for example ECHO.
- **Move towards electronic and portable health records.** We need to invest in new ways of collecting, using and sharing data, enabling local, contextualised decision-making.
- **Ensure access to Nutrition:** we need to further integrate social protection systems, food systems and health systems to have an impact on nutrition.
- **Effective infodemic management:** Since, it is linked to people's beliefs and behaviour we need a dedicated behavioural insights group to provide advice on behaviour change.
- **Empowering our frontline health workers:** We need to invest in them to ensure that they have the tools they need, receive regular training and mentoring, and are well paid.
- **Improving health literacy:** The fear, stigma and discrimination circulated on social media can be countered by health literacy.
- **Investment:** We need to invest in strong institutional mechanisms and capacities in our regulatory bodies, research centres and public health institutions.

A health system is not only about the supply side. It should actively involve citizens and the people in developing the services that we are bringing to them. For this, we need investment in human resources and to engage and empower communities.

#### 7. Evolving Strategic Autonomy

**Source:** The Hindu

**Syllabus: Gs2:** Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

**Context:** The engagement of India and China in the West Asia region is a good example of their evolving strategic autonomy.

#### What is strategic autonomy and How the concept is evolving?

- Strategic autonomy is the ability of a state to pursue its national interests and adopt its preferred foreign policy without being constrained in any manner by other states.
- The concept of 'strategic autonomy' is much different from the Nehruvian era thinking of 'non-alignment'.



- Now The alignment is issue based, and not ideological. For example, India's equitable engagement with Saudi Arabia, Iran and Israel, without entering into the region's multi-layered conflicts and political fissures.

#### How China's relation with West Asia is evolving?

- With the West Asian countries started thinking over the need to invest more in others countries as the American security safety net is not absolute, China is trying to capitalise this.
- China is now ready to offer an alternative model for "investment and influence" and wants to play much active role in West Asia through concepts such as "negative peace" and "peace through development."
- The fact that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) obtained Chinese Wing Loong drones in 2016 a copy of U.S.'s infamous armed MQ-9 'Reaper' drone that U.S refused to sell is a good example of the Gulf's resolve of attaining military capabilities from wherever possible.
- Also, the Gulf economies such as Saudi Arabia need growing markets of China and India to sell oil in the coming decade.
- According to a report, the China is also taking advantage of U.S. abandonment of the Iran nuclear deal by signing \$400 billion, 25-year understanding agreement between Iran and China.
- To address the region's tensions, China is pursuing to establish an alternative forum to the West-led ecosystems.

#### How India's relation with West Asia is evolving?

- India's outreach to West Asia has increased since 2014.
- India, by giving open economic and political preference to the larger Gulf region it increased its cooperation with Abu Dhabi and Riyadh.
- India has realised the economic realities of this region with, Saudi Arabia and the UAE announcing multi-billion-dollar investments on Indian shores.
- Even, there has been a steady development with Israel but the relation with Iran has lagged behind due to U.S sanctions.
- The Israel's recent peace accords with the UAE and Bahrain signifies a more stable gulf region which opens up tremendous opportunities for India's engagement with West Asia.

From the perspectives of both the India and China, the theory of interests superseding ideology in foreign policy is fast disappearing, It signifies the departure from ideological based cooperation to issue based alignment.

### 8. GST Issue

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

**Syllabus:** GS2: Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure,

**Context:** Centres unilateral decisions on the issue of GST compensation to states without having consensus of GST council is threatening the federal architecture.

#### What is GST?

- The GST is a **single destination-based tax** that replaced numerous central and State taxes with States giving up almost all their powers to tax.
- In exchange for this bargain, the Centre assured them full compensation, for five years, for all losses arising due to the transition to the GST.

- Followingly, a GST Council was established, consisting of the Central and State Finance Ministers who are empowered to make recommendations about various issues related to the GST.
- Benefits of GST includes efficiency, equity, stabilisation, economic growth, and balanced development, among others.
- GST is hailed as one of the most significant **fiscal reforms** since Independence.

#### What is the background of the issue?

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic induced disruption, Tax collections were low leading to a massive revenue shortfall.
- This has also reduced the available resources in the compensation fund.
- The centre with limited abilities to raise revenues was initially not committed to the agreement on full compensation to states for five years, for all losses arising due to the transition to the GST.
- Though, the centre was not committed at first to compensate states for GST losses claiming the pandemic as an 'act of God', later it came up with other options to meet the states shortfall in tax revenue collection.
- The Centre allowed states to increase its fiscal deficit from 2% to 3% and asked the states to borrow from the market to meet their shortfall.

#### How Centre's decision is affecting Co-operative federalism?

- **Borrowing on Conditional basis:** The states were allowed to borrow on conditional basis that states need to bring reforms in four areas including universalisation of a 'One Nation-One Ration Card', electricity distribution, ease of doing business, and urban local body revenues.
- **Shifting the fiscal burden to the states:** While most of the States preferred that the Centre should borrow the entire shortfall the responsibility to borrow was transferred on to the states.
- **Unilateral decisions:** there was a deliberate attempt to prevent "unionised bargaining" by the States as the decisions were not being made in the GST Council but announced in press meetings.

#### What is the way forward? Co-operative federalism-----Case of VAT (Value added tax)

- It has to be noted that, it was the empowered group of State Finance Ministers who helped to bring fiscal reforms earlier namely, VAT the precursor to GST.
- This consensus based decision-making process gave States both the confidence and ownership of reforms and the new institutions being put in place.
- It assured that, authority migration towards the Centre might not make a difference to States as their interests are being taken care of by the Centre.
- Such collective decision-making process will guarantee the continuity of federal institutions.

The recent Centre's actions on GST compensation issue undermine the federal architecture. If this happens consistently over time, it will threaten the very existence of GST as a federal institution.

#### 9. India - Myanmar relations

**Source:** The Hindu

**Syllabus:** GS-2- International Relations

**Context:** The recent visit of Foreign Secretary and Chief of the Army Staff Gen. to Myanmar revealed India's multidimensional interests in the country and the deepening of ties between Delhi and Naypyidaw.

**More on news:**

- **The visit featured two lines of thinking that drive India's Myanmar policy:** engagement with key political actors and balancing neighbours.
- **For Myanmar**, the visit would be viewed as India's support for its efforts in strengthening democratisation amidst criticisms by rights groups over the credibility of its upcoming election.

**What has India's policy for Myanmar been?**

- **India's policy to support democratisation** driven from within the country has had following outcomes:
  - This has allowed Delhi to engage with the military that played a key role in Myanmar's political transition and is still an important political actor.
  - It has enabled Delhi to work with the party in power, whether the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party or the pro-democracy National League for Democracy.
  - India is aware of the geopolitical dimension of Myanmar's democratisation.
- **Policy of diversifying its foreign engagements:** India and a few Asian countries have engaged Myanmar keeping in mind the need to reintegrate it with the region and world.
- Reason for military regime in Myanmar was to reduce dependence on china. By engaging Myanmar, **Delhi provides alternative options to Naypyidaw.**
- This driver in India's Myanmar policy has possibly gained greater importance in the rapidly changing regional geopolitics.

**What are the recent initiatives taken?**

- Some initiatives announced during the joint visit suggest Delhi is taking steps to influence its political, diplomatic, and security ties with Myanmar:
  - **The inauguration of the liaison office** of the Embassy of India in Naypyidaw.
  - **India has proposed to build a petroleum refinery** in Myanmar that would involve an investment of \$6 billion.
  - **Another area of cooperation that has expanded involves the border areas.** The joint visit restated the "mutual commitment not to allow respective territories to be used for activities inimical to each other."
- **The balancing act between Bangladesh and Myanmar** remains one of the keys to its overall approach to the **Rohingya issue.**
  - Delhi has retold its support for "ensuring safe, sustainable and speedy return of displaced persons" to Myanmar.
  - India has made it clear that it supports Myanmar's efforts and also understands Bangladesh's burden.

**Way forward**

- These initiatives could be the beginning of change on the ground by establishing India's presence in sectors where it ought to be more pronounced.
- For India, Myanmar is key in linking South Asia to Southeast Asia and the eastern periphery becomes the focal point for New Delhi's regional outreach.

**10. Governance reforms for commerce**

**Source:** [The Hindu BusinessLine](#)

**Syllabus:** GS-2- Polity

**Context:** A Commerce Ministry for the 21st century with specialised departments for trade policy, negotiations and industrial development are of vital importance.

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**How the commerce ministry can be revamped to serve the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century?**

- The Ministry of Commerce and Industry is tasked with navigating the complex web of issues to support India's industrial development and competitiveness, and its engagement with the global economy.
- This task requires institutional depth and high levels of capability and domain expertise.

**Competent trade negotiators**

- The first suggestion is to create a specialised department focussed only on trade policy and negotiations headed by a Secretary.
- This department would be responsible for all negotiations for the WTO, FTAs, and other trade and investment related agreements.
- Senior officers including Joint and Additional Secretaries should have contracts of minimum five years, and should be individuals with major trade policy related experience because longer tenures would ensure institutional memory.

**Competitiveness & value-chains**

- The second suggestion is to create a single department responsible for the country's industrial development and competitiveness.
- This would require bringing together of the mandates of the Director-General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
- Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and Export Promotion Councils (EPCs) would also be under this department's realm.
- Department of Industrial Development and Competitiveness, would lead to streamlining of the overall policy making and involvements required to address issues of industrial development, sectoral strategies and incentives, and export promotion.

**Export discounts, trade promotion**

- Export incentives should be replaced by schemes that reward firms for new product development, expanding into new markets, for job creation, or for significant achievements in value-addition.
- The digital information available with GSTN, Customs ICEGATE, the RBI, Unique LIN linked to EPFO and ESIC, and the JAM trinity has made this very easy.
- Dynamic MSMEs would be the biggest beneficiaries of trade facilitation schemes.
- EPCs should be made responsible for systemically collecting data and commercial intelligence in their sector, mapping global market opportunities and potential sources of competition.
- An anonymous committee drawn from industry members in EPCs should be made responsible for an independent inspection.
- EPCs should be made responsible for actual buyer-seller matching, and successful conclusion of deals achieved due to their efforts. They should be formally certified by beneficiary member firms.
- A grievance redress mechanism for members who have not received sufficient level of support from their EPCs should be set up, headed by the Secretary of the department.

**Logistics Division**

- Another suggestion is that the Logistics Division should become a full-fledged department headed by a Secretary.

- It should also be made responsible for Trade Facilitation along with providing holistic institutional basis to coordinate logistics infrastructure development, master-planning, and policy development.
- The Logistics Division should become the secretariat for the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC), and be made responsible for framing the National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (NTFAP) and its implementation.

#### Way forward

- In order to impart Customs related domain expertise, officers from Customs could be supported to the Logistics Division to support the NTFC related activities.

### 11. Chinese economic policy

**Source-** Live Mint

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

**Context** - Importance of China's economic strategy for India.

#### What is the significance of china's 14<sup>th</sup> five year plan?

The Five-Year Plan (FYP) is China's top-level policy blueprint created every five years since 1953, the 14th is in development and will cover 2021–25. There are two new growth model based on economic self-reliance-

1. **Made in China programme-** To ensure that china dominates production in 10 select sectors, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, new materials, electric vehicles, high-end medical equipment and next-generation transport technologies.
- China plans to use credit subsidies, public sector enterprises and intellectual property acquisitions to ensure that it achieves 70% self-sufficiency by 2025, and global dominance by 2049.
2. **China's dual circulation strategy-** The two circulations are economic exchange within China and economic exchange with the rest of the world.

#### Aim-

- a. Moving bank lending from services to high-end manufacturing, as well as restricting funds to real estate.
- b. Cutting dependence on food and energy imported from the rest of the world.

In short, China will rely mainly on internal circulation i.e., the domestic cycle of production, distribution, and consumption for its development, supported by innovation and upgrades in the economy.

#### What are important lessons from the expected shifts in Chinese economic strategy?

There are three important lessons from the expected shifts in Chinese economic strategy-

1. **Driver of Economic growth-** China has been trying to increase domestic demand as a driver of economic growth rather than exporting goods in international market.
2. **Technology war with USA** – China is building capabilities in emerging industries through domestic industrial policy which indicates not only trade war but also technology war with USA in international market.
3. **Increase the share of wages-** Any country aiming for a higher reliance on its domestic market necessarily needs to increase the share of wages in its economy. The ability to build a mass consumption base is crucially dependent on higher wages across the economy.

**Way forward-** India has been a laggard in attracting manufacturing industries, but shift of supply chains out of China provides the opportunity to India to become global manufacturing hub and increase its global export.

## 12. Indo-Pacific region

**Source-** The Hindu

**Syllabus-** GS 2 -

**Context-** Both India and the US will look to deepen bilateral defence consultation and collaboration in the Indo-Pacific region.

**What are the similarities and differences between Indo-Pacific and QUAD?**

**Similarity-**

- The QUAD members are also major States in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Both the Quad and the Indo-Pacific constructs are focused on China.
- And also they are centered around India's geographic location and its policies, without India's presence their ability to sustain geopolitical constructs might diminish.

On the flip side, the Indo-Pacific is a grand politico-economic vision while the Quad is a forum for strategic and military consultations.

**Is Indo-Pacific will be an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative BRI?**

The BRI and free and open Indo-Pacific are competing initiatives but, it is too early to compare both because-

- The BRI is far more advanced, much more thought-out, and has the economic might of the Chinese state behind it.
- Several Indo-Pacific countries are already members of the BRI.
- China's BRI is a unilateral project that advances the interests of one country. The Indo-Pacific strategy meanwhile is inclusive by definition. It must accommodate the interests of all states that are willing to participate in the initiative.

However, the BRI is a 'Chinese' project and is already under immense stress from its inherent weaknesses, such as China's unilateral pursuit of the BRI and the associated economic burdens on the States that sign up to it.

**What are the challenges in India's strategy for the survival of Indo-Pacific?**

**Economic hurdles-**

**1. RCEP** - India's determination to not be a part of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) might probably complicate the nation's future engagements within the Indo-Pacific region.

- **Trade gap-** there is a trade gap between Indian and Chinese trade with Indo-Pacific countries and QUAD states which will be a major determining factor in shaping the region's strategic realities.
- **Free trade agreement-** India does not have FTA s with Australia, New Zealand, the U.S., Bangladesh and the Maldives. While China has FTAs with all these countries barring the U.S.

**2. India's limited reach in Indo-Pacific** - The economic slowdown in India in the wake of pandemic and the lack of political consensus about regional economic agreements such as the RCEP, India's ability to economically engage with the region remains limited.

**Military hurdle -**

1. **Chinese dominance-** China is a major defence exporter to several countries in the Indo-Pacific region, dwarfing India's minimal sales, defence dialogues and occasional joint military exercises in the region.

### Way forward-

India needs to rethink its strategic posture, and the recognition of its material inability to counter Chinese aggression. The only choice for now is to structured regional strategic alliance with the U.S. and its allies in the broader Indo-Pacific region.

### 13. India-US 2+2 Dialogue

**Source:** Indian Express

**Gs2:** Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

**Context:** Third meeting of India-US 2+2 dialogue was held in New Delhi recently.

#### More in news:

- India-U. S signed the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA).
- The joint statement on the need to “enhance supply chain resilience and to seek alternatives to the current paradigm” reflects the oneness of India-US interests regarding Chinese trade practices.
- Jointly, called for observance of international norms in the Indo-Pacific region.

#### What are the Opportunities in India -US bilateral relations?

- India's health, education and science and technology can benefit positively from India-U. S bilateral partnership.
- India should push for a full defence engagement with the US and develop closer ties in defence industries without constraining the development of indigenous capacity.
- Closer association with US will enable India to reduce its dependence on Chinese manufactures by giving flip to economic and commercial ties with china.
- India's decision to go along with QUAD group including through its maritime exercises, is in line with India's interests.

India's should rely on its own strengths in matters of national security and should not lose its autonomy in the hope that an outside power would provide useful inputs. India should collaborate with caution and prudence.

### 14. ASER report analysis

**Source:** The Hindu, The Indian Express

**Syllabus:** GS-2- Education

**Context:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students in rural areas have received only marginal assistance in the form of structured learning materials from teachers.

#### What are the findings of the Annual Status of Education Report 2020?

- **The ASER 2020 survey covering 26 States and four Union Territories** found that there is a shift in enrolments from private schools to government institutions, of about five per cent over 2018, ranging from class one to higher secondary levels.
- **There is a marked rise in students not being enrolled**, either because they dropped out, or because it was not possible to get admitted.
- The survey found **43.6% of students in government schools are without access to a smartphone**, while 67.3% of those who received learning materials in these institutions got them over WhatsApp. This underscores the role played by gadgets and connectivity.
- **Only about one-third of the surveyed children had access to online learning** and only 11 per cent had access to live online classes.

**What steps can be taken to better the situation?**

- This unsettling finding by the Annual Status of Education Report 2020 **should prompt the Centre and the State governments to plan remedial measures** for the future, when it will be safe again for students to return to the classroom.
- **Expanding availability of textbooks to all**, including those who dropped out or are waiting to be formally admitted, will help parents and siblings aid learning.
- **Bridging the divide on educational aids** by including smartphones, will enable transmission of learning materials, and personal tutorial sessions.
- **Students could use the safety of the open countryside** to learn, under guidance from teachers. This is particularly feasible for lower classes, where observational learning creates a strong foundation.
- **Educational video, which has helped thousands**, can advance learning even beyond the pandemic, using talented teacher-communicators.
- States such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala have already hosted curriculum-based video lessons on the Internet, after beaming them on television.

**Way forward**

- The experience of southern states in the past decades proves that investment in a public school system multiplies opportunities manifold.
- It will take out-of-the-box thinking during the pandemic to come up with interventions that are a substitute for traditional methods and prevent 2020 becoming a zero year.

**15. India-US relations**

**Source- The Hindu**

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

**Context** - India-US relations over the year and significance of 3<sup>rd</sup> 2+2 Dialogue.

**How India-US ties deepened with the end of Cold War?**

In the post-cold war era, India's relationship with the US on defence and strategic issues has strengthened. This can be reflected in the following:

- **1991**- India's engagement with the US on defence cooperation started with the 1991 Kicklighter Proposals.
- **1998**: Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee authorized five underground nuclear tests in response to Pakistan's test firing of a surface-to-surface missile. This had set India and U.S at a confrontational footing.
- **2005- New Framework for the US-India Defence Relationship** has established an institutionalized framework, With a Defence Policy Group and its four sub-groups-
  - The Procurement and Production Group.
  - The Joint Technical Group.
  - The Military Cooperation Group.
  - The Senior Technology Group.
- **Bilateral civil nuclear cooperation agreement 2008**: Culminating a decade of partnership on civil nuclear issues, the two sides have agreed to build nuclear reactors in India. This was the time when the relationship between India and USA peaked and it was considered as a Game changer for INDO-US relations.
- **Bilateral trade**: overall trade between the two countries has grown and reached \$140 billion in 2018, the US is India's largest trade partner.
  - From less than \$400 million of defence acquisitions till 2005, the U.S. has since signed defence contracts of \$18 billion.



- **2016-** The U.S. categorized India as “a Major Defence Partner” in 2016. It has helped that India also joined the export control regimes (Australia Group, Missile Technology Control Regime and Wassenaar Arrangement) and has practices consistent with the Nuclear Suppliers Group.
- **2018-** India was placed in Category I of the Strategic Trade Authorisation, easing exports of sensitive technologies.

**Areas of growing cooperation:**

1. **Quad** - India's vision of the Indo-Pacific and its distinctive inclusiveness in the region is against the premise of multilateralism that the Quad presupposes. 'Quad' grouping of like-minded democracies has the potential to dramatically change the region's security landscape.
2. **Indo-pacific** - The US under its Pivot to Asia policy views India as an ideal balancer to check the aggressive rise of China. Therefore, the US has formulated the concept of Indo-Pacific to counter China in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean.
3. **2+2 dialogue:** It is the dialogue between Indian External Affairs and Defence Ministers, and their US counterparts. The main outcomes of 3<sup>rd</sup> India-USA 2+2 dialogue are-
  - a) **BECA** - India has signed the **Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement** (BECA) with the USA. It will enable the exchange of geospatial data and information between the two countries and will improve the accuracy of India's missiles in precision strikes.
    - 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.
4. **India's participation in Five Eyes meeting-** India's first-ever participation, in a meeting of the exclusive Five Eyes grouping that facilitates intelligence-sharing among the US, Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand.

**Way forward-**

India defined strategic autonomy as Non-alignment 2.0. The Indian strategic community needs to appreciate that policies cannot become prisoners of labels. The policy objective has to enhance India's strategic space and capability.

# General Studies Paper - 3

## General Studies - 3

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### 1. Buffer Stocks

**Source:** Indian Express

**Syllabus:** Gs3: Issues of Buffer Stocks and Food Security

**Context:** Irregular rainfall patterns is resulting in production fluctuations of agricultural crops.

**How the production fluctuation is happening?**

- **Unreliability of kharif crop production even in normal monsoon years:** In the last two years, excess rains in a single month has damaged the standing crops including onions, pulses and soyabean leading to production losses of kharif crop.
- **Bumper harvest during Rabi season:** Extended monsoon rains, although not beneficial for kharif, will help recharge groundwater aquifers and thereby result in bumper production during the rabi season.
- Hence the rabi crop will increasingly impart stability to India's agricultural output.

**What are the steps taken by the government?**

- Banning exports and easing imports.
- Imposing stock holding limits in onions.
- Forcing cold store owners to release potatoes deposited with them.

**What is the way forward?**

- With climate change and irregular rainfall patterns becoming a norm, Production fluctuations are inevitable
- The government should create a buffer stock of not just food grains, but even onion, potato, sugar, edible oil, milk powder and white butter, to enable non-distortive marketing intervention.

### 2. Air Pollution in India

**Source:** The Hindu

**Syllabus:** GS-3- Environment

**Context:** US President has criticised India's air quality.

**What is the state of air pollution in India?**

The State of Global Air that is a collaborative study of Health Effect Institute and Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation of Global Burden of Disease Project has presented that:

- **PM 2.5 Concentration:** India recorded the highest annual average PM 2.5 concentration exposure in 2019. India was followed by Nepal, Niger, Qatar and Nigeria.
- **Household Air Pollution:** India has managed to reduce the number of people exposed to household air pollution to 61% from 73%.
- **Ozone(O3) Exposure:** Among the 20 most populous countries, India recorded the highest increase (17%) in O3 concentrations in the past ten years.

**What steps have India taken to combat air pollution?**

- **National Clean Air Programme:** It aims to meet prescribed annual average ambient standards at all locations in the country in a stipulated timeframe. It calls for:
  - Augmentation of existing air quality monitoring network by increasing number of existing manual and continuous monitoring stations,
  - introducing rural monitoring stations,



## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (Fourth week), 2020

- identifying alternative technology for real-time monitoring network
- augmenting capabilities of existing monitoring stations to measure PM2.5 concentration
- national-level emission inventory
- **Launch of National Air Quality index (AQI):**
  - The AQI classifies air quality of a day considering criteria pollutants through colour codes and air quality descriptor. Further, it also links air quality with likely human health impacts.
  - The index measures eight major pollutants, namely, particulate matter (PM 10 and PM 2.5), nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, ozone, carbon monoxide, ammonia and lead.
- **Measures to curb vehicular pollution:** In March 2017, the Supreme Court banned the sale of BS III vehicles in the country. The court ordered that from April 1, 2017 onwards only BS IV would be registered in India. The Indian government BS-VI norms from 2020.
- **Measures to curb indoor air pollution:** The government launched Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojna to replace unclean cooking fuels used in the most underprivileged households with clean and more efficient LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas). A major objective of the scheme is to ensure smoke-free houses and thus curb indoor air pollution.

### 3. DISCOMs

**Source:** The Hindu

**Syllabus:** GS3: Infrastructure: Energy

**Context:** Providing only Stimulus package will not solve the entire problems of DisComs.

#### More in News

- DisComs, are utilities that buy power from generators and retail these to consumers.
- The government provided an ear marked stimulus package of ₹1,25,000 crore for DisComs to respond to COVID-19's economic shock.
- The loan is meant to be used by DisComs to pay off generators.

#### Why the Stimulus package provided won't be sufficient?

- As per **PRAAPTI** (Payment Ratification And Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators) portal, DisComs owe **one lakh crore rupees** to generators.
- But, PRAAPTI portal is not comprehensive as it is based on voluntary compilation of dues.
- Whereas, according to The Power Finance Corporation (PFC)'s Report on Utility Workings for 2018-19, DisComs owe ₹2,27,000 crore to generators which is twice that of the dues shown in PRAAPTI portal.

#### Why do DisComs face financial crunch?

- **Management issues:** Inefficiency and Aggregate Technical and Commercial (AT&C) losses that arise due to theft, lack of collection from consumers.
- **Unsustainable tariff rates:** Regulators themselves have failed to fix cost-reflective tariffs that denies DisComs to become a profitable sector.
- **State as defaulters:** State governments are the biggest defaulters, responsible for an estimated a third of trade receivables, besides not paying subsidies in full or on time.

- **Consumers as defaulters:** Consumers owed DisComs over ₹1.8 lakh crore in FY 2018-19, booked as trade receivables.
- **Impact of Covid19:** it has disproportionately impacted revenues to DisComs from paying customers, commercial and industrial segments.

#### What is the way forward?

- It is important to Improve AT&C losses.
- Need for a complete overhaul of the regulation of electricity companies and their deliverables.
- Rationalisation of electricity tariffs instead of free electricity. For this, regulators must allow cost-covering tariffs.
- Need a much larger liquidity infusion than has been announced along with credible plans to pay down growing debt.

To meet the current national needs of quality, affordable, and sustainable power its vital to improve the financial position of DisComs.

#### 4. Punjab Assembly Rejects Centre's Farm Laws

**Source-** The Indian Express

**Syllabus- GS 3-** Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.

**Context** - Legislative approach of Punjab government to nullify some provisions of the Central farm laws

#### What are the sole objectives of farms bills 2020?

**Liberate farmer from out-dated system-** Opens up agricultural sale and marketing outside the notified Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) mandis for farmers.

- It will allow farmers an option to sell their produce directly to these new zones, without going through the middlemen and paying levies such as mandi fees.

#### What are the new farm bills introduced by Punjab state government?

Punjab government passed legislation under Article 254(2) of the Constitution, to negate the enforcement of three Farm Acts passed by the Central government under Entry 33 of the Concurrent List.

**Punjab State Bills** - The Punjab assembly introduced three farm Bills-

1. **Agreement on price assurance and farm services-** It seeks to ensure that sales or purchase of wheat and paddy in Punjab is not allowed below the Minimum Support Price.
  - It provides for imprisonment of not less than three years and fines for harassment of farmers or payment of less price to the farmer.
2. **Fee on trade outside the APMCs-** The central law abolished any market fees or licences for private players outside the APMCs, the Punjab bills have reintroduced it. These fees will go towards a fund for the welfare of small and marginal farmers.
3. **Essential Commodities bills-** It prevents hoarding and black-marketing of agricultural produce and seeks to ensure status quo ante with regard to implementation of the Central Act namely, 'The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020'.

### **What is the main reason of passing new bills by Punjab Government?**

**Against the Spirit of Cooperative federalism-** Since agriculture and markets are State subjects – entry 14 and 28 respectively in List II – the ordinances are being seen as a direct encroachment upon the functions of the States.

- The main subjects of the three acts are agriculture and market that are essentially state subjects as per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.
- The Central government in devious manner its way into the legislation by misconstruing its authority on food items, a subject in the Concurrent List, as authority over the subject agriculture.

### **What is Article 254 (2) will this help the states?**

It enables a State government to pass a law, on any subject in the Concurrent List, that may contradict a Central law, provided it gets the President's assent. A state legislation passed under Article 254 (2) requires the assent of the President of India.

### **Way forward-**

- Farming community and state governments should give the reform measures a fair chance by giving farmers access to competitive purchases, affording better prices.
- Government should improve agricultural infrastructure to strengthen competition.

## **5. DeepFake**

**Source:** The Hindu

Gs3: Issues associated with Development of new technologies.

**Context:** The threat emerging out of Deepfakes and measures to counter it.

### **What is Deepfakes?**

- Deepfakes are the digital media (video, audio, and images) manipulated using Artificial Intelligence.
- Using Deepfakes its possible to fabricate media by swapping faces, lip-syncing, and puppeteer.
- Access to cloud computing, algorithms, and abundant data has opened opportunities for media manipulation.
- Deepfakes have now become new tool to spread computational propaganda and disinformation at large scale and at faster rate.
- Disinformation perpetuated using new technologies like Deepfakes are increasingly used for creating social discord, polarisation, and in some cases, influencing an election outcome.
- Deepfakes and hyper-realistic digital falsification can inflict damage to individuals, institutions, businesses and democracy.

### **Why it is a threat?**

- **Impact on women:** Pornographic deepfakes reduce women to sexual objects and harms their reputation and psychology.
- **Economic impact:** Using audio and video deepfakes it is possible to deceive individuals for financial gains. Also, it can be used to extract money, confidential information, or exact favours from individuals.
- **Impact on media:** It further erodes the trust in news media and can contribute to a culture of factual relativism.
- **Impact on security:** It can be used by insurgent groups and terrorist organisations to cultivate anti-state sentiments among people.

- **Impact on social institutions:** False information about institutions, public policy, and politicians powered by a deepfakes can be exploited to alter the democratic discourse and undermine trust in institutions.
- **Impact on Democratic processes:** A Deepfake produced to harm the image and reputation of political candidate can confuse voters and disrupt elections.
- **Impact on citizen's Freedom** Authoritarian regimes can use this as a tool to justify oppression and to disenfranchise citizens.

#### What is the way forward?

- **Multi-stakeholder and multi-modal approach:** collective techniques across legislative regulations, technology intervention, and media literacy can provide effective and ethical countermeasures to mitigate the threat of malicious deepfakes.
- **Media literacy for consumers and journalists:** Consumers of media must have the ability to decipher, understand, translate, and use the information they encounter.
- **Regulation:** Facilitate disincentivising the creation and distribution of malicious deepfakes.
- **Technology intervention:** Need easy-to-use and accessible technology solutions to detect deepfakes.
- **Behavioural change:** Falsity goes viral more than the truth on social platforms. Citizens should restrain themselves from spreading disinformation and become a part of the solution to this infodemic.
- **Re-evaluate:** The principle of Democratising nature of information dissemination need to be discussed, debated.

Deepfakes created without consent is a threat to psychology, security, political stability, and business disruption.

#### 6. Urbanpoverty

**Source:** [The Live Mint](#)

**Syllabus:** GS-3- Economy

**Context:** India needs policy intervention to uplift its urban poor.

#### What are the problems faced by urban poor?

- **Lack policy support** of the kind provided in the West. During its urbanization, slum residents' lives in India have been full of instability and unpredictability.
- **They have disposable livelihoods**, as they usually make a living when well-off city residents need their services and the pandemic has made slum dwellers' incomes fall steeply.
- **Multiple informalities:** Informality of different kinds fill the lives of slum residents with risk and uncertainty. Only tiny share of slum residents have formal jobs with written contracts.
  - More than 70% have homes without titles, and 40% lack identity papers needed to access entitlements. This makes their lives extremely volatile and vulnerable.
- **The pandemic pushed many slum families into persistent poverty.** For example, Residents from 35 out of 40 settlements in Patna continued to cut back on food or other essentials, while residents from 30 settlements needed to borrow money to meet essential needs.
- **Few good jobs:** The urban labour forces are growing but regular factory jobs are not growing alongside; there is a huge scarcity.

**What are the steps to be taken?**

- **The need for policies:** Three kinds of policies are necessary.
  - **The conditions of employment** must progressively be made more secure, with workplace protection, old-age support, and health care benefits.
  - **The process of slum notification needs to be accelerated**, so the threat of demolition passes, even if individual titles are not given immediately.
- **Interventions are required in education and skills training**, and to make entrepreneurship more rewarding.
  - Such efforts are being made on a small scale by social mobility promoting organizations, including Prerana in Bengaluru, Udaan Foundation in Mumbai, and CSRL in various cities.
- **Affordable and reliable health care is necessary** as the worst-off in slums almost always involve families ruined by high medical expenses.
  - The government seems to be pursuing this through Ayushman Bharat.

**Way forward**

- It is necessary to raise slum residents' prospects for good jobs and upward mobility.
- Policy interventions that help reduce the ill effects of informality are necessary.

**7. Farm Bill and MSP**

**Source:** Indian Express

**GS3:** Issues related to Direct and Indirect Farm Subsidies and Minimum Support Prices

**Context:** The recently enacted farm bills have triggered debate on the desirability of the MSP regime.

**More in news:** The period from 2004 to 2012 was the period of high commodity prices, high government procurement and rapid reduction in rural poverty. This shows a causal link between the high prices and decrease in poverty

**What is the issue?**

- The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) bill allow for free entry of agents (private individuals, producer collectives or cooperatives) to set up markets.
- This means that the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and other associated agencies can procure in the traditional mandis or in a new market established under this law or in their own backyard.
- Critics view that the dismantling of the monopoly of the APMCs as a sign of ending the assured procurement of food grains at minimum support prices (MSP).

**Are MSPs irrelevant for the welfare of the farmers?**

- According to the supporters of the farm bills the MSPs are irrelevant for most of the farmers in the country as it benefits only a small fraction of farmers (Punjab and Haryana) and procurement has remained confined to only a few crops.
- However, it has indirectly benefited all food grain producers in the country.
- For example, the procurement through MSP significantly exceeds the PDS requirement, this creates additional demand in the food grain market, pushing up the prices especially when the international prices have remained low.
- The RBI's annual report of 2017-18 on the impact of MSP-based procurement on the food prices conclusively shows that MSP is a leading factor influencing the output prices of the farm produce in the entire country.



- Also, for rain-fed agriculturists, the only state supports these farmers (primarily cotton and pulse producers) have is that of MSPs as they are deprived of irrigation and they don't benefit from subsidies on electricity and fertiliser.

## 8. New ordinance to curb Air Pollution

**Source-** The Indian Express

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

**Context-** Centre issued an ordinance to form new commission for air quality management in NCR and adjoining areas.

### What is the new commission for air quality management?

Indian President has promulgated an ordinance to constitute a Commission for Air Quality Management in the National Capital Region (NCR) and adjoining areas.

- The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Ordinance 2020, released by the law and justice ministry
- This commission for air quality management will replace the EPCA (environment pollution and prevention control authority).
- Commission will be constituted for air quality management for better coordination, research, identification and resolution of problems surrounding the air quality index.
- **Area under commission-** It will include representatives from Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan.
- **Composition-** A Chairperson, a representative from the Ministry of Environment, members from the state of Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, technical experts from Central Pollution Control Board and Indian Space Research Organization among others.

### What are the powers of the commission?

- The ordinance makes it clear that state as well as central bodies will not have jurisdiction over matters related to air pollution.
- The commission has been given executive powers to act upon those found violating directions set by it to curb the pollution crisis.
- The ordinance will erase the relevance of start pollution control bodies since they do not have the powers to make any autonomous decisions anymore.
- It will also have the power to lay down parameters of air quality and emissions, issue directions to abate pollution crisis, take up matters suo moto on basis of complaints, stop power supply or take action against any entity or industry.

### Penal power

- There will be a penalty imposed for non-compliance to the commission's orders.
- The offence could be punishable with imprisonments upto a term of 5 years, with fine which may extend to RS 1 crore or more.
- Offence under the ordinance shall be non-cognizable and be triable under the national green tribunal act in the court of the national green tribunal (NGT).

### What are the challenges?

1. **Co-ordination problem-** The Commission has a large number of members from the central government, which has not gone down well with the states.
2. **Rule enforcement-** A major weakness, in tackling air pollution has been the inability of agencies to consistently enforce rules on the ground. For instance, factor

in stubble burning or prevent pollution from thermal plants do exist, but these are often not strongly enforced always in States due to political considerations.

**Issues with new ordinance-**

1. The central government has taken control over the pollution control matters in the Delhi NCR region.
2. Limiting the adjudication to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) and not any other court.

Political differences will also now play a part in the functioning of the Commission because states are not happy with the overarching powers being vested in it.

**9. Stubble Burning Issue and Analysis**

**Source:** The Hindu

**GS3:** Science and Technology- Developments and their Applications and Effects in Everyday Life.

**Context:** New innovative method, the PUSA Decomposer, developed at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Pusa can offer a sustainable solution for stubble burning.

**What is stubble burning?**

- Stubble burning refers to the practice of farmers setting fire to plant debris that remain in farms after harvest.
- Stubble burning is practised predominantly by farmers in north India.
- It is to be noted that, before the 1980s, farmers used to till the remaining debris back into the soil after harvesting the crops manually.

**Why farmers resort to stubble burning?**

- **Advent of the Green Revolution:** It resulted in increased production of rice and wheat which simultaneously increased stubble post-harvest.
- **Mechanised harvesting:** Machines used in combined harvesting technique is not efficient as it left behind one-foot-tall stalks.
- **Economic reason:** Due to the limited time period of 20-25 days between harvesting one crop and sowing another, Stubble burning offered a low-cost and speedy solution to farmers.

**What are the negative impacts of Stubble burning?**

- **Source for toxic gases:** It releases harmful gases including nitrogen oxide and carbon monoxide into the atmosphere.
- **Air pollution:** It creates vast smoke blankets across the Indo-Gangetic Plains. As per TERI (The Energy and Resources Institute) report, in 2019 the air pollution in New Delhi and other parts of north India was 20 times higher than the safe threshold level as prescribed by the World Health Organization.
- **Impact on crop production:** It degrades soil fertility, destroys organic fertilizers and reduces ground water levels.
- **Impact on Health:** Stubble burning during a pandemic could worsen the situation by making lungs weaker and people more susceptible to disease.

**What are the Steps taken to control stubble burning?**

**Laws & Regulations**

- In 2013, the Punjab government-imposed ban on stubble burning.

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- Later, in 2015, the National Green Tribunal imposed a ban on stubble burning in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab.
- Stubble burning is an offence under Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1981.

### Technological intervention

- To control stubble burning NGT directed government to assist farmers by obtaining equipment like happy seeders and rotavator.

### Setting up of independent Commissions

- Recently, in **Aditya Dubey v. Union of India**, the Supreme Court appointed a one-man committee under Justice Madan B. Lokur to monitor and provide steps to prevent stubble burning activities in Punjab, Haryana and U.P. Haryana.
- Presently, a permanent commission for air quality management was set up by the Union government through an ordinance. It will replace the Justice Madan B. Lokur Commission.

### What is the way forward?

- **Setting up Custom Hiring Centres** it will facilitate farmers removing stubble by providing them with machinery such as the happy seeder, rotavator, paddy straw chopper, etc
- **Innovative solutions:** For example, the Union government is testing an innovative method, the **PUSA Decomposer**. It helps the paddy straw to decompose at a much faster rate than usual.

Technological innovations can offer a better solution for problems like stubble burning. The application of **happy seeders** and **super SMS machines** along with innovative solutions like **PUSA Decomposer** will not only reduce air pollution but also increase soil fertility and agricultural productivity