

9pm Compilation

1st to 8th December, 2020

General Studies - 1

1. Uttarakhand's nameplate initiative

General Studies - 2

1. Ayurveda and patient safety
2. Aspects of vaccine distribution
3. Aishwarya Reddy's death
4. Assassination of Iranian nuclear scientist
5. Regional priorities
6. Origin of COVID-19
7. Reopening schools for exams
8. Gender deficit in Indian Judicial system
9. Religious Freedom and Personal Choices
10. Purpose of the vaccine
11. Behind China's wolf warrior diplomacy
12. AMR and health crisis
13. Disability - policy and challenges
14. Shadow pandemic
15. India's stand against 'UN's selectivity on religions'
16. Issues in Labour codes

General Studies - 3

1. Dilli chalo farmer's protest
2. Farmer's protest
3. Corporate houses owning banks
4. Need for the procurement system
5. Protesting farmer's concerns
6. GDP recovery- questionable data
7. Farm Bills Concerns and evaluation
8. Economic recovery
9. The many layers to agricultural discontent
10. Exclusive arbitration body for financial disputes
11. Monoculture farming- depleting natural resources
12. Highlights of MPC meeting
13. A new roadmap for end of oil age
14. Permitting industrial houses to own banks
15. Farmers could perish with new farm acts
16. Coercive and Liberal environmentalism
17. Authorisation of coronavirus vaccines

General Studies Paper - 1

General Studies - 1

1. Uttarakhand's nameplate initiative

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS 1 - Role of women and women's organization, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies. Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism.

Context- Pauri district in Uttarakhand boast nameplates with girls name as district steps up for gender rights.

More in News

The Pauri administration in Uttarakhand has launched an initiative, '**Ghar ki pehchan, nooni ku noo**' (**House in the name of the daughter**), in its efforts to empower women and girls, under the initiative, villages are encouraged to put their daughters' names on the nameplates outside their house.

What is the significance of the initiative?

1. **Women empowerment** - The initiative is to give due recognition to the women of the hills who are backbone of all activities. This will also bring gender sensitivity among men and, in turn, empower the girl child.
2. **Create awareness**- The initiative is an effort by the district administration to create awareness about gender rights and property ownership among women and their families.
 - The programme has been started under the mass awareness component of the Centre's '**Beti bachao beti padhao**' programme.
3. **To improve child sex ratio**- An indicator of early gender discrimination is a matter of concern- at 904, it is way below the state average of 963.

What is the way forward?

- This programme is just a start. Having the women's name on the nameplate will elevate her status in the family and within society too.

In a first of its kind initiative in Uttarakhand, intended to raise awareness about the rights of the girl child.

General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies - 2

1. Ayurveda and patient safety

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-2- Health

Context: Efficacy of Ayurveda to incorporate surgical techniques.

What are the requirements for conducting a successful surgery?

- **Apprenticeship is the key:** Surgery in the present era is an interdisciplinary effort. This is one branch of medicine where knowledge can only be acquired through apprenticeship that is, the learner needs to be guided by an expert
 - A well-trained anaesthesiologist keeps the patient free of pain.
 - Other specialist doctors address any other illnesses that the patient has before surgery can be safely performed.
 - The well-trained surgeon must have a good knowledge of the structure of the human body in health and disease.
- **Clinical judgement:** The surgeon needs to know when not to perform surgery, a skill commonly called clinical judgement. These skills are difficult to teach and difficult to master.
- **Modern medical training:** It consists of a basic degree during which the fundamentals of the functioning of humans in health and disease, and techniques to diagnose illnesses are taught. Increased knowledge in various domains is obtained through postgraduate training.
- **Ayurveda and modern medicine:** It is impossible for Ayurveda to incorporate surgical techniques while ignoring all the other domains of modern medicine and still perform surgery safely and effectively.
 - Safe and effective health care should not become a casualty of a misguided desire to protect indigenous systems.

What are the problems?

- **Data:** Data from the United States suggests that up to 4,000 surgical errors occur each year despite well-considered controls on who can perform surgery.
 - Efforts to reduce this rate focus on better training. Besides professional codes, legal mechanisms have been developed to ensure safe medical practice.
- **Consumer protection act:** In India, the Consumer Protection Act serves as an incentive to modern medical practitioners to provide high quality health care. Even this legal mechanism is not accessible to the poor.
- **Deepening inequality:** The quality of medical care received in India is highly dependent on personal resources. Surgical facilities manned by graduates of Ayurveda will be utilized only by the very poor who do not have the resources to access modern medical care.
 - This will further root the existing grossly unequal access to health care.

Way forward

- **Increase medical colleges:** There is a shortage of trained medical personnel in rural areas. The only way to address this is to greatly increase the number of government medical colleges.
- The way forward is to incorporate traditional medical systems into modern medicine.

2. Aspects of vaccine distribution

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

Context: Aspects of vaccine distribution.

Background

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the COVID-19 a pandemic in March 2020 and the most optimistic prediction for a vaccine to be available was by the middle of 2021.
- Now, the labs around the world are working faster than anticipated and the first vials of a vaccine are likely to roll out in the next two months.

Why stakes in a vaccine against COVID-19 are unprecedented?

- Though, Economies have gradually opened up after lockdowns, festivals have been celebrated in a subdued manner, and polls have been conducted in several countries.
- But it's the vaccine that can set us free, can give back the human freedom of association, and most importantly, it can relieve the anxiety and worry that has become the part of life in large parts of the planet.

How early research in Corona virus family is helping now?

- The epidemics caused by pathogens of the coronavirus family in the past 20 years, SARS and MERS, have pushed scientists to study the varied interactions between the human immune system and contagions.
- These studies have illustrated that, unlike other flu viruses, coronaviruses make use of various biological pathways in the human body. For example-opting enzymes of the host's cells.
- Knowledge of the spike protein has made the scientific community to understand the ways in which the immune system behaves when a person contracts the novel coronavirus.
- The recent approaches targeting the spike protein whether through genetic material as in the case of the vaccines developed by Moderna and Pfizer or through a viral vector from chimpanzees as in the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, have benefitted from earlier research with coronaviruses.

What are the challenges to vaccine distribution?

- India, produces 60 per cent of the world's vaccines and is home to the largest manufacturer, the Pune-based Serum Institute.
- Yet, the country also has the largest number of unvaccinated children in the world.
- NSO data shows that less than 60 per cent children receive the entire basket of vaccines.
- Delay in acceptance or refusal of vaccines despite availability of vaccination services in more than 90 per cent countries in the world is another hurdle in immunisation programmes.

What is the Way forward?

- Securing 1.3 billion people will require a massive public policy effort at improving the country's public health infrastructure.
- Partnership with the private sector in immunisation programme.
- Controlling the growth of black markets.

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor-based courses.

- Checking the diversion of resources from regular immunisation programmes.
- Institute transparent mechanisms at points where science and research meet public policy.

The novel coronavirus forces us to do things differently, it demands a different conception of herd from science and public policy.

3. Aishwarya Reddy's death

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

Context: Aishwarya Reddy's death points finger at an education system that turns a blind eye to inequality.

Background

- Recently a young student, Aishwarya Reddy from Lady Shri Ram College, died by suicide.
- The girl from a poor family took her life due to her inability to buy gadgets required by her to continue her online education.

What factors that pushed her to choose death over life?

- Digital divide in accessing online education.
- Delay in giving her the well-deserved scholarship on time by the Department of Science & Technology's (DST).
- Lack of knowledge on part of the college administration about its students' socio-economic backgrounds because of which all students, except the freshers, were asked to leave the hostel premises.
- The girl's inability to proactively reach out to those in positions of authority for help.
- The painful experiences of the daily struggle of her parents, their inability, desperation and frustration to buy her a laptop and the guilt of pushing them to mortgage their house and forcing her younger sister to drop out of school.

What is the most fundamental cause for such student's suicides?

- ours is an unequal society and our socio-economic and cultural locations determine the school that we go to and the nature/quality of education that we get.
- So, most students find it difficult to come out of their vicious cycles of disadvantage, a few resilient ones manage to enter those elite institutions, to which there is limited access.
- Though they clear, the Children with different caste, class, religion and ethnicity, with unequal economic, social and cultural capital, are all treated alike.
- For example, syllabus, curricular resources, pedagogic processes, assessment practices are same for everyone, irrespective of the divergent spaces they come from.
- Though this seems to be equal and neutral is in effect unequal and biased.

What is the way forward?

- Institutions should take responsibility to make such spaces more democratic and egalitarian.
- They need to adopt more proactive measures to reach out to their students, especially those belonging to marginalised backgrounds.
- It is important to recognise that the pressures faced by students such as the pressure to do well academically, pressure to conform and look/dress/talk in a certain way, appreciate a particular kind of music/film etc.

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.

Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor-based courses.

4. Assassination of Iranian nuclear scientist

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

Context: Assassination of Iranian nuclear scientist threatens will have serious geopolitical implications in West Asia and beyond

Background

- Fakhrizadeh, who is widely regarded as a key figure in Iran's nuclear weapons programme was recently killed in an ambush attack on a rural road outside Tehran.
- Also, note that Qasem Soleimani, the Iranian general in charge of the Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guard was killed by a US drone strike in January.

What would be its impact on Peace in West Asia?

- **Direct Wars:** Iran has hinted that Israel and Saudi Arabia are behind the attack and has vowed revenge. Since the Iran-Iraq war, Tehran has conducted a sort of cold war against its rivals, acting largely through proxies such as the Houthi rebels in Yemen, rather than engaging in a direct conflict. A retaliation to the Fakhrizadeh assassination could change the dynamics of this conflict.
- **Threatens renewal of nuclear deal with US:** Israel can push Biden to seek greater concessions from Iran while re-negotiating the nuclear deal which Donald Trump pulled out. This hard strategy can result in strengthening more radical forces within Iran disturbing peace in West Asia.

5. Regional priorities

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS- 2

Context: Three years after joining the eight-nation Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), India hosted the SCO heads of governments (HoG) meeting for the first time.

How does the SCO serve India's quest for geopolitical balance and regional engagement?

- **The focus:** The focus of the 66-point joint statement was in developing a "Plan of Priority Practical Measures for 2021-2022 to overcome the socio-economic, financial and food consequences of COVID-19 in the region".
- **Tackling Pakistan:** India made strong observations on cross-border terrorism; he called it the SCO region's "biggest challenge", in comments aimed at Pakistan.
- **SCO:** The SCO is a rare forum under which India-Pakistan troops take part in joint exercises under the Regional Anti-Terror Structure, although it would seem the two countries have come no closer on the issue.
- Neither statement on terrorism was reflected in the final joint statement, which focused on trade and economic issues.
- **Dealing with china:** India also marked its differences with China over the BRI by not joining other SCO members in a paragraph endorsing the BRI.
 - India also made a pitch for "transparent and trustworthy" trade practices, seen as a sidebar aimed at China.
- **SCO's significance for India:** The SCO is one of the few regional structures India is a part of now, given a decline in its engagement with SAARC, BBIN and the RCEP.
- The SCO provides India a convenient channel for its outreach for trade and strategic ties to Central Asian countries.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of December (First week), 2020

- It has afforded a platform, when needed, for bilateral discussions with the two countries India has the most tense ties with: China and Pakistan.

Way forward

- The SCO has been seen as a grouping worth pursuing as it retains India's geopolitical balance, a useful counterpoint to New Delhi's otherwise much more robust relations with the western world, and hosting the SCO meeting was one more step towards developing that engagement.

6. Origin of COVID-19

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS- 2

Context: WHO must work alongside China in quickly uncovering the origins of the virus.

Uncovering the origin of corona virus is shrouded in mystery due to various factors.

Discuss.

- **Origin of the virus:** In the case of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), its source is still unknown even 11 months after WHO reported the first case.
 - Knowing the natural reservoirs, intermediate hosts and the events that allowed the virus to jump across the species barrier are important in prevention.
 - Soon after the virus spread around the world, there was heightened demand to identify its origin in China's Wuhan where the first case cluster was reported.
- **Efforts to find the origin:** It was only in early August that WHO completed the mission to lay the groundwork for joint efforts to identify the origin.
 - It was only in late October that China began early studies for the two-phase investigation.
- **Politicizing the issue:** If China failed to alert WHO immediately after a Wuhan cluster was reported, its reluctance to quickly and earnestly investigate the source can partly be explained by U.S. President Donald Trump's attempt to politicise the issue.
- **Economic cost:** The reluctance has only increased after mounting international anger over its reporting the outbreak and the huge economic cost of the pandemic globally.
- **Susceptibility:** One way to find this out is to know the susceptibility of different animal species.
 - There is strong evidence that the virus originated in bats and probably spread to humans through an intermediate species.
 - Already, many animals including cats have been found susceptible to the virus in the lab and outside.
 - With the virus spread so wide, zeroing in on the intermediate host becomes more difficult as the possibility of humans having spread the virus to animals cannot be ruled out.

Way forward

- A multi-pronged approach with an emphasis on investigating China's wildlife farms becomes crucial. This highlights the importance of working alongside China to uncover the virus's origin.

7. Reopening schools for exams

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS- 2

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor-based courses.

ForumIAS

Context: It is reasonable to plan for school exams in summer, if progress on COVID-19 holds.

Should schools reopen for exams, if covid-19 situation improves?

Views against opening schools:

- **State board's stance:** State Boards are yet to make up their minds on the schedule for annual examinations and the academic session for next year.
- Badly affected Maharashtra and Gujarat are thinking of postponing the final examinations.
- **ICSE's views:** The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations has appealed to States to allow its schools to open Classes 10 and 12 in a limited way early in January.
- **Conflicts in some states:** There is also the likely conflict between summer elections in large States such as Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Kerala, and the examination schedule for 2021.

Argument in favour:

The strongest argument in favour of a written Board examination is that it eliminates asymmetrical access, including technology deficits, and gives all pupils an equal opportunity to score.

- **View of CBSE:** The CBSE which has more than 20,000 schools under its domain at the secondary level, has weighed in favour of written mode tests, obviously counting on progress in dealing with the pandemic.
 - The board was able to wrap up its 2020 examination schedule that began in mid-February, without getting derailed by the national lockdown in March.
- **Syllabus reduction:** Students are relieved that, in line with the experience in countries such as the U.K., the syllabus has been significantly cut down and examination schedules may be put off by a few months beyond March.
- **Vaccine covering teachers:** The availability of a good vaccine that will also cover teachers and students through a staggered programme is arguably key to determining the coming year's academic time-table.

Way forward

- **Hearing public concerns:** Education Minister's move to hear public concerns on such issues through an online consultation is a positive step to build consensus.
- India is better placed than America or Europe to provide ventilated classrooms, an important factor in controlling viral spread, because of the climate. Yet, a definitive view on the school schedule for 2021 is not possible until the course of the pandemic over the next few months becomes clear.

8. Gender deficit in Indian Judicial system

Source: [Indian Express](#)

GS2: Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

Context: Attorney-general KK Venugopal has asked the Supreme Court to fix gender deficit in the Indian judicial system.

Facts on number of Women in Indian judicial system.

- Women comprise only 7.2 per cent of all the judges in the SC and the high courts.
- There were only eight women judges till now in Supreme Court and there has never been a woman Chief Justice of India.

Why the Indian judicial system is alleged gender insensitive?

- The Madhya Pradesh High Court had asked a man accused of “outraging the modesty of a woman” to visit the home of the victim and ask her to tie a rakhi.
- Nine women lawyers had moved the SC against the bail order.
- Courts are also known to nudge alleged sexual offenders and victims towards “compromise weddings”.
- In one instance, SC Chief Justice presided over a case in which he had been accused of sexual harassment at workplace. The SC, which has empowered judgments on gender rights failed to institute an impartial mechanism to deal with the allegations.
- Similar judgments and conduct of court get tangled in patriarchal notions of honour instead of holding up constitutional rights.

What needs to be done?

- Need for gender sensitisation of judges and lawyers to avoid judgments that exuberates patriarchy.
- Greater representation of women across all levels of judiciary is urgently needed for dismantling patriarchal attitudes.

The judiciary should consider the suggestions of the attorney-general and apprise itself of the gender skew in its workings and take urgent steps to bridge the gap.

9. Religious Freedom and Personal Choices

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Indian Constitution Significant Provisions and Basic Structure.

Context: The Allahabad High Court verdict in ‘Salamat Ansari’ is a reminder of the Constitution’s most cherished values.

What did the court say?

- Religious conversions, even when made solely for the purposes of marriage, constituted a valid exercise of a person’s liberties.
- The High Court ruled that **the freedom to live with a person of one’s choice is intrinsic** to the fundamental right to life and personal liberty.
- It held that the **judgment in Noor Jahan was incorrectly delivered**. Marriage is a matter of choice, and every adult woman has a fundamental right to choose her own partner.

What is the issue?

- **Legislation:** Various State governments undertaking projects to outlaw what they describe pejoratively as “Love Jihad”.
- **Petitioners vs. State:**
 - The petitioners had approached the High Court seeking orders to quash a First Information Report (FIR). This FIR alleged that crime was committed under **Section 366** of the Indian Penal Code, which **criminalises the abduction** of a woman with an intent to compel her to marry against her will.
 - The State argued that the partnership had no sanctity in the law, because a conversion with a singular aim of getting married was illegitimate.

What are the other related judgements?

- **Noor Jahan v. State of U.P. (2014):** the High Court had held that a conversion by an individual to Islam was valid only when it was predicated on a “change of heart” and on an “honest conviction” in the tenets of the newly adopted religion.

- **Burden of proof:** the High Court had ruled that the burden to prove the validity of a conversion was on the party professing the act.
- **Rev. Stainislaus v. State of Madhya Pradesh:** the Court upheld, on grounds of public order, two of the earliest anti-conversion statutes in India: the Madhya Pradesh Dharma Swatantrya Adhiniyam, 1968, and the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act, 1967. These laws required that a District Magistrate be informed each time a conversion was made and prohibited any conversion that was obtained through fraud or illegal inducement.

What does the judgement signify?

- **Right to religious freedom:** it is neither the province of the state nor any other individual to interfere with a person's choice of partner or faith.
- **Right to privacy:** It held that an individual's ability to control vital aspects of her life inheres in her right to privacy. **Puttaswamy judgement**, has recognised that every individual possesses a guaranteed freedom of thought.
- **Right to live with dignity:** It includes the preservation of decisional autonomy, on matters such as "personal intimacies, the sanctity of family life, marriage, procreation, the home, and sexual orientation".
- **Freedom of conscience:** Article 25 of the Constitution expressly protects the choices that individuals make. It guarantees to every person the freedom of conscience. The idea of protecting one's freedom of conscience goes beyond mere considerations of religious faith.

This is high time that we need to **respect people's choices**. When we fail to acknowledge and respect the most intimate and personal choices that people make, we undermine the most basic principles of dignity.

10. Purpose of the vaccine

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

Context- The challenges vaccine poses to qualify as a 'public health' intervention in India.

What is the purpose of vaccination?

1. **Individual prevention-** - The ability to develop immunity by producing antibodies among those individuals who have taken a vaccine shot.
- **It builds an adaptive immune system**
2. **To achieve herd immunity-** It is a concept used for vaccination, in which a population can be protected from a certain virus if a threshold of vaccination is reached.
 - Herd immunity refers to community protection.
 - The threshold coverage is estimated to be around 60% for COVID-19 vaccine to achieve population-level immunity.
 - The idea of herd immunity is to protect the vulnerable.

What are the concerns related to vaccination?

1. **Safe immunization-** There are three major elements of immunization safety.
 - Health care providers must be concerned with the safety of vaccines themselves (their composition),
 - Administration of the vaccination (handling, scheduling, and injections),
 - And surveillance and evaluation of the immunization program, including documentation of vaccine efficacy and the probability of adverse events.

2. **Economic concern**-The huge economic resources will be needed to make the vaccine available for a large population.
3. **Lack of infrastructure**- Vaccines require cold chain infrastructure for storage. Logistical and Infrastructural issues in storage of vaccines hampering its penetrability in the rural hinterland.
4. **Cost**- If open market forces determine the cost of the vaccine and affordability then, the section of society most vulnerable to the disease would get left out.
5. **Credibility**- fears regarding safety and credibility can be almost impossible obstacles to overcome and must be addressed head-on.

What are the challenges related to population based vaccination programme?

Priority- Within the country, it is certainly not clear who should be treated first or it should be determined by need, affordability, vulnerability or some other criterion or a combination of all.

The outcome is the clear- If this process target only specific population group then its very purpose will be defeated as the pandemic can infect all groups similarly.

What is the way forward?

- It is safe to demonstrate the success of vaccination as a public health intervention in a small population, like a block or a district, before scaling it up for the national level.
- However, if herd immunity is not the focus, then the key purpose of COVID-19 vaccines will be to ensure individual immunity.
- **Protect the vulnerable**- Use the first limited supplies of vaccines to protect those most in need, without worrying about the more robust members of the “herd”.

11. Behind China's wolf warrior diplomacy

Source: [The Hindu](#)

GS2: India and its Neighborhood- Relations

Context: Xi Jinping is deepening a ‘Chinese Communist Party-state’ brand of nationalism for a domestic and global audience.

What is Chinese brand of nationalism?

- An abrasive brand of nationalism is associated with China.
- Beijing's recourse to nationalistic aggression as a foreign policy strategy has gained the euphemism of ‘wolf warrior diplomacy’.
- It involves a state-sponsored and systemic indoctrination campaign.
- It has acquired the dynamics of Chinese nationalism with Xi Jinping at the Core.

What is its basis?

- The Chinese Communist Party initially embraced nationalism as a co-option strategy in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square massacre.
- Nationalism has turned into a state dogma to embed the Chinese Communist Party in the political subconsciousness of the country, and secure the filial piety of its populace.
- It derives its inspiration from the idiom of ‘**Great Rejuvenation**’ and its obsession with re-achieving the glories of an imaginary past.

How this is linked with threat perception?

- The first concerted attempt by the Chinese Communist Party to shape Chinese nationalism came with the launch of the ‘**Patriotic Education Campaign**’ in the 1990s.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of December (First week), 2020

- At the core of this campaign was the grand design to project the Chinese Communist Party as the harbinger and sole guarantor of the peace, prosperity and sovereignty of the eternally 'victimised' Chinese nation.
- It is based on an aggressive posturing and display of strength in international affairs.
- It is secured through patriotic indoctrination campaigns, promotion of a leadership personality cult, and the now legendary anti-corruption drive.

What is Agenda of indoctrination?

- After Mao, Xi has become the only Chinese leader to appoint a Party theoretician on the Politburo Standing Committee.
- The new 'Patriotic Education' guidelines were introduced in 2019, along with the '2019-2023 National Work Program for the Education and Cultivation of Party Members'.
- It includes extra-curricular activities such as '**Red Education**' and the aim of such programmes is to cultivate future generations of Chinese youth with 'Red DNA'.
- In 2018, the Party launched a "patriotic striving spirit" campaign to 'enhance patriotism' among Chinese intellectuals.
- Chinese media outlets have been asked to follow the dictum of "telling China's stories well" to shape domestic and international opinion as per the Party's diktats.
- Promotion of the Xi Jinping personality cult has become an intrinsic component of Chinese nationalism.
- Elite institutions in China have either established research centres or introduced mandatory courses in 'Xi Jinping Thought'.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently inaugurated a 'Xi Jinping Thought' study centre to guide the "theoretical construction" of China's foreign policy.

What are the plans ahead?

- Cult of personality will gain further momentum after the recently concluded fifth plenum of the Party which approved a plan for China to become a global leader in technology by 2035.
- Mr. Xi has further declared his intentions to remain at the helm of China's affairs long after his due retirement date as General Secretary of the Party in 2022.
- The international community is poised to face an increasingly aggressive Chinese nationalism.

12. AMR and health crisis

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-2- Health

Context: Antimicrobial resistance (AMR), a silent pandemic, is growing at an alarming rate.

Why is AMR growing at an alarming rate?

- **AMR:** Globally, about 35% of common human infections have become resistant to available medicines.
- About 700,000 people die every year because available antimicrobial drugs (antibiotics, antivirals, anti-parasitic and antifungals) have become less effective at combating pathogens.
- Resistance to second- and third-line antibiotics the last lines of defence against some common diseases are projected to almost double between 2005 and 2030.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of December (First week), 2020

- According to a study published in The Lancet, an estimated 58,000 new-born children die annually from sepsis in India alone because antibiotics can no longer treat certain bacterial infections.
- **Reasons for AMR:**
- Microorganisms develop resistance to antimicrobial agents as a natural defence mechanism. Human activity has significantly accelerated the process.
- The misuse and overuse of antimicrobials for humans, livestock and agriculture is probably the biggest reason for this.
- Research points to the role of environment and pollution in AMR.
 - Once consumed, up to 80% of antibiotic drugs are excreted un-metabolised, along with resistant bacteria.
- Release of effluents from households and health and pharmaceutical facilities, and agricultural run-off, is propagating resistant microorganisms. Wastewater treatment facilities are unable to remove all antibiotics and resistant bacteria.

What are the problems faced?

- **Issues faced:** In India, there is capacity to treat only about 37% of the sewage generated annually. The rest is discharged into natural water bodies without treatment.
- An analysis of single wastewater discharge from a treatment facility in India catering to drug manufacturers found concentrations of antibiotics high enough to treat over 40,000 people daily.
- **Mode of spread:** Water may be a major mode for the spread of AMR, especially in places with inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene.
- Wildlife that comes into contact with discharge containing antimicrobials can also become colonised with drug-resistant organisms.

What are the key initiatives to tackle AMR?

- **UNEP:** The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) identified antimicrobial resistance as one of six emerging issues of environmental concern in its 2017 Frontiers Report.
- The UN Environment Assembly pressed the need to further understand the role of environmental pollution in spreading AMR.
- **GAP:** UN agencies are working together to develop the One Health AMR Global Action Plan (GAP) that addresses the issue in human, animal, and plant health and food and environment sectors.
- **MoEF&CC:** The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) issued draft standards which set limits for residues of 121 antibiotics in treated effluents from drug production units.
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and MoEF&CC constituted the inter-ministerial Steering Committee on Environment and Health, with representation from WHO and UNEP.

Way forward

- The Centre and State governments in India can strengthen the environmental dimensions of their plans to tackle antimicrobial resistance.
- It is particularly important to promote measures that address known hotspots such as hospitals and manufacturing and waste treatment facilities.

13. Disability - policy and challenges

Source: Indian Express

Syllabus: GS-2- Social Justice

Context: 3rd dec is the annual International Day of Persons with Disabilities, established by the United Nations in 1992.

More on news:

- **International Day of Persons with Disabilities:** Promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development.
- Increase awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

What are the problems faced?

- **Huge numbers:** About a billion people internationally live with a disability, with 80 per cent of these being residents of the developing world. In 2007, the UN passed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- India is a state party to the convention, and the World Bank estimates that there may be well over 40 million Indians living with disabilities.
- **Shortage of ramps:** The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act was passed in 2016 but our country is still largely devoid of ramps on its footpaths or government buildings.
- **Poor development:** Indians with disabilities are far more likely to suffer from poor social and economic development. Shockingly, 45 per cent of this population is illiterate.
- **Community's lack of political representation:** Despite the vast population of people with disabilities in India, in our seven decades of independence we have had just four parliamentarians and six state assembly members who suffer from visible disabilities.

What are the steps taken by India?

- **Mental health care act:** In 2017, the Mental Healthcare Act recognised and respected the agency of persons with mental-health conditions.
- Expanding the presence of mental-health establishments across the country.
- Restricted the harmful use of electroshock therapy.
- Clarified the mental-health responsibilities of state agencies such as the police.
- Effectively decriminalised attempted suicide.
- **Initiatives:** Initiatives to improve the life of Indians with disabilities, such as the ADIP scheme for improving access to disability aids.
 - The Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan, or Accessible India Campaign, has aimed to make public transport, buildings and websites more accessible.
- **The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act:** The best that can be said is that the passage of this law may have helped shift the treatment of disabled persons in society towards rights-focused thinking.
- **Media representation:** Mainstream media has increasingly started showing positive representations of people with disabilities, from Taare Zameen Par to Barfi.
- **Representation in sports:** Athletes with disabilities have reached the pinnacles of sport and done us proud repeatedly, most recently winning four athletics medals at the 2016 Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro.

Way forward

- It is critical that the government work with civil society and individuals with disabilities to craft an India where everyone feels welcome and treated with respect, regardless of their disabilities.

14. Shadow pandemic

Source: Down to Earth

Syllabus: GS-2- Social justice

Context: A village volunteer from Gharabari village near Siliguri in West Bengal alerted the police of a child marriage in the first week of July. Thirteen-year-old was married off to a 35-year-old man in a discreet manner at her house.

More on news:

- Her parents were warned and a case was filed under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012 Act.

What are the causes of a shadow pandemic?

- **Causes:** Acute poverty, worsened by the loss of jobs and incomes due to the lockdown, push poor people into the daily grind of labour work.
 - The distress and uncertainty is often seen as an elbow to those living on the borders to get rid of the alleged burden of feeding girl children.
- **Exploitation:** Several girls are often made to believe that they are a liability to the family. Some victims of trafficking are also given false promises and money in advance of being abused.
 - They owe debt to the traffickers and are scared to run away. They are captured and enslaved into debt bondage, a cruel form of control and exploitation.
- **Covid-19 impact:** In India, about 400 million people working in the informal economy are at risk of falling deeper into poverty due to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19).
 - The economic distress has made girls and young women belonging to marginalised sections extra vulnerable.
- **Children are at heightened risk of exploitation:** A 2018 study conducted by non-profit World Vision India revealed that Bengal has a high prevalence of child trafficking cases.
 - The study also highlighted that 48 per cent of the adolescent children in the state have at least one form of vulnerability that included cases where the child was an orphan, the primary care giver chronically sick and unable to work, etc.
- **Priority tasks:** Governments are diverting resources to address the pandemic and the police have new tasks for the enforcement of lockdowns and social distancing, affecting their normal operational capacity.
 - Under these conditions, there is a future danger that investigating trafficking in persons would become a lower priority and that proactive inspection of suspect sites and cases would be reduced.
 - This may have an impact on arrests, investigations, prosecutions and convictions, leading to a climate of practical impunity where traffickers can operate with even lower risk of detection and conviction.

What are the steps to be taken?

- **Committees:** In a situation where policing is overstretched, community-based vigilance committees should play a key role in mapping and monitoring the most vulnerable children who are at imminent risk.
- **Integrated Child Protection Scheme:** The Union Ministry of Home Affairs issued guidelines to undertake such a mapping exercise under the Integrated Child Protection Scheme. Such identified children should also be linked with the various services initiated by both central as well as state government.

Way forward

- Communities must look out for each other, support each other and report suspicious activities. The time has come for the government and society to unite and ensure to end child trafficking, for the greater good of our children.

15. India's stand against 'UN's selectivity on religions'

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Context: India criticised UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) for “selectivity” in seeking to protect Abrahamic religions — Islam, Christianity and Judaism over others.

What is UNAOC?

- UNAOC is an organisation which was set up in 2005
- **Objective:** to prevent polarisation between societies and cultures and to bridge differences between them.

How UNAOC criticised India?

- The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, for example, has been criticised for offering fast-track citizenship to only a select group of religions, leaving out Muslims.
- India cannot call for a culture of peace that stitches together an alliance of faiths, while Indian States bring laws that seek to make difficult inter-faith marriages.

What are the key highlights of statements issued by India while criticising the world body?

- India pointed out that previous resolutions of the UNAOC dating back to 2006 had repeatedly decried the hatred against those religions “Islamophobia, Christianophobia and anti-Semitism”
- However, the body didn't condemn attacks on other religious groups including Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists, who have suffered terror strikes and seen their shrines destroyed in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- The UNGA statement welcomed the Kartarpur Gurdwara corridor agreement between India and Pakistan.
- The world body failed to note that Pakistan's government has taken over the management of the Sikh shrine, which it called a contravention of the agreement and a violation of Sikh beliefs.
- India's delegate also accused Pakistan of a “culture of hatred” against “religions in India” and fostering cross-border terrorism.
- UNAOC only serves to further the theory of an inevitable “clash of civilisations”.

What are India's concerns?

- UNAOC portrays only three religions as victims of religious hatred.

- It is important that they are broadened to include every community that faces religion-based violence.
- It is also important that the government thwarts Pakistan's particularly insidious attempts to create a controversy against India at this time, by pushing these resolutions as India steps to take its two-year seat at the UN Security Council.
- India has been concerned by an **increase in intrusive language** from the UN bodies concerned as well, given that UNAOC issued a statement of "grave concern" over the Delhi riots this year that it said resulted in casualties of "mostly Muslims".
- India is keen to push back on the UNAOC and other UN arms, like the UN Human Rights Council, that have criticised the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

India needs to maintain its own secular credentials enshrined in the Constitution and its pluralistic ethos.

16. Issues in Labour codes

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

Context: The labour codes will only better India's 'ease of doing business' ranking instead of improving conditions of employment

What is the Significance of Labour codes?

- Will generate employment and secure the basic rights of the workers.
- It will universalise the right to minimum wage of workers and social security entitlements.

Why, have the labour codes not been universally welcomed by workers?

- **Social Security net is not universal:** The codes mandate benefits of Employees' State Insurance (ESI) and Provident Fund (PF) only for workers belonging to establishments employing 10 workers or more. This leaves out nearly 80% of all Indian workers in the informal sector from the ambit of these benefits.
- **Inadequate hospitals and dispensaries under ESI**
 - The ESI employed around six doctors per one lakh beneficiaries in 2016, as against the World Health Organization norm of 100 doctors.
 - With the new codes seeking to cover 20% of all workers, the membership would further increase to around 10 crore workers a three-time increase over the membership in 2019 (3.6 crore). The available capacity of the hospitals and dispensaries would evidently be inadequate.
- **Disparity on ESI coverage between states:** The ESI coverage follows the map of industrial growth in the country. Thus, in industrialised States like Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, the ESI covered is around 20% of the population as beneficiaries in 2016 whereas, for Bihar the ESI covered is only 0.7%.
- **Abridgement of cess-based welfare boards:** The new labour codes also does away with a number of existing cess-based welfare schemes. For example, the Beedi Workers Welfare Board which covers five lakh home-based women workers.
- **Fixed Minimum wage is meager:** The floor wage announced more recently by the Finance Minister of ₹202 is way less compared to the Labour Ministry's Expert Committee recommendation on Wage in 2019 i.e. is ₹375 per day.

General Studies Paper - 3

General Studies - 3

1. Dilli chalo farmer's protest

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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- Farmers from all over the country are protesting seeking the repeal of the new farm laws.

What is Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce [FPTC] Act, 2020?

- **Break the monopoly-** It allows intra-state and inter-state trade of farmers produce beyond the physical premises of Agricultural Produce and Livestock Market Committee (APMC) markets.
- State will be now prohibited from levying any market fees or cess outside APMC areas.

However, a large proportion of Indian harvest is sold outside mandis, only 29% and 44% of the harvest is sold in a mandi.

Farmer's fears- This could corporatize agriculture, threaten the current mandi network and State revenues and dilute the system of government procurement at guaranteed prices.

What are the concerns of farmers?

1. They are farmers are forced to sell their harvest outside the mandis due to -

- **India still doesn't have enough mandis-** Only 7,000 APMC markets operating across the country.
- **Transport costs-** Most small and marginal farmers, given their small marketable surplus, do not find it economical to bear the transport costs to take their harvests to mandis.

Therefore, the farmer ends up selling their harvest to a village/local trader even if at a lower price. Even if private markets replace mandis, small and marginal farmers will continue to sell to traders in the village itself.

2. No assurance of receiving higher prices even if private market emerges.

3. Adverse impact on rural investments-

Mandi taxes are reinvested by APMCs to improve market infrastructure. A fall in mandi taxes would reduce the surplus available with APMCs for such investment.

What are the reasons for poor private investment in market?

- **High transaction cost-** Private players have incurred considerable costs in opening collection centres and for salaries, grading, storage and transport.
- Corporate retail chains face additional costs in urban sales and storage, as well as the risk of perishability.

Therefore, corporate retail chains prefer purchasing bulk quantities from mandis rather than directly from farmers.

What is the farmer's fear with regard to MSP?

Many policy signals point to a strategic design to weaken the MSPs

- MSPs are rising at a far slower rate over the past five to six years than in the past.
- The government has not yet agreed to fix MSPs at 50% above the C2 cost of production.
- Recommendation of CACP to stop open-ended procurement of food grains.

What Steps needs to be taken?

- India needs an increase in the density of mandis, expansion of investment in mandi infrastructure and a spread of the MSP system to more regions and crops.
- APMCs need internal reform to ease the entry of new players, reduce trader collusion and link them up with national e-trading platforms.
- The introduction of unified national licences for traders and a single point levy of market fees.

Way forward-

The Farm Acts were legislative measures that were passed without elaborate discussion with stakeholders. Thus, government has to take steps to address the genuine fears of farmers.

2. Farmer's protest

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 – Massive communication failure on the part of the central government to explain to farmers what these laws are, and how they are intended to benefit them.

What is the farmer's and States concern with regard to new farm laws?

1. **Farmer's fear-** This could corporatize agriculture, threaten the current mandi network and State revenues and dilute the system of government procurement at guaranteed prices.
2. **States fear-** Due to this bill, the revenue earned by the states in the form of market fees will drop drastically. About 13 per cent of the total revenue earned by the Punjab government comes from these mandis.

What are the demands of the farmers?

1. **Repeal of new agriculture law-** Punjab farmer leaders, including two major political parties, demand repeal of these laws.
 - However, repealing would mean bringing back mandi system, licence raj and the resultant rent-seeking.
2. **MSP to be legally binding-** Farmers' second demand is a written assurance in the form of a bill that the MSP and conventional food grain procurement system for the central pool will continue in future.
 - Farmers want a legal guarantee that no procurement will happen below MSP anywhere in the country.

However, The Food Corporation of India is already overloaded with grain stocks that are more than 2.5 times the buffer stock norms.

What are the policy options does government have?

1. **Use of Price Stabilization Scheme** - To give a lift to market prices by pro-actively buying a part of the surplus whenever market prices crash, say more than 20 per cent below MSP.
2. **Decentralization of agriculture system** - Decentralization the MSP, procurement, stocking, and public distribution system (PDS). Since agricultural marketing is a state subject.

- The food subsidy can be allocated to states on the basis of their share in all-India poverty/proportion of vulnerable population, all-India wheat and rice production, all-India procurement of wheat and rice

What is the way forward?

- Farmers protest in India is an indication of larger complex issue. Pressure groups play a vital role in generating awareness and reaching a consensus and sustainable solutions to farmer's problems.
- The Finance Commission can work out a formula for distribution funds amongst States, based on some tangible performance indicators and the Centre should get off from MSP, PDS, fertilizer subsidy, and MNREGA.

3. Corporate houses owning banks

Source: [The Hindu](#)

GS3: Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

Context: Granting license to corporates to promote banks will be disastrous to the economy as a whole.

Background

- Recently, the RBI constituted an Internal Working Group to determine if large corporate houses can be given licence to promote banks.
- The Internal Working Group recommended to allow corporate houses to operate banks.

What are the concerns associated with this move?

- **Experts caution:** Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan and former RBI Deputy Governor Viral Acharya opined that the recommendations for allowing corporates into banking a “bombshell” and said this proposal needs to be dropped.
- **Issue of connected Lending:** Business houses owning an in-house bank may lead to self-lending.
- **Issue of Credit Quality:** Banks cannot make good loans when it is owned by the borrower. Even under the existing financial regime, the RBI was unable to detect at an early stage the connected lending which felled large regulated financial entities like IL&FS, Yes Bank (Rana Kapoor and his entities held 10.6% as on end September 2018), DHFL (promoter holding 39%).
- **Growth of monopoly market:** India's business landscape is already starting to resemble a Monopoly board for example, telecommunications and transportation. Allowing corporates to own banks will strengthen this process.

What are the arguments given by RBI's Internal Working Group in support of giving corporates licence to promote banks?

- Making necessary amendments to the Banking Regulation Act of 1949 to deal with connected lending and linkages between banks and non-financial group entities.
- Strengthening the supervisory mechanism for conglomerates. These measures will be able to regulate corporate owned banks effectively.

What is the way forward?

- The way forward should be to privatise public sector banks by allowing wide and diversified holding of stock by the general public.

- If the government exits banking ownership, it would lead to professional management and broader distribution of wealth. The banks would come under both SEBI and stringent RBI guidelines.

4. Need for the procurement system

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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- Dismantling the procurement system is neither in the interests of farmers nor the government.

What are the concerns of farmers related to new farmer's acts?

Farmer's concern-

- Their main worry is about a possible withdrawal of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and a dismantling of the public procurement of grains.
- This could corporatize agriculture; threaten the current mandi network and State revenues.

However, the government claims that the farmer's new laws will-

- **Break the monopoly-** It allows intra-state and inter-state trade of farmers produce beyond the physical premises of Agricultural Produce and Livestock Market Committee (APMC) markets.
- The MSP-procurement system will continue, and that there is absolutely no plan to dismantle the system.
- **Unshackle farmers-** increase options for farmers in the output markets
- **Boost competition-** The competition will increase and private investment will reach villages. Farming infrastructure will be built and new employment opportunities will be generated.

Why farm protests have been highly intense in Punjab, Haryana?

1. **PDS is the lifeline** - The procurement system and MSP mechanism is strong in Punjab and Haryana.
 - Nearly 88% of the paddy production and 70% of the wheat production in Punjab and Haryana (in 2017-18 and 2018-19) has been absorbed through public procurement.
2. Other states are hardly benefitted from the MSP mechanism.

Does government want this procurement system?

The need for procurement of paddy and wheat to government is even more because-

1. **To support the needy one-** There are nearly 80 crore NFSA (National Food Security Act) beneficiaries and an additional eight crore migrants who need to be supported under the PDS.
2. **To maintain the PDS** - The government needs an uninterrupted supply of grain, particularly from these two States.
3. **To overcome COVID-19 situation-** Due to the onset of the novel coronavirus pandemic and the migrant crisis, government needs to procure a huge quantum of grains than in previous years as the government cannot afford to go to the open market.

What improvements are required in new farmer's Act?

- **Regulatory mechanism-** Framework for supervision of all trade (irrespective of its being done on the electronic market or physical market) to ensure fair play by private players vis-à-vis farmers

- **Lack of transparency in trade area transactions** are two of the major limitations that need to be addressed immediately.

Instituting these safeguards will make the reforms foolproof.

What is the way forward?

- The government has to continue its procurement from Punjab and Haryana even after the COVID-19 situation improves and the migrant crisis abates, as the obligations under the NFSA will continue.
- The government should reach out to the farmer groups and assures them of the indispensability of MSP-procurement system.

5. Protesting farmer' concerns

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- Three Acts in Parliament and handed hurriedly, ignoring critical objections inside each Houses and the opposition outdoors.

Why are these bills being opposed?

1. **End of MSP-** The bills also lack any assurance about Minimum Support Price(MSP)
 - Dismantling of the monopoly of the APMCs as a sign of ending the assured procurement of food grains at minimum support prices (MSP).
 - After the abolition of mandis, farmers in Bihar on average received lower prices compared to the MSP for most crops.
2. **Promote corporate control-** The farmers contend the federal government is making ready to withdraw from the procurement of food grain and hand it over to the company gamers.
3. **Weak grievances redress system-** The dispute decision mechanism from the purview of courts and fingers it over to the SDM and the DC, who're perceived as being below stress from their political masters.
4. **Hamper the rural growth-** The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce act prohibits State governments from collecting market fee, cess or levy for trade outside the APMC markets that are used for rural growth and market infrastructure.
5. **No mechanism for price fixation** - The Price Assurance Act offers protection to farmers against price exploitation.
6. **Food security** – Easing of regulation of food commodities in the essential commodities list would lead to hoarding of farm produce during the harvest season when prices are generally lower.
 - This could undermine food security since the States would have no information about the availability of stocks within the State.
7. **Against the Spirit of Cooperative federalism-** Since agriculture and markets are State subjects, the ordinances are being seen as a direct encroachment upon the functions of the States

However, the authorities argues that-

- **Farmers will get higher prices-** The acts aim to increase the availability of buyers for farmers' produce, by allowing them to trade freely without any license or stock limit, so that an increase in competition among them results in better prices for farmers.

- **Contract farming-** This can present predetermined costs to farmers contracted upfront which will guarantee costs greater than the MSP.
- This enables farmers to promote their produce anywhere within the nation and interact with personal corporations to promote their crops.

What is the way forward?

- The farmers' unions want a complete withdrawal of the recently enacted Farm Acts, and an assurance that MSP and procurement by FCI will proceed.
- The Farm Acts were legislative measures that were passed without elaborate discussion with stakeholders. Thus, government has to take steps to address the genuine fears of farmers.

6. GDP recovery- questionable data

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

Context- The Q-2 sharp recovery is very tactical because of pent-up demand, because of lockdown and the Data used for quarterly growth rates are weak and questionable.

What in the news-

The second quarter GDP contracted at a slower pace of 7.5 per cent compared to a massive 23.9 per cent in the first quarter of the current fiscal.

- The economy's performance between July and September when lockdown restrictions were eased is better than most rating agencies and analysts anticipated.

Critic's view- India had introduced one of the strictest lockdowns in the world which has resulted in the sharpest output contractions and massive losses in terms of jobs and livelihoods.

Why GDP data should not be taken as sustainable recovery?

1. **The source of information is not reliable-** Very little up-to-date primary information from farms, factories and offices is available for the estimation.
2. **Pent up demand-** The healthy recovery in the second quarter represents meeting the pent-up demand after the 'Unlock' phase started in June.

However, the quarterly figures do indicate the broad direction of change.

- **GDP in the manufacturing sector-** It rose 0.6 per cent in the September quarter, in a big sign of recovery compared with a crash of 39.3 per cent in the April-June period.

What are the challenges for sustainable recovery?

1. Weak aggregate demand-

- Revenue shortfalls- The government's debt-GDP ratio has gone up though.
- Bank credit growth in the economy continues to decelerate.
- The cumulative growth of the index from April to October this year stood at negative 13% when compared to the same period last year.

2. Balance of payment surplus-

the shortfall is on account of a sharp decline in investment demand, denting potential output.

- Both exports and imports have shrunk but imports have shrunk relatively more than exports, such a sharp fall in import demand does not augur well for a growing economy such as India.

3. Rising foreign exchange reserves- India's flourishing foreign exchange reserves are made up of short-term debt flows; they are not our net export earnings.
4. **Sudden booming stock market**- This entirely driven by short-term foreign capital inflows.
 - Such inflows are highly fickle, representing hot money, which can quit the financial markets in a jiffy if perceptions change for any exogenous reason.

Way forward-

- As an additional expenditure on government consumption or investment or credit growth remain muted, recovery is likely to remain modest.
- Economic recovery could still prove to be premature and illusory - Economists have reservations about reading too much into the September-October data as a sustainable trend.

7. Farm Bills Concerns and evaluation

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

Context: Agriculture in India needs state support to thrive.

Background

- Recently, President Ram Nath Kovind gave his assent to three contentious farm bills passed by Parliament.
 1. The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 (FAPAFS).
 2. The Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020 (FPTC).
 3. The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 (EC).
- Indian farmers worry that these farm bills may clear the way for giant Indian companies.

Why the Farm bills are touted as a watershed moment for Indian agriculture?

- **Elimination of middlemen:** The reforms would remove the shackles from the agriculture sector and free farmers from the stranglehold of middlemen by creating one market.
- **Abolition of monopoly of APMC mandis:** The bills will permit private buyers to hoard essential commodities for future sales, which only government-authorized agents could do earlier, along with changing the rules for contract farming.

Why the farmers are concerned about farm bills?

- **Issue of withdrawing MSP:** Since the Minimum Support Price (MSP) is not mentioned in the bills, they fear that they will lose the assured option of selling to the APMC mandis and that this will lead to corporate exploitation.
- **Corporatisation of agriculture:** In the absence of regulation, as agribusiness firms might well be able to dictate both the market conditions (including prices) and the terms of contract farming as small farmers do not have the same bargaining power.
- **Loss of livelihood and employment:** Farmers are suspicious that the entry of giant Indian companies in future such as Reliance and Adani who have already made investments in the agri-business infrastructure will wipe out their livelihood in farming. **For instance**, the management of the crop insurance scheme against natural disasters, introduced in 2017, was handed over to one of Anil Ambani's companies, among others.

How in most countries governments subsidise Agriculture sector?

- In the US, the agriculture subsidies accounts for about 40 per cent of the total farm income. sector (\$46 billion in federal subsidies this year). - New York times.
- Similarly, the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy spending has averaged €54 billion annually since 2006.

Why Agriculture sector needs state support in India?

- **Majority of the farmers are small in India:** Smallholder and marginal farmers, those with less than two hectares of land account for 86.2 per cent of all cultivators - **10th Agriculture Census.**
 - For them, it is unaffordable to carry their produce to other states or far-off places to sell. Without some support from the state, the smallest of Indian peasants would be even more vulnerable.
- **Lack of proper jobs:** Also, the prospects of generating employment from other secondary and tertiary sector is not bright. For example, the share of the secondary sector in total employment has been stagnant at around 26 per cent (as against 41 per cent for agriculture) and its share in the GDP is declining.
- **Urban rural divide:** There is a wide gap between urban and rural India in terms of per capita resources is widening.

What is the way forward?

- Need to increase public investment in agriculture in terms of Agri- infrastructure.
- Promote Livelihood and Income Augmentation schemes like the Rythu Bandhu in Telangana or the Krushak in Odisha.
- Need to ensure that no transaction can be done below the MSP, would help alleviate some rural distress.
- For making farming sustainable, the government should draw inspiration from **Andhra Pradesh's community managed farming model** which promotes agro-ecological principles with the use of locally produced, ecologically sustainable inputs, focusing on soil health, instead of depending on chemical fertilisers. This model is more resilient as well as more biodiverse in nature and provides a safety net to farmers.

8. Economic recovery

Source: The Indian Express

Syllabus: GS-3- Economy

Context: A recovery led by profits, at the expense of wages, has implications for demand, inequality and policy.

- **GDP is typically reported in two ways:** The sectoral, production side (agriculture, manufacturing, services) and the functional, expenditure side (consumption, investment, net exports).
 - **Third way:** On the income side, GDP is calculated as the sum of profits, wages and indirect taxes.

Discuss the role of factors of production in economic recovery.

- **Capital:** The economic recovery in many parts of the world is too twisted for comfort, driven excessively by capital than labour.
 - If listed company profits are growing at 25 per cent, and yet GDP contracted 7.5 per cent, it reveals significant pressure on profits of unlisted SMEs, wages and employment.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of December (First week), 2020

- **Labour market pressures around the world:** US hiring slowed sharply in November and the unemployment rate is still forecasted to remain close to 6 per cent i.e. almost twice pre-COVID levels even at the end of 2021.
 - Household demand for MGNREGA remains very elevated, suggesting significant labour market slack.
- **The employment rate:** Some labour market surveys still reveal about 14 million fewer employed compared to February.
 - Nominal wage growth across a universe of 4,000 listed firms has slowed from about 10 per cent to 3 per cent over the last six quarters.

Why does this matter?

- **Weak demand:** It disincentivises re-hiring, reinforcing the risks of settling into a sub-optimal equilibrium.
- **Worry for future demand:** It may be normal for any one firm to boost profits by cutting employee reward. But if every firm pursued that strategy, It simply dismantles future combined demand and profitability for all firms.
- **Acceleration of technological adoption:** Differential productivity impacts on capital, skilled and unskilled labour, will likely have more deep impacts on the future capital-labour mix, possibly stressing existing inequities.
- **Job-market pressures:** If job-market pressures convince households into observing this shock as a quasi-permanent hit on incomes, households will be incentivised to save, not spend in the future.
- **Global recovery:** If labour market pressures dent private consumption, and an incomplete global recovery in 2021 dents export prospects.
 - There will be no authoritative for entrepreneurs to invest, especially with manufacturing utilisation levels below 70 per cent heading into COVID-19 outbreak.
- **Fiscal policy:** US policymakers are negotiating yet another fiscal package, and only a small fraction of the large discretionary stimulus that the Euro Area and Japan injected will be reversed next year.
 - India's fiscal response has been controlled so far. It's therefore important for the Centre to step up spending in the remaining months.

What is the way forward?

- **Public investment and a large infrastructure push:** Must be the theme of the next budget. This will be crucial to boost demand, create jobs, crowd-in private investment and improve the economy's external competitiveness.
- **Monetary to fiscal:** In 2021, the stick must pass from monetary to fiscal, especially since the latter is a more surgical instrument to target SMEs and the labour market.

9. The many layers to agricultural discontent

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs3: Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices

Context: The Farm Acts that are the focus of the farmers' protest bear variously on the different strata of the farming community.

How farming distress is shared in common by the different strata?

- The powerful farmers' movements that sprouted across India from the 1970s, led by such iconic leaders as M.D. Nanjundaswamy, Sharad Joshi, and Mahendra Singh Tikait, which claimed to speak not merely for farmers but to the rural segment as a whole.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of December (First week), 2020

- They presented a platform for discussion and debate beyond their immediate concerns.
- The organisations have undergone much change. In some parts of the country the class and caste divide are still sharp, in other places, farmers' organisations have not shied away from critically engaging with class, caste and gender concerns.
- The very fact that a **social reality** is widely accepted provides space for policy intervention. The Farm Bills have ignored that the rural is a vibrant space in India, with 'elective affinities' binding its vast expanse.
- The rich farmers have also reinforced their position enormously in the rural areas over the years after the Green Revolution and farmers' movements of the 1970s.
- They have also invested their surplus in agri-business and clearly hold access to the wider economic and institutional domains.
- The lower strata of the farming community are invariably beholden to the rich farmer not merely for employment but also to access resources and services.

Why the Farm bills were introduced?

- To double the income of India's farmers by 2022.
- To liberalise access to agricultural markets.
- To remove existing barriers to storage of agricultural produce, and facilitating contract-farming.
- The objective is to create 'One Nation, One Market', and promote 'Ease of doing business'

What is the immediate response?

- Organised farmers' bodies and Opposition in Parliament offered strong resistance to these Bills.
- Some State governments even enacted their own Bills.
- The Shiromani Akali Dal, walked out of the alliance with NDA in protest against these Bills.

What are the key concerns?

- **Agrarian distress:** piecemeal legislation and regulative processes have been put in place such as Pradhan Mantri yojanas but several key concerns of farmers have gone unattended.
- **States' role:** the issues affecting the farming community have a far greater bearing on the States relative to the Centre.
- **Lack of consensus building:** The Centre extended little consideration to the sensitivity of the States.
- **Disparities:** The three Acts bear differently on the different strata of the farming community and in different regions.
- **APMC as cushion:** for instance, weakening the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) system and its resultant bearing on Minimum Support Price (MSP), particularly on crops such as rice and wheat is seen by the farmers as a threat to an assured sale of their produce at a price.
- **Procurement issues:** Subjecting Procurement system to the vagaries of a competitive market, including storing and contracting of the produce, where he would eventually be beholden to the large players, including monopolies, are prospects that a farmer detests even though he is aware that the middleman is not a saint.

10. Exclusive arbitration body for financial disputes

Source: [The Hindu Business line](#)

GS3: Issues related to planning, Mobilization of resources, Growth, Development, Employment

Context: India needs a special arbitration body for financial disputes.

Why financial institutions resort to litigation instead of arbitration for settling disputes?

- **Courts are more powerful:** Litigation, offers a more potent forum for recovery of money and resolving financial disputes as the judges are vested with stronger powers than an arbitrator. such as interim measures, summary judgments, warrants for non-appearance, etc., which are not available in arbitration.
- **Creates more pressure on defaulter:** In addition, the public nature of disputes in courts allows the banks to create pressure on the defaulters to discharge their debts as public disclosure hinders their future investment prospects.

Why settling financial disputes through courts is disadvantageous?

- **Judges lack technical knowledge:** The judges in these jurisdictions are not competent enough to understand complex transactions and financial instruments. After 2009-09 financial crisis, the financial institutes felt a need for adjudicators who possess a deep knowledge of finance and an understanding of complex transactions.
- **Litigation negatively impacts economy as a whole:** Moreover, financial disputes of large size often lead to public distress, resulting in negative impacting listed stocks which could consequently lead to collapse of economies, if big financial institutions are involved.

What is the advantage of resorting to arbitration over litigation?

- **Confidentiality:** Arbitration maintains privacy of proceedings and ensures that the adjudicator is a person with expertise in finance
- **Relatively Easy enforcement:** It is easier to enforce an arbitral award as opposed to a court judgment which can be appealed multiple times.

Why India needs a special arbitration body?

- No special body for financial arbitration exists in India and such arbitrations continue to be adjudicated by retired judges, who are generalists and do not possess a specialized knowledge of finance and financial markets.
- Considering the rise of financial disputes in India, including defaults by some of the biggest Indian corporations such as **Anil Ambani's Reliance Group, Vijay Mallya's Kingfisher and Nirav Modi's Firestar Diamonds**, there is a need for providing a specialised institution to deal with financial arbitrations.

What we can Learn from the International experience?

- In America, the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) provides assistance and advice for dispute resolution involving securities.
- Similarly, The Panel of Recognised Market Experts in Finance (P.R.I.M.E. Finance) was set up in The Hague, Netherlands, in 2012 for providing a panel of arbitrators specialising in banking and finance, offering arbitration rules tailor-made for financial arbitrations and providing financial experts for assistance during such arbitrations.

- The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) is one such institution which possesses a body of some of the most prominent financial experts in India. Perhaps, the government should create a panel in consultation with the ICAI for facilitation of financial arbitrations.

11. Monoculture farming- depleting natural resources

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- In the ongoing farm debate in the country the green reality check seems to be missing.

What is agro ecology?

It is a concept where agriculture sector of a country expanded along with keeping environmental protection [agriculture with sustainable environmental practice].

What is monoculture farming and its Impact?

Monoculture is the agricultural practice of growing a single crop, plant, or livestock species, variety, or breed in a field or farming system at a time.

- Modern agricultural practices emphasize maximizing crop yields, farm incomes and global competitiveness. The single-minded pursuit of such goals has remade land and farms into monocultures.

Monoculture reduces diversity and leads to a host of other problems-

1. Contributed significantly to climate emissions.
2. Threatened farmer livelihoods and the natural resource base they depend upon-
 - **Destroys soil nutrients-** Single crop eliminates all soil nutrients and everything else is killed as pests or weeds.
 - Pollutes groundwater supplies due to extensive use of fertilizers.
 - Adversely affects and alters the natural ecosystem.
 - Destroys the overall soil's degradation and erosion.
 - **Requires lots of water to irrigate-** Monoculture results in the topsoil cover being harvested all at the same time, the topsoil loses elements that could help it retain moisture. Therefore, require vast amounts of water to irrigate the crops.
3. Distorted food consumption patterns, replacing nutritious millets with polished rice and wheat and negatively affected our nutritional security.

In attempting to offer a new deal to farmers, the new farm laws do not address any of these fundamental concerns. Such changes often affect the resilience of production systems and their role in biodiversity.

How new farm laws and farmers demand promote monoculture farming?

Both government and farmers have continued to ignore the broader ecological and social contexts in which agriculture is embedded.

1. Corporatization of agriculture through contract farming, higher stocking limits and private marketplaces will accelerate the growth of long supply chains of monoculture commodities.
2. Guaranteed procurement in the past has incentivized monoculture farming.

What is the way forward?

Government should make policies that go beyond the productivity trope and populist posturing-

- Instead of a resource-based approach, the need is to develop a relationship-based approach towards the environment.
- Any sound economic and techno-scientific model must have agro ecology and equity at the core and, must indeed, be guided by them.
- Government needs to promote less favoured crops like millets and pulses.

12. Highlights of MPC meeting

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

Context- RBI in its 6th bi-monthly MPC meeting voted unanimously to maintain status quo on benchmark interest rates to support the economy.

What were the key highlights of latest MPC meeting?

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) recently left benchmark interest rates unchanged and maintained an 'accommodative' policy stance as it prioritized support for the economy's recovery over 'sticky' inflation amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The RBI keeping rates low despite high inflation shows its focus to boost economic growth over keeping inflation under check which is majorly a supply-side issue.

Key highlights-

- **Decision** - The MPC kept the RBI's key lending rate, the repo rate, steady at 4%.
- MPC panel projected that the real GDP contraction will contract at 7.5% [-7.5%] for the financial year ending. It is an upgrade in comparison to -9.5% in October MPC review.
- Citing the improvement in activity in the second quarter, it projected GDP would return to growth of 0.1% in Q3, and expand 0.7% in Q4.
- The RBI also announced a raft of liquidity management measures and steps to improve regulatory oversight of the financial system.
- MPC expects inflation to rise in the near term.

What are the key challenges?

- **Cost push pressure-** The increase in the prices of iron ore, steel and transportation fuels also add to the worries that cost pressures are continuing to accumulate.
- **Food inflation** surges to double in October 2020 across protein-rich items including pulses, edible oils, vegetables and spices on multiple supply shocks.
- **Booming financial markets** and rising asset prices because of surplus liquidity will also contribute to upside risks.

Way forward-

- MPC's policy approach is clearly fraught with risks. A small window is available for proactive supply management strategies to break the inflation spiral being fuelled by supply chain disruptions, excessive margins and indirect taxes
- The RBI policy is supportive of growth and in sync with the government's reform agenda.

13. A new roadmap for end of oil age

Source: The Indian Express

Syllabus: GS-3- Environment

Context: The latest book The New Map: Energy, Climate and the Clash of Nations, provides some pointers on how should India navigate future energy transitions.

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor-based courses.

Explain the key pointers on navigating future energy transitions.

- **Future pathway:** It pulls together the transformative occurrences and technologies that have shaped the energy world in recent years into a clear framework.
- **Six broad themes define The New Map:**
 - The first is the **US shale revolution**, which transformed the US from a major importer of oil and gas to a significant exporter.
 - The second is the **leveraging of gas exports by Russia** to compel former members of the Soviet Union to stay within its sphere of influence and to embrace China into an energy partnership.
 - The third is **China's assertion of its rights over the South China Seas** which is a critical maritime route for its energy imports and the Belt and Road initiative.
 - The fourth is **sectarian strife (Sunni/Shia) in the Middle East** which, compounded by volatile and falling oil prices, has brought the region to the edge.
 - The fifth is the **Paris climate summit** and its impact on public sentiment, investment decisions, corporate governance and regulatory norms.
 - The last is the consequential impact of the manifold and impressive **advancement of clean energy technologies**.
- **Energy transition:** Energy transition will unfold in different ways in different countries and over different time periods. This is because they will be influenced not just by economics and technology, but also by politics and public activism.
- **Peak oil demand:** They bring out one development that plays to India's advantage i.e. the onset of "peak oil demand". The earlier concern was "peak supply" (supplies are finite and the market will face a shortfall).
 - There is no consensus, however, on the timing of peak demand.
 - BP believes, for instance, it has already peaked;
 - the International Energy Agency (IEA) projects it will peak by 2028;
 - IHS Markit's "rivalry" scenario puts the date around the mid-2030s.

What are the policy initiatives for future energy transitions?

- **A framework for considering policy options**
 - **On the fossil fuel axis:** The book suggests the government leverage its buyer ("monopsonist") strength to secure "most favoured" terms of trade for crude supplies.
 - **Battery storage:** One, India must develop its own world-scale, competitive, manufacturing systems for photovoltaics (PVs) and battery storage.
 - If not, it will not be able to provide affordable solar units unless it accepts the further deepening of dependence on Chinese imports.
 - Currently, China manufactures 75 per cent of the world's lithium batteries; 70 per cent of solar cells; 95 per cent of solar wafers and it controls 60 per cent of the production of poly silica.
 - **Strategy:** India must prepare a clean energy technology strategy.
 - The India strategy should identify relevant "breakthrough technologies", establish the funding mechanisms and create the ecosystem for partnerships (domestic and international).

Conclusion

- No disagreement over the fact that the oil market does face a structural supply overhang. In regard with India, clean energy technology offers an early and mutually beneficial platform for charting out a new roadmap for the end of oil age.

14. Permitting industrial houses to own banks

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs3: Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

Context: Permitting industrial houses to own banks could undermine economic growth and democracy.

Background

- Recently, an internal working group of the RBI has made a far-reaching recommendation to permit industrial houses to own and control banks.
- According to the report, the reason for permitting industrial houses to own and control banks is that industry-owned banks would increase the supply of credit, which is low and growing slowly.
- However, many believe that this step would be a grievous mistake, and it will be a setback to Indian economic and political development.

Why it is a concern?

- **Against the recommendations of the experts:** The report states that majority of the experts were of the opinion that large corporate/industrial houses should not be allowed to promote a bank.
- **The problem of connected lending:** This can lead to Over-financing of risky activities, encouraging inefficiency by delaying or prolonging exit and entrenching dominance.
- **Regulation of Connected lending is difficult:** It is clear from the experience of Indonesia and most advanced countries that regulating connected lending is impossible and the only solution is to ban corporate-owned banks.
- **Overburdened RBI:** RBI has encountered much difficulty in dealing with banking irregularities at Punjab National Bank, Yes Bank, ILFS and Lakshmi Vilas Bank. Regulation and supervision need to be strengthened considerably to deal with the current problems in the banking system before they are burdened with new regulatory tasks.
- **Can delay exiting of inefficient firms:** This makes it impossible for more efficient firms to grow and replace them. If industrial houses get direct access to financial resources, their capacity to delay or prevent exit altogether will only increase.
- **Can stimulate growth of Monopolies:** Already, The Indian economy already suffers from over-concentration. The COVID-19 crisis is aggravating this picture because those with greater resources will not only more easily survive the crisis and they will be able to take over small, medium and large enterprises that have not had the resilience or resources. In this scenario, if large industrial houses get banking licences, they will become even more powerful.
- **Will dampen rules-based well-regulated market economy:** The power acquired by getting banking licences will not just make them stronger than commercial rivals, but even relative to the regulators and government itself. This will aggravate imbalances leading to a vicious cycle of dominance.
- **Affect credit Quality:** Indian financial sector reforms have aimed at improving both the quantity and the quality of credit. If India now starts granting banking licences to powerful, politically connected industrial houses, allowing them to determine how credit is allocated, it will effectively abandon the principle of ensuring that credit flows to the most economically efficient users.
- **Alternative options do exist:** The other powerful way to promote more good quality credit is to undertake serious reforms of the public sector banks.

Mixing industry and finance will set us on a road full of dangers for growth, public finances, and the future of the country itself.

15. Farmers could perish with new farm acts

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- Agricultural operations may flourish with new farm acts, but they threaten to lead to the marginalization of the farmers

How farmer's protest is unique?

- **Farmer's group come together-** 31 farmers' organizations, which have different ideologies and leanings, are to fight collectively against these Bills.
- **Kept politician out of agitation-** The unions came together and formally decided to keep politicians of all parties out of their "struggle".
- Even the traders and the arhtiyas, who have been staunch supporters of the Central government, have expressed their anguish against the new farm laws.

Why is the anger so pronounced in Punjab?

1. **Food bowl of India-** Punjab has contributed the largest amount of food grain in the central pool.
2. **Un-level field-** The Punjab farmers are being asked to diversify their cropping patterns whereas other states like Madhya Pradesh and western Uttar Pradesh are encouraged to produce grains.
 - This resulted in
3. **The procurement system and MSP** mechanism is strong in Punjab and Haryana
 - Only 6 per cent of the farmers in India are fully covered by the MSP, and 84 per cent are located in the states of Punjab and Haryana.

Therefore, any disruption to the system, real or perceived, will cause a major upheaval

What are the farmer's concerns?

- **End of MSP-** Their main worry is about a possible withdrawal of the MSP and a dismantling of the public procurement of grains.
- **Promote corporate control-** The farmers contend the federal government is making ready to withdraw from the procurement of food grain and hand it over to the company gamers.
 - Small and marginal, would be left at the mercy of the corporates, with reduced collective bargaining capacity.

What is government's contention?

- **Farmers will get higher prices** - These Acts are intended to empower the farmers and ensure doubling of their incomes.
- The Acts will only increase options for farmers in the output markets, that the MSP-procurement system will continue, and that there is absolutely no plan to dismantle the system.

What are the issues with the new farm Acts?

- Free market does not have the solutions to improve the well-being of people living on the margins.
- The assumption that the market shall protect and multiply farmers' income is misleading.

Way forward-

1. **Compensate farmers under WTO compatible blue box-** The Centre could allocate subsidies for diversification to commercial crops for the farmers of Punjab.
 - Subsidy could be given for three consecutive years.
2. To keep the mandi system functional, the APMC Act may be reformed
 - The state governments permitted to collect mandi fee and arhtiyas given handling charges.

16. Coercive and Liberal environmentalism

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

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

Context- India's ability to influence the new geopolitics of climate change will depend a lot on its domestic political resilience in adapting to the new imperatives.

What are China's climate commitment?

- China would become carbon net-zero by the year 2060.
- Also, China now aims to have CO2 emissions peak before 2030. That means China would not allow its greenhouse gas emissions to grow beyond that point.

What is Coercive and liberal environmentalism?

China's coercive environmentalism

The Chinese government pursues its environmental goals with the authoritarian tools it has available: mandatory targets, mass campaigns, top-down bans, factory closures, forced relocations, and even household trash inspectors who can ticket offenders.

- **Effective state intervention-** Enforcing new environmental norms in the last few years has helped China shed the image of being the "bad boy" on climate issues.
- China has been "codifying" environmental policies into clear rules, regulations and laws.

Joe Biden's environmental policies-

- **Modernizing liberal environmentalism** that relies on political consensus in drafting new environmental norms and their effective enforcement as well as the reliance on market-based mechanisms.
- **To enforce environmental regulations** which were either diluted or discarded by the Donald Trump administration and enhance the incentives for polluters to compensate for their violation of norms.
- **Climate justice-** The recognition that pollution and other ecological problems have a greater impact on the poor and minorities.
- Special focus on an early end to the worldwide use of coal.
- Rejoining the Paris Accord to set accelerated timelines for reducing carbon emissions.

However, Coercive and Liberal approaches to managing climate change totally different but they share some important objectives.

- Both China and the US (along with the West) recognize the urgency of the climate challenge.
- US and China, both are racing to develop new technologies that will constitute the foundations of the green economic future.
- Both have zeroed in on industrial policy to achieve their climate objectives.
- Both understand that climate politics is in the end about rearranging the global order.

What are the challenges ahead of India?

- The urgency of addressing climate change is likely to intensify in the immediate term with the election of Biden as US President and the prospect of cooperation on climate change between Washington and Beijing.
- **Puts Pressure on India:** European Union and 70 other countries (that have relatively low emissions) have committed itself to a net-zero emission status by 2050. The new direction of Chinese and US policies in Environmental Initiatives puts pressure India

Way forward-

India's real test on climate change is on building a new domestic consensus that can address the economic and political costs associated with an internal adjustment to the prospect of a great global reset.

17. Authorisation of coronavirus vaccines

Source: [THE HINDU](#)

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

Context: Safety and efficacy data for the new vaccine must be known before emergency-use authorisation for vaccines.

Why in news?

- The Pune-based Serum Institute of India has approached the regulator for nod for its vaccine, Covishield, developed by Oxford University.
- AstraZeneca, which is carrying out the phase-3 trials of the Oxford vaccine in four countries, is yet to secure a nod from any of the regulatory agencies.
- AstraZeneca recently gave details of the **interim safety and efficacy data** involving 131 COVID-19 cases in the phase-3 trials in the U.K. and Brazil. But details of the trials in India are not out yet.

Why fast tracking of vaccine authorization is needed?

- The unprecedented speed in taking the **vaccine from the development stage to approval process** in less than a year is remarkable but also necessitated by the toll the virus has taken on lives and livelihoods.
- To reduce mortality and morbidity.

What are the concerns associated with authorization of vaccines?

- **Regulatory bodies under pressure:** to **fast-track** the entire process.
- **Lack of transparency:** Opaqueness about vaccine safety and efficacy does no good in gaining people's confidence and willingness to get vaccinated.
 - For example, Moderna, Pfizer and AstraZeneca took the extraordinary step of publicly sharing the trial protocol, the time points at which interim analysis of phase-3 trial in India will be carried out for safety and efficacy is unclear.
- **No checks:** the U.S. FDA has clearly spelt out at least 50% efficacy and stipulated a median follow-up duration of at least two months after completion of the full vaccination regimen to assess a vaccine's benefit-risk profile for emergency-use approval. However, no such conditions have been mentioned by the Indian regulatory agency. The phase-3 trial of Covishield began on September 21 and completed the enrolment on November 12.
- **Fear of side effects and vaccine hesitancy:** ineffective or unsafe vaccine is worse than not having one. A survey by the London-based Vaccine Confidence Project

9 PM Compilation for the Month of December (First week), 2020

revealed that though the intent to get vaccinated was 87% in India, 34% respondents were worried about side-effects while 16% were concerned about fast-moving trials.

What needs to be done?

- Need to engage all stakeholders in a transparent manner at every stage and not by merely sharing guidelines regarding vaccine safety with the States.
- It is also important that those seeking emergency-use authorisation share the safety and efficacy data immediately.

ForumIAS