

9pm

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General Studies - 1

1. Nutrition fallout in wake of pandemic

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

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

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

Alarming situation for India-

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

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

Food security concerns due to pandemic-

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

What are the possible solutions required?

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

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

Way forward-

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

2. LGBT community rights

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS 1- Society

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

What is Solicitor General Verdict on same sex marriage?

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

What is the history of same sex marriage in India?

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

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

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

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

4. **Racial Discrimination-** Additionally, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people suffer from social and economic inequalities due to continuous discrimination.

Way forward-

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

3. Alimony Guidelines

Source-[The Hindu](#)

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

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

What are the impacts of early marriage?

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

What did the Court say?

As per the Supreme Court guidelines-

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

Why such a judgment?

- Usually, maintenance cases have to be settled in 60 days, but they take years, in reality, owing to legal loopholes.
- The top court said women deserted by husbands are left in dire straits, often reduced to destitution, for lack of means to sustain themselves and their children.

- Despite a plethora of maintenance laws, women were left empty-handed for years, struggling to make ends meet after a bad marriage.

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

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

Way forward-

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

4. A digital sisterhood

Source: The Indian Express

Syllabus: GS-1- Gender issues

Context: Social media helps the independent woman find and forge new solidarities.

The rise of social media is a result of loopholes in the traditional society. Discuss these loopholes.

- **Globalisation:** Globalisation and the resulting rush of ideas across the world meant that we are no longer connected only to our physical tribes.
- This has also meant that we do not feel connected to our families and communities in the way that the previous generations were.
- **Effect on women:** This disconnect is far more distinct in women than in men; because men are more inclined to follow the traditional line of thought, especially since that school of thought heavily privileges them.
- Independent women who have a voice and demand to be heard, who refuse to bow down to the old world order and refuse to fit in with cultural norms of what a woman “ought” to be like.
- **Traditional communities fall short:** People need to be understood. Their worldview is so different from ours that we have spent much of our lives in isolation; an emotional isolation.
- **Distance between generations:** The isolation of the modern world has not been brought on by technology alone, but by the new ideas and by the distance between the ideas of the present generation and the previous one.
- **Lack of support:** Individuals who didn’t conform to normative ideas of social acceptance, traditional communities did not provide much support or emotional nourishment.
- There is no replacement for the feeling of being heard and understood that one gets in the presence of people who can empathise, and offer advice that enables you to live a life that you want.

How should be social media ideally used?

- **Social media is a supplement:** Social media becomes a hindrance and an isolator only when you begin to use it as a replacement for real-life family and friends, ignoring their physical presence when you are glued to your device even in the presence of people around you.
- Social media is not a substitute for physical networks.

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- **Seeking genuine and meaningful engagements:** Instead of constantly being in battle mode over politics or religion or the newest debate, we need to attempt to genuinely connect with people at a personal level, at the level of ideas and emotions and empathy.
- Some of those online friendships could translate into offline friendships too.
- **An additional tribe:** There are various support groups popping up on social media now, for this purpose. To help people find their tribes, who would understand them and help them overcome the unending loneliness that is the curse of people whose ideas are vastly different from the physical communities they are a part of.

Way forward

- In a world that is increasingly becoming a mix of cultures, a mix of identities and a mix of selfhoods, we need a mix of multiple tribes to get through life.
- The notion of tribes and communities needs to evolve as well.

5. Andhra Pradesh's three capital plan

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- **GS 1** – Human Geography, Salient aspects of Urbanization

Context -Impact of Andhra Pradesh decentralization and inclusive development of all regions bill, 2020.

What is Andhra Pradesh Decentralization and Inclusive Development of All Regions Bill, 2020?

It is an act of Andhra Pradesh Legislature containing provisions relating to the decentralization of governance in the state of Andhra Pradesh so that establishments for additional two capitals can be made at any place outside Amaravati.

This law paves the way for three capitals for the state.

1. Amaravati– legislative capital.
2. Visakhapatnam– executive capital.
3. Kurnool– judicial capital.

The proposed three-capital plan claims to achieve the following-

- **Equal development of different regions-** The state government claims that it would allow an even development of the state. It would ensure justice to everyone and every region.
- **Decentralization-** It also claims it's a good idea to decentralize power across the state as there have been several imbalances among the regions which had often led to agitations. Three capitals will lead to equitable development.
- **Growth perspective-** Furthermore, it would be a boost to urbanization and then economic development. In India, cities contribute anywhere between 59% and 70% of the GDP.

Why implementing this idea will be difficult?

1. **Coordination and logistics fear:** Coordinating between seats of legislature and executive in separate cities will be easier said than done, and with the government offering no specifics of a plan, officers and common people alike fear a logistics nightmare.
2. **Hamper administrative efficiency** - Executive capital Visakhapatnam is 700 km from judicial capital Kurnool, and 400 km from legislative capital Amaravati. The Amaravati-Kurnool distance is 370 km. The time and costs of travel will be significant.

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- **Infrastructure requirements:** It will need constructing new buildings in the new capitals.
- 3. Environmental impact-** Unrestrained real estate interests can co-opt local State institutions and sabotage environmental interests.
- 4. Impact on farmers-** the Andhra government had acquired around 30 thousand acres of land approximately from the farmers in and around the Amaravati region. So the decision of changing the capital may affect most of the farmers living out there.

Way forward-

- The success of distributed development depends on a well-developed infrastructural network linking the growth centres.
- The ongoing processes of preparing the Master Plan and Strategic Plan for the Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region are an opportunity to address environmental challenges.
- The bill is thin in details but offers hope in its broad contours of pursuing inclusive development through Zonal Planning and Development Boards.

6. Urbanisation and pandemic

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-1- Urbanisation

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for a reimagining of urban planning and development to make cities and towns healthy and liveable after COVID-19.

More on news:

- PM emphasised resetting the mindset, processes and practices for safe urban living, and acknowledged that governments actually do little for the working millions at the Bloomberg New Economy Forum.

Discuss the spread of pandemic in urban areas and associated issues.

- **Spread of pandemic:** The top 10 cities affected worldwide accounted for 15% of the total cases, and data for populous Indian cities later showed large spikes that radiated into smaller towns.
- **Reason for the spread:** Rapid transmission in Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai was the unavoidable outcome of densification and an inability to practise distancing norms.
 - In Dharavi, which has one of the world's highest slum densities, epidemiologists point an apparently low viral impact to screening and herd immunity.
- **Social impact:** The pandemic's full social impact, especially among the poorer people has not been adequately measured here or elsewhere.
- **Housing:** Good and affordable housing is the basis of a sustainable and healthy city.
 - Well-designed rental housing that is the key to protecting migrant labour and other less affluent sections remains poorly funded.
 - Mumbai is estimated to have added only 5% of rental housing in new residential construction (1961-2000), and that too led by private funding.
- **Enforcement of laws:** Laws on air pollution, municipal solid waste management and water quality are hardly enforced, and tokenism marks the approach to urban mobility.

What can be done?

- **Schemes:** An opportunity to make schemes such as the Centre's Affordable Rental Housing Complexes deliver at large scale and focus on new good houses built by the state.

- **Demand and supply:** The Ministry of Housing could work by digitally combining and transparently publishing data on demand and supply for each city.
- **Learning from the past:** Past menaces such as cholera, the plague and the global flu pandemic a century ago led to change such as sewerage, waste handling, social housing and health care that reduced disease. Something on the same lines should be done about the pandemic.
- Government should show the political will to reinvent cities after the pandemic is over.

7. Machine hole- Technology led initiative

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS 1- Society

Context - Centre announces new measures to end manual scavenging by August 2021.

What is manual scavenging and step taken by government to eliminate manual scavenging?

Manual scavenging is the practice of removing human excrement from toilets, septic tanks or sewers by hand.

- More than 375 workers died while cleaning septic and sewer tanks between 2015 and 2019.

Government initiatives –

1. Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act 1993-

- The act prohibited the employment of manual scavengers for manually cleaning dry latrines and also the construction of dry toilets (that do not operate with a flush).

2. Prohibition of Employment of Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013

- **Prohibition:** The act prohibits the employment of manual scavengers, manual cleaning of sewers and septic tanks without protective equipment, and the construction of insanitary latrines.
- **Rehabilitation:** It seeks to rehabilitate manual scavengers and provide for their alternative employment.

What are the new measures announced by the government?

1. **Mechanized cleaning-** Sewers and septic tanks in 243 cities will be mechanized and a helpline created to register complaints if manual scavenging is reported
2. **Change in terminology-** The word “manhole” will be replaced with “machine-hole” in official usage
3. **Direct allocation of funds-** Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry said that it would directly transfer funds to ‘sanitation workers’ to buy cleaning machines, instead of contractors or municipal corporations.

Why the impacts of such measures always fall short?

These measures are not giving adequate attention to the social conditions that force people to plumb toxic cesspools.

1. Failure in the implementation of law-

- The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, allows the use of manual labour to clean sewage if the employer provides safety gear. But, in practice, this provision is more flouted than followed.

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- Municipal corporations and local bodies very often outsource the sewer cleaning tasks to private contractors, who do not maintain proper rolls of workers.
- In case after case of sanitation workers being asphyxiated to death while working toxic sludge pools in different parts of the country, these contractors have denied any association with the deceased.
- 2. **Discrimination-** The entrenched belief in the caste system that assumes people belonging to a particular caste group will readily perform the stigmatized task of emptying latrines.
- 3. The design of septic tanks in large parts of the country is not amenable to technological intervention and machines are too big to enter narrow by-lanes, especially in dense urban areas.

Way forward-

- Government's move to use machines is a first step towards according dignity and respect to sewer workers. However, technology's emancipatory powers will be realized at their fullest only when the states stop living in denial about manual scavenging.
- Systems need to be put in place to prevent pilferage, ensure that the machines reach the right hands.

8. Violence against women

Source: The Indian Express

Syllabus: GS-1- Society

Context: Domestic violence cases spiked during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Explain about the violence during the pandemic?

- **Shadow pandemic:** The UN Secretary-General used the term for rise in domestic violence cases during the lockdown.
 - Women and sexual minorities were confined indoors with their abusers and even making a call or stepping out for shelter were likely to be very challenging.
- **Violence:** Violence is the short-hand language we use to communicate power play.
 - Different kinds and contexts of violence lie on a spectrum which is defined by inequality and the desire to control.
 - This includes domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, street sexual harassment, workplace sexual harassment, custodial rape and conflict-related sexual violence.
- **Inequalities:** The deep-seated inequalities of Indian society, creates a climate where state violence is tolerated because we are conditioned to granting others power over us and condoning its abuse.

What was the impact of lockdown on the females?

- **Access to reproductive healthcare:** The lockdown made access to reproductive healthcare, including abortion, very difficult. The dullness of lockdown is the new context of marital rape, with frustration over income uncertainty is offered as justification.
- **Forceful marriages:** One of the outcomes of lockdown was that many girls were married forcibly and early in desperation to see them safe and fed.
- **Abandonment:** Women and girls with disability were left alone to fend for themselves in the aftermath of the lockdown.

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- **Vulnerable to harassment:** New forms of workplace harassment have emerged with “work-from-home” and made women vulnerable to harassment.
- **Impact on children:** The children witnessed daily violence and was taken to be the normal language of human interaction.
- The male child who gets everything he reaches for knows he is entitled and that he can grab it with freedom.

Way forward

- Systematic creation of a support infrastructure (easy access helplines, secure shelter services with enabling cultures), bystander intervention awareness and gender violence sensitisation of the police and administration especially for crisis contexts, would have mitigated the epidemic of violence.

9. Right to choice of women

Source: The Indian Express

Syllabus: GS-2- Polity

Context: The Uttar Pradesh government has cleared an ordinance that enables the state to police and punish inter-faith marriages with “the sole intention of changing a girl’s religion”.

Discuss the issues associated with the law against love jihad.

- **Law against fundamental rights:** By clearing the ordinance, the state government has trespassed the fundamental right to marry guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- **Problem with this law:** Neither clan council nor khap panchayat, and certainly not a democratic government, has the licence to vet personal choices as right or wrong.
- “Love jihad” ordinance is being peddled as measures taken for the security and “respect” of women.
- **Law can be abused:** Allowing the police to examine subjective “intentions” of men and women entering a marriage sets the law up for widespread abuse.
- **It legitimises a rank communal fantasy:** It continues the pessimistic politics that seeks to organise Hindu unity by fuelling the anxieties about the ‘Muslim Other’ and treasures it in law.
- **Patriarchal fear:** The law’s scrutiny is specially focussed on a woman’s change of faith reveals the patriarchal fear behind it.
- **An attempt to police women’s lives:** The pretentiousness of protection, indeed, masks a fear of female sexuality that will not be contained by caste and clan barriers.
- It is used to police women’s lives and choices, often by violence, as is evident in the history of “honour killings”.

Way forward

- The government must withdraw the proposed law as in the eyes of law men and women are not only members of religions, but individuals with “free will and choice”.

General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies - 2

1. Shifting trajectory Indian foreign policy

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Other Steps Taken:

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

What are the issues related with signing of BECA agreement?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Way forward-

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

2. Repopulation of prisons during pandemic is dangerous.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs2: issues in functioning of the Criminal Justice system

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

Background of the issue

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

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

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

What are the causes for the historically burdened prison system?

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

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

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

3. Examining Examinations

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-2- Education

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

What are the problems with our current examination system?

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

How will NEP 2020 help in holistic learning?

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

What are the requirements for successful implementation of NEP?

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

Way forward

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

4. Serological surveys

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

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

What is serological survey?

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

How serological surveys are carried out?

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

Why antibody is tested?

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

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

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

What is the way forward?

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

5. Post-Quad era

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

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

What are the likely changes?

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

What are the opportunities for India?

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

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

6. NEP 2020: Analysis

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-2- Education

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

More on news:

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

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

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

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

Discuss the various systems of education in India.

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

Way forward

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

7. Academic freedom

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- Polity

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

What were the findings of academic freedom index?

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

What are the claims in NEP 2020?

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

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

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

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

Way forward

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

8. DBT Scam

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

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

Background

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

What is the need for direct benefit transfer?

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

How DBT funds are being misappropriated?

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

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

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

9. Power of ECI

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

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

Background of the issue

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

What is star campaigner status?

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

Why the court stayed ECI's order?

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

What were the arguments made by ECI?

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

What is the way forward?

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

10. Freedom of Media

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs2: Role of Civil Services in a Democracy.

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

Why the arrest is seen as political vendetta?

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

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

How it affects democracy?

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

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

11. Weakened fiscal capacity of States

Source-[The Hindu](#)

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

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

What are the reasons of weakened fiscal capacity of States?

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

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

C. GST shortfall-

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

What are the Impacts of colossal borrowing on States?

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

Way forward-

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

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

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

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

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

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

Scenario of Indian women's labour force participation

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

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

Way forward

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

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

13. China occupied Kashmir

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

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

What is China’s dual politics in Kashmir?

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

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

What is 1963’s Sino-Pakistan Agreement?

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

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

Significance of the agreement-

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

What is the history of China occupied Kashmir?

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

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

14. The Indo-Pacific journey

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- International Relations

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

Where do we geographically place the Indo-Pacific?

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

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

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

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

Way forward

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

15. Foreign policy changes in Joe Biden's administration

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

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

What are the changes expected?

On Afghan policy:

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

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

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

On Relation with Pakistan:

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

On U.S. policy with India:

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

On Indo Pacific:

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

On India - US Trade:

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

On visas to Indians:

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

On Civil rights and democracy:

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

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

16. GST levy on mobility aids

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

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

Background

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

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

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

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

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

Why the arguments given by government is not satisfactory?

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

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

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

17. How the US economy and its policy choices likely to affect India

Context: How a Biden presidency likely to benefit India's economy

More in News

- "In a democracy, someone who fails to get elected to office can always console himself with the thought that there was something not quite fair about it"-
Thucydides 431 BC.

What is the Significance of U.S to India's Economy?

Trade:

- India enjoys a trade surplus with the U.S over the past 20 years. The trade surplus has widened from \$5.2 billion in 2001-02 to \$17.3 billion in 2019-20.
- Also, India accounts for nearly 5 per cent of USA's global services import. In 2019, US imports of services from India were around \$29.7 billion.

Investment:

- The US is the fifth-biggest source for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into India after Mauritius, Singapore, Netherlands, and Japan.
- The US also accounts for one-third of all Foreign Portfolio Investments (that is, investment in financial assets) into India. US accounted for Rs 11.21 lakh crore of FPI as of September 2020.

How the US economy and its policy choices likely to affect India?

On Trade aspects

- Biden's administration is expected to support a strong **rule-based order** as well as a move away from the **protectionist approach**.
- Biden understands the need to control the Covid pandemic before any sustainable economic recovery. With the control of Covid infections and the economic recovery, the US could provide a growth impulse to the global economy that has benefits to countries like India to boost their exports.
- Under a Biden administration, the view that trade is a zero-sum game is likely to change.
- Also, under Biden there are chances of reconsidering the India's exclusion from the US' Generalized System of Preference.
- All these changes are likely to help India to get a renewed push in trade from the dip since 2017-18.

On H1B Visa

- H1-B visa issue, affects Indian youth far more than the youth of any other country.
- Visa regime was severely curtailed under Trump's administration that favoured "America first policy"
- This could change under Biden, who is unlikely to view immigrants and workers from India with suspicion.

Better resolution on existing issues

- Data localisation, capping prices of medicines and medical devices have remained as a contentious issue between India and US.
- With Biden, moving away from radical approach to Pragmatism all these issues stand a better chance of getting towards a resolution.

Normalisation of US-Iran relationship

- US sanctions on Iran severely limited India's sourcing of cheap crude oil.
- Normalisation of US-Iran relationship leading to lifting of sanctions would benefit Indian economy which needs a regular supply of cheap oil to grow fast.

Climate change

- The US under Biden is expected to rejoin the Paris Climate Accord. This will help countries like India in dealing with, both technical and financial challenges related to climate change mitigation.

Democracy

- Civil liberties and democratic rights in India will be monitored closely an aspect to which the Trump administration largely ignored.

18. India-Maldives bilateral relations

Source- The Hindu

Syllabus- GS 2 - India and its neighborhood- relations.

Context- The upcoming visit of Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla to the Maldives and significance of Maldives 'India out' campaign.

What are the significances of India-Maldives bilateral relationships?

- 1. India's Neighborhood First Policy:** India announced a financial assistance package of \$1.4 billion for the Maldives in the form of budgetary support, currency swap agreements and concessional lines of credit to fulfill socio-economic development programmes.
- 2. Connectivity:** The two nations emphasized connectivity through the establishment of enabling infrastructure that would promote the exchange of goods and services, information, ideas, culture and people.
 - **Direct Cargo Ferry Service-** It will be run between India and Maldives.
- 3. Bilateral relations-** Maldivian students attend educational institutions in India and patients come to India for healthcare, aided by a liberal visa-free regime extended by India.
- 4. Air Travel Bubble between India and Maldives-** Tourism is the mainstay of Maldivian economy. The travel bubble will facilitate movement of people for employment, tourism and medical emergencies.
 - Maldives is the first neighboring country of India with which an air bubble is being operationalized.
- 5. Quotas for Supply of Essential Commodities** - Given the geographical limitations imposed on the Maldives, India has exempted the nation from export curbs on essential commodities.
- 6. Financial Aid** - At the peak of the continuing COVID-19 disruption, a financial aid of 250 million USD will be provided to Maldives by India.

History-

- **Operation Cactus-** In 1988, in response to a request from the Maldives, India activated Operation Cactus to deploy its military and ensure regime continuity in Male.

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- **Disaster management-** The Government of India has provided large-scale assistance to the Maldives in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and during the 2014 Male water crisis.

What is 'India out' campaign?

Main-ruling Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP)'s Parliamentary Group leader the Yameen camp has launched an 'India Out' campaign instigated against India-Maldives relations aims to create unrest in the country to divert attention from the many corruption allegations raised against the higher ups of the opposition.

- Maldivian protesters recently converted their demand for early release of Mr. Yameen, sentenced to five years of imprisonment in a money laundering case, pending appeal.

Concern for India-

- India should be concerned about the protests as well as the occasional rumblings within the ruling Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), apparently between **President Solih** and **Speaker and former President Nasheed** may pose serious challenge, especially after Mr. Nasheed sought the removal of certain Ministers- accusing them of corruption.
- Mr. Nasheed has also been pushing for a parliamentary system. There is concern within the government that his moves might undermine the President, who is trying to work with the coalition partners.
- The Maldives has maintained a close relationship with China, especially in financial terms, under its previous government.

Way forward-

India's increasing geostrategic concerns in the shared seas, taking forward the multifaceted cooperation to the next stage quickly could also be at the focus of Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla's visit.

19. US Federal Election Commission Vs Indian Election commission

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Comparison of the Indian Constitutional Scheme with that of Other Countries.

Context: Comparison between Indian U.S. Federal Election Commission and Indian Election commission

What are the Issues pertaining to the functions of U.S. Federal Election Commission?

Vacancies:

- The Commission has hardly been able to function in the last year because of resignations.
- The Commission haven't passed a single order since August 2019, owing to lack of quorum, for which at least four members are needed.
- As a result, several hundred matters lie pending before the Federal Election Commission.

Lack of consensus:

- The six posts of Commissioner are supposed to be equally shared by Democrats and Republicans.
- This has created a situation where decision making was often divided on partisan lines.

Powerless:

- During the recent Presidential election, when there are allegations over election process the President decided to appeal only to the U.S. Supreme Court without any reference to the Federal Election Commission.

How different is U.S. Federal Election Commission compared to Indian Election commission?

- **Origin:** The Federal Election Commission was established recently in 1975, with the special mandate to regulate campaign finance issues. Whereas Election commission of India came in to force on 25th January 1950.
- **Members:** The Federal Election Commission is led by six Commissioners. Whereas Indian Election commission consists of one Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners.
- **Scope:** Federal Election Commission has a much narrower mandate than its Indian equivalent. In India, by virtue of being the custodian of the electoral roll, all matters related to keeping the roll updated, fall under the ECI's domain and ECI enjoys enormous power.
- **Role of Judiciary:** In India the role of the judiciary is limited post the election period. Our constitutional makers were clear that if election-related petitions were entertained during the course of the election process, it would impede the process and delay election results.
- **Scope of Postal ballot:** In the 2016 U.S. election, almost a quarter of the votes counted arose from postal ballots. In India we have confined postal ballots to only a few categories, of largely government staff, the police or armed forces.

Ever since our first election in 1951-2 our political parties, both losers and winners, have invariably accepted the results declared by the Election Commission of India, allowing the transfer of power to be passed on in a smooth manner.

20. Strengthening public health capacities

Source- The Hindu

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

Context- Lessons learnt by India's healthcare sector in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and possible solution.

What is Disaster management act 2005?

The stated object and purpose of the Disaster Management Act is to manage disasters, including preparation of mitigation strategies, capacity-building and more.

- It came into force in India in January 2006.
- The Act provides for "the effective management of disasters and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto."
- DM Act in COVID-19 pandemic- measures included from imposing lockdowns to price control of masks and medical services.

What are the issues pertaining to Disaster Management response during COVID?

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed-

- The approach which continues to be reactive.
- Significant gaps particularly in terms of medical preparedness for disasters.

The lesson learnt –

- Health services and their continuing development cannot be ignorant to the possibility of disaster-imposed pressures.

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- The legal framework for disaster management must push a legal mandate for strengthening the public health system.

What are the issues associated with healthcare systems in India?

1. **Issues pertaining to health Insurance** – The future development of hospital care services is being envisaged chiefly under publicly financed health insurance, which would very likely be private-sector led.
 - A large majority of private hospitals in the country are small enterprises which cannot meet the inclusion criteria for insurance
 - Private hospitals under health insurance often prefer high-paying, non-communicable disease-related interventions.
2. Private healthcare interests aren't particularly aligned with managing infectious diseases and emergencies.
 - Private health sector services during disasters can hardly be a dependable option as there were many instance of overcharging and weak response to treatment.
3. **Lack of integration of disaster management with primary health care-**
 - The lack of Community engagement and local bodies has been a major criticism of the Disaster Management Act
 - The existing public primary health care model in the country is limited in scope. It is implicit that the primary healthcare sectors network lags training to deal with the emergency situations like COVID-19 pandemic.

What are the possible solutions?

- Making primary health care central to disaster management can be a significant step towards building health system and community resilience to disasters.
- A legal mandate to strengthen public sector capacities via disaster legislation, including relevant facets such as capacity-building of staff.

21. Significance of Biden's wins

Source- The Hindu

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

Context- Impact of Joe Biden's wins on ties with India.

How US-India relations under different administration?

1. Clinton administration-

- The Clinton years witnessed dip in India and the US bilateral relations.
- India was pressurized to "freeze, rollback and eliminate" its nuclear programme and to settle Kashmir dispute with Pakistan.

2. Bush administration-

- George W Bush ensured the success of the nuclear deal between India and the United States. The agreement mainstreamed India's nuclear programme.
- Bush administration depended on Pakistani cooperation for its war in Afghanistan, and India's importance was mostly as a lever to pressure Pakistan.
- **Progresses in trade** - U.S.-India trade were close to \$40 billion.

3. Singh-Obama administration-

- **Surge in Trade**- Between 2009 and 2014, U.S.-India trade nearly doubled.
- **Supported India**- For permanent membership of the UN Security Council and the Nuclear Suppliers Group, helped it become a member of the East Asia summit.
- **Military ties**- strengthened military to military ties in the Indo-Pacific region.

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- Promoted Indian engagement in Afghanistan and opening to Central Asia, encouraged the European Union to engage more closely with India.

4. Trump-Modi administration-

- U.S.-India ties did not strengthen under the Modi-Trump administrations.
- Trade grew at the slowest rate than in the preceding five years. Moreover trump administration terminated India's designation as a preferential trade status under the Generalized System of Preference (GSP) trade programme.

What are the significances of Joe Biden win?

Concerns-

A. On Civil rights and democracy:

- This is a major concern for the Indian government, which has got support from the Trump administration on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Also, Biden co-associates have been particularly vocal in several issues against Indian administration. For example, Jammu-Kashmir issue, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, communal and caste-based violence, actions against non-governmental organizations and media freedoms.

B. India not high on Biden-Harris priority list- Biden-Harris list of priorities includes

- Dealing with COVID-19.
- healing domestic divides.
- **Reviving the U.S. economy**- repairing ties with Europe, evolving a calibrated China policy, rejoining multilateral initiatives such as on climate change.
- Reinstating the **Obama-era Iran policy** and furthering peacemaking in Afghanistan.

Significance of Biden win-

- As India slide rapidly into autocracy, people desperately need leaders who will appeal to our better rather than baser instincts.
- Indian judiciary and media should take lessons from the U.S. Example, where so many State-level courts and the national media fought back against Mr. Trump's attempts to cow them. They paved the way for this election result.

22. India's foreign policy concerns

Source: The Hindu

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

Context: Analysing the possible outcomes of the US foreign policy under new president Biden that will concern India

Background- India-US relation during Trump years

- **Defence cooperation:** India signed all the 'foundational' agreements with America and bought billions of dollars' worth of military hardware from them.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** India resisted converting the Quad into a military or strategic grouping. The External Affairs Minister even once stated that India will not join any military alliance.

Two US Foreign policy issues which are of great concern for India

West Asia policy of US:

- What policy President-elect Joe Biden will adopt on the questions of West Asia peace plans and the nuclear deal with Iran-the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is a huge concern of India.
- India has a huge stake in that region. For example, remittance, energy security, Largest Indian immigrants.

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- Sanctions on Iran has also limited our ability to buy Iranian oil, and sell our pharma and other goods.
- If Biden administration chooses to reduce tension with Iran it will significantly help India to invest openly in oil and other infra projects in Iran, including the rail project in which Indian Railways Construction Ltd has been interested.

China Policy of US:

- If Biden adopts a more conciliatory approach towards China, India will be left alone in confronting with China.
- On matter related to QUAD, it is highly likely that India will be forced to agree to some form of military alliance in future given the fact that all the other three countries are already in strategic alliance with one another.
- With India not in a position to deal with China on its own and we need external support to protect our territorial integrity.
- Even Jawaharlal Nehru, the architect of non-alignment, sought the help from America during the war with China in 1962.

23. Credibility of exit/opinion polls

Source: The Hindu

Gs2: Salient Features of the Representation of People's Act.

Context: Prediction of Election outcome through Exit polls and opinion polls have not been accurate.

Some examples where election prediction has miserably failed?

- **The example of the Venezuelan recall referendum of 2004:** The exit poll that predicted Hugo Chávez to be recalled however, Hugo Chávez won in the Venezuela Referendum
- **In recent Bihar elections:** The exit polls, mostly predicted a Rashtriya Janata Dal victory with huge margin however the NDA proved exit polls are wrong.
- **US presidential elections 2016:** Hillary Clinton consistently led Trump in national polls in 2016 however Trump won the election.

What are the reasons for such failures?

- **Principles of statistics ignored:** Pollsters do not follow the statistical principles properly in designing, sampling, and analyzing their data.
- **Lacks holistic coverage:** They do not cover remote corners of the country and cover sensitive booths for their surveys.
- **No scope for Margin of error:** The standard requirements of 3 percentage points as margin of error is not adhered.
- **Selection bias:** The samples selected by them does not maintain the proportions across gender, age, income, religion, caste, and other important factors.
- **Issues in method of sampling:** Non responses are not properly tackled and the aspect of 'random' sampling is not given adequate importance.

24. Media regulation

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-2- Polity

Context: The government is bringing online news and current affairs portals along with "films and audio-visual programmes made available by online content providers" under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

Analyse the problems with this step.

- **This is an attack on the free press:**

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- It is targeted at a section that has been bold and forthright in speaking truth to power.
- This move has been criticised as it is set out to make the media institutionally captive.
- It is clubbing the only sector of the media which has pre-censorship, namely films (through the Central Board of Film Certification).
- The news media which has so far, not been subject to pre-censorship, although media practitioners know the grave post publication consequences of airing news or views critical or adversarial to the government.
- **Regulation leading to censorship:**
 - The reason given by the government for this annexation of the digital media by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is that the self-regulation proposals given by the sector were not satisfactory.
 - It hijacks another public interest litigation in the Supreme Court relating to content on “Over the Top” (OTT) platforms not being subject to official oversight.
- **Arms the executive:** It neatly hijacks matter before the Supreme Court of India relating to freedom of the press and freedom of expression to arm the executive with control over the free press, thereby essentially making it unfree.
- The instant case is that relating to Sudarshan News, in which hate speech is being disingenuously sought to be passed off as freedom of the press.
- **Divide and rule strategy:** It seeks to divide and rule the press by creating an artificial distinction between the new-age digital media which is the media of the future, the media of the millennial generation and the older print and TV news media.
- There is no comparison between the Press Council of India and the NBA as professional bodies on the one hand and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on the other.
- **Fate of digital media:** The fate of the digital media under the control of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting leaves little scope for hope for both the media practitioner and the media entrepreneur and for the start-ups that have been the new vibrant face of contemporary journalism.

Way forward

- This move must be seen for what it is politically and morally decrepit and must be legally challenged as unconstitutional and autocratic.

25. Right to work

Source: The Hindu

Gs2: Fundamental Rights

Context: Need for Right to work in India.

What is the legal status of the right to work internationally and in India?

- **International:** The Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes the right to work in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- **In India:** Though Right to work is not a constitutional right but it was accorded statutory rights through MGNREGA act. Under MGNREGA, a person can hold the state accountable for not fulfilling the right by demanding an unemployment allowance.

Need for Right to work?

- **Failure of market:** The right to work is not only about lack of adequate work but also the profound lack of public goods and assets. It is the state's responsibility to provide these public goods when the market fails provide welfare.
- **Destruction due to Development:** The path of development has not only created adequate employment opportunities but it has also resulted in displacement of people from their means of livelihood.
- **Jobless growth:** Along with this, the failure to create new jobs by the government and advent of automation leading to jobless growth there is a need to think on the right to work and make it legally enforceable.
- **Statutory backing can be repealed any time:** Also, the statutory backing given to right to work in India through MGNREGA can be withdrawn through legislative actions.

How can we make 'the right to work' in India a reality?

- One approach is through Decentralised Urban Employment and Training, or DUET.
- For DUET, urban local bodies can issue job vouchers to certified public institutions such as schools and universities for pre-approved tasks. These institutions can only use the vouchers to hire labour for pre-defined tasks e.g. painting school buildings.
- Along with MGNREGA, an Urban Employment Guarantee can be enacted. In the wake of COVID-19, three States Odisha, Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh have launched measures along these lines.
- States need to expand spending on providing basic services such as health, education and housing, and in providing them, employment can be generated.
- For example, Thailand, which has a universal basic healthcare system that is labour-intensive. It solves two problems, builds social infrastructure and simultaneously it creates jobs.

Does the 4 labour codes dilutes the worker rights?

- India is a labour surplus economy, so in the capital-labour bargaining process, labour is structurally weak in India.
- To balance this government needs to legislate protective labour laws however the four labour codes tries to achieve the opposite.
- An effective employment guarantee programme can be an excellent solution to the structural weakness of labour. it automatically creates the conditions for better treatment of workers.

'Right to work' is not only about employment opportunities but also the right to earn one's own livelihood without any obstruction and in a dignified way. Dignity of living should be assured through fair work conditions, such as being paid a fair wage, regulated work hours.

26. Right of "free consent".

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs2: Fundamental Right

Context: Many state governments have announced that they are considering enacting an appropriate law to stop marriages which they term as "love jihad".

What are the recent cases?

- A Muslim girl by birth converted to the Hindu religion and just after a month, she married a Hindu man according to Hindu rites and rituals.
- The Allahabad court directed the girl to appear before a magistrate to record her statements.

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- The purpose was to check whether the girl converted with her consent or not.
- In another matter, a Hindu girl by birth converted to Islam and married a Muslim. The High Court recorded her statement and after its subjective satisfaction that she, being a major, had acted of her own volition.

What was the basis of observations?

- **Lily Thomas (2000) and Sarla Mudgal (1995):** In both the cases, the issue was of Hindu married men committing bigamy to avail a second marriage, without dissolving the first just by converting from Hinduism to Islam.
- **Section 494 and second marriage:** Both judgments concluded that the second marriage of a Hindu husband, after his conversion to Islam, would not be valid in view of Section 494 of the Indian Penal Code. The Court clarified that a marriage solemnised as a Hindu marriage cannot be terminated by one spouse converting to another religion.

What are the arguments against such laws?

- **No legal basis:** The concept of “love jihad” has no legal or constitutional basis, it has been concocted for the last few years.
- **Fundamental right:** The right to marry a person of one’s choice is a guarantee under Article 21. At the same time, freedom of conscience, the practice and propagation of a religion of one’s choice, including not following any religion, are guaranteed under Article 25.
- **Avoid mixing of issues:** Polygamy, polyandry, kidnapping, coercion, etc. are separate issues covered under existing provisions of the IPC.
- **Fundamental freedoms:** The right to marry a person of one’s choice flows from the freedom of individuality, naturally available to any individual.
- **Supreme court views:** The view of the Supreme Court (1965) that a marriage is not approved unless the essential ceremonies required for its solemnisation are proved to have been performed can only be read if one partner denies the marriage.
- **Marriage is the very foundation of civilised society:** the observation that “marriage is the very foundation of civilised society” and without which no civilised society can exist have become obsolete given the recent judgments by larger benches of the Supreme Court.
- **Sub-judice:** The legality of legislation like the Citizenship Amendment Act, which excludes only one religion from its purview, criminalisation of pronouncements of triple talaq and taking away the special status of Jammu & Kashmir are pending consideration in the Supreme Court.

The Courts needs to examine if the individual concerned has exercised their right of “**free consent**”.

27. RCEP

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Context: India’s opting out of RCEP appears more debatable in terms of its economic rationale.

Background:

- The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was signed on 15.11.2020 by 15 countries led by China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and the 10-state ASEAN grouping.

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- It created one of the world's largest trading blocs.
- India after seven years of protracted negotiations decided last November to exit the grouping.

Why India opted out of RCEP?

- India had justified its decision on following grounds:
 - **High trade deficit:** Protecting its economy from burgeoning trade deficits with a majority of the 15 RCEP members.
 - **Lack of safeguards:** It had cited the grouping's refusal to accede to its requests on safeguards as a deal breaker.

What are the significances of RCEP?

- RCEP members now account for about 30% of the global GDP and a third of the world's population.
- The timing of the accord presents a unique opportunity to support economic recovery, inclusive development and job creation.
- It will help in strengthening regional supply chains.

Why India should have joined the RCEP?

- **Impact of the pandemic:** Global trade and the economy are falling due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Lack of markets:** New infections in Europe and the U.S. might prompt fresh restrictions leading to shrinkage of export markets for India.
- **Uncertain Global order:** There is heightened tariff uncertainty generated by the deadlocked Brexit negotiations between Britain and the E.U. which will also impact India's trade.
- **But, RCEP economies are re-energising economic activity:** The east Asian and Pacific countries including China, South Korea, Vietnam, Australia and New Zealand having contained the pandemic successfully and have restarted their economies. This would have provided an alternative market for India if joined.

What is the way forward?

- Bury the geopolitical differences with China and prioritise what is collectively seen as a mutually beneficial trading compact.
- For example, among the ASEAN signatories Vietnam and the Philippines, which not only continue to have their share of disputes with Beijing but also suffer significant trade imbalances with Asia's largest economy.
- Acknowledging India's value as a market the RCEP members have left the door open. India should reconsider its stance as RCEP members have also waived a key 18-month cooling period for interested applicants.
- India needs to dispassionately review its position and **embrace openness rather than protectionism.**

28. Judicial Barbarism

Source: Indian Express

Gs2: Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

Context: Judicial barbarism is now a systematic phenomenon with deep institutional roots.

How democratic barbarism and judicial barbarism are related?

- **Democratic barbarism:** It is a politics that sees protest, dissent, and freedom of expression all through the prism of potential enemies of the state. It occurs when the state treats a section of its own citizenry as enemies of the people.
- **Judicial barbarism:** For example, weak protection for civil liberties and dissenters and an unusual degree of deference to state power, especially in constitutional matters. Giving Judicial form to the language of democratic barbarism.

What are the components of Judicial barbarism?

- Overwhelming appearance of arbitrariness in judicial decision-making.
- The application of law becomes so **dependent on the arbitrary whims** of individual judges that the rule of law or constitutional terms no longer have any meaning.
- The law becomes an instrument of oppression.
- The court becomes excessively concerned with its version of lese majesty: Like a scared monarch.
- Democratic barbarism has been part of a global trend. For example, in Turkey, Poland and Hungary the judiciary aids **democratic barbarism**.

What are the signs of Indian judiciary slipping into judicial barbarism?

- **Misuse of Power of contempt:** Maintaining credibility by its **power of contempt**. It is now a systematic phenomenon with deep institutional roots.
- **Favouritism in listing of cases:** The court has **refused to do timely hearings of cases** that go to the heart of the institutional integrity of a democracy. For example, the electoral bonds case.
- **Arbitrariness in courts processes:** The rules for the grant or denial of bail by the Supreme Court and correspondingly by several high courts have reached new levels of arbitrariness. For example, Patriots like Sudha Bharadwaj or thinkers like Anand Teltumbde are being denied bail. Similarly, the fate of so many young student anti-CAA protestors remains uncertain.

What can be the possible implications of this institutional inefficiencies?

- **Legitimises bad laws:** Barbarism will slowly creep into the ideological foundations of the state. For example, legislation on “love jihad”.
- **Growth of Inequality:** Few people are not treated equal citizens before the law. The democratic barbarism now directly aided by judicial power.
- **Affects Fundamental Rights:** As per Justice SA Bobde’s, that the Supreme Court is trying to discourage the use of Article 32. Article 32 is one of the glories of the Indian Constitution that protects fundamental rights. It can be suspended only in a state of emergency.

Every issue should not be thought through the prism of partisan combat. There is need to protect the respectability for the institution.

29. Governors’ mercy powers

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- **GS 2** - Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Context- Supreme Court expressed unhappiness over the pendency of a plea by A G Perarivalan with the Governor of Tamil Nadu Banwarilal Purohit for over two years.

What was the Supreme Court's verdict over governor delay in deciding the plea for pardon?

Supreme Court statement - Multi-Disciplinary Monitoring Agency (MDMA) investigation into the "larger conspiracy" behind Rajiv Gandhi assassination need not deter the Tamil Nadu Governor from deciding the plea for pardon of convicts like A.G. Perarivalan.

- The court made it clear that it was reluctant to exercise its jurisdiction when the Governor was already seized of Perarivalan's plea for pardon under Article 161 of the Constitution.
- **Background-** Perarivalan had applied to the Governor for pardon on December 30, 2015. Almost three years later, on September 2018, the Supreme Court asked the Governor to decide the pardon plea as he "deemed fit".

What are the pardoning powers of the Governor?

Article 161 deals with the Pardoning Power of the Governor.

- The Governor can grant pardons, reprieves, respites and remissions of punishments or suspend, remit and commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the state extends.
- The Governor cannot Pardon a Death Sentence. (The President has the power of Pardon a death Sentence).

What were the past judicial stands?

1. The advice of the appropriate Government binds the Head of the state.

- **Maru Ram v Union of India case (1980)** - Even though the President and Governor are the executive heads, but they cannot exercise their discretion with regard to their powers under Articles 72 and 161. Both the executive heads are required to act on the advice of the appropriate government—Central and State Government.
- The court followed Maru Ram's case wherein it was held that the state government can advise the governor who is bound to take it.

2. Undue delay in execution of mercy petition-

- **Shatrugan Chouhan v. Union of India-** Undue delay would entitle the death convict to seek relief under Article 32 r/w Article 21 get his death sentence commuted.
- Inordinate delay caused due to circumstances beyond the control of the death convict and which is caused by the authorities for no reasonable ground", the court should itself commute the sentence rather than "remanding matter for reconsideration of mercy petition".

3. Constitutional functionaries are not exempt from judicial scrutiny-

- **Keisham Meghachandra Singh v. Hon'ble Speaker (2020)** - the Supreme Court was asked to examine the Speaker's inaction with regard to disqualification proceedings.

Way forward-

- Undue, inordinate and unreasonable delay in execution of death sentence has dehumanizing effects.

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- The mercy petitions under Article 72/161 should be disposed of at a much faster pace than what is adopted now, if the due procedure prescribed by law is followed in verbatim.

30. Biden and new diplomacy

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

Context: The expected actions of the Biden presidency and its Political, Environmental and Global institutional implications.

What are the present challenges to India under Biden's presidency?

- **Environmental:** India's environmental policies will be closely monitored and discussed world over. For example, the restrictions removed in mining of forests or on land use in the natural forests of Kashmir may attract criticism.
- **Minority rights:** Biden presidency is very sensitive to minority rights as constitutionally proclaimed. For example, Vice President-elect Kamala Harris has already commented on Kashmir issue.
- **Global trade:** Biden presidency will pursue the objective of strengthening multilateral accords and WTO rules with more diplomatic pressure. For example, our government had already given up the food security and livelihood clauses as preconditions for discussing "other issues", basically tariff reduction.

How India needs to recalibrate its strategy?

- **Environment**
 - Need to emphasise for a progressive stand at the Paris negotiations.
 - Need for more sensitive implementation of environmental laws by resisting pressure from corporate interests.
 - The rights of Adivasis habitation, livelihood, spiritual affiliation with trees and the jungle will need greater attention.
- **Minority rights:** Strict adherence to the rule of law and more reforms for the development of inclusive society
- **Trade:** Need to push for reconsidering GSP preference and India should resist diplomatic pressure by sticking to its common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR) principle

31. Government interventions

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

Context - The Government's core belief in 'minimum government', which ties its hands when it comes to fiscal measures even in such harsh economic conditions.

What are the reasons for the failure of stimulus packages?

1. **Lack of Demand-** The aggregate demand for goods and services again is dependent on the income and purchasing power of people, which has come down drastically, at the aggregative level, due to the COVID-19 lockdown.
- **Nothing to stimulate demand** – many economists have opined that the government stimulus tries to resolve only supply-side issues. There is nothing to generate demand. This could only be done by putting money in the hands of people.

- 2. Risk of taking housing loans** - Though the consumer or housing loans are easily available at lower rates of interest, still people are not taking the household loans, as they are in doubt of their future incomes or dwindling current one.
- 3. Bank burdened with bad loans-** On the supply side, the big constraint on fresh lending is the burden of non-performing assets (NPAs).
- 4. Credit easing will not work immediately-** Credit easing by the RBI is not direct government expenditure and banks will be hesitant to lend the money available with them.

What are the possible solutions?

- 1. Relax FRBM target-** Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) should be kept in a state of suspension for both Centre and the States.
- 2. Cash transfer to Households-** The government needs to announce a ₹10 lakh crore fiscal stimulus package providing universal food ration and cash transfers for households in order to revive the economy at this time.
- 3. An urban employment guarantee law-** This could help improve worker incomes and have multiplier effects on the economy.
- 4. Improving health infrastructure-** The government needs to build a robust public health infrastructure on the principle of public provisioning instead of walking down the insurance route.
- 5. Investment in Green Deal-** - A comprehensive green deal can be planned, which changes the energy mix of the economy and also makes the poor and the marginalized a part of a sustainable development process.

Way forward-

The current COVID-19 pandemic has given an opportunity to rethink of health, economic and climate policies.

32. Federal water governance ecosystem

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

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

Context- Importance of Centre-States coordination to deal with the emerging challenges of inter-state water governance.

How the two bills on water can attend the longstanding issue of inter-state externalities

- 1. The Interstate River Water Disputes Amendment Bill 2019-** The bill seeks to improve the inter-state water disputes resolution by setting up a permanent tribunal supported by a deliberative mechanism, the dispute resolution committee.
- 2. The Dam Safety Bill, 2019-** The bills provides for the surveillance, inspection, operation, and maintenance of specified dams, with the help of a comprehensive federal institutional framework comprising committees and authorities for dam safety at national and state levels.
 - It also provides for an institutional mechanism to ensure the safety of such dams.

However, these two bills were passed by Lok Sabha and are pending in Rajya Sabha.

What is the importance of Jal Jeevan Mission JJM?

- **The chief objective** of the Mission is to provide piped water supply (Har Ghar Jal) to all rural and urban households by 2024.

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- The Jal Jeevan Mission will converge with other Central and State Government Schemes to achieve its objectives of sustainable water supply management across the country.
- The central assistance through JJM is an opportunity to open a dialogue with the States to address federal water governance gap.

Why a coordinated response from the Centre and states is vital?

1. **Systematic federal response-** Emerging concerns of long-term national water security and sustainability, the risks of climate change, and the growing environmental challenges, including river pollution needs systematic federal response where the Centre and the states need to work in a partnership mode.
2. **For implementation of current national projects-** Centre-States coordination is also crucial for pursuing the national projects. For example Ganga river rejuvenation or inland navigation or inter-basin transfers.
3. **Critical for Jal Jeevan Mission's success.**
4. **To pursue development and sustainability goals-**

What is the way forward?

1. **Absence of authoritative water data-** Data systems related to water in the country are limited in their coverage, robustness and efficiency. The sector suffers from the following key data problems-
 - a. Limited coverage,
 - b. Unreliable data
 - c. Limited co-ordination and sharing.

Therefore, the Centre can work with the states in building a credible institutional architecture for gathering data and producing knowledge about water resources.

2. Jal Jeevan Mission presents an opportunity to get states on board for a dialogue towards stronger Centre-states coordination and federal water governance ecosystem.

33. Regulating free speech

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-2- Polity

Context: The Supreme Court's has questioned the Union government on the measures it can and is willing to take against communally slanted television coverage.

More on news:

- It appears to be an attempt to bring about a commitment to a course of action that will curb inflammatory journalism on broadcast media.
- The Court has distinguished between free speech and 'hate speech'.

Give some latest instances of partial news coverage. Also mention the point-of-view of the Centre and the Court.

- **Coverage of Tablighi jamaat event:** The Court is hearing petitions against the communal colour given by some channels to the incidence of large clusters of COVID-19 infections among those who attended a Tablighi Jamaat event in New Delhi.
- The portrayal of the participants as intentional super-spreaders was vicious and motivated.
- **Case of Sudarshan news:** The case of Sudarshan News, which began a series on the channel that propagated hate against Muslims, is an open example.

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- The government has merely administered a 'caution' to the channel and asked it to moderate the content of future episodes.
- **Centre's point of view:** The Centre's affidavit has stated that media coverage "predominantly struck a balanced and neutral perspective".
 - It further stated that it was open to the viewers to choose from a number of varying perspectives given by different media channels.
- **Court's point of view:** The Court is keen to know what action has been taken under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act against offending broadcasters.
- The Court appears unconvinced that the present mechanism of self-regulation, i.e. The National Broadcasting Standards Authority is effective.

What are the safeguards provided under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act?

- **Government's powers:** The government is empowered under the Act to prohibit transmission of programmes that violate the programme or advertising codes (Section 19) and even an entire channel, in public interest (Section 20).
- In the past, channels have been asked by the I&B Ministry to take some programmes off the air.
- **Penal law:** Depending on the damage done to individuals or institutions, or even society at large, there is enough scope for action under the penal law.

Way forward

- The distinction between free speech and hate speech should be at the heart of any order creating a new mechanism; to deal with broadcast media excesses.

34. Threat to Democracies

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Context: Problems faced by the leading democracies in the world.

What are the issues that are threatening the Democracies?

- **Identity crisis:** The issues of identity, or threats to identity, are becoming an important issue in elections, across democracies.
- **Menace of Fake news:** Manipulation of grievances by using psychometric techniques and use of 'deep fakes' made possible through Artificial Intelligence, further enhances the threat to current notions of democracy.
- **Terrorism is resurfacing with renewed vigour:** The IS, that was thought to be defeated following the victories achieved in Syria and Iraq towards the end of 2018, has recently carried out attacks in France (Paris, Nice) and in Austria (Vienna). It reminds of the transnational character of the threat it poses to democratic countries.
- **Informational autocracy:** There is a growing concern across the globe about increasing efforts to manipulate information in order to perpetuate power. For example, the efforts made by the U.S. President, Donald Trump, to negate the verdict of the recently held presidential elections

What are the Problems specific to European democracy?

- **Economic uncertainty:** With a resurgent COVID-19 pandemic, an uncertain Brexit will further damage the prospects of both the United Kingdom and Europe.

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- **Threat to secularism:**

- The recent wave of terrorist attacks, beginning with the beheading, recently, of a Paris schoolteacher by an Islamic State (IS) supporter, followed by IS violence in Nice, have raised questions on long-held secular beliefs.
- French President Emmanuel Macron and French leaders have been openly harsh against radical Islam

What are the Problems specific to Indian democracy?

- **Polarisation:** The enactment of Citizenship (Amendment) Act and the National Register of Citizens have created a deep religious divide among its citizens.
- **Challenges to Internal security:** With growing tensions in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), Pakistan's efforts to push terrorists in larger numbers is leading to large scale casualties especially among the Indian Army and security forces personnel.
- **Failure of India's bargaining strategy:** India has been left out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), world's biggest trade bloc which covers almost a third of the world's economy.
- **International isolation:** Provocation by Pakistan by holding of Assembly elections in Gilgit-Baltistan and India's steady marginalization in Afghanistan where the control of the Taliban is increasing confirms India's isolation in international arena.

35. Judiciary is not slipping into 'barbarism

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs2: Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

Context: Recently questions have been raised on functioning of judiciary that it is slipping into "judicial barbarism".

What are the recent charges made against the judiciary?

- **Electoral bonds case:** The court has refused to do timely hearings of cases that go to the heart of the institutional integrity of a democracy.
- **Elgar Parishad case:** The Supreme Court has been blamed for denying bail to Sudha Bharadwaj and Anand Teltumbde, who has been detained in the Bhima Koregaon case that is being probed by the National Investigation Agency.
- **Promoting Love Jihad:** judiciary was blamed in legitimising this newest assault on liberty.
- **Arnab Goswami case:** Where the Chief Justice of India was blamed for quick hearing of Arnab's case when other significant constitutional cases are pending for hearing before the court.

Elgar Parishad case

- Ongoing investigations related to the Koregaon Bhima violence witnessed on January 1, 2018.
- The case became prominent because of the arrests of some high-profile activists and lawyers, some of who are in jail for over a year now.

Why the charges laid against judiciary are not true?

- **Judiciary has effectively Protected Individuals Liberty:** In the Prashant Bhushan case and the case of journalist Vinod Dua. After criticising government, these individuals got an early and effective hearing and also relief from the court.
- **Judiciary has effectively protected the Freedom from arrest:** In 2018, Teltumbde was granted interim protection from arrest by the Bombay High Court. These are reflective of the fact that the Supreme Court has always come to the rescue of citizens.

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- **Judiciary has effectively protected right to privacy:** Historic verdicts by the SC such as nine judges held that **the right to privacy** is a fundamental right and it held that the CJI is a public authority under the RTI Act.
- **Judiciary has always Ensured justice:** For example, Umar Khalid though a student he has been probed for his role in the Delhi riots for allegedly trying to incite violence during the Delhi riots, which cost more than 50 lives.
- **Judiciary has effectively Protected individuals freedom and choice:** The Supreme Court in **Shafin Jahan v. Ashokan K M (Hadiya case)** observed that Hadiya, being a 24-year-old adult, had the power to make her own decisions, and the court could not compel her to go to her father or husband against her will.
- **Judiciary has effectively protected individuals from malafide prosecution:** Arnab goswami case prima facie appears to be a case of malafide prosecution. The Supreme Court rightly remarked that the accused should pursue his remedy before the high court.

The criticism of the judiciary stems not from facts or evidence but from ideological inclination and dislike of particular political leaders.

36. Digital nation: On delivery of citizen services

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-2 - Governance

Context: The true measure of digitalisation would be smooth delivery of all citizen services.

Analyse the development of India as a digital nation.

- **Measure of digital nation:** The true measure of digital nation is the readiness of governments to use technology to create open, participatory public systems that citizens consider trustworthy.
- **Result of internet access:** Affordable smartphones and Internet access have made India a digital nation with an estimated 750 million connections and a thriving financial technology sector.
- **Digital platforms in Covid-19:** Digital platforms providing goods and services, including online education and telemedicine, have grown vigorously during the COVID-19 pandemic, while many professionals have maintained productivity by working from home.
- **Schemes and services:** Government-to-citizen services using Common Service Centres for:
 - Advice to agriculturists.
 - Digital payments of welfare benefits through bank accounts.
 - Online legal advice to four lakh people under the Tele-Law scheme.

Discuss the sectors which has potential for developing India's digital governance.

- **Digital method in road safety:** If digital methods were applied to other sectors, such as road safety, the results could be dramatic as it can potentially reduce the accident mortality rate of about 1,50,000 deaths a year.
- **Technology in social sectors:** Enhanced adoption of technology in health and education;
 - The nucleus plan is Ayushman Bharat, with a digital health identity for all.
 - It should be possible to achieve measurable progress early on at least on one UHC component such as access to free, essential prescription drugs.
- **Issuing a digital health ID:** A digital health ID would help prescribe and dispense essential medicines free.

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- The Planning Commission estimated that the public procurement cost for this, in 2011, would be 0.1% to 0.5% of GDP
- **Transformation of internal process:** Efficient digital government depends on transforming internal processes, and fixing deadlines for service delivery.

Way forward

- If digital has to become a way of life, redefining the complex functioning of citizen-centric services would be a good place to start, with deadlines for government departments.
- Governance must achieve is a reliable system of digital welfare.

37. Global governance

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs2: Important International Institutions, agencies and fora - their Structure, Mandate

Context: Analysing the need for common global governance

What are the impediments to international cooperation in the 21st century?

- **USA & China:** The rivalry between the world's two largest economies has intensified spreading the fears of a new cold war breaking between them.
- **India - China:** The militaries of the two most populous countries of the world has been engaged in a tense standoff for the past seven months.
- **India and Pakistan:** Endless state of confrontation between the armies of two nuclear-armed countries.
- **West Asia:** Civil wars in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen that are externally instigated.
- **Brazil:** Fire in parts of the Amazon forest, the world's largest sink for atmospheric carbon dioxide has been a global concern
- **USA- Russia nuclear disarmament:** Uncertainty over the extension of the only remaining nuclear weapons control pact between the US and Russia, the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty which is set to expire on February 5, 2021.

What are the Other common challenges?

- Ensuring affordable availability of the COVID vaccine to the entire global population.
- Making the world economy inclusive, equitable and sustainable for complete eradication of poverty.
- Achieving time-bound climate action to protect the planet.
- Preventing the militarisation of oceans, outer space and other global commons.

How can we tackle this problem?

- **Need to establish democratic world government:** Since, Non-discriminatory and justice-promoting governance is necessary for creating a more united, safer and better world. So, this concept must be brought to the centre of global discourse and action.
- **Principle of shared sovereignty:** Exclusive national sovereignty has become the greatest barrier to human unity and fraternity. The concept of national sovereignty is invoked many times to threaten peace, well-being and development. In the age of globalisation, we must embrace the virtues of shared sovereignty, in which connectivity (physical, digital, cultural and people-to-people) takes priority over the territorial sovereignty.
- **New laws of global governance:** Where militarisation of international disputes must be criminalised.

- **Disarmament:** The world community must compel all nations, to destroy all their weapons of mass destruction and to reduce their military expenditures.
- **Reform and strengthen United Nations:** To gradually evolve into a future world government body. As a key element of UN reforms, permanent membership of its security council must be abolished and nations that wage offensive wars or have failed to resolve disputes with their neighbours should stand disqualified/suspended from UNSC membership.
- **Making governance more broad-based and participatory:** Technology and mobility have made it possible for artists, professionals, environmentalists, disempowered communities etc, to collaborate by transcending national barriers. Therefore, their empowered participation in global governance is a must.
- **People's Movement:** Rally the people of all nations, races and religions around a new democratically governing body to address the issues caused by myopic, self-centred and unaccountable national governments.

The solution to polarisation is reform of government and state institutions in a way that they work for all citizens without discrimination and injustice. Societies are healed when governance becomes fair and compassionate.

38. The Wide Net of Hunger

Source: [Indian Express](#)

GS2: Issues relating to Poverty and Hunger.

Context: Since the lockdown, the Government of India (GoI) has announced Pradhan Mantri Gareeb Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) and Atmanirbhar Bharat. However, numerous studies have shown their inadequacy.

What is the hunger watch survey?

- The Right to Food campaign in partnership with several civil society organisations initiated “Hunger Watch”, a rapid survey across 11 states from mid-September to mid-October.
- The objective was to assess the situation of hunger among vulnerable groups, as well as to take immediate local action to support those in extreme need.
- It focussed on the conditions among marginalised communities such as Dalit/Adivasi households, daily-wage workers, households with single women, aged or disabled and so on.
- 41 per cent of sample reported having a monthly income of less than Rs 3,000 pre-lockdown compared to only 2.4 per cent more than Rs 15,000.
- One-third of them were daily wage workers.

What are the key findings of the survey?

- **Widespread hunger continues to be a major issue irrespective of the income levels:**
 - Households also face difficult conditions with 27 per cent saying that they had **no income** in the month before the survey (compared to 43 per cent with no income during April-May).
 - One in three respondents reported members having to skip meals “sometimes” or “often”.
- **Reduction in consumption to cope with food insecurity:**
 - More than half the respondents said their current consumption of rice/wheat was less than what it was pre-lockdown.

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- Two-thirds of households reported that the quantity of food consumption either decreased somewhat or decreased a lot and 73 per cent reported that their consumption of green vegetables decreased.
- **Nutrition hunger:**
 - Based on the 2011 National Sample Survey, a recent paper by Raghunathan, Headey, and Herforth, published in the Food Policy showed that between 63 and 76 per cent of rural Indians could not afford nutritious diets.
 - The statistics from the survey comparing the food situation before lockdown and in October indicate about 71 per cent of our respondents reported that the nutritional quality of food worsened.
- **Rural-Urban disparity:**
 - Based on leaked consumption expenditure survey from 2017-18, S Subramanian, showed that **consumption declined uniformly** across rural India.

What need to be done?

- Need a well-functioning Public Distribution System (PDS) along with cash-support measures through social security pensions.
- Universalise PDS to prevent starvation.
- **MGNREGA** needs to be strengthened along with an urban employment programme.
- **Effective implementation of Mid-day Meal scheme** as only less than half the anganwadi children (47 per cent) and 63 per cent of school children said that they were getting some sort of dry rations and/or cash support in lieu of the meals.

39. Time for an Asian Century

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Context: The world returning to the centrality of Asian civilisations sharing prosperity, with the U.S. adjusting to a triumvirate.

What is Asian centrality?

- 'ASEAN centrality' rejects the current frame of the West setting the agenda while allowing the West to adapt Asian rules and marking the end of the colonial phase of global history.

How Asian-led world order is emerging?

- **Economic integration:**
 - The mega trade deal is led by ASEAN, not by China, and includes Japan and Australia, military allies of the U.S.
 - The new frame goes beyond transfer of goods and services, focuses on integration and facilitating supply chains for sharing prosperity, requiring a very different calculus for assessment.
- **Rise of China and India:**
 - Both China and India are breaking the monopoly of the West in wireless telecommunications, AI and other emerging technologies.
 - India has also, in the UN, questioned Western domination calling for a "reformed multilateralism".
 - RCEP's **new rules on electronic commerce** could offset losses in declining trade in goods. 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' will leverage indigeneous technological strength, data and population.

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- **Declining power of west:**
 - Despite its military 'pivot' to Asia, the U.S. needs India in the Quad, to counterbalance the spread of China's influence through land-based trade links.
 - With the ASEAN '**code of conduct**' in the South China Sea, both the security and prosperity pillars of the U.S.-led Indo-Pacific construct will be adversely impacted.
- The U.S. Congressional Research Service report identifies four key elements to strengthen its global governance:
 - Global leadership.
 - Defence and promotion of the liberal international order.
 - Defence and promotion of freedom, democracy, and human rights; and
 - Prevention of the emergence of regional hegemony in Eurasia.

What India needs to do?

- **Reduce dependence:** India needs a new strategic doctrine and mindset.
- **Focus on technology transfer:** With the Rafale aircraft purchase, India has recognised that there will be no technology transfer for capital equipment.
- **Modernisation:** Military Theatre Commands should be tasked with border defence giving the offensive role to cyber, missile and special forces based on endogenous capacity, effectively linking economic and military strength.
- **Infrastructure development:** The overriding priority should be infrastructure including electricity and fibre optic connectivity; self-reliance in semiconductors, electric batteries and solar panels; and skill development.
- **Counter china:** Leveraging proven digital prowess to complement the infrastructure of China's Belt and Road Initiative will win friends as countries value multi-polarity.
- **Joining RCEP:** The RCEP already includes India's priorities such as rules of origin, services and e-commerce also RCEP members have expressed their "strong will" to re-engage India, essentially to balance China.

There are compelling geopolitical and economic reasons for India in shaping the Asia-led order, which is not yet China-led, to secure an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

40. India- West Asia

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

Context: Recently, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's visited Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

What is the significance of West Asia to India?

- **Socio economic significance:** Gulf is a source of oil and a destination for labour exports. The UAE alone hosts nearly three million Indian expatriates and the Gulf as a whole hosts large labour force close to eight million.
- **New opportunities in the Gulf:** The Gulf states have embarked on massive economic diversification and are investing in a variety of new projects including renewable energy, higher education, technological innovation, smart cities, and space commerce.
- **Khaleeji Capitalism:** Gulf has become the source of capital that has been built on the massive accumulation of oil revenues over the last few decades. For example,

sovereign wealth funds in the Gulf dominate several regional sectors from banking and finance to infrastructure and logistics etc.

- **Growing political influence:** The Gulf's financial power is increasingly translating into political influence and the ability to shape the broader regional issues in the Middle East. For example, have normalised relations with Israel, growing ability of the Gulf to influence regional conflicts from Afghanistan to Lebanon and from Libya to Somalia.
- **Reforms in Social order:** For example, the UAE recently announced a series of legal changes that make the Emirates an attractive destination for foreign workers such as decriminalization of alcohol use, permission for cohabitation among unmarried couples, criminalization of honour crimes against women, and the institution of long-term visas.
- **Security in Indian ocean:** The UAE currently chairs the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), friendly relation with gulf countries can bring scale and depth to its regional initiatives on connectivity and security in the Indian Ocean.

What are the roadblocks in strengthening India-West Asia ties?

- India's narrow bureaucratic approach towards the Gulf was incapable of a political engagement with the region's interests. For example, India viewed gulf countries through the prism of Pakistan.
- The Indian elite has long viewed the Gulf as a collection of extractive Petro-states run by conservative feudatories.
- There is a wide gap between the investments that the Gulf is ready to offer and India's ability to absorb needs. For example, in 2015, Abu Dhabi committed to invest \$75 billion in India. Still, India is a long distance away from facilitating that scale of investments.
- India provided very little attention to the significant reforms unfolding in the Gulf that seek to reduce the heavy hand of religion on social life, expand the rights of women, widen religious freedoms, promote tolerance, and develop a national identity.

How India's perspectives on the Western Indian Ocean have changed recently?

- From 2015, India has acknowledged the strategic significance of the Indian ocean island states such as mauritius and Seychelles. Since then, South Block has brought Madagascar and Comoros along with Mauritius and Seychelles into the Indian Ocean Division.
- India also unveiled a maritime strategic partnership with France, a resident and influential power in the Western Indian Ocean.
- India became an observer at the Indian Ocean Commission, the regional grouping that brings France's island territory of Reunion together with Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, and Seychelles.
- India has also become an observer to the Djibouti Code of Conduct — a regional framework for cooperation against piracy between the states of the Gulf, the Horn of Africa and East Africa.

With Gulf economies reinventing themselves, India now has every reason to support the Gulf rulers who are trying to reverse course and promote political and social moderation at home and in the region. India needs to discard outdated perceptions of the Gulf and seize the new strategic possibilities with the region.

41. Kerala's new 118A law

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

Context - The Kerala cabinet recommended to the Governor the promulgation of the ordinance to insert Section 118 (A) into the Act.

What is Kerala's new 118A law?

The new Section 118A has been introduced in the Kerala Police Act, 2011.

According to the new law- The state government recommendation to amend the police act says that if the government finds any media platform including social media producing, publishing or propagating content that could threaten, insult or harm an individual

- The amendment proposes three years in prison and a fine of up to ₹ 10,000 for those found guilty.
- The state officials said this would give law enforcers more teeth to prosecute the guilty, media houses said the law could be used to gag them.

Why the law being criticized?

1. **Threat to free speech**- It is being seen as an attempt to stifle not only dissent but also freedom of speech and expression.
 - In 2015, the Supreme Court in the **Shreya Singhal case** had struck down Section 66A of the Information Technology Act and Section 118D of the Kerala Police Act, finding both provisions unconstitutionally vague and thus violative of free speech rights. [Article 19].
2. **Vulnerable to misuse**- The law is unspecific and indistinct and can be indiscriminately misused by individuals or even the government and the police.
3. **Granted the police untrammelled authority**- It empower police to suo motu interpret and deal with “offensive” communication and make arrests without a warrant.
4. Though the Kerala government claims it is to fight cyber-crimes against women, that has not found any mention in the law either.

What is the way forward?

The amendment would reverse the course of media freedom, muzzle free speech and undermine civil liberties.

- The greatest danger of such legislation is that if the Ordinance is not withdrawn by the Kerala government, it will act as an example to other states to frame similar laws of their own.

42. Contribution and Criticism of Supreme Court

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS 2 - Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries.

Context- Criticism is the hallmark of a prosperous democracy, but unfounded and unrestrained criticism is harmful rather than contributive.

Why judiciary is the strongest pillar on which the edifice of Indian democracy stands?

1. India ranks in the top one-third of nations in efficiency of the legal framework to challenge regulations and in judicial independence.
2. At the cost of being criticized for over-interference, the courts have strained to protect the life, liberty and the quality of life of citizens.

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3. India's overburdened judiciary has been epitome of a free and independent judiciary worldwide.
- On the other hand, US Supreme Court only accepts 100-150 of the more than 7,000 cases it is asked to review annually. In 2016-2017, only 92 cases were heard by the UK SC.

How Indian judiciary system is different from Poland, Hungary and Turkey?

1. **In Poland**- The legislative proposal aimed to ban judges from obeying the orders from their own Supreme Court making them liable for prosecution.
2. **In Turkey**- Thousands of Turkey's judges and prosecutors have been sacked or jailed as Erdogan's government wields the judiciary against its opponents.
 - They have been replaced by loyal and inexperienced newcomers, some in their 20s, plunging the courts into crisis.
 - By a new law, most of the 711 judges of the two highest courts will also be removed.
3. **In Hungary** - The Hungarian parliament is planning to establish a government-influenced judiciary system, apart from the ordinary courts, to establish direct political control over the judiciary.

Therefore, such a comparison is unjustified and unfounded to the Indian scenario.

Examples of Supreme Court landmark decision-

- SC ordered floor test within 24 hours in Maharashtra that led to the resignation of Devendra Fadnavis as chief minister.
- Defending LGBTQ and transgender rights.
- SC rules in favour of permanent commission to women officers and guaranteeing them the same terms of employment as men.
- Upheld the supremacy of the RTI Act over the Official Secrets Act.
- SC brought India's most polarising case to a peaceful close through its Ayodhya judgment.

Way forward-

- Judicial barbarism is an extremely unjust and unfair description of the conduct of the Supreme Court.
- **Constructive criticism** – People should try and strengthen institutions with balanced and constructive critique and not slowly nibble at their foundation by constant badgering and berating.

43. India exits RCEP

Source - [Live Mint](#)

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

Context – India's decision to stay out of the China-backed RCEP agreement and its significance.

What is RCEP and its significance?

Launched in 2012, Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership is a trade pact between the 10-member ASEAN bloc, along with China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. However, India had been due to sign but pulled out last year.

Objective-

- The purpose of the deal is to create an **integrated market**.

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- **Mega Trade deal-** It was described as the “largest” regional trading agreement as it covers nearly a third of the global population, contribute over a quarter of world exports and makeup around 30% of the GDP.

Significance of RCEP-

- The agreement simplifies customs procedures and rules-of-origin laws between countries.
- **Low tariff rate-** RCEP countries have agreed to progressively abolish 90% of all tariffs on goods between participating members.
- The agreement focused on diversifying trading partners, solidifying supply chains, and achieving economic and job growth through a pan-regional trade agreement.

What are the reasons for India’s withdrawal from RCEP?

1. **Trade balance paradox-** India has trade deficits with 11 of the 15 RCEP countries, and some experts feel that India has been unable to leverage its existing bilateral free trade agreements with several RCEP members to increase exports.
2. **Dumping of Chinese Goods-** This is the major concern for India, as after signing RCEP cheaper products from China would have flooded the Indian market.
3. **Import might harm domestic producers-** It raised alarm about market access issues, fearing its domestic producers could be hard hit if the country was flooded with cheap Chinese goods.
 - Textiles, dairy, and agriculture were flagged as three vulnerable industries.
4. **Shallow agreement-** RCEP does not contain provision on issues like environmental protections, labour rights or intellectual property.
5. There is no investor-state dispute settlement system in RCEP.
6. **China’s presence-** Apart from economic reasons (fear of dumping), escalating tensions with China are a major reason for India’s hardened position on the deal.

What are the implications of India’s decision of opting out?

1. **Benefits China-** RCEP is a China-backed trade deal, signing it without India will further strengthen China’s economic power.
 - It will affect India’s neighbourhood as China already tries to influence the region through its deep pockets.
2. India remains outside the institutionalized orbit where future discussions, amendments, additions and revisions to RCEP could occur.
 - Such discussions and potential rules will facilitate trade not just between the Asean but the other five.
3. **Losing out on Large Market-** The move could potentially leave India with less scope to tap the large market that RCEP presents.
4. Positive institutional effects of RCEP must not be underestimated as trade patterns evolve in this region. Indian firms will find it tough to adapt to a regional market.

Way forward-

- RCEP’s institutional legacy could have far-reaching effects such as fostering trust, creating standards, fixing gap.
- India’s absence from the Asia-Pacific trade treaty will solidify its insular economic orientation and hurt innovation.

44. India-EU trade

Source- [The Hindu Business Line](#)

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

Context- The recently concluded 15th Summit of India and EU, the broad consensus that emerged is to strengthen the EU-India Strategic Partnership.

India-EU areas of convergence-

- India's largest trading partner, while India is the EU's ninth biggest trading partner.
- India is among the few nations that run a surplus in services trade with the EU.
- Both share similar 'universal values' of democracy, pluralism, respect for international institutions and multilateralism.
- Share common interest in tackling climate change, and building trade.

However, India's exports in the competitive EU market are not doing well such as-

- **Agriculture Commodities-** Apart from processed rice, the share of India's agriculture commodities in EU's import is invariably less than 3 per cent.
- **Marine products** - EU imports more from ASEAN than India despite its longer coastline.
- **Labour intensive products-** Bangladesh exports more such products like apparels and leather products than India.
- **pharmaceutical sector-** EU imports more by-products of same (chemicals, rubber plastic products) from China and ASEAN than India

What are the reasons for lower share of Indian export in the EU market?

1. **High production cost** in India leading to higher import cost in EU market compared to other countries;
2. **High logistics costs and poor connectivity** that make Indian exports uncompetitive in EU market.
3. **Inefficiency in trade facilitation** measures leading to high cost of export or consignments being rejected, which has spill-over effects.
4. India's exports being subjected to **higher para-tariff** in comparison to other countries.
5. **India's exports not meeting the European standard.** Indian products have been rejected/ banned due to failure to comply with EU standards and this legacy is affecting India's exports.

How India can boost EU trade?

1. **Reduction on production cost-** Advance logistics/trade facilitation measures can keep the production cost low which increases the competitiveness.
2. **Better infrastructure-** This leads to lower logistic cost and faster and direct connectivity of consignment to Europe.
3. **Enhancing connectivity-** Facilitating people's mobility and connectivity to improve mutual understanding and create opportunities for innovation and growth.
4. **Following Chinese strategy-** Indian products have been rejected/banned due to failure to comply with EU standard. On the flip side, China produces goods complying with European standards at higher price than what they produce for African/Indian market. This way, China protects their brand value and manages cost.

Way forward-

Indian producer needs to pay much more attention to complying with specific EU market standards.

45. Protecting Article 32

Source: Indian Express

Gs2: Indian Constitution—Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions and Basic Structure.

Context: The Chief Justice of India is reported to have stated during the hearing of journalist Siddique Kappan's bail matter, that the Court was trying to "discourage" recourse to Article 32.

What does article 32 says?

- The right to move the Supreme Court by appropriate proceedings for the enforcement of the rights conferred by this Part is guaranteed.
- CJI M Hidayatullah in Tilokchand (1970) said that what Article 32 does is to keep open "the doors of this court" and requires the state not to put any hindrance to a person seeking to approach the Court.

What are exceptions to the article 32?

- The Court regards Article 32 as a judicial power subject to the **fundamental principles of administration of justice**.
- It does not mean that the Court must ignore and trample under foot all laws of procedure, evidence, limitation, res judicata and the like.
- Justice MP Thakkar and Kanubhai Brahmabhatt observed that time for imposing self-discipline has already come, even if it involves shedding of some amount of institutional ego and to inspire confidence in the litigants that justice will be meted out to them.
- Even if there is a constitutional right to remedies it remains **subject to the discipline of judicial power and process**.
- **Article 33** clearly says that the right will not extend to the members of armed forces.
- Justice Patnaik maintains that the article 33 and 34 will not eclipse the right of a person detained without the authority of law to move for habeas corpus.

How the new facets of article 32 evolved?

- In 1950, it has ruled that powers under Article 32 are not limited to the exercise of prerogative writs.
- In 1987 the Court ruled that it has powers to rule for compensation of violation of fundamental rights.
- In 1999 it said that this power extended to the rectification of its own mistakes or errors.
- The Court has also upheld (in 1997) the 50th amendment enlarging the scope of this article against a challenge of the basic structure of the Constitution.

What are the issues have been raised?

- CJI or the Court as a whole should not suffer from epistemic collapse so as to receive sharp reminders and rebukes from citizen commentators.
- Article 32 does not merely confer wide powers on the Court but also the judicial duty to provide constitutional remedies.
- Lawyers and justices know what distinguishes Article 32 from Article 226 is the very dimension of it. HCs have the **discretion** to act or not to.
- **Article 32 is not absolute**. The Supreme Court decides on what "appropriate proceedings" should be for it to be so moved.

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- **Discrimination in bail** where one case is fast tracked whereas others are consigned to slow moving judicial action.
- **Scandalous judicial delays** and a bold resolution of “who watches the watchman” syndrome demand urgent response.

Article 32 makes the apex court into a “people’s court” and in future we should be able to conclude that the Court did not deliberately dealt deathblows to the “soul” of the Constitution.

46. Power of Pardon

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs2: Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

Context: Recently, US President Donald Trump exercised his powers under the Constitution to pardon Michael Flynn, his former National Security Advisor

What is the extent of the US President’s power to pardon?

- **Constitutional right:** The President of the US has the **constitutional right to pardon** or commute sentences related to federal crimes.
- **No restriction:** The US Supreme Court has held that this power is “**granted without limit**” and cannot be restricted by Congress.
- **Discretionary power:** Clemency is a broad executive power, and is discretionary. The President is not answerable for his pardons, and does not have to provide a reason for issuing one.

What are the limitations?

- Article II, Section 2 of the US Constitution says all Presidents shall have Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offenses against the United States, **except in Cases of Impeachment.**
- The power only applies to **federal crimes and not state crimes.**
- Those pardoned by the President can still be tried under the **laws of individual states.**

What is the frequency of usage of pardoning power during different Presidents?

- In 2017, Trump pardoned former Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who was found guilty of being in **contempt of court** for ignoring a federal judge’s order to stop arresting immigrants solely on the suspicion that they were residing in the US illegally.
- In four years, Trump has granted pardons to 29 people (including Flynn) and 16 commutations.
- President Barack Obama had, during his eight-year tenure, issued 212 pardons and 1,715 commutations.
- The only other President who can be compared with Trump for infrequent use of the power is George H W Bush, who granted 77 clemency requests during his one-term tenure.
- The highest number of clemency grants by a US President (3,796) came during Franklin D Roosevelt’s 12-year tenure, which coincided with World War II.

How Indian President pardons?

- **Not discretionary:** the President has to act on the advice of the Council of Ministers while deciding mercy pleas. These include **Maru Ram vs Union of India in 1980, and Dhananjay Chatterjee vs State of West Bengal in 1994.**

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- **Article 72:** the President shall have the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence where the sentence is a sentence of death.
- **Article 161:** the Governor too has pardoning powers, but these do not extend to death sentences.
- **Executive power with defined procedure:** The President cannot exercise his power of pardon independent of the government. The mercy plea is forwarded to the Home Ministry, seeking the Cabinet's advice. The Ministry forwards this to the concerned state government based on the reply, it formulates its advice on behalf of the Council of Ministers.
- **Final decision making:** Article 74(1) empowers President to return cabinet's advice for reconsideration once. If the Council of Ministers decides against any change, the President has no option but to accept it.

47. India - US future cooperation

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-2- International relations

Context: The future looks bright for U.S.-India trade, but it may not be any easier.

More on news:

- **Constructive stance:** There will be a more constructive stance on multilateral issues in the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- **In bilateral trade policies:** The Biden administration is likely to emphasise enforcement, and that will not differ so much. It is less likely to engage in unilateral tariff increases and more likely to pursue remedies in the WTO.

What are the five likely developments to take place under Biden's rule?

- **Domestic concerns:** Biden plans to focus on domestic concerns first, particularly in implementing a coherent COVID-19 policy.
- Trade aspects may have limited early relevance for a future U.S.-India trade policy.
- **Trade priorities:** As it turns to trade policy, the Biden administration is not likely to place India among its top few priorities.
- Whether it should prioritise concluding Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations with the U.K. in April before the Trade Promotion Authority expires.
- **Other top priorities:**
- Resolving the Airbus-Boeing dispute with the European Union.
- Formulating its approach with China, such as finding alternatives to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership to set new global standards that address China's practices.
- **Trade agreement with India:** The trade deal still pending with the Trump administration remains compelling. There could be an early opportunity to conclude these negotiations.
- This trade agreement could pave the way for later additional small agreements.
- **Trade policy forum:** The Biden administration will see the TPF's value as a venue for more regular discussions on a range of trade issues.
- A refreshed TPF will present new opportunities for the two countries to take up a range of cutting-edge trade issues that will be critical in determining whether the U.S. and India can converge more over time or will drift further apart.
- These include digital trade issues, intellectual property rights and approaches to nurturing innovation, better health sector alignment, and more regular regulatory work on science-based agricultural policies.

Way forward

It will be critical for leadership on both sides to commit to strong efforts to put the trade relationship on a new footing, which will have to involve a 'can-do' attitude to solving problems.

48. Ayush and Ayurveda

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-2- Health

Context: Recently, the Indian Medical systems of Ayurveda, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa and Unani Medicine have identified surgical procedures that can be performed by postgraduate Ayurvedic doctors in Shalya (surgery).

What is the history of Ayurveda and Allopathic practices in India?

- **After Independence:** The Indian state was faced with the difficult task of accommodating both the ascendant modern medicine brought in by the British and India's traditional systems of medicine, notably Ayurveda.
 - **Options:**
 - One was to take the best from all systems and integrate them into one cohesive science. This was possible but not easy as the systems had certain incompatible approaches.
 - For a brief period there actually existed 'integrated' courses, wherein both Ayurveda and Modern medicine were taught to students.
 - These withered away partly due to opposition from purists in Ayurveda who were outraged by the 'dilution' of their science.

Discuss the issues associated with ayurvedic graduates.

- **Ayurvedic graduates experienced an identity crisis:** Many of them had joined the course not for the love of Ayurveda but to get a degree with the honorific 'Dr.' which gave them upward mobility, social status and even value in the marriage market.
- **Their role:** They became resident doctors, intensive care duty doctors and operation theatre assistant surgeons.
 - There is an instance of a homoeopathic graduate manning and training others on the extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, or ECMO, a complex heart lung machine in the largest unit used for critically-ill COVID-19 patients.
 - They work for less pay which allows hospitals to control costs and even make profits.
- **The idea of Ayurvedic surgeons:** In an effort to develop postgraduate programmes, Ayurveda medical colleges developed one in "Shalya" or "surgery".
 - A procedure called 'Kshar Sutra' used for anal fistula was described in Ayurveda texts and has been incorporated in modern medicine.
- **Procedures and complexities**
 - **Indian Medicine Central Council (Post Graduate Ayurveda Education) Amendment Regulations, 2020:** It authorises an MS (Ayurveda) Shalya Tantra, or General Surgery postgraduate degree holder on completion of his course to perform 58 surgical procedures.
 - Some of the procedures in the list are rather complicated. For example, removal of the gallbladder called cholecystectomy.

What can be done?

- **Proper training:** Ayurveda graduates including surgeons are a large workforce in search of an identity. If they are creatively and properly trained, they can play important roles in our health-care system.
- **IMA needs to be constructive:** AYUSH, or Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy, is a priority area for the present government. The IMA in its opposition needs to be precise and constructive.

Way forward

Serious discussion about utilising India's large workforce of non MBBS doctors to improve access to decent health care for our ordinary citizens is required.

49. India's malnutrition challenge

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Context: There is need for an immediate universalisation of the PDS, distribution of quality food items and community kitchens.

What does the recent survey of the Hindu say?

- In this report, a schoolteacher had highlighted how girl students, who took admission in Standard five were relatively **shorter in height** than the previous year's batch of students.
- It was largely integrated with **malnutrition** that is burgeoning.
- Children from impoverished households not being able to have the mid-day meal many a time because of stomach-related problems.

What does the global reports say about malnutrition?

- The annual report on "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020" by the Food and Agricultural Organization and the 2020 Hunger report, "Better Nutrition, Better Tomorrow" by the Bread for the World Institute have stated staggering facts about **Indian food insecurity and malnutrition**.
 - As per PoU and PMSFI India is one of the **most food-insecure countries**, with the highest rates of stunting and wasting among other South Asian countries.
 - The **Prevalence of Undernourishment(PoU)** measures the percentage of people who are consuming insufficient calories than their required minimum dietary energy requirement.
 - The **Prevalence of Moderate or Severe Food Insecurity (PMSFI)** identifies the percentage of people who live in households that are severely or moderately food insecure.
- **Food Insecurity Experience Scale survey**, which covers almost 90% of the world's population but not allowed to be conducted in India.
 - **It** indicates that between 2014-16, about 29.1% of the total population was food insecure, which rose up to 32.9% in 2017-19.
 - About 375 million of the total population was moderately or severely food insecure in 2014, which went to about 450 million in 2019.

What are the issues currently existing?

- **High incidence of malnutrition:** The reduction in poverty has been substantial going but malnutrition has not declined.

- **Poor performance:** In terms of percentages, the PoU has declined 24.7% between 2001 and 2018 for India; other data are China (76.4%), Nepal (74%), Pakistan (42%), Afghanistan (37.4%) and Bangladesh (18.9%).
- **Low consumption:** “Hunger Watch” survey by the Right to Food Campaign says with close to one out of every three respondents reporting low food consumption and massive compromise on food quality.
- **Double-whammy:** States have temporarily expanded their coverage in the wake of the crisis, the problem of malnutrition is likely to deepen in the coming years with rising **unemployment and the deep economic slump**.
- **Non inclusive National Food Security Act, 2013:** there is non-inclusion of nutritious food items such as pulses and exclusion of potential beneficiaries.

What need to be done?

- **Universalisation of the Public Distribution System:** It should focus on the distribution of quality food items and innovative interventions.
- **Focus on nutrition:** United Nations World Food Programme should bring focus back on pressing issues of undernourishment and hunger in India.

The need of the hour is the right utilisation and expansion of existing programmes to arrest at least some part of this burgeoning malnutrition in the country.

50. Post Truth politics

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-2- Democracy

Context: Untroubled by factuality and diversity, privilege and power are shaping public opinion in troubled democracies.

What is the relation between truth and politics?

- **“Factual truth”:** It is a reference to observations by living subjects of constantly changing reality. But factual truth was always prone to challenge as being no more than opinion.
- **“Formal truths”:** On the contrary, it is a part of the received wisdom, such as the proposition that two and two made four.
- **Truth and politics:** Both of them had always been “on rather bad terms with each other” and “truthfulness” was never counted “among the political virtues”.
 - This was a reality with a deep bearing on the practice of politics, since “facts and events”, the outcome of the collective life of humanity, were the “very texture of the political land”.

How is truth altered by deception?

- **Factuality:** The lie in normal circumstances is “defeated by reality”. However large the tissue of falsehood, even when twisted with the help of computers, it would be inadequate to “cover the immensity of factuality”.
- **Radical destruction:** A fact could be removed from the world if a sufficient number of people believe in its non-existence.
 - But this would require a process of “radical destruction”, an experiment that totalitarian regimes had undertaken with frightening consequences, though without the intended result of “lasting deception”.

What is the role of social media?

- **The role of social media:** Earlier modes of harvesting attention and securing assent for a particular perception of reality have been transformed in this intensely networked situation.

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- Since the events of 2016, notably the United Kingdom's Brexit referendum and Donald Trump's election as the U.S. President, social media has come in for intense scrutiny for its ability to create bubbles of political misinformation.
- The economist, Raghuram Rajan, and the philosopher, Michael Sandel, have in recent times pointed out how daily lives in the U.S. today are increasingly about sameness, less about exposure to diversities of culture and social perception.
- It is a context that enables particular population units to pretend that other worlds do not exist, that their perceptions, fortified in regular "check ins" with social media, are all that matter.
 - **Customary deliberative processes have been dispensed with:** Parliament sessions conclude without the Question Hour and consultative meetings across party lines over significant legislative initiatives have been scrapped.

Way forward

Public opinion in democracies is now fashioned within cocoons of privilege and power, untroubled by factuality or diversities in perception. The U.S. seems to have tapped the sources of countervailing power to neutralise this drift towards a world of alternative truths.

51. Impact of COVID-19 on tribal communities

Source- [Down To Earth](#)

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

Context - The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on forest community and their spirited efforts to tackle it.

What are the problems faced by forest community during COVID-19?

1. **Losses of livelihood and shelter**-Due to sudden lockdown, the forest-dwelling communities who got stuck in the cities without any support system, shelter, food or water.
 - The lockdown measures have badly affected wage employment for tribal communities.
2. **Lack of health infrastructure**- The absence of healthcare facilities in tribal areas posing a serious threat to the tribal population.
3. **Problems accessing the PDS**- poor access to public distribution system among tribal people and other traditional forest dwellers during the lockdown.
4. **Loss of forest products collection season** - The other major challenge faced by tribal communities during the lockdown was the collection, use and sale of minor forest produce (MFP) with April-June being a peak season for generating their income.
 - According to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, around 100 million forest dwellers depend on MFP for food, shelter, medicines and having cash with them.
5. Tribals were not able to get direct cash benefits as they did not have bank accounts or banks were located in remote locations.

What are the government interventions to resolve the situation?

- **Revision in MSP** - The Centre recently revised the minimum support price for 49 MFPs to provide relief to tribal groups amid the lockdown. It urged states to speed up procurement operations for MFP
- FRA title holders are entitled to an additional 50 days of work under employment guarantee schemes.

How forest dwelling communities are braving the pandemic?

Examples indicate that these communities have coped with the crisis with remarkable resilience.

Case studies documented- Local communities and gram sabhas better understand the local complexities than local administrations while dealing with a crisis as presented by COVID-19.

- In each village, the Community Forest Rights Management Committees (CFRMCs) members identified families that were starving due to no income and provided ration to them.
- **Holistic COVID-19 governance plan-** Gram sabhas encouraged local and forest-based food security, thereby preventing crowding in market places.
- **Use of local knowledge** - Many communities were able to survive on a diverse range of forest foods during the lockdown as they had been regenerating their natural forests for over four decades.
- Women played the leading role in the gram sabhas, organising systems to work with social distancing.
- In many tribal communities, they made face masks of leaves to cover their faces due to non-availability of protective masks in the areas.

Way forward

- The above examples lead to an understanding that community empowerment, particularly by ensuring tenure security and devolving natural resource governance and management power, can restore ecosystems, create sustainable economies and community resilience to cope with the natural and human-induced calamities such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Government need to learn from these stories of resilience and works towards effective implementation of the FRA.
- The Centre should provide state governments with adequate financial resources to ensure tribal communities and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers receive cash entitlements.

52. Social registry, for better targeting of welfare schemes

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

Context: A social registry linking Aadhaar to residence info can target aid to the vulnerable during a pandemic.

What is the need for Social registry?

- Recent estimates from the World Bank suggest that 88 to 115 million people could slide into poverty in 2020, which presents a tough challenge for targeting welfare beneficiaries.
- It also emphasises the need for post-disaster revalidation of any existing social registration database.

Case study: challenge of targeting welfare beneficiaries: Examples from India and US welfare programs

The case of US:

- Few months back, the US government enacted the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act that sends \$1,200 to each individual below the income

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threshold of \$75,000 to provide relief on account of the COVID-19 to poor and middle-class individuals and to stimulate the economy.

- However, according to The Washington Post millions of households were yet to receive their stimulus payments.
- The reason is, account information was available only for taxpayers who received their refunds in their bank accounts whereas, for the poor, whose incomes were below the income threshold, the authorities find difficulty in reaching them leading to exclusion from safety nets.

India's Case:

- Under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY), an ex-gratia payment of Rs 500 was credited to women Jan Dhan account holders.
- Similarly, Farmers registered for PM-KISAN also received Rs 2,000 in their accounts immediately.
- However, the money did not reach the most vulnerable households. For example, recipients of PM-KISAN were not amongst the poorest households. Data from round-3 of the NCAER Delhi Coronavirus Telephonic Survey (DCVTS-3), suggests that 21 per cent of farm households received transfers through PM-KISAN. However, 42 per cent of such households belonged to the wealthiest.
- Similarly, for the PMJDY payment, BPL and non-BPL households record similar receipt transfers. For example, nearly half of poor women are unlikely to receive PMJDY transfers.

What can we learn from these observations?

- Authorities need a registry containing data about individuals and the individual must have a functioning bank accounts for money to be transferred expeditiously.
- However, registries based on specific criteria (for example, identified BPL households) may not identify individuals most vulnerable to crises.
- The reason for this is, factors that contribute towards alleviating poverty may differ from the ones that push people into it that pose a challenge of targeting welfare beneficiaries.
- For example, about 40 per cent of the poor in 2012 were pushed into poverty by special circumstances and would not have been classified as being poor based on their 2005 conditions.

Can, the Universal social protection schemes can solve the problem of exclusion errors in welfare targeting?

- It will lead to serious fiscal impacts if expanded nationwide because most disasters are geographically clustered.
- For example, Floods or earthquakes often devastate a few districts not all, similarly pandemics may affect densely-populated cities more than villages.
- Hence Universal social protection schemes can benefit the well off more than the needy.

What is the way forward?

- Need to set up social registries that identify individuals, their place of residence, and their bank accounts, these linkages can be used to transfer funds to everyone living in the affected area quickly.

- Aadhaar linkages of individuals and bank accounts already exist. If residential information in the Aadhaar database can be efficiently structured, this would allow for geographic targeting.

Any social registry that can serve as a potential beneficiary platform for safety nets inherently runs the risk of violating individual privacy. To avoid privacy issues, such social registries can be allowed to store only basic information such as location, instead of more sensitive identifiers.

53. Supreme Court on Protecting Rights of People

News: The Supreme Court has pronounced its reasons for granting interim bail to Republic TV editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami in connection with the abetment of suicide case against him.

Facts:

Key Takeaways from the Judgement:

- **Protect Personal Liberty:** The Supreme Court called on judges to protect personal liberty and the right of ordinary people to bail saying liberty is not a gift for the few and deprivation of liberty even for a single day is one day too many.
- **Importance of Bail:** The apex court invoked the case of State of Rajasthan, Jaipur v Balchand and referred to Justice Krishna Iyer's statement that "basic rule of our criminal justice system is bail, not jail".
- **Courts as first line of Defence:** The Courts must ensure that they continue to remain the first line of defence when citizens liberty is deprived. But in reality, undertrials remained behind bars while their bail applications were lobbed from one rung of courts to another.
- **Pending Bail Pleas:** The court highlighted that 91,568 bail pleas were pending in High Courts, while 1.96 lakh bail applications continued to wait for a hearing in the district courts. Hence, it urged the judges in charge of these courts to utilise tools at their disposal to address this pendency.
- **Importance of District Courts:** The district courts are only subordinate in hierarchy. It is less to none when it comes to saving the lives of citizens or doing justice for them. Hence, the district judiciary must be alive to the situation as it prevails on the ground – in the jails and police stations where human dignity has no protector.

General Studies Paper - 3

General Studies - 3

1. Air India Strategic Sale

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

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

Background

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

What are the new changes?

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

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

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

2. Platform workers and their issues

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

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

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

Definition of Platform work according to new law-

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

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

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

What are the issues with new labour code?

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

Discuss the role of platform worker amidst the pandemic.

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

Way Forward

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

3. RBI's governance

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Way forward-

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

4. Divestment in fossil fuels

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Context: The divestment movement against fossil fuels.

What do you mean by Divestment movement in Fossil fuels?

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

What is the role of Climate activist in divestment process?

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

What are the challenges?

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

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

What is the way forward?

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

5. India's income crisis

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-3- Economy

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

What are the solutions to this income crisis?

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

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

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

What are the steps to be taken?

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

Way forward

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

6. Cancer treatment – Palliative care

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

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

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

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

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

What are the possible solutions of dealing cancer?

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

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

What is the way forward?

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

7. Infra investment

Source: The Live Mint

Syllabus: GS-3- Economics

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

What were the problems highlighted in the MOSPI report?

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

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

What are the steps to be taken?

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

Way forward

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

8. Crucial expertise of CAPFs

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-3- Security

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

Discuss the role of CAPFs during the pandemic?

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

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

What steps can be taken?

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

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

9. COVID-19, climate and carbon neutrality

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-3- Environment

Context: Environmental problems have profound public health consequences both in terms of morbidity and mortality and hence demand urgent actions in the post covid-19 world.

How are environment and public health inter-related?

- **Human intrusions:** Evidence has gathered that loss of biodiversity and ever-increasing human intrusions into the natural world have contributed heavily to the outbreak and spread of epidemic diseases.
- **The three Es: evolution, ecology and the environment** will be key to identifying potential pandemics.
 - COVID-19 also reinforces the need to pay far greater attention to the biosciences that underpin agriculture, health and the environment that are going to be deeply impacted by the current pandemic.
- **Environmental problems** such as air pollution, water pollution, chemical contamination, deforestation, waste generation and accumulation, land degradation and excessive use of pesticides all have deep public health consequences.
- **The traditional 'grow now, pay later' model** is not only unsustainable in the medium- to long-term but also dangerous to public health in the short term.
- **A report of the Ministry of Earth Sciences** called 'Assessment of climate change over the Indian region' points to the need for making our future science and technology strategy in different areas with an understanding of the impacts of climate change caused by continued emissions of greenhouse gases.

- **The depletion of the ozone layer** has been fixed more or less, but HFCs are a potent threat from a climate change perspective since their global warming potential is a thousand times that of carbon dioxide.

What is carbon neutrality?

- Carbon neutrality refers to that situation when carbon emissions are equal to absorptions in carbon sinks, of which forests are one.
- Carbon neutrality, is a far bolder and worthwhile goal, the attainment of which has to be consciously engineered.
- It will involve massive scientific invention and technological innovation especially when it comes to removing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

Way forward

- India can and should show to the world how the measurement of economic growth can take place while taking into account both ecological pluses and minuses.

10. Foreign Investment in India

Source- The Hindu

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

Context- Prime Minister has chaired the Virtual Global Investor Roundtable (VGIR), with an aim to attract investment.

What Virtual Global Investor Roundtable (VGIR) 2020 conference?

It is an exclusive dialogue between leading global institutional investors, Indian business leaders and the highest decision-makers from the Government of India and Financial Market Regulators.

- **Organized by-** Ministry of Finance and the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF).
- **Focus for 2020-** Discussions around India's economic and investment outlook, structural reforms and the government's vision for the path to a USD 5 trillion economy by 2024-25.

Key highlights of the conference-

- **National Infrastructure Pipeline-** Under it, India has an ambitious plan to invest USD 1.5 trillion in various social and economic infrastructure projects, aimed for faster economic growth and alleviation of poverty in the country.
- **India as safest investment hub-** Prime minister in this conference pitched India as the ideal destination and the country offered returns with reliability, demand with democracy, stability with sustainability and growth with a green approach.

What are the challenges for revival of investment?

1. Low FDI inflow in India –Contraction in investment since July-September quarter in 2019 and then the Pandemic has caused a further shock.

- **Fixed investment** has continues to face an uncertain outlook given the weak consumption because of the Demand shock caused by pandemic.
- **Lack of funds-** the government's ability to apportion more funds for growth-spurring capital projects is hamstrung by a widening fiscal deficit amid border stand-off, the health crisis and revenue shortfall.

2. The three-fourths of FDI equity inflows in 2019-20 fiscal-year being accounted by single large telecom company, a bulk of this investment is unlikely to manifest as new job-creating factories or businesses.
3. **Lack of policy stability** - Bureaucratic procedures and corruption continue to make India less attractive to foreign investors.
4. **Infrastructure** is also one of the issues that need to be addressed.

Possible solutions

- **Assurance of stability**- India needs to ensure that assurance of stability is buttressed by actions that dispel investors' concerns over unstable policy.

11. Unemployment

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-3- Economics

Context: It is for the first time that unemployment has become a big issue in Bihar assembly elections.

What are the issues?

- **Impact of lockdown:** The economy contracted severely, Bihar saw millions of poor migrant labours returning home as U.P. and Bihar have a disproportionately high number of out-migrants.
- **Joblessness an issue this election:** An opposition leader promised 10 lakh government jobs in his first Cabinet meeting, if made Chief Minister; the Janata Dal (United)/BJP countered him by promising to create 19 lakh new jobs.
- **Labour force:** For nearly 10 years after 2003, GDP growth averaged more than 7% per annum. Non-agricultural jobs in India were generated at a rate of 7.5 million per annum. But only 2 million of the youth were joining the labour force (as enrolment in schools/ colleges was increasing).
- New non-agricultural jobs pulled over 5 million per annum out of agriculture and into construction and other work, where Bihari and U.P. labour got absorbed in large numbers.
- **Demonetisation** and the reluctance to competently handle the non-performing assets crisis sent the economy into a downward spiral.
- **Unemployment rise:** The number of unemployed educated youth and a disheartened labour force (youth who completed education and training but were still neither in jobs nor searching for jobs actively) increased to unprecedented levels by 2018.
- **Self-employment decline:** It is clear that despite the government's measures (example, MUDRA) to promote self-employment, the number of youths engaged as self-employed declined from 81 million to 63 million between 2005 and 2012 and further to 49 million between 2012 and 2018.
 - This is despite 95% of MUDRA loans being in the smallest Shishu category. The Ministry of Labour's MUDRA study in 2018 had already demonstrated this fact.
- **Actual government jobs:** Only about 7% of the total employment is created in the government, including the public sector undertakings (NSS, 2017-18).
- Of the total 465 million jobs in India, about 260 million are created in non-farm (in the industry and services) sectors, of which only 34 million are created in the government sector.
- The Central government tried to create a myth that the self-employed can create enough jobs.

What are the steps to be taken?

- **Private sector employment** through appropriate government policy is crucial.
- **Measures are needed to fill the vacant government posts.** There has been a massive decline of government sector job growth from 1.3 million per annum from 2005 to 2012 to only 0.4 million per annum from 2012 to 2018.
- **The National Education Policy 2020 is likely to increase the supply** of vocationally trained youth due to the expansion of vocational training curricula at the school level, it will have no impact on the labour demand conditions of the industries.
- **Supplementary measures** including development of infrastructure and local industrialisation are necessary.
- **The focus will have to be on two kinds of jobs.** First, the health and education sectors and the police and the judiciary have too few government staff. These are sectors where the new government can expand government jobs.

Way forward

- In all governments, State and Central, the share of Groups C and D jobs is an overwhelming 89%, leaving 11% of jobs for Groups A and B. With such few managerial or professional staff, it is impossible to run any government. Post-pandemic, most States will need to increase spending on public health.

12. Cold chain infra for covid vaccine

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-3- Economics

Context: India must improve its cold chain infrastructure to avail benefits of new vaccines

Elaborate about the potential covid-19 vaccine by Pfizer?

- **Potential covid vaccine:** Multinational drug company Pfizer has announced promising results from its ongoing phase-3 trial of a potential COVID-19 vaccine.
- **Effectiveness in trials:** Pfizer, which is using a vaccine candidate by German firm BioNTech, had disclosed in September that for a vaccine to be judged 60% effective, 164 volunteers would have to contract COVID-19.
- **Sample size:** The claim of 90% is based on a sample of 94 volunteers but it is not known how many belonged to either group. It is also unclear if those who were eventually infected, manifested mild or moderate severity of disease.
- **Awaited result:** There is still time to be reliably sure that the results actually hold up in a wider population.
- **There are no large phase-3 trials** of the 'Covishield' by the Serum Institute or 'Covaxin' by Bharat Biotech Ltd vaccine in India.
- **India's access to vaccine:** While there were early discussions with Pfizer, there is as yet no confirmation on whether India can be assured of early access to even a fraction of the vaccine output in the event it is readied.
- **m-RNA technology:** The vaccine candidate is based on an m-RNA technology, which avoids the use of an infectious particle, such as a portion of the virus, and uses a piece of RNA that is then made into an antigen by the body's own machinery.
- **Faster production:** It also does not need to be cultured in chicken eggs or other mammalian cells, allowing it be made faster and more inexpensively.
- **Optimum temperature required:** They also reportedly need to be refrigerated to nearly minus 70°C and India, with its limited cold chain infrastructure, lacks efficient vaccine storage capacity.

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- **Basic strategy:** It shows that scientists' basic strategy of developing a vaccine to target the spike protein of the virus is correct and given that this is an approach most vaccine developers are following, the chances of several encouraging results are high.
- **Moderna, also employs an m-RNA based approach,** it is likely that the new vaccine platform may prove to be a breakthrough approach in developing future vaccines.

Way forward

- India must keep a close watch on such platform-technology and develop expertise. It must also not lose an opportunity to improve its cold chain infrastructure which currently is developed only for rudimentary vaccines.

13. 15th Finance commission report

Source- The Hindu

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

Context - The Fifteenth Finance Commission led by Chairman N K Singh, submitted its Report to the President of India.

What are the key highlights of the latest report?

The Fifteenth Finance Commission led by Chairman N. K. Singh submitted its report for the period 2021-2026 to President of India. As per the Terms of Reference (ToR), the Commission was mandated to give its recommendations for five years, i.e., 2021-2026.

- Title of the report - '**Finance Commission in COVID Times**' and the scales are used to represent the balance between the States and the Union.
- The report is divided into four volumes.
- The Report is devoted to the Union Government and contains key departments in greater depth, with the medium-term challenges and the roadmap ahead.
- After the report is tabled in the Parliament, it will be available in the public domain.

Which issues are addressed in the report?

1. The Commission submitted its report on vertical and horizontal tax devolution, local government grants, disaster management grant, incentives for States in many areas such as power sector, adoption of DBT, solid waste management etc.
2. The Commission also submitted its report on whether a separate mechanism for funding of defence and internal security ought to be set up and if so how such a mechanism could be operationalized.

What are the key points in the report that can impact states revenue share?

1. The Commission has addressed all its unique terms of reference such as considering a new non-lapsable fund for financing national security and defence spending, and offering performance incentives for States that deliver on reforms.
2. The Fifteenth Finance Commission has considered the 2011 population along with forest cover, tax effort, area of the state, and "demographic performance" to arrive at the states' share in the divisible pool of taxes.

States issues-

- **Cutbacks in devolution** - Centre has systematically cut the share of States in taxes raised by the Union government.

- **Shrinking of divisible pool-** Centre has reduced the pool of funds to be shared with the States by shifting from taxes to cesses and surcharges.

Way forward-

The Centre can reduce States' fears further by tabling the report soon so that any anxieties can be debated and laid to rest, and States can also plan upcoming Budgets with less uncertainty.

14. Lessons from Vietnam and Bangladesh

Source: The Hindu

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

Context: Learning through the success stories of Vietnam and Bangladesh

More in News

- Bangladesh has become the second largest apparel exporter after China.
- Vietnam's exports in apparel sector has grown by about 240% in the past eight years.

Vietnam's success stories

- **Duty free exports:** Signing of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with important trading partners like the U.S., the EU, China, Japan, South Korea and India makes their product competitive.
- **Incentives to foreign firms:** Mending domestic laws to allow Foreign firms to compete for local businesses. For example, EU firms can open shops, enter the retail trade, and bid for both government and private sector tenders. They can take part in electricity, real estate, hospital, defence, and railways projects etc.
- **Cheap labour:** over the year's large brands such as Samsung, Canon, Foxconn, H&M, Nike, Adidas, and IKEA have shifted to Vietnam to manufacture their products owing to reduced costs.

Bangladesh Success story

- **Duty free exports:** Large export of apparels to the EU and the U.S. make the most of the country's export. The EU allows the duty-free import of apparel and other products from least developed countries (LDCs) like Bangladesh.
- **Supporting large firms:** Because large firms are better positioned to invest in brand building, meeting quality requirements, and marketing. Whereas Small firms begin as suppliers to large firms and eventually grow.

What are the challenges for Vietnam and Bangladesh?

- **Lacks diversification:** For example, Most of Vietnam's exports happen in five sectors.
- **Limited Investment sourcing:** Due to Lack of developed domestic and capital market.
- **Duty free markets:** Bangladesh may lose its LDC status in four to seven years as its per capita income rises.
- **Small gains:** For example, most of Vietnam's electronics exports are just the final assembly of goods produced elsewhere. In such cases, national exports look large, but the net dollar gain is small.
- **Vulnerability:** high dependence on exports brings dollars but also makes a country vulnerable to global economic uncertainty.

What are the lessons for India?

- Promote manufacturing and investment by setting up sectoral industrial zones with pre-approved factory spaces.
- Following an open trade policy, signing balanced FTAs, restricting unfair imports, and supporting a healthy mix of domestic champions and MNCs.
- While export remains a priority the focus is should be on organic economic growth through innovation and competitiveness.
- Reforms to promote innovation and lowering the cost of doing business.

15. Firecrackers ban ahead of festival season.

Source- The Hindu

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

Context- National Green Tribunal bans firecrackers in place where air quality is poor.

What are the guidelines of National Green Tribunal for firecrackers?

- **The National Green Tribunal (NGT) directed** that there would be a total ban on sale or use of all kinds of firecrackers between November 10 and 30 in places where air quality is 'poor' and above category.
- **About Green crackers-** NGT also directed that in places where the ambient air quality fell under the 'moderate' or below category, only green crackers would be permitted to be sold and timings restricted to two hours for bursting.
- The panel specified that data from November 2019 would be calculated to ascertain the average ambient air quality for both the instances.
- The Tribunal in its order noted that Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Delhi and Chandigarh among others had prohibited the sale and use of firecrackers to protect vulnerable groups.

What is the impact of air pollution on COVID-19?

1. **COVID-19** –The potential modes of transmission of COVID-19 is through ambient air by droplets which carry the viruses. Changes in the environment will affect the transmission of the infection. Air pollution is one of the elements that can change the environment. So air pollution can indirectly influence the transmission.
 - 40% of all pollution-linked deaths attributed to bad air quality in leading emerging economies and some evidence from the U.S. on higher COVID-19 mortality in highly polluted areas.

What are the concerns of the fireworks industry?

- The ban on firecrackers by some state governments has come as a double blow for the fireworks industry in Tamil Nadu, which cater to 90 per cent of the demand in the country, as they have already been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Disbursement of salaries** to employees and uncertainty whether the units would receive payment for stocks already sent to states like Rajasthan and Haryana before the ban was announced.

Way forward-

- A compensation scheme for workers and suitable relief for firecracker producers may be necessary.
- Longer-term solution might lie in broad basing economic activity by reducing reliance on firecrackers.
- All State pollution control boards and committees must take special initiative to contain air pollution by regulating all other sources of pollution.

16. The cost of clearing the air

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-3- Environment

Context: In February, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a ₹4,400 crore package for 2020-21 to tackle air pollution in 102 of India's most polluted cities.

More on news:

- The funds would be used to reduce particulate matter by 20%-30% from 2017 levels by 2024 under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).
- It was the largest yearly allocation by a government to specifically tackle air pollution.

What is the scale of the problem?

- **Unclear scale:** It is unclear if this amount is adequate to handle the task of improving air quality. Delhi, after being the epitome of pollution, has only in the last two years managed to firmly install an extensive network of continuous ambient air quality monitors.
 - About 37 and the highest in the country managed by several government or allied bodies.
 - It has also managed to conduct source apportionment studies to determine the degree of pollution that is contributed by its own activities (construction, road dust, vehicle movement) and that brought on from external sources such as stubble burning. Though the data is not enough.
- **Insufficient allocations:** The taxpayer money that has actually gone into it far exceeds allocations that find mention in the Centre and State government's budgeting books.
- **Funds expenditure:** Several of the States with the most polluted cities that have been allotted NCAP funds are expected to spend a substantial fraction in the act of measurement. Maharashtra and U.P., by virtue of their size, got the maximum funds: close to ₹400 crore.
- **An analysis by research agencies :**Carbon Copy and Respirer Living Sciences recently found that only 59 out of 122 cities had PM 2.5 data available.
- **Use of manual machine:** Cities have used manual machines to measure specified pollutants and their use has been inadequate. Only three States, had all their installed monitors providing readings from 2016 to 2018.
 - Prior to 2016, data aren't publicly available making comparisons of reduction strictly incomparable.
- **Manual machine replacement:** Now manual machines are being replaced by automatic ones and India is still largely reliant on imported machines though efforts are underway at institutions such as the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur to make and install low-cost ones.

Do these budgetary allocations help?

- **Budgetary allocations alone don't reflect the true cost :**
 - A Right to Information disclosure sourced by the research agencies revealed that for four cities in Maharashtra ₹40 crore had been assigned.
 - Pollution clean-up activities have been assigned 50% of this budget and another ₹11 crore are allotted for mechanical street sweepers.
 - Depending on the specific conditions in every city, these proportions are likely to change.

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- **In the case of the National Capital Region:** at least ₹600 crore was spent by the Ministry of Agriculture over two years to provide subsidised equipment to farmers in Punjab and Haryana and dissuade them from burning paddy straw.
- Yet this year, there have been more farm fires than the previous year and their contribution to Delhi's winter air remain unchanged.

Way forward

- While funds are critical, proper enforcement, adequate staff and stemming the sources of pollution on the ground are vital to the NCAP meeting its target.

17. Covid19 Vaccine

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs3: Science and Technology- Developments and their Applications and Effects in Everyday Life.

Context: The US-based pharma company Pfizer Inc and German biotech company BioNTech today announced their mRNA-based covid vaccine candidate, BNT162b2, against coronavirus has demonstrated evidence of efficacy against COVID-19.

Background

- Earlier in August, the results of the Pfizer vaccines Phase-1 trial were announced. It showed that the vaccine was capable of inducing neutralising antibodies and specific T cell responses in younger and older adults.
- In the Phase-3 trial, ninety-four confirmed cases of COVID-19 in trial participants were evaluated and the results seems to be encouraging.
- The endpoint to evaluate vaccine efficacy is when 164 trial participants get infected, irrespective of whether they received the vaccine or a placebo.
- The company expects that endpoint to be reached by the end of this month.
- Also note that apart from Pfizer Inc Moderna and NIAID are also at advanced Phase-3 trial, and uses the same mRNA platform. It is likely that these vaccines too may show similar outcomes.
- The Oxford University vaccine too produced immune responses similar to Pfizer's in early stage trials and is expected to show positive results in Phase-3 trial.

What are the findings from the Phase-3 trial?

- Over 90% effectiveness is reported against symptomatic infection.
- It is also observed that the protection is achieved 28 days after administration of the first dose of vaccines.

Why caution is needed?

- The nature of infection that the vaccine can protect is not clearly demonstrated i.e. mild, moderate or severe.
- Also, the interim results do not reveal how effective the vaccine is in older adults, who are more likely to progress to severe disease and even die.
- The duration of the protection after getting vaccinated is also not known.
- It is likely that the effectiveness might change as more cases get reported. However, 90% effectiveness demonstrated is way high than the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) cut off of 50% required to prevent disease or decrease disease severity.
- The inability of the vaccine to prevent asymptomatic infection will reduce the ability to prevent transmission of disease.

18. Future of the federal framework

Source- The Indian Express

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

Context- The role of the Finance Commission as a neutral arbiter in the Centre-state relation in achieving the delicate balance.

What are the key highlights of the latest report?

The Fifteenth Finance Commission led by Chairman N. K. Singh submitted its report for the period 2021-2026 to President of India.

Title of the report – ‘Finance Commission in COVID Time’s and the scales are used to represent the balance between the States and the Union.

Significance of report-

- a) The report will determine how India’s fiscal architecture is reshaped.
- b) And how Centre-state relations are reset as the country attempts to recover from the COVID-19 shock

What are the key points in the report that can impact states revenue share?

1. The 15th Finance Commission, in its interim report had said, ‘There is merit in ensuring **funds for defence and internal security** and this will receive appropriate consideration in our final report.’
 - This had led to speculation that states will have to contribute to such a fund, in turn leading to a drop in their share of central government’s taxes.
2. **Southern Indian states complaining** their efforts to control population would go against them. This is because the terms of reference of the 15th Finance Commission included using the 2011 census to suggest devolution of taxes to states.
 - The 15th FC has considered the 2011 population along with forest cover, tax effort, area of the state, and “demographic performance” to arrive at the states’ share in the divisible pool.

What are the States issues?

Recommendation of 14th Finance commission- The commission had recommended for an increase in the share of the States in total tax revenues from 32% to 42%. However, states’ share never touched 42 per cent of tax collections due to-

- **Dominance of Centre-** The Centre is trying to claw back the fiscal space ceded to the states and assert its dominance over the country’s fiscal architecture. Central government spending has risen on items that lie in the state and concurrent lists.
- **Shrinking of divisible pool-** Centre has reduced the pool of funds to be shared with the States by shifting from taxes to cesses and surcharges, revenue from which is not shared with the states.

Way forward-

- Finance Commission has to play an important role in achieving the delicate balance in the conflicting domain of finance by addressing the concerns of both the players.
- The Centre can reduce States’ fears by tabling the report without delay, and address any apprehensions it may give rise to.

19. Atmanirbhar Bharat

Source: Indian Express

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

Context: Making India self-reliant India or Atmanirbhar Bharat

What are the current economic challenges faced by India?

- The supply chain disruption due to national and localised lockdowns has led to supply side and demand side contraction.
- Slowdown of aggregate demand due to low, private final consumption expenditure (PFCE), investment and exports.
- Even, the consumption demand of the rest of the demography from agriculture, small-scale manufacturing and self-employed is stagnant due to low income growth.
- The investment slowdown is affecting industries like steel, cement and power and income, employment and demand.
- Along with these constraints, India has huge developmental implications on poverty, inequality and standard of living.

What are advantages for India in present labour market?

- **All other manufacturing giants are ageing:** For example, Japan, EU, the US, South Korea and China. Ageing population has forced them to move out of low-end labor-intensive manufacturing.
- **China's lost advantage:** Due to a rise in wages, strict environmental regulations and an increase in the cost of production along with the uncertainties due to China's friction with the US and other countries.

How to ensure Atmanirbhar Bharat?

- **Incentivising the farming community:** Need to shift from grain-based farming to cash crops, horticulture and livestock products. For example, the Chinese experience in the late 1970s has shown that reforms in agriculture increased rural income, leading to demand for labor-intensive industrial goods.
- **Exploiting the demographic dividend:** India has around 900 million people in the working-age population with an average age of 27.
- **Shift the labour force from agriculture to manufacturing:** For this, labour-intensive manufacturing should be promoted that can generate employment opportunities for labour force with low or little skills, along with income and demand.
- **Create a competitive manufacturing sector:** Need to aggressively reduce both tariffs and non-tariff barriers on imports of inputs and intermediate products that will create a competitive manufacturing sector for Make in India, and "Assembly in India".
- **Ensure free flow of Investments:** Attracting multinational enterprises and foreign investors in labour-intensive manufacturing will facilitate R&D, branding, exports, etc.
- **Market reforms:** By rationalizing punitive land acquisition clauses and rationalizing labour laws, both at the Centre and state level.
- **Human capital development:** Need for a large-scale vocational training from the secondary-school level, like China and other east and south-east Asian countries.

The COVID-triggered economic crisis can be an opportunity for India if we create a development model that brings opportunities for the people at the bottom of the pyramid. A competitive and open economy can ensure Atmanirbhar Bharat

20. 3RD Stimulus package

Source- The Indian Express

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

Context- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the next set of stimulus package to boost the coronavirus-hit economy.

What are the key highlights of 3rd stimulus package?

Union Finance Minister on recently announced a third stimulus package to help pull the Covid-19-battered economy. The FM announced 12 measures under Atmanirbhar Bharat3.0 which includes-

1. Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana.
2. Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) 2.0.
3. Atmanirbhar Manufacturing Production-Linked Incentives for 10 champion sectors.
4. To boost demand in Real Estate sector, relief for home buyers and sellers.
5. Support for construction and Infrastructure- Relaxation of EMDs and Performance Security on government tenders.
6. Income tax relief for homebuyers and developers.
7. Infrastructure Debt Financing.
8. Support for Agriculture.
9. Boost for rural employment.
10. Boost for Project Exports.
11. Capital and Industrial Stimulus.
12. Research and Development grant for Covid-19 vaccine.

Previously announced package-

1. **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKP)** - The government had announced Rs 1.70 lakh crore during March to protect the poor and vulnerable sections from the impact of COVID-19 crisis.
2. **The Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan package-** The stimulus of Rs 20.97 lakh crore in May, largely focused on supply-side measures and long-term reforms.

What are the key areas of focus of this fiscal package?

1. Incentivizing job creation-

- **Boost formal sector employment-**Providing incentives to EPFO-registered firms to hire more employees could lead to job creation. Formalization of the existing informal work force in urban areas.
- **MGNREGA boost-** Further additional outlay of Rs 10,000 crores will be provided for PM Garib Kalyan Rozgar Yojana in the current financial year.

2. To boost demand in Real estate sector –

- Rs 18,000 crores additional outlay for PM Awas Yojana (Urban) over the Budget Estimates for 2020-21. This is over and above Rs 8,000 core already this year.
- This will help 12 lakh houses to be grounded and 18 lakhs to be complemented.
- The scheme will also guarantee additional jobs to 78 lakhs.

3. To boost manufacturing production-

- Production Linked Incentives with proposed expenditure of ₹1.46 lakh crore over five years will be offered to ten stressed sectors to boost domestic manufacturing.
- And create an efficient domestic manufacturing ecosystem.

4. To Research and Development grant for Covid-19 vaccine-

- Rs 900 crores provided for Covid-19 Suraksha Mission for the development of the Indian vaccine to the Department of Biotechnology.

5. Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) 2.0-

- EECLG 2.0 for MSMEs, businesses, MUDRA borrowers and individuals (loans for business purposes), has been extended till March 31, 2021.

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- Under this credit scheme, banks will be able to lend to stressed sectors from 26 sectors identified by the K.V. Kamath committee earlier this year.
- The new scheme will have a 1-year moratorium and 5 years of repayment.

What are the challenges to India's economic recovery according to RBI?

- The foremost risk stems from the global economy now at risk from the second wave of COVID-19.
- The Second major risk is the stress that has been intensifying among households and corporations

Way forward-

- Ensuring credit off-take of previously announced schemes amongst the poorest sections must be a priority.
- Forcing banks to lend to companies where assessing risk has become a challenge due to the pandemic puts banks at a bigger risk.

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

Context- The new labour codes clear attempt to diminish the role trade unions.

What are the new labour laws?

The current government has introduced new versions of three labour codes in Lok Sabha which are-

1. Industrial Relations Code.
2. Code on Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions Code.
3. Social Security Code.
4. Labour code on wages.

However,

- Central government has excluded trade unions from pre-legislative consultations on drafting the new labour codes.
- The new Labour codes ignore the recommendations of Parliamentary Standing committee.
- And the labour reforms bills passed in the absence of the Opposition.

What are trade unions?

A trade union can be defined as an organized association of workers in a trade or profession, formed to further their rights and interests. In India, Trade Unions in India are registered under the **Trade Union Act (1926)**.

Functions-

1. Protect the interests of workers-

- Trade Unions protect the worker from wages hike, provide job security through peaceful measures.
- They also help in providing financial and non-financial aid to the workers during lock out or strike or in medical need.

2. Collective Bargaining- A process of negotiation between employers and a group of employees in respect to working condition. It is the foundation of the movement and it is interest of labour that statutory recognition has been accorded to Trade Union.

What are the key objectives of Trade Union Act (TUA)?

- 1. Right to registration-** The law provided a mechanism for the registration of trade unions, from which they derived their rights, and a framework governing their functioning.
 - The TUA gave workers the right, through their registered trade union, to take steps to press their claims, and where necessary, as in the case of a malevolent employer, agitate for their claims and advance them before the government and the judiciary.
- 2. Immunity from civil suit in certain cases-** No suit or other legal proceeding shall be maintainable in any Civil Court against any registered Trade Union in respect of any act done in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute.

What are the key concerns with new labour codes?

- 1. In case of deregistration of trade union –**
 - The collective decision taken by its members and elected officers can be treated as illegal.
 - **Vulnerable against charges of conspiracy-** The trade union's members and elected officers lose their immunity from prosecution for criminal conspiracy for collective decisions and actions.
 - It will lead employment dispute resolution outside the legal framework.
 - The Industrial Relations Code (IRC) widens the grounds under which a trade union may be deregistered.
- 2. Against the Interests of Employees-** The codes provide the liberty to industrial establishments to hire and fire their employees at will.
 - The new labour codes dilute workers' rights in favour of employers' rights.

Way forward-

A vibrant and responsible trade union environment is the requisite for inclusive growth to any economy. It checks growing inequality and falling living conditions of the working class. If trade union is deregistered then the workers effectively lose their fundamental right to freedom of association.

22. How to end pollution

Source: The Indian Express

Syllabus: GS-3- Environment

Context: An independent Environmental Protection Agency is required to build scientific and technical capacity for controlling pollution.

What are the sources of pollution?

- **Sources:**
 - Seasonal sources: crop-burning and fireworks grab attention at this time of year.
 - According to a study by Chandra Venkataraman of IIT-Mumbai and other scientists, the biggest sources nationally are cooking fires, coal-fired power plants, various industries, crop residue burning, and construction and road dust.
 - Cooking fires: Since particles diffuse with the air and are carried by winds, they do not stay in kitchens; they contribute to pollution throughout the country.

What are the challenges in handling pollution?

- **Investment not profitable in technological changes:** Although it is hugely beneficial for the country as a whole but is not privately profitable at present.
- **The judiciary:** It does not have even the few scientific and technical staff available to our under-funded pollution control boards;

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- It has no capacity to conduct pollution monitoring or scientific studies or even evaluate the results.

What are the steps needed to be taken?

- **Deal with pollution firmly and gradually:** If this is done, it can be brought down to developed-country levels within a few years.
- **Reason:** there are many sources of pollution and it would be ridiculously costly to stop them or even significantly reduce them all at once.
- **Replacement of existing technologies:** Smoky firewood, dung and crop residues that are burnt in kitchens all over rural India and some urban slums must be replaced with LPG, induction stoves, and other electric cooking appliances.
- Old coal power plants must be closed and replaced with wind and solar power and batteries or other forms of energy storage, while newer plants must install new pollution control equipment.
- Other industries that use coal will have to gradually switch over to cleaner fuel sources such as gas or hydrogen.
- Farmers will have to switch crops or adopt alternative methods of residue management.
- Diesel and petrol vehicles must gradually be replaced by electric or hydrogen fuel cell vehicles running on power generated from renewables.
- **Tax and subsidies:** It is easy for governments to make clean investments more profitable and dirty investments less profitable.
 - All that needs to be done is to tax polluting activities and subsidise clean investments.
- **Environmental Protection Agency:** The EPA can announce that they will raise the pollution fees by a certain percentage every year. This gives businesses time to adjust; they will then find it profitable to make new investments in non-polluting technologies.
- For example, a fee on plastic production at refineries, since it is very costly to monitor small producers and retailers of plastic bags; a fee on fly ash or sulphur dioxide emitted by coal power plants, and a fee on coal use, a fee on diesel at refineries, etc.
- **The EPA has to be given some independence:**
 - A head appointed for a five-year term removable only by impeachment.
 - A guaranteed budget funded by a small percentage tax on all industries.
 - Autonomy to hire staff.
 - Set pollution fees after justification through scientific studies.
- **The PM Ujjwala Yojna** that increased LPG access has made a big difference to the pollution from cooking fires.
- **The BS-VI regulations** will reduce vehicular pollution over the next decade.

Way forward

We need the scientific and technical capacity that only a securely funded independent EPA can bring to shrink pollution down to nothing.

23. Fertiliser Subsidies

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs3: Issues related to Direct and Indirect Farm Subsidies

Context: In a step to clear dues of fertiliser companies the government has allotted an additional Rs 65,000 crore towards fertiliser subsidy for 2020-21, over and above the already-budgeted Rs 71,309 crore.

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Why clearing the arrears in fertiliser subsidy is important?

- **To build faith on government schemes:** Fertiliser firms have to sell their products below production cost. If the government does not pay the difference as subsidy in full and on time, it leads to erosion of trust.
- **Production-linked incentive scheme:** It seeks to attract manufacturing investments by offering cash incentives to the tune of Rs 200,000 crore over five years on incremental sales. Its success rests on the government's credibility in repaying subsidies.

What are steps to be taken to improve the use of fertiliser in India?

- **Neem coating of urea:** To Check illegal diversion of subsidised material.
- **Conditional transfers:** Releasing payments to companies only after sales to farmers being registered against biometric authentication or even capping the number of bags.
- **Nutrient-based subsidy (NBS):** introduced more than a decade ago, provides subsidy on any fertiliser based on the underlying nutrient content be it nitrogen, phosphorus and potash or Sulphur, zinc and boron.

Why NBS scheme has failed?

- NBS has failed simply because urea has been kept out of NBS scheme. The government still fixes the maximum retail price (MRP) for urea.
- The price of urea has been raised by hardly 11 per cent since April 2010, while the rates of other decontrolled fertilisers have increased 150-300 per cent.
- This has actually worsened the soil nutrient imbalance resulting from over-application of urea.

Way forward

- The government should bring urea under NBS. This would mean increasing its MRP from Rs 5,360 to Rs 9,000 per tonne.
- This can be done by hiking the NBS rates for other nutrients, thereby reducing the MRPs of non-urea fertilisers and encouraging their consumption.
- Subsidy should be to facilitate innovations to bring in new nutrient solutions that are crop-, soil- or even plant stage-specific.

24. Policy framework for technology

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-3- Science & Technology

Context: With the rapid pace of technology blurring boundaries, a holistic policy framework is must.

How is Data a new currency?

- **Paradigm shift:** The amount of "value add" from intangible technology services as opposed to physical objects, even in traditional goods, is being transformed by information.
 - A modern automobile has 40% of its component value from electronic-based products and a modern electric vehicle has close to 100 million lines of code, which is more than that used by a Boeing 787 or the Chrome browser.
- **Increasing digitisation:** There is increasing digitisation and electronification of industrial activities, products and services, influencing the evolving skill sets in industry.

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- For instance, a conventional “metal-based” industrial product, information and electronics are becoming all-pervasive, ensuring that we set boundaries to control quality or the uptime of the equipment.
- **Revolution:** This revolution is taking place across products, as information availability drives efficiency and creates value for customers by providing greater control over the product and its surrounding environment.

Why is there a need of a new policy framework?

- **To address the needs of various stakeholders:** governments have tended to build specialised departments and designed policies that govern those areas.
- Over time, as each of these departments grew, they have tended to operate in silos. This has for most of the 20th century been reasonably successful in driving economic development in countries.
- **Capital formation:** Technology is driving an increasing share of the value add coming from digitisation and data analytics in products and services across industry segments, there needs to be a way of encouraging capital formation by way of intangibles in traditionally tangible industries.
- **Issue of a shift of value between manufacturing and services as technology changes:** The policy, promotes and gives incentives for manufacturing, whereas the share of intangibles, even in traditional manufacturing companies, whether it be software, research and development or even servicing of products, are not adequately covered in industrial policies.
- **Inter-departmental cooperation:** There is increasingly a need for inter-departmental cooperation and synergy not only in policy framework but also in deployment.
- Increasing electronification and digitisation of the automobile are not covered by industrial policies that govern the Electronics and Information Technology Ministry.
- Drones that could serve different sectors, including agriculture, and would require a lot of inter-departmental clearances outside of the Department of Agriculture.
- **Holistic view:** There is a need to have a holistic view of policies for economic development as technology is becoming a significant enabler in most industries.
- **A sufficiently empowered policy clearing cell:** It could ensure a holistic view on policy across departments of government, at the State and the Centre.
- **Ecosphere:** A nourishing ecosystem for industry, including the hard infrastructure and softer areas such as education, skilling, technical institutions, laboratories, testing centres, etc., has to be cultivated.
- The creation of clusters of companies in adjacent but complementary areas could constitute such an ecosystem that encourages multi and cross-disciplinary learning and spur innovation and economic development.

Way forward

- In this evolving policy framework, it is important that there is close cooperation and alignment between the Centre and State to ensure effective implementation on the ground. Some of these thoughts could help us navigate through an ecosystem that is changing with technology.

25. The right lessons from Pulwama and Balakot

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs3: Role of Media and Social Networking Sites in Internal Security Challenges, Various Security Forces and Agencies and their Mandate.

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Context: Recently, Pakistan's Opposition MP, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, alleged that the PTI government released the captured Indian fighter pilot, Abhinandan Varthaman due to fear of an imminent missile strike from India.

Background

- On 14 February 2019, the suicide car bomb blast in **Pulwama** led to the death of 40 Central Reserve Police Force personnel.
- Avenging this, the Indian Air Force (IAF) targeted a seminary at Balakot in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan what is known as **Balakot strike**.
- The Pakistan Air Force attempted its counter attack the next day morning in Jammu and Kashmir, and in the ensuing aerial combat, Wg. Cdr. Abhinandan was captured by the Pakistan military.
- Later, Wg. Cdr. Abhinandan was released by Pakistan as a peace gesture.

What are the lessons from Pulwama and Balakot?

Pulwama attack

- Even, after the National Investigation Agency filed a 13,800-page charge sheet in August certain Questions have not been answered satisfactorily.
- The responsibility for the intelligence failure, violation of standard operating procedures by security forces and the possible involvement of disgraced Jammu and Kashmir police officer, Davinder Singh, remain unexamined.

Balakot Strike:

- The performance of the IAF has been seen with scepticism in most western capitals. For example, the IAF claims to have shot down a Pakistan Air Force F-16 fighter jet was not accepted.
- There were many questions damaging the professional image of IAF such as whether IAF were able to strike the designated targets, asking for providing proof of the destruction caused by IAF etc.
- For, all the questions and scepticism raised, the IAF didn't have a convincing answer.
- Also, the fact remains that the IAF has lost a fighter aircraft and the pilot ended in Pakistani custody. That day, the IAF also shot down its own helicopter in friendly fire, close to Srinagar.
- The IAF has behaved in a partisan manner by preventing any media reportage of the incident before the Lok Sabha elections were over.
- In a healthy democracy, apolitical armed forces are supposed to follow the elected government's lawful orders but do not work to further the partisan aims of the ruling party.
- This would set a wrong precedent for the armed forces and its senior leadership unless corrected.
- Also, neither the surgical strike of 2016 nor the Balakot air strike have infused deterrence in the Kashmiri hinterland or on the LoC, as evident from the senior Indian Army officers regularly claiming that Pakistan has hundreds of militants ready to be pushed across the Line of Control (LoC) at launchpads.

Case study: Nonpartisanship

- Two decades ago, the then Army Chief, General V.P. Malik, had lodged a strong complaint with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee during the Kargil war about the use of the images of three service chiefs on the Bharatiya Janata Party's election posters.

- In recent years, the institutions like Parliament, the judiciary and the media has earned a lot of attention, while the scholars have been shy of making enquiries about the conduct of the armed forces, an institution even more critical to the health of Indian democracy.

26. Women workforce

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

Context - Declining female labour force participation.

Why in news-

Year 2020 marked as-

1. The nearly fifty years since the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) submitted the report 'Towards Equality' to the United Nations (UN).
 - It focused on women-sensitive policymaking in India, providing a fresh perspective on gender equality.
2. The 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action- A benchmark for analyzing the condition of women and State-led empowerment.

What is the status of women's workforce in India?

1. **Workforce participation:** India demonstrates one of the lowest labour participation rates for women, which have been consistently declining since 1950.
 - The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), 2018-19 indicates a fall in absolute employment for women.
 - Women faced a decline in labour participation rates (from 2011 to 2019) in rural areas from 35.8% to 26.4%, and stagnation in urban areas at around 20.4%.
2. **Poor worldwide Rankings:**
 - **Global Gender Gap Index-** India has been ranked 149th among 153 countries in terms of women's economic participation and opportunity published by World Economic Forum.
 - **2019 Oxfam report-** Gender wage gap highest in Asia. Based on hourly wages, women earn, on average, 65.5% of what their male colleagues earn for performing the same work.
3. **Women in agriculture:**
 - **Lack of ownership of land-** As many as 87 per cent of women does not own their land, only 12.7 per cent of them do.
4. **Status of women in other sectors of the economy:**
 - Manufacturing sector - around 14% of the female labour force.
 - Women account for only 19.9% of the total labor force in India
 - The service sector sees women disproportionately involved in care-work, over 60% of the 4.75 million domestic workers are women.
5. The non-availability of white collar jobs, disproportionate long hours and lesser job security narrow downs the job opportunities for educated women in India.

What are the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic and new labour codes on women workforce?

1. **COVID-19 impact-** Recent job stagnation and high unemployment rates for women, exacerbated by the Coronavirus pandemic, also keep women out of the labor force.

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- **Job lost in pandemic-** The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data showed that 39% of women lost their jobs in April and May compared to 29% of men.
- 2. New labour codes impact-** The labour reforms disregard women's work conditions.
- The codes acknowledge neither the gender wage gap nor non-payment of wages and bonuses
 - Ignore informal mostly women workers in terms of social security, insurance, provident fund, maternity benefits, or gratuity.
 - There is no protection against sexual harassment at workplace.
 - Maternity benefits remain unchanged from the 2017 amendment

Way forward-

- Addressing structural issues which keep women away from the workforce is a must.
- Policy decisions need to articulate gendered concerns during public health emergencies because gender-sensitive pandemic planning may substantially mitigate these concerns.

27. Asian economies

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-3- Economy

Context: The post-pandemic global economy has often predicted that China's appeal as a business destination would fade.

What are the various strategies that can be pursued post pandemic global economy?

- **'China +1' strategy:** The combination of the trade war and the COVID-19 crisis has resulted in firms establishing relatively small-scale operations elsewhere. This is perceived as a buffer against being completely dependent on China.
- **There are three reasons for firms to remain in China and pursue this strategy:**
 - Starting an enterprise and maintaining operations in China are much easier than elsewhere.
 - Chinese firms are agile and fast, which is evident from the quick recovery of Chinese manufacturing after the lockdown.
 - Many global companies have spent decades building supply chains in China. Hence, getting out would mean moving the entire ecosystem, which involves time and expenditure.
- **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP):** Asia's growth would hinge on the role of trade and investment flows into these economies.
 - This is expected to be the centrepiece of global growth, as the 15 member countries account for nearly 30% of the global GDP.The RCEP and the 'China +1 strategy' is likely to impact investment flows into Vietnam, India, Bangladesh and Indonesia, which have emerged as key investment destinations.

Suggest steps which can be pursued by countries like India to deal with the changed economic scenario.

- **Public Investments:** The task of increasing domestic public investments, which have a central role in economic activity, for both demand and supply sides.
- In India, even before the pandemic, the growth in domestic investments had been weak, and this seems to be the right time to boost public investments as interest rates are low globally and savings are available.

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- **Major overhaul in trade policy:** World trade had been rattled by tendencies of rising economic nationalism and unilateralism leading to the return of protectionist policies.
- **The two effects of the RCEP:** the ‘Walmart effect’ and a ‘switching effect’.
- The first would sustain demand for basic products and help in keeping employee productivity at an optimum level, but may also reduce wages and competition due to sourcing from multiple vendors at competitive rates.
- Switching effects would be an outcome of developed economies scouting for new sources to fulfil import demands, which requires firms to be nimble and competitive.
- **Export diversification:** Major fallout of this ‘policy dualism’ is the dampening of export diversification. The challenge is to make exporting activity more attractive for all firms in the economy.
- **Increase women’s participation in the labour force:** Women’s labour force participation rate has fallen from 42.7% in 2004–05 to 23.3% in 2017–18. This means that three out of four Indian women are neither working nor seeking paid work.
- Globally, India ranks among the bottom ten countries in terms of women’s workforce participation.
- India could gain hugely if barriers to women’s participation in the workforce are removed, for which the manufacturing sector should create labour-intensive jobs that rural and semi-urban women are qualified for.

Way forward

- India’s approach to the changed scenario needs to be well-calibrated.
- The intensity of competition is evident from the fact that after India passed three labour code Bills on September 23, Indonesian Parliament on October 5 passed a legislation that slashes regulations contained in more than 70 separate existing laws, to open up the country to more foreign investment.

28. Moratorium on Lakshmi Vilas Bank

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs3: Mobilisation of Resources- Banking Sector & NBFCs

Context: RBI has imposed a moratorium on Lakshmi Vilas Bank and drafted a scheme for a merger.

Why it is a concern?

- Already, India’s banking system is distressed due to the failures of IL&FS, Punjab & Maharashtra Cooperative Bank and DHFL, followed by the bailout of Yes Bank.
- Now, the Reserve Bank of India decision to put in place a draft scheme for the amalgamation of Lakshmi Vilas Bank with DBS Bank India, a subsidiary of DBS of Singapore, has raised concerns about the safety of the financial system.

Why this decision was taken?

- **Erosion of the bank’s net-worth:** Deposits has undergone a steady decline, with continuous losses over the last three years.
- **Experiencing low levels of liquidity:** Inability to raise adequate capital from market and due to continuous withdrawal of deposits.
- **Increase in Non-performing assets:** Almost one fourth of the bank’s advances have turned bad assets. Its gross non-performing assets (NPAs) stood 25.4% of its advances as of June 2020

What has been the regulatory response to these failures?

- The announcement of moratorium by banking regulator.
- Followed by a reconstruction plan.
- Followed by the Capital infusion by banks and financial institutions by investing in the equity capital of the reconstructed entity

Issues faced by old-generation private banks?

- **Lack of promoters:** For example, the South Indian Bank and Federal Bank have been operating as board-driven banks without a promoter. In Karur Vysya Bank, the promoter stake is 2.11%, and in Karnataka Bank, there's no promoter making them targets for mergers or forced amalgamation.

Are the depositors and the financial system safe?

- For small depositors, the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC), an RBI subsidiary gives insurance cover on up to Rs 5 lakh deposits in banks.
- Apart from this, additional infusion of capital and the proposed amalgamation will make the combined balance sheet of DBS India and LVB healthy.

What happens to the investors in these banks?

- Equity capital is being fully written off. This means that existing shareholders face a total loss on their investments unless there are buyers in the secondary market.
- The Equity Capital refers to that portion of the organization's capital, which is raised in exchange for the share of ownership in the company.
- In the case of Yes Bank, too, some individual investors faced a total loss on their investments in AT-1 bonds.
- As per RBI rules based on the Basel-III framework, AT-1 bonds have principal loss absorption features, which can cause a full write-down or conversion to equity.

How far the loan stress caused by the pandemic impact the banking system?

- The impact will differ depending upon the sector, as segments like pharmaceuticals and IT seem to have benefited in terms of revenues whereas sectors like hospitality, tourism, aviation have been hit the most.
- However, due to the Pandemic, the Corporate sector debt that remains under stress has increased (worth Rs 37.72 lakh crore that is 72% of the banking sector debt to industry).
- An expert committee headed by K V Kamath recommended for a one-time loan restructuring window for corporate borrowers under stress due to the pandemic.

29. Export: A key to economic growth

Source: IndianExpress

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

Context: Arvind Panagariya's new book, India Unlimited: Reclaiming the Lost Glory, discuss systematically how to reconstructs a path to higher growth.

What is the present scenario?

- Public sectors confronting a mountain of debt, the fiscal will need to be reined in post-COVID across several emerging markets.
- COVID-19 will accentuate the prevailing export pessimism, as global potential growth is damaged and protectionist instincts are stoked.

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- The choice and sequencing of reforms will depend critically on the growth philosophy India embraces.

What are the possible strategies?

- India's size provides fertile ground for import substitution. However, this approach was not successful in the past.
- The most significant is to underscore the necessity of export-led growth to India's prospects.
- No emerging market has been able to sustain 7-8 per cent growth for any length of time without relying on the Siamese twins of exports and investment.
- Dismantle the underpinnings of export pessimism.

Why there is need to focus on exports?

- **Prospects in exports:** Global merchandise exports stood at almost \$18 trillion in 2017 (more than six times India's GDP) with India commanding an export share of just 1.7 per cent (versus China's 12.8 per cent).
- **Doubling exports:** Even if the global market shrinks to \$15 trillion, India could double its exports by raising its global market share to just 4 per cent. India's 2002-2010 growth boom was underpinned by exports, which grew 18 per cent a year for eight years.
- **Labour-intensive manufacturing:** For many labour-intensive tasks, automation is still infeasible. Adidas, for example, produces only 1 million of its 360 million pairs of shoes in automated factories.
- **Geopolitical reasons:** Chinese real wages are rising; the workforce is shrinking and the embattled relationship with the US.
- **Integration:** integrate into the Asian supply chain by attracting multinational companies seeking a China hedge in the region.
- **Create jobs:** exports can create manufacturing jobs which will serve as a powerful magnet to attract labour away from agriculture. By 2030, agriculture will constitute less than 10 per cent of GDP while still employing 35-45 per cent of the workforce.

What are the challenges that lie in front of India?

- **India's fragmented industrial structure:** It's estimated almost 60 per cent of India's manufacturing workforce is employed in firms with five or less workers, and 75 per cent in firms with 50 or less workers.
- **Low productivity and low wages:** For example, 92 per cent of workers in the apparel sector worked in firms with less than 50 workers. In contrast, 57 per cent of China's apparel workforce were employed in firms with more than 200 employees.

What needs to be done?

- Avoiding the import-substitution trap.
- Reduce Import tariff which are equivalent to an export tax.
- Ensuring the rupee remains competitive.
- Boosting free trade agreements and trade facilitation.
- Creating autonomous employment zones (AEZs) where factors of production are less distorted.
- Reduce the gap in per-capita incomes between agriculture, industry and services.
- Create higher-wage jobs in industry and services for agricultural workers to migrate to.

30. Amalgamation of Lakshmi Vilas Bank

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

Context- RBI has decided to place a draft scheme for amalgamation of Lakshmi Vilas Bank with DBS Bank, a subsidiary of DBS of Singapore and has raised concerns about the safety of the financial system.

What are the reason of RBI to put LVB under moratorium and amalgamated with DBS Bank?

The RBI has now decided to impose a 30-day moratorium on Lakshmi Vilas Bank Ltd (LVB) due to the following reasons-

1. **Continuous Losses:** The RBI said the financial position was declining steadily, with continuous losses over the last three years eroding the bank's net-worth.
2. **Rising NPAs:** Serious governance issues in recent years have led to deterioration in its performance. Almost one fourth of the bank's advances have turned bad assets. Its gross non-performing assets (NPAs) stood 25.4% of its advances as of June 2020, as against 17.3% a year ago.
 - The Tier 1 Capital ratio turned a negative 0.88% at the end of March 2020.
3. **Low Liquidity:** It was also experiencing continuous withdrawal of deposits and low levels of liquidity.
4. **Unable to raise Capital:** The bank has not been able to raise adequate capital to address these issues. The bank management had indicated to the RBI that it was in talks with certain investors, but failed to submit any concrete proposal.
 - The capital ratio subsequently worsened to -4.85% by the end of September, tipping the central bank's hand.

What happen to depositors and shareholders?

1. **Depositors-** The RBI, which put a cap of Rs 25,000 on withdrawals, has assured depositors of the bank that their interest will be protected
 - Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) gives insurance cover on up to Rs. 5 lakh deposits in banks.
2. **Shareholders of LVB-** Equity capital is being fully written off. This means existing shareholders face a total loss on their investments unless there are buyers in the secondary market who may ascribe some value to these.

How has the pandemic affected the banking system?

1. **Worsen NPA** -NPAs in the banking sector are expected to increase as the pandemic affects cash flows of people.
 - RBI's Financial Stability Report pointed out in its stress test indicated that the gross NPA ratio of commercial banks could worsen to as high as 14.7% by end of current financial year.
2. The COVID-19 pandemic has stress on corporate balance sheets and governments burdened with large debt.
3. **Lurking around the corner is also the major risk-** stress intensifying among households and corporations that has been delayed but not mitigated, and could spill over into the financial sector

Way forward-

Banks now need to adopt a 'React, Adapt and Lead' strategy to emerge stronger on the other side of the COVID-19 pandemic. After all, stronger banks and a sound financial services ecosystem will play a key role in the recovery of Indian economy.

31. FTA's and its significance

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Context: India's External Affairs Minister recently disapproved of free trade and globalisation.

Background:

- On November 15, 15 countries of the Asia-Pacific region signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement while India refused not to sign RCEP.

What were the rational arguments given by the government to walk away from RCEP?

- In the name of openness India has allowed subsidised products and unfair production advantages from abroad to prevail.
- An economy as attractive as India allowed the framework to be set by others.
- The effect of past free trade agreements has brought de-industrialisation in some sectors.

How good is India in emphasising trade openness?

- India is much more open economy than it was three decades ago, yet, India continues to remain relatively closed when compared to other major economies.
- According to the WTO, India's applied most favoured nation import tariffs are 13.8%, which is the highest for any major economy.
- According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, on the import restrictiveness index, India figures in the 'very restrictive' category.
- From 1995-2019, India has initiated anti-dumping measures 972 times (the highest in the world), to protect domestic industry.

Why FTAs are significant for Indian economy?

- **Economic recovery:** With trade multilateralism at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) remaining sluggish, FTAs are the gateways for international trade.
- **Attract FDI:** To be part of the global value chains, to enhance competitiveness, it is important to join FTAs. For example, India's competitors such as the East Asian nations who have signed mega-FTAs are in a far superior position to be part of global value chains and attract foreign investment.
- **To reproduce the past success:** Economic survey 2020 concluded that India has benefitted overall from FTAs signed so far. Blaming FTAs for deindustrialisation means being ignorant to the real problem of the Indian industry which is the lack of competitiveness and absence of structural reforms.
- **Globalisation not protectionism has benefitted India:**
 - India has been one of the major beneficiaries of economic globalisation as per International Monetary Fund (IMF).
 - Post-1991, the Indian economy grew at a faster pace, ushering in an era of economic prosperity.
 - According to the economist and professor, Arvind Panagariya, poverty in rural and urban India, which stood at close to 40% in 2004-05, almost halved to about 20% by 2011-12.

The Prime Minister's desire to make India a global destination for foreign investment while following trade protectionism as the government's official policy will not be realistic.

32. Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB) merger with DBS bank

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

Context: Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB) merger with DBS bank is justified

Why RBI decided for merger of Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB) amalgamation with DBS bank?

- **Erosion of trust in financial institutions:** India, over the past two years has seen the collapse of four financial firms: IL&FS, Dewan Housing Finance, Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative Bank and Yes Bank.
- **Rise in NPA's:** LVB's bad loans have mounted to about a quarter of its gross advances, while deposits have shrunk by nearly Rs 6,900 crore in the last one year.
- **Failure of bank's management:** They were unable to come up with a credible capital-raising and revival plan, forcing the RBI to seek its merger with another bank.

Why Investors in Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB) are unhappy over its amalgamation with Singapore's DBS Bank?

- The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) proposed to write off LVB's entire paid-up equity capital and reserves, resulting in a zero value of its shares.
- The situation is similar to that of Yes Bank's AT-1 (additional tier-1) bond investors, who suffered a total write-down of their Rs 8,415 crore holdings as part of a rescue plan.
- The LVB's shareholders, like Yes Bank's AT-1 bondholders, are demanding compensation for the forced extinguishing of their investments.

The question of who is more important an Investor or a depositor?

- The RBI's concern as a banking sector regulator is to first secure the interest of depositors because Banks, unlike regular companies, make money not from owning plants, machinery and property instead, it is derived from deploying other people's money primarily deposits.
- No bank, however well-capitalised, can survive if depositors decide to pull out money.

Why the choice of amalgamating with DBS is right?

- Unlike public sector banks that are burdened with stressed loans and requirement of fund infusion, DBS has committed to bring in additional capital of Rs 2,500 crore upfront.
- Also, despite being a foreign bank, it has chosen to operate in India through a wholly-owned subsidiary, as opposed to just having branches.
- Has submitted itself to the RBI's more stringent regulatory requirements, and DBS will be able to add 550-plus branches to its existing 33. This will send a strong signal to other foreign banks to pursue greater growth opportunities
- With Indian banks want for more capital, a foreign bank as desi is most welcome.

33. Banking reforms

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

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

Context- RBI committee has recommended a series of changes that could transform the banking landscape by paving the way for large industrial conglomerates to set up banks.

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What are Non-Banking Financial Companies NBFCs?

These are establishments that provide financial services and banking facilities without meeting the legal definition of a Bank. Hence they are frequently referred to as “shadow banks”.

Significance of NBFCs-

- These organizations play a crucial role in the economy, offering their services in urban as well as rural areas, mostly granting loans allowing for growth of new ventures.
- They alone count for 12.5% raise in Gross Domestic Product of our country.
- However, they are restricted from taking any form of deposits from the general public.

What are recommendations of RBI's working group regarding NFBCs?

Proposal by RBI's internal working group-

1. The group also suggested giving banking licences to large corporate or industrial houses after necessary amendments to the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
2. It recommended increasing the size of the stake that promoters in private banks can hold to 26% from the current 15% over a 15-year time frame.
3. NBFC or shadow bank with assets of Rs 500 billion and above, including those which are owned by a corporate house may be considered for conversion into a bank after 10 years of operations.
4. **Conversion to Small finance bank SFB-**
 - Payments banks with three years of experience can be eligible for conversion into a small finance bank.
 - SFB and payments banks may be listed within 6 years from the date of reaching net worth equivalent to prevalent entry capital requirement prescribed for universal banks' or '10 years from the date of commencement of operations, whichever is earlier.
5. The minimum initial capital requirement for licensing new banks should be enhanced from ₹500 crore to ₹1000 crore for universal banks, and be raised to ₹300 crore from ₹200 crore for SFBs.
6. For non-promoter shareholdings a uniform cap of 15% of the paid-up voting equity share capital of the bank instead of a current tiered structure.
7. Non-operative Financial Holding Company (NOFHC) should continue to be the preferred structure for all new licenses to be issued for universal banks. However, it should be mandatory only in cases where the individual promoters/promoting entities/ converting entities have other group entities.

Way forward-

- It is a welcome idea to boost economic activity, job creation enhancing liquidity.
- Strict regulations on the use of funds held with the bank and monitoring of related party transactions will be essential, where corporate house is a promoter.

34. Making of a biotech hub

Source: The Indian Express

Syllabus: GS-3- science & Technology

Context: The pandemic has given the country an opportunity to evolve from being the pharmacy of the world to being the centre of a revolutionary research.

How has India performed in the field of biotechnology over the years?

- **Change overtime:** India has seen an immense improvement in the number and quality of its healthcare facilities, reduction in pregnancy-related deaths, and improvement in sanitation and immunisation coverage and has successfully averted several preventable disease epidemics.
- **Department of biotechnology:** The Government of India recognised the enormous potential of biotechnology and established a separate department in 1986.
- **Contribution of innovators:** The researchers and innovators have shown the way forward by introducing low-cost diagnostics and testing kits, manufacturing PPE kits, masks & therapeutics and now conducting clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccine.
 - The clinical trial for the vaccine developed by the Oxford University and produced by the Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII), Bharat Biotech's Covaxin and Zydus Cadila's ZyCoV-D, has entered the final phase.
- **Tackling the pandemic:** The immediate need was to have our indigenous production of masks, PPE's, ventilators and most importantly diagnostic kits.
 - In less than 60 days from 100 per cent import we attained self-sufficiency with a potential to export.
- **A vibrant innovation ecosystem:** Prime Minister launched the Startup India, Make in India and similar other programmes which have today established a very strong foundation of an ecosystem that has been enabling policy initiatives.
- **The Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC):** BIRAC brings innovators and funders on to a common table, enabling ideas to become a reality and facilitate technological advances that make human progress possible.
- **Achievements in biotechnology:** the sector employs the best of minds and contributes to the development of generic and affordable medicare.
 - The country accounts for approximately 3 per cent of the global biotech industry.
 - Industry enterprise, a highly-skilled research force backed by government support, has led the biotechnology sector to grow from \$1.1 billion in 2003 to a mammoth \$64 billion sector in 2019.
 - India has over 2,700 biotech start-ups and are expected to touch the 10,000-mark by 2024.
 - Over 3,500 biotech companies generate employment, contribute to the country's economy and facilitate a sustainable environment.
 - By 2025, we aim to be worth a \$150 billion industry.

Way forward

- **Atma nirbhar:** we must motivate our young scientists to continue this path of research and generate new ideas and solutions. "Atma Nirbhar Bharat" will lead to an entrepreneur-friendly ecosystem in the country wherein our energetic youth and their innovations will thrive.
- The pandemic has provided the country with an opportunity to play the lead role in a global biotech ecosystem. It is time to build on our existing strengths and enter the next stage i.e. from being the pharmacy of the world to being the hub of cutting-edge innovation and research.

35. Relook agriculture subsidies

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- The dire need to shift the nature of support to farmers from input subsidies to investment subsidies.

What are the main reason of air pollution in India and its impact?

- 1. Stubble Burning** - Practice of farmers setting fire to plant debris that remain in farms after harvest.
 - It emits large amounts of toxic pollutants in the atmosphere which contain harmful gases like methane, carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds (VOC) and carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.
 - Farm fires have been an easy way to get rid of paddy stubble quickly and at low cost for several years.
- 2. Atmospheric Ammonia** - Ammonia is a gaseous compound of nitrogen that combines with other pollutants in the air to form aerosols which affect public health and the climate
 - The **Indo-Gangetic Plains** are global hotspot of ammonia emission due to intense agricultural activities and a large concentration of fertilizer industries.
 - Chemical fertilizers are the largest contributors to nitrogen emission.
 - Researchers found that fertilizer consumption was directly linked to the amount of ammonia in the air.
- 3.** Other factors causing air pollution includes vehicular pollution, dust, and dip in temperatures, firecrackers, construction activities and open waste burning.

What are the impacts of Agri-subsidies?

- Power subsidies have not only led to an alarming overuse of groundwater, but also it has severely damaged the health of power distribution companies.
- Increase in the stock piles of grains.
- Rising ammonia pollution.
- Subsidized Urea has led to massive overuse of nitrogenous fertilizers, leading to damaged soils and pollution of local water bodies.

What is the way forward?

- 1. Crop diversification-** The conversion of paddy areas in this belt to orchards with drip irrigation, vegetables, corn, cotton, pulses and oilseeds, that consume much less water, much less power and fertilizers and don't create stubble to burn.
 - The approach to diversification has to be demand-led, the role of the private sector in building value chains will be critical.
- 2. Direct cash transfer to farmers-** Instead of subsidizing fertilizers, direct cash transfers can be made to farmers. With fixed amounts, farmers will likely cut down their usage of fertilizers in the interest of soil health as prices of fertilizers will be decontrolled.

These measures could double farmers' incomes, promote efficiency in resource use, and reduce pollution.

36. Trade openness and globalization

Source-[The Hindu](#)

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

Context- India's External Affairs Minister believes that the economic growth that has accrued from globalization is not a good enough outcome for India.

What are the views of External Affairs Minister on globalization and trade pacts?

1. Trade pacts and globalization have allowed other countries 'unfair' trade and manufacturing advantages "in the name of openness".
2. The effect of past trade agreements has been to de-industrialize some sectors.
3. The consequences of future ones would lock us into global commitments, many of them not to our advantage.
4. Employment challenge was created by trade.
5. Trade agreements have made India over-dependent on imports.

Views of critics-

- Between 1995-2018- India's overall export growth averaged 13.4 percent per year.
- India's manufacturing exports (in dollars) grew on average by 12.1%, nearly twice the world average.

What are the proposed reasons for India's slowed down exports?

1. **Strong rupee approach** - The current government "strong rupee" approach is among the chief causes that have been shown to have slowed down exports. The real effective exchange rate has appreciated by about 20% since 2014.
2. **Low export competitiveness**- India's own supply side constraints and bottlenecks, i.e., its difficult regulatory environment, poor logistics quality, inadequate and inefficient trade infrastructure, and high transactions costs, among others, all of which hurt export competitiveness.
 - This low ease of doing business relative to other exporting countries has further eroded the competitiveness of Indian exports.
3. **Policy errors**- India's share in industrial production and manufactured exports in the world economy has declined steadily in last six years, coinciding with the phase of corruption scandals, a severe banking crisis, demonetization and a badly designed GST.

How trade openness and globalization can solve these problems?

1. **Generating employment**- Openness to trade is important to India for generating employment in the post-COVID-19 world.
2. **Globalization and India**
 - India has been one of the major beneficiaries of economic globalization — a fact attested by IMF.
 - Post-1991, the Indian economy grew at a faster pace, ushering in an era of economic prosperity.
 - Poverty in rural and urban India, which stood at close to 40% in 2004-05, almost halved to about 20% by 2011-12.

Way forward-

- To denounce trade openness and globalization at this point is also poor timing.
- **Strong rupee policy**- led to the surge in imports of goods and services preferred by non-rich Indians, and a measurable loss of competitiveness in labor-intensive exports. On the flip side, the disadvantages Indian exporters have long struggled against the substantially higher logistics remain as burdensome.

37. Controlling AMR

Source: Down to Earth

Syllabus: GS-3- Science & Technology

Context: A One Health approach is necessary to control antimicrobial resistance.

More on news:

- **India an important locus for the generation of resistance genes:** The multi-drug resistance determinant, New Delhi Metallo-beta-lactamase-1 (NDM-1), emerged from this region and spread globally.
- **The containment of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in India:** It is central to the global effort to address this threat.
- In India, over 56,000 newborn deaths each year occur due to sepsis, caused by organisms that are resistant to first line antibiotics.

How are antibiotics categorised?

- **Categories:** WHO has categorised antibiotics into
 - “Access” which should be widely available,
 - “Watch” to be limited to specific indications,
 - “Reserve”, to be used as a last-resort.
- In 2015, India had the highest consumption rate worldwide for oxazolidinones, which have been defined by WHO as “Reserve” antibiotics.

What are the reasons for prevalence of AMR in India?

- **Lack of formal training:** Many medical practitioners lack formal training in India and 70 per cent of primary healthcare is delivered by such individuals.
- Sales companies target both doctors as well as those acting in a medical capacity without required qualifications.
- **Biased information:** Pharmaceutical sales representatives are a key source of updates and information for prescribers, but the information they provide may be biased and motivated by commercial considerations to promote antibiotic sales.
- **Sale of antibiotics without prescription:** The sale of antibiotics without a prescription is prohibited under Schedule H1, which has been supported by the red line campaign but it is not widely enforced.
- **The lack of access:** The lack of access, due to geographical distance or affordability, to medical professionals and prescribers, in rural areas of India, leads 50 per cent of people to buy antibiotics directly from the pharmacy as a first choice.
- **Falsified, substandard or counterfeit antimicrobials:** It can worsen AMR in several ways. They can leave patients under-dosed and bacteria that are only partially suppressed may be more likely to evolve resistance.
- **Contamination:** Effluents from multinational pharmaceutical companies contain active antibiotics, resistant bacteria and resistant genes.
 - They contaminate rivers, streams and wells, including waters which are used for drinking and bathing. This increases both the emergence of resistant bacteria in local populations and also their spread.

What can be done?

- **Access to basic antibiotics:** An estimated 170,000 deaths from pneumonia in children under five can be prevented with timely access to effective antibiotics.
- **Balance excessive and inappropriate use:** It is a key driver of antibiotic resistance, while ensuring life-saving medicines are available to those who need them.
- **Adequate sanitation:** Half of the South Asian population lacked access to basic sanitation in 2018. The Swachh Bharat Mission in India has improved access to toilets in many areas.

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- **Improvement in infrastructure:** Improvements in the infrastructure required for and access to clean water, adequate sanitation and quality hygiene in India could result in a reduction of 590 million diarrheal cases by 2020 that would have been treated with antibiotics.
- **Vaccination coverage:** Vaccination has shown to reduce the transmission of AMR infections and the volume of antibiotics consumed.
 - Mission Indradhanush to address low vaccination coverage strengthened micro-planning and additional mechanisms to improve monitoring and accountability.

Way forward

- One objective of the Indian National Action Plan (NAP) on AMR is to develop standards to ensure that access to effective antibiotics.
- Sustainable antibiotic production methods need to be developed and adopted by manufacturers.

38. One Health Approach

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-3- Environment

Context: 'One Health' is the optimum approach to counter the impact of antimicrobial resistance.

Discuss antimicrobial resistance.

- **Antimicrobial resistance (AMR):** It is the resistance acquired by any microorganism (bacteria, viruses, fungi, parasite, etc.) against antimicrobial drugs such as antibiotics that are used to treat infections.
- **Reason for AMR:**
 - The ingenuity and survival instinct of germs.
 - The irrational use of antibiotics in humans and animals.
- **The long-term impact of AMR:** AMR is estimated to cause 10 million deaths annually by 2050, unless concerted actions are initiated now. It will result in 7.5 % reduction in livestock production and negatively impact the global GDP by 3.5%.

How can we tackle the AMR challenge?

- **Solutions to combat the AMR threat:**
 - Discovery of new drugs, before the emergence of resistance in germs.
 - Prudent use of available antibiotics
- **Challenge in producing new antibiotics:** it is an expensive and unpredictable process. No new class of antibiotics has been developed since 1984. The estimated cost for developing a new antibiotic exceeds \$1 billion.
 - Only one option: to use the available antibiotics carefully to ensure their efficacy for as long as possible.
- **The World Health Organization Global Action Plan:** it provides a road map for tackling this challenge. Almost 80 countries have developed their respective national action plans in alignment with this Plan.

Elaborate on how the one health approach supports focussed actions on the human-animal-environment interface.

- **The 'One Health' approach:** The rational use of antibiotics in humans, animals, and agriculture warrants coordinated action in all sectors. These multi-sectoral,

multidisciplinary and multi-institutional actions constitute the 'One Health' approach.

- It is reinforced by the fact that all the epidemics in the current millennium (SARS, MERS, bird flu and COVID-19) have originated from animals because of unwanted excursion of humans into animal domains.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasised the urgency of implementing One Health.
 - **One platform for experts:** This effort utilises existing expertise and infrastructure in various sectors with a focus on inter-sectoral coordination, collaboration, and communication.
 - **Human-animal-environment interface:** The approach supports focussed actions on the human-animal-environment interface for the prevention, detection and response to the public health events that influence global health and food security.
 - **Implementation of One Health:** It permits a strong and continuous national narrative on zoonoses. It advocates a multi-sectoral response to public health problems, particularly pandemics, as also to address issues related to AMR.

Way forward

- There is a need to optimally utilise emerging technologies to improve human health and development. One Health has been acknowledged as the optimum approach to counter the impact of AMR and future pandemics and must be adopted expeditiously.

39. Corporate houses in Indian banking

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Context: Recently, an Internal Working Group of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recommended that corporate houses be given bank licences.

Background

- Earlier, in 2013, the RBI had issued similar guidelines permitting corporate and industrial houses to apply for a banking licence. However, no corporate was given a bank licence as none of the applicants had met 'fit and proper' criteria.
- In 2014, the RBI, reversed its earlier decision and prohibited the entry of corporate houses into banking based upon the Committee on Financial Sector Reforms (2008) suggestion that opined it is premature to allow industrial houses to own banks.
- Now, an Internal Working Group of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has once again recommended for providing bank licences to corporate houses.

What are the Pros and Cons of letting corporate houses to operate banks?

Pros:

- Corporate houses will bring capital and expertise to banking.
- In many countries corporate houses were not barred from banking.

Cons

- **Interconnected lending:** They can use banks to provide finance to customers and suppliers of their businesses.
- **Concentration of economic power.**
- **Exposure of the safety net** provided to banks to commercial sectors of the economy.
- **Fund diversification:** by turning banks into a source of funds for their own businesses.

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- **Impact of Non entities on banks growth:** Banks owned by corporate houses will be exposed to the risks of the non-bank entities of the group.
- **Privatisation of Public banks in the long run:** For example, Public sector banks need capital that the government is unable to provide. The entry of corporate houses will result in the possibility of cash rich corporate bank acquiring cash trapped public sector banks which is a serious concern about financial stability.

Why Tracing interconnected lending will be a challenge?

- The Internal Working Group suggests that, before corporate houses are allowed to enter banking, the RBI must be equipped with a legal framework to deal with interconnected lending and a mechanism to effectively supervise conglomerates that venture into banking.

However, there are challenges while dealing with interconnected lending.

- **Multi sector cooperation required:** Monitoring of transactions of corporate houses will require the cooperation of various law enforcement agencies.
- **Crony capitalism:** Corporate houses can use their political clout to thwart such cooperation.
- **No prevention possible:** The RBI can only react to interconnected lending ex-post; it will not be able to prevent such exposure.
- **Complex process:** In case, even if RBI could trace interconnected lending, any action taken on corporate will only cause a flight of deposits from the bank concerned and precipitate its failure.
- **Regulator credibility at stake:** The regulator would be under enormous pressure to compromise on regulation. Pitting the regulator against powerful corporate houses could end up damaging the regulator.

Why the Internal Working Group of the RBI has recommended so?

- Under the present policy, NBFCs with a successful track record of 10 years are allowed to convert themselves into banks.
- There are corporate houses that are already present in banking-related activities through ownership of Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs).
- The Internal Working Group believes that NBFCs owned by corporate houses should be eligible for such conversion.
- The Internal Working Group argues that corporate-owned NBFCs have been regulated for a while. The RBI understands them well. Hence, some of the concerns regarding the entry of these corporates into banking may get mitigated.

India's banking sector needs reform but corporate houses owning banks will not be the one that is required as of now.

40. Central Trade Unions strike

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- GS 3 - Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

Context- Trade unions called for nationwide strike to protest government policies.

Why Central Trade Union (CTUs) have called for a nation-wide strike and what are the demands

Central Trade unions called for national wide strike to protest against anti-farmer laws, anti-worker labour codes, privatization of public sector and the corporatization policies of the government.

Trade union's demands-

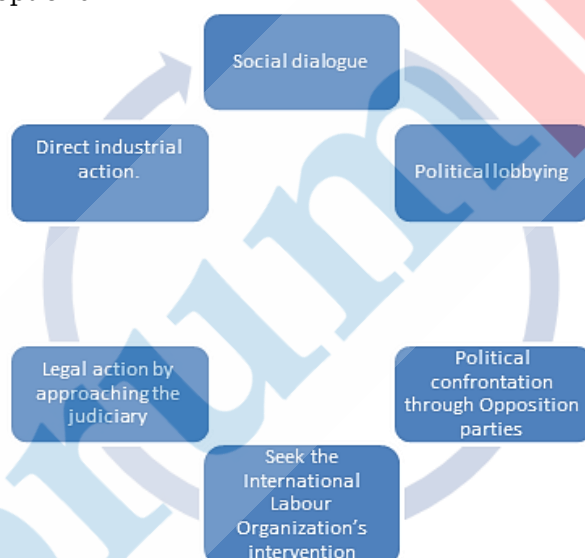
- The demands of the joint platform include cash transfer of Rs 7,500 per month for all non-income tax paying families and 10 kilograms free ration per person per month to all needy people.
- **Expansion of MGNREGA**, the rural employment guarantee scheme, to provide 200 days' work in a year in rural areas at enhanced wages and also extension of the employment guarantee to urban areas.
- Withdrawal of the "draconian circular on forced premature retirement of government and PSU employees".
- **Pension to all-** scrapping NPS (National Pension System) and restoration of earlier pension with improvement in Employees' Pension Scheme 1995 [EPS-95].

What are the key concerns with new labour codes?

1. **Against the Interests of Employees-** The codes provide the liberty to industrial establishments to hire and fire their employees at will.
 - The new labour codes dilute workers' rights in favour of employers' rights.
2. Inspection system has been diluted in the Wage Code.

What are the other options that trade union have to dilute this resolution?

Trade unions have six options-



However,

- Central government did not conduct an effective and sustaining social dialogue and at the State level, social dialogue institutions are largely absent or weak.
- The new Labour codes ignore the recommendations of Parliamentary Standing committee.
- And the labour reforms bills passed in the absence of the Opposition.
- **International Labour Organization's intervention-** Trade union did write to ILO, seeking its intervention to protect worker's rights but the ILO's intervention only provide provided a temporary respite to trade unions as the government did what it has been doing.

Way forward-

- **Approaching the judiciary-** Trade unions must shed their judicio-phobia and approach to judiciary provided they have strong legal grounds to challenge reforms introduced by Central or State governments.

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- **Strike alone will not make much difference-** Trade unions must explore other avenues such as seeking the ILO's intervention, judicial action and social dialogue
- This strike is a reminder of this potential, positive reconstruction of laws.

41. Present State of economy

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

Context: The pandemic has delivered a “scissor cut” to the government finances.

What is the current scenario?

- Economic output and government revenues are shrinking.
- The government has to spend more to safeguard lives and livelihoods.
- Widening deficit.
- Most of state's revenue come from center which changes their debt servicing ability for the worse.

What are the recent issues?

- **Revenue side:**
 - In the first half of fiscal the center's net revenue (tax and non-tax) collection stood at 27.3% of budget for the full fiscal year compared to 41.6% of previous fiscal year.
 - Revenue collections in the first half of the year were down to 32.5% as compared to an average 15% growth over the same period.
- **State's fiscal issue:**
 - Fiscal data for the year is available only for the eleven non special category states.
 - Revenue of these states is down by 21.5%.
 - Adding center's transfer to the states then the decline in revenue reduces to 16.5%.
 - Shortfall in states' revenue is much steep than that of center.
 - For the eleven states total expenditure and capital spending have contracted by 1.5% and 23.4 % respectively.
 - Allocation for pension and subsidies down by 10% and 20%.
 - Since health is State subject, state will have to shoulder major part of health expenditure burden on account of the pandemic.
- **Cutting capital expenditure:**
 - Both center and state have cut their capital expenditure.
 - This is worrying as states undertake more as they have more than 60% of the overall general government capital expenditure.
 - For instance, in 2019-20, capital expenditure by states stood at rs 4.97 lakh crore down by 20%.
- **Low capacity utilization:** for instance, it was 71.9 % in the previous year which is down to 58.6 %.

What are the consequences?

- Reduces Center's and states' ability to invest and lift the economy.
- Need of more borrowing.
- Centre's total expenditure has been declined by 0.6 % which led to 11.6% decline in capital expenditure with revenue expenditure by 1 %.

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- To maintain states 'spending government has forced them to increase borrowing which has led to increase in market borrowing by 50%.
- Rising debt level of states. For instance, overall government general debt stood at nine year high.
- Centre's debt to GDP is declining.
- Ratio of interest payment to revenue receipts is also declining which raises question on sustainability of debt.
- The private sector will remain wary of investing as demand uncertainty continues.

42. Push for Exports

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Context: India needs to shed its exaggerated fears of trade agreements to create new jobs.

What are the challenges facing by Indian economy?

Case Study: Importance of investing in labour intensive industries

- Let us suppose that the government makes available ₹10 lakh as a loan to four companies for capital investment.
- The first company, a steel manufacturing company, will create one new job with this amount.
- The second, an automobile manufacturer, will create three new jobs.
- The third, a producer of leather goods, will create 70 new jobs.
- And the fourth, an apparel and garment maker, will create 240 new jobs including 80 for women (Economic Survey 2016-17).

- **Contracting Economic growth:** India is in an economic recession for the first time in its independent history.
- **Rising Unemployment:** Thousands of people lost their jobs due to the slowing economy in 2018-19 and 2019-20. Unemployment had reached a 45-year high. Added to this worry, more than 2 crore people lost their jobs during the lockdown.
- **Rising demand for right to work:** During the seven-month lockdown period, there were 11 crore people who asked for work under MGNREGA.
- **Stagnating Merchandise Exports:** Merchandise goods exports were \$314 billion in 2013-14 and remained stagnant for the next five years touching \$313 billion in 2018-19.

What are the reasons for stagnating Merchandise exports?

- Reversal in the direction of India's foreign trade policy with higher tariffs, non-tariff barriers, quantitative limits.
- The return of licensing.
- Border country restrictions.
- The appreciating value of the rupee.

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How to boost exports and produce jobs for Indian workforce?

- **Investing in labour intensive sectors:** Good quality jobs can be created only in sectors that are labour intensive, and where India has a comparative advantage, such as apparel, leather goods, value-added agriculture etc.
- **Find more export markets:** The job-creating sectors depend not only on the domestic market but, significantly, on export markets. For example, more than one-half of the leather goods and one-third of the apparel produced in India are exported to other countries.
- **Encourage and Incentivise exports:** Merchandise exports helps to create supporting jobs in warehousing, transport, stevedoring, container stations, shipping, ship chandling, ports and export financing.

Why India cannot persist with protectionism policy?

- **Trade is reciprocal:** India cannot 'protect' its domestic industry with high trade barriers while aspiring for bilateral trade treaties to promote exports. Also, no country will allow import of Indian goods and services unless that country is able to export its goods and services to India on reasonable and fair terms.
- **FTA has Benefited its members:** More winners than losers because of bilateral and multilateral trade agreements in the recent past witnessed through proliferation of FTA's such as ASEAN, NAFTA, MERCOSUR, RCEP recently.
- **To promote exports:** Most manufacturing today has a long supply chain that cuts across many countries. To be able to export goods, India must import raw materials or equipment or technology from other countries in the supply chain.

What are the issues in signing FTA's?

- FTA provisions were misused by some countries to question the foreign investment policies and tax policies of other countries.
- Purely trade and commercial disputes were dragged to international arbitral tribunals on the pretext of violating FTA provisions.

Exports are one of the main engines to revive economic growth and create many new jobs. India has the immediate opportunity to export goods worth \$60 billion in labour intensive sectors which can then create lakhs of new jobs. To revive exports, India needs greater access to global markets. Hence, we must re-learn to engage with other countries and negotiate favorable trade agreements through the bilateral and multilateral routes.

43. 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.

44. Urban planning

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- **GS 3** - Disaster and disaster management.

Context- A radical shift is needed in our approach towards disaster mitigation and management. Government can handle cyclones better by investing in town planning and infrastructure.

What are the reasons of no major casualty or lesser destruction by cyclone Nivar?

Cyclone Nivar- It is the fourth cyclone that has taken shape in the North Indian Ocean region this year. The reason for lesser destruction are-

1. **Correct weather forecasting-** IMD has pointed the track of the cyclone very early and his help with adequate warnings and evacuation from the coast.

- 2. Disaster preparedness** - The NDRF deployed 25 teams and disaster management equipment in the coastal areas of Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Andhra Pradesh.
- 3. Government readiness** - The Tamil Nadu government has shown brisk readiness in handling the acute challenge of a severe weather event.

What are the concern concerns?

- 1. Unplanned development**- Unplanned development, encroachments in riparian zones, failure of flood control structures, unplanned reservoir operations, poor drainage infrastructure, deforestation, land use change and sedimentation in river beds are exacerbating floods.
 - Indiscriminate encroachment of waterways and wetlands, inadequate capacity of drains and lack of maintenance of the drainage infrastructure.
2. Governments have not shown the rigour to collect and publish data on annual flooding patterns, and measure the peak flows in the neglected rivers and canals to plan remedies.

Way forward-

- The aftermath now presents an opportunity to make a full assessment not just for distribution of relief but also to understand the impacts of extreme monsoon weather.
- Governments and local bodies should hardwire urban planning and invest heavily for a future of frequent disruptive weather.

45. Women in science

Source: The Indian Express

Syllabus: GS-3- Science & technology

Context: The new Science, Technology and Innovation Policy is currently being drafted by the Department of Science and Technology (DST)

More on news:

- Its aim will be to increase the participation of women in science.
- The DST will incorporate a system of grading institutes depending on the enrolment of women and the advancement of the careers of women faculty and scientists.

What is Athena SWAN?

- **The Athena SWAN Charter:** It is an evaluation and accreditation programme in the UK enhancing gender equity in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM).
- **Function:** Participating research organisations and academic institutions are required to analyse data on gender equity and develop action plans for improvement. The programme recognises such efforts with bronze, silver or gold accreditation.
- **Institutions that sign up commit to:**
 - Addressing unequal gender representation.
 - Tackling the gender pay gap.
 - Removing the obstacles faced by women in career development and progression.
 - Discriminatory treatment often experienced by trans people.
 - Gender balance of committees and zero tolerance for bullying and sexual harassment.

How well has it worked?

- **In 2019, a report by Ortus Economic Research:** In partnership with Loughborough University found that 93% of participants believed the programme had a positive impact on gender issues.

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- 78% said it had impacted equality and diversity issues positively, and 78% noted a positive impact on the career progression of women.
- **A study in BMJ:** It found that in the five-year period since the scheme was started, participating institutions had a higher number of female leaders than non-Athena institutions, and gender diversity in leadership positions also improved.

Why does India need such a programme?

- **GATI:** In India, it will be called GATI (Gender Advancement through Transforming Institutions). India is ranked 108 out of 149 countries in the 2018 Global Gender Gap report.
- **According to DST figures:** In 2015-16, the share of women involved in scientific research and development was 14.71%.
 - The DST has also found that women are either not promoted, or very often drop out mid-career to attend to their families.

What are the challenges ahead?

- **Institutions lack control:** To get as many institutions as possible to sign up, the DST will need to manoeuvre around government red tape as most universities, barring the IITs and NITs, are run and funded by the government as well.
 - This means that these institutions don't have direct control over institutional policies, recruitment and promotions.

What are the steps of DST towards ensuring gender equity?

- **Gender equity:** The DST has tied up with National Assessment and Accreditation Council, under the UGC, aiming to push gender equity through them.
- **Gender sensitisation:** The DST plans to run intensive gender sensitisation programmes, especially for the top leadership of institutions, and work within existing rules such as pushing for women members on selection committees during recruitment processes.
- **Policy changes:** In the future, the DST is likely to consider policy changes such as those brought about in the UK providing financial incentives through grants to institutes.

Way forward - For the pilot, 25 institutes will be shortlisted to carry out self-assessment on gender equity in their departments. The British Council is assisting the DST and will facilitate collaboration between selected institutions under GATI with Athena SWAN-accredited institutions in the UK, with each institute here having a partner institute in the UK for guidance.

46. India's digital strike

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- GS 3 - Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention.

Context- The government of India has blocked 43 new Chinese app which are prejudicial to sovereignty and Integrity of India, defence of India, security of state and public order.

Why Indian Government ban these apps?

1. **Defence and security concern-** These apps are involved in activities against India's sovereignty, integrity, defense, security and law and order.

2. **Data Privacy Issue** - The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) banned apps on reports of stealing and transmitting user's data in an unauthorized manner to servers which have locations outside India.

- Strong move by the government that sends out a strong message that Indian data cannot be compromised.

Benefits-

1. **Opportunity for Indian**- The recent ban on Chinese app is a good opportunity for Indian entrepreneurs to quickly rise to fill market gaps.-

- This opportunity has also opened up the job market under the segment which will eventually have an added boost to the Indian economy.

2. The ban may be useful for India to use its vast market for Internet services as leverage in its attempts to keep China in check at the border.

What are the concerns related to Chinese apps ban?

There are issues with the government gag against Chinese apps-

1. This can trigger an unconventional battle between the two countries in the larger technology realm.

2. **Create negative image**- This creates a big uncertainty for the foreign investors, and often results in reduces outflow of foreign investment.

What is the way forward?

- **Need for A Data Protection Law:** Data privacy and security remains to be major challenges emanating from the ongoing digital revolution. Thus, a data protection law is long overdue.
- India must stick to a rules-based approach in regulating the Internet.

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General Studies - 4

1. Ethical democracy

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS 4 – Ethical governance; strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance; ethical issues in international relations and funding; corporate governance.

Context- The elected must protect all the unelected instruments of democracy- – judiciary, media and civic organizations.

What is check and balance in the democracy?

Checks and balances, principle of government under which separate branches are empowered to prevent actions by other branches and are induced to share power.

- Democracies have developed systems of efficient checks and balances — elected and unelected institutions. Such a balance is critical to their success.
- Democracies can be harmed if the rulers succeed in jeopardizing the other pillars like the judiciary and free press.

What were Aristotle [ancient Greek philosopher] views on different models of government?

According to Aristotle-

- Monarchies were for the benefit of the monarchs.
- Oligarchies for the benefit of men with means.
- And democracies were for the benefit of men without means.

What were Mahatma Gandhi and Ambedkar views on democracy?

1. Gandhi's View

- He was a firm believer of Ahimsa based stateless ruled based on self-regulation by individual. He considered democracy as a means to achieve his "Ram Rajya". While this would make the country an ideal state, the notion was utopian.
 - He believed in decentralization of power and self sufficiency of villages which shall be brought in by democracy.
2. And laid stress on the individualism provided by democracy. Individualism was important encouraging the individual to surrender to society to achieve his selfless society.

Ambedkar's views-

- He belonged to a backward caste and from his early childhood faced various forms of discrimination in the society.
- For him democracy was not limited to only political spheres but extended to social, religious, economic spheres of life as well, that no person should be arbitrarily discriminated against and for this he fought for his entire life.

For Gandhi, democracy meant the weak getting the same chance as the strong and for Ambedkarji, it was about giving voice to voiceless.

3. For successful democracy - Both believed that the parliamentary majorities need to be restrained through constitutional ethics and public morality.

- Constitutional ethics is about leaders respecting constitutional order, conventions and institutions.
- Gandhi's final message to the congress to convert itself into a **lok Sevak Sangh** and work at the grassroots for social, economic and moral independence.

Conclusion-

- India's democracy, as envisaged by the makers of the constitution, thrived essentially because of the respect of the leaders for the ethical constitutionalism and moral activism of the grassroots activists.
- Indian democracy has been immensely benefitted from such diverging viewpoints. The core values which our freedom fighters stood for are still the basic structure on which our constitution proudly stands.

2. Vaccine nationalism

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- GS 4 - Strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance; ethical issues in international relations and funding; corporate governance.

Context- Problems posed by vaccine nationalism and the possible solutions.

What is vaccine nationalism the problems posed by vaccine nationalism?

Vaccine nationalism occurs when a country manages to secure doses of vaccine for its own citizens or residents before they are made available in other countries.

- This is done through pre-purchase agreements between a government and a vaccine manufacturer.

The problems posed by vaccine nationalism-

- It undermines equitable access to vaccines.
- **Issue for countries with fewer resources-** The most immediate effect of vaccine nationalism is that it further disadvantages countries with fewer resources and bargaining power.
- **Deprives access to public health-** It deprives populations from timely access to vital public health goods.

What needs to be done?

1. **Global framework for equitable access-** International institutions, including the WHO, should coordinate negotiations to produce a framework for equitable access to vaccines during public health crises.
2. **Governments should be the custodian of public goods-** Governments must step in to regulate vaccine development, innovation, manufacture, sale, and supply ultimately to the public.
3. **Prioritization for high risk groups-** The first batch of the vaccines should be made available to all frontline, health and social care workers, police and others who are at high risk of getting the infection.
4. **Ensuring equity-** Equitable distribution and access should be ensured. Equity entails both affordability of vaccines and access opportunities for populations across the world, irrespective of geography and geopolitics.
5. Pre-purchase agreements and contracts should not trump equitable access to global public health goods
6. It was important for WTO members to work together to ensure that intellectual property rights such as patents, industrial designs, copyright and protection of undisclosed information did not create barriers to timely access to affordable medical products.

Way forward-

- Countries around the world should stop engaging in overly nationalistic behaviors. Failure to do so will harm patient populations across the globe.
- The WTO has a role in getting pharmaceutical firms and countries to treat vaccines and life-saving medicines as a public good.