

9pm

Compilation

January, 2020 (Second Week)

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General Studies Paper - 1

General Studies – 1

1. Reasons behind Sexual violence in rural India

Source-[Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS Paper I - Society and social structure

Synopsis- Women of rural India are becoming victims of hierarchies of caste, class, and patriarchy. We need to form a suitable policy that will tackle gender-based sexual violence in rural India.

Background- The Bhanwari Devi rape case in 1992 and the Khairlanji rape and massacre in 2006 to the Hathras case in 2020 shows that sexual violence against women is multi-dimensional issue, root of which lies in the hierarchies of caste, class, and gender.

How the issues related to caste, class, and gender promotes sexual violence in rural India?

Sexual Violence against women in rural -India is linked with caste, caste and patriarchy in the following ways:

- **Firstly, Ancient social structure** - Since ancient times, many things have changed but what has remained constant is rural India's obsession with the caste order. The lower castes have served the upper castes while the upper castes work to keep the status quo. Violence becomes a tool of maintaining the status quo.
- **Secondly, Tilted land reforms-** In the political economy of post-Independence India, land is supreme. Land is class, power and honour. Its exclusive ownership is the basis of maintaining the caste order. Hence large landowners who were of dominant castes were the beneficiary and the landless labourers were of lower castes.
- **Third, Political rise of lower castes-** The Bahujan -Dalit political mobilization challenged this ancient hierarchies and with this, oppressed castes found themselves represented in positions of power.
- **Fourth, Political pressure on police** - Police officials mostly favour the dominant caste groups due to the pressure from the administration to not register sexual crimes under their jurisdiction, since these cases make them targets for transfers and dismissals.

In the societies riddled with caste structure and patriarchy, **women are considered as a symbol of family's, a community's, a caste's honour**. In these societies, sexual violence against the women of opposition becomes **a tool of robbing them of their honour, to maintain the status quo of land and caste**.

During land disputes between two caste groups with a large differential of power and influence, women's bodies become collateral damage.

In conflicts among caste groups who are relatively close together in the caste (and class) order, women are used as a tool to tactically use the Section 354 of the Indian Penal Code (outraging the modesty of a woman) to punish the other side.

What are the steps required to be taken?

To address the multi- dimensional issues related to sexual violence against women, we need to take the following actions.

- **First-** Along with police reform, caste discrimination, patriarchy and reforms in land ownership, we need to implement the policies related to women empowerment in both letter and spirit.
- **Second-** We must take an **intersectional approach** that targets all of the issues.
- **Third- Land ownership reform** must tackle the irregularities of demarcation and the lack of proper records.

- **Fourth-** Sound policy involving all stakeholders should also **tackle the illegal constructions on abadi land and banjar zameen.**
- **Fifth-** The goal of annihilating caste cannot be achieved without mammoth efforts in **educational, professional, and social integration of lower castes** into every field, be it healthcare, judiciary, education, entertainment, or sports.

Way Forward

Along with the land and caste reforms, we must tackle the persistence of patriarchy in our society. “Women’s empowerment” has now become just a phrase for political and corporate organisations. We must demand more representation of women in positions of power through reserved seats in MP, MLA, and MLC elections, or the judiciary and corporate boards.

We need to work for quality sexual education and consent training for our youth, with the aim of preventing sexual assault and equalising and normalising healthy relations among members of different genders and sexes.

Lastly, we must bridge the gender divide in access to the transformative and emancipatory power of consumer technology.

2. Should There Be Wages for Housework?

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- **GS 1** - Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India. Role of women and women’s organization

Synopsis- MNM led by Kamal Haasan promised to recognize HouseWorks. Efforts by historical movement to provide wages for HouseWorks, highlighted many challenges in doing that.

Background-

- Makkal Needhi Maiam MNM, led by its founder Kamal Haasan has promised that **homemakers’ will get their due recognition through payment for their house works** which hitherto has been unrecognized and unmonitored.
- According to **International Labour Organization**, women perform **76.2 per cent of total hours of unpaid care work**, more than three times as much as men. This figure rises to 80% in Asia and the Pacific.
- The debate around wages for housework remained unresolved within the women’s campaign- ‘wages for housework movement’.

What is wages for housework movement?

The International Wages for Housework Campaign **started in Italy in 1972** as a **feminist movement** that highlighted the **role of gendered labour in the home** and its connection to the production of surplus value under capitalism. The movement further spread to Britain and America.

Though women’s work helps men to be productive, this contribution is largely unnoticed. It is extremely difficult to quantify how much women contribute to the economy with their unsung work but it would run into the billions or beyond.

What were the hurdles faced in demand of wages for housework?

‘Wages for housework’ would only imprison women further within the household as-

- Paid housework would reinforce gendered division of roles, keeping women in their traditional role of wife and mother.
- A salary would isolate women from the community and prevent men from sharing housework.
- A salary would legitimize their oppression.

Thus, the idea behind women's movement should be made them free from daily domestic chores and allow them to participate in social sphere and further including paid employment outside the household.

What are the issues that need to resolve before providing wages for housework?

Though MNM has made a promise, but there are few important questions or challenges that need to answered to make it look feasible;

- Once salaried, housework would be controlled in terms of number of hours, quality of work, and so on. **Who would exercise this control and under what terms?**
- Would it **include women only**, who are full-time homemakers?
- What about women workers who earn an income from home by **stitching clothes, selling cooked meals or are engaged in petty trade** and identified a 'Housewives'?

These issues cannot solve easily. Therefore, the idea of a **Universal Basic Income (UBI)** an unconditional cash payment to low income households and should be transfer directly to women.

Way forward-

Women constitute almost half the population and their needs and issues have to be addressed.

- **Paid domestic works** are done predominantly by women in other's houses. Thus, a **National legislation for domestic workers** containing guarantees for minimum wages, and the workers' status and rights should be enacted.
- The **demand of women domestic workers in Tamilnadu address** the issue of value of housework in their demands i.e. an hourly minimum wage, a weekly day-off, an annual bonus.
- Thus, all political parties must **seriously consider their demands** as will be **helpful in asserting the dignity of housework** and making it a visible and valued form of labour.

3. Laws against Inter-faith marriage and Fundamental rights

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- GS 1 – Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Synopsis- Uttar Pradesh recently passed an ordinance which criminalizes interfaith marriages, which is against the exercise of the free will of individual citizens in India.

Introduction-

- UP ordinance which criminalizes inter-faith marriages **has set an extreme example**, being followed by other states like MP.
- In these states' **other laws on slaughter of cattle, marriage, and religious conversions** have been enacted targeted at minorities of the state.
- In Uttarakhand, a **recent divergent view attracted an enquiry** over a press release by district social welfare department that **highlighted a scheme incentivizing inter-faith and inter-caste marriages**.

How interfaith marriages were seen in the past

- **First, Nehru's view-** Chaudhary charan singh in 1994, Sends a proposal to Prime Minister Nehru to pass a law that would ensure only those youth who married outside, or were prepared to marry outside, their caste be recruited in gazetted government services.
- Charan singh believed the intractable issue of caste required drastic measures to start the process of its disintegration.

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- But Nehru disagrees with his proposal on account of freedom of choice of individuals to choose their life partner.
- **Second, Kusubh Chandra sen's view**– The very first debate for legal marriage in India dates back to the 1860s, when the colonial State received a petition signed by Keshub Chandra Sen of Brahma Samaj, to legitimise marriages amongst the members of Brahma Samaj. The motive was to provide the Samaj the right to freely marry as per their '**rites of conscience**'.
- **Third, Special Marriage Act, 1954**– SMA is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted to provide a special form of marriage for the people of India and all Indian nationals in foreign countries, irrespective of the religion or faith followed by either party.

However, States such as Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh framing laws that target inter-faith marriage.

The procedural requirements of the SMA such as the need to give prior notice, and allowance for objections, seem to be undermining its original intent by opening the doors to violent moral policing by vigilante groups.

What are the issues related to these new laws?

Interference by the State in an adult's right to love and marry has a 'chilling effect' on freedoms

- **First, against personal liberty**- These new laws intervene in the citizens' personal liberty by interfering with the choice of their spouse.
- **Second, Against the Right to Privacy**– The level of state interference in a civil union, which is a solemnization of a relationship between two individuals, breaches the basic structure of the Constitution.
- **Third, Hinder the individual's Right to choose faith**– According to **Articles 25 to 28**, an Indian citizen is guaranteed the freedom to practice any religion of his or her choice. The ordinance is a conflict with these rights as it limits the choice of the religion of a prospective spouse.
- **Lastly, Patriarchal Roots**- This shows the law has deep-seated patriarchal roots, wherein women are infantilized, placed under parental and community control, and denied the right to take life decisions, should those decisions not be agreeable to their guardians.

Constitution of India offers high principles for citizens to aspire for. Citizens may not have been lived up to these principles but it was the intent that individual try to achieve those principles by doing better to the society. Laws in questions are doing exact opposite by going against these principles.

Way forward-

Based on the judicial pronouncements it is clear that the Right to marry a person belongs to another faith is a Fundamental Right

It is for the court to suo motu strike these laws down if it wants to presser

4. Gender based inequality in agriculture sector in India

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- GS 1- Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India. Role of women and women's organization, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies. Effects of globalization on Indian society. Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism.

Synopsis- Women farmers fear that the farm laws will further deepen the existing gender-based inequality in the agriculture sector.

How Farming in India has strengthened gender-based inequality?

This gender discrimination is deeply rooted in society and deprives women farmers of some of the most basic facilities like access to loans and irrigation systems.

- **First, non-recognition as farmers** - Female farmers are labeled as 'cultivators' or 'agricultural laborer's but not farmers. Without any recognition, they tend to get excluded from all the benefits of government schemes.
- According to the agricultural census, 73.2 percent of rural women workers are engaged in agriculture, yet they own only 12.8 percent of the land.
- **Second, the lack of land ownership makes female farmers "invisible"**. Without land, they are not recognized as farmers despite their large contributions to the sector and this marginalization means they are especially vulnerable to **exploitation by large corporations** under the new laws.
- 83% of agricultural land in India is inherited by male members of the family and less than 2% by their female counterparts, according to India Human Development Survey (2018).

What are the implications of recently enacted farm law's on women a farmer?

Recently enacted farm laws will further deteriorate there already poor condition;

- **First, no mention on MSP-** Their main worry is about a possible withdrawal of the MSP and a dismantling of the public procurement. Without a guarantee of an MSP, they are vulnerable to corporate exploitation.
- **Second, bargaining power-**When selling their produce outside mandis, Women farmer's ability to understand and enter into a fair agreement with the corporate buyers is a cause of concern.
 - Without this safety net, Vulnerable farmers fear they will have to participate in contract farming with private corporations, where these companies determine the price with no adequate redressal mechanism.
 - They also fear that the **small marginal and medium farmers (mostly women led)** will be forced to do **sell their land to big agro-businesses and become wage laborer.**

Thus, the lack of safeguards from the government for pricing will widen the gender gap in farming as the premise of "increasing competition" assumes women are able to trade as easily as men when they are subject to greater limitations.

Way forward-

- Widen the definition of farmers which doesn't recognize women as farmer but as cultivators and agriculture laborer.
- Policy paralysis in granting entitlement to women agriculture needs to be focused.
- Grant property rights and tenure of security of agriculture land to women.

Empowerment of women farmers is important not only to achieve gender equality, but improve nutritional security of the country.

5. Flawed understanding of triple talaq law is leading to its misuse

Source- [The IndianExpress](#)

Syllabus- *GS Paper I (laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.)*

Synopsis- Faulty understanding of the triple talaq law i.e., Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act of 2019, as well as the Islamic law on divorce is leading to misuse of the act.

Introduction- In the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act of 2019, a Supreme Court Bench led by Justice D Y Chandrachud observed that mother-in-law of the second respondent (wife) cannot be accused of the offence of pronouncement of triple talaq under the Act as the offence can only be committed by a Muslim man (husband). It clearly shows that the act is being misunderstood.

Background of the anti-triple talaq law-

- Anti-women divorce **customs prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia** had been given a severe blow by the teachings of great social reformer Prophet Muhammad.
- On the basis that “old habits die hard”, unscrupulous men innovated ways and means to circumvent the Prophet’s noble teachings.
- One of these was the practice of triple talaq — repeating the word “talaq” thrice — which was believed to effect instant dissolution of marriage leaving no room for any reconsideration or reconciliation.
- Instead of defeating this innovation, law men of the time called it talaq-ul-bidat and declared it to be “sinful but effective”.
- This concept remained in Muslim societies for centuries across the globe.
- But due to its devastating effects on families and societies, country after country in Asia and Africa gradually abolished by legislation the detestable practice of triple talaq.

Situation in India-

India took a much longer time to follow suit. During British rule, courts kept this law alive as a “**sinful but effective**” form of divorce after calling it a concept “**bad in theology but good in law.**”

Post- Independence, some High Court judges like VR Krishna Iyer of Kerala and Baharul Islam of Assam tried to awaken the custodians of state authority to the need for its abolition. Finally, the practice of triple talaq was outlawed in the **Shayara Bano case of 2017**. The **anti-triple talaq Act of 2019** was the outcome of this judicial reform.

How provisions of Triple Talaq law are often misunderstood?

- **Misuse of Section 498A** of the Indian Penal Code (cruelty to a woman by her husband or his relatives) was once acknowledged by the apex court and formalized some measures. But under feminist pressure, the measures were withdrawn.
- **Anti-triple talaq law together with Section 498A** is proving destructive for the families.
 - For Instance, in one triple talaq case in Kerala, a lawyer of a woman **included her husband’s mother in the FIR** filed against her husband in reference to the said IPC provision.
- Kerala High Court had refused bail to the accused husband’s mother. The case went to SC where SC highlighted the faulty applications on the act, that
 - There is no specific provision in Section 7(c), or elsewhere in the Act, making Section 438 inapplicable to an offence punishable under the Ac
- **Section 7 of the 2019 act is particularly misunderstood.** Many lawyer misbelief that it overrides the general provision for anticipatory bail under Section 438 of the Criminal Procedure Code.
 - For example, after enactment of the act, a man accused in the Triple talaq case **sought anticipatory bail in the Bombay High Court.** Lawyer argued that the non-obstante clause in Section 7, makes CrPC provision inapplicable.
 - However, Court rejected the argument and granted bail to the person.
- For understanding the common-sense fact that this Act is meant to discipline erring husbands only, the learned lawyers needed a learning session with the apex court.

Conclusion

The verdict of SC is a significant step towards preventing the misuse of the anti-triple divorce law.

6. Issues in wages against housework and alternatives to it

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS Paper I (Salient features of Indian Society, Role of women and women's organization)

Synopsis- It is important to recognise the value of unpaid domestic work. However, creating value isn't always about fair remuneration. A salary to women for domestic work will institutionalise the idea of men as 'providers'.

Introduction- Recently, Kamal Hasan's party, Makkal Needhi Maiam, promised salaries to housewives as a part of its electoral campaign in Tamil Nadu.

Shashi Tharoor also said that monetising the services of women homemakers in society will enhance their power and autonomy and will lead to a recognition of the value of unpaid work. He also emphasised on creating near-universal basic income.

Origin of demand for wages against housework-

- It was first raised at the **third National Women's Liberation conference in Manchester, England**. The International Wages for Housework Campaign (IWFHC) was formed by Selma James in 1972.
- In India, the **National Housewives Association, in 2010**, tried to seek recognition as a trade union. But it was rejected on the ground that housework is not a trade or an industry.
- To empower women financially and help them live with dignity, **in 2012**, the government announced that it was considering mandating a salary for housework to wives, from husbands. But it never came to force.

Status of majority of women in their family-

- Household works require efforts and sacrifices throughout 24/7, 365 days a year, still they face domestic violence and cruelty due to their economic dependence on others, mainly their husbands.
- **As per the data of the NSSO, only about a quarter of men and boys above six years engaged in unpaid household chores, compared to over four-fifths of women.**
- Every day, an average Indian male spends 1.5 hours per day in unpaid domestic work, compared to about five hours by a female.

Consequences of the paid domestic work

Recognising the value of unpaid domestic work is not always about fair remuneration. It may not lead to all positives;

- Men paying for wives' domestic work could further **enhance their sense of entitlement**. It may also put an additional onus on women to perform.
- Ethically, buying domestic labour from wife will **formalize the patriarchal Indian family** where the position of **men stems from their being "providers"** in the relationship.
- Moreover, **legal recognition does not always mean protection**. For instance, despite legal recognition of equal inheritance rights, the majority of women are not receiving that.

What are the alternatives to wages for housework?

- **First-** Dowry can be converted to the policy as it shows some gains received by daughters from the parental property (equal inheritance rights). It would be more effective than salary for household work.
- **Second-** Rather than creating a new provision of salary for housework, we need to strengthen awareness, implementation, and utilization of other existing provisions like;
 - Right to reside in the marital home,
 - Streedhan and haq mehr,
 - Inheritance rights as daughters
 - Free legal aid and maintenance in instances of violence and divorce
- **Third-** Women should be encouraged to reach their potential through quality education, access and opportunities of work, gender-sensitive and harassment-free workplaces.
- **Fourth-** Husbands should support wives in their daily housework and should not burden their wives for the work which they can do by themselves.
- **Fifth-** We should raise our boys to be brothers, sons, husbands, and fathers who would respect the women and will fight for their rights.

Way Forward

Just as we do not want women to commodify their reproductive services and we banned commercial surrogacy in the country. On similar lines, we should not allow the commodification of housework and personal care.

Once the above-given conditions are assured to the women, they will be able to exercise freedom for themselves and will be able to decide whether to work inside or outside of the home.

General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies – 2

1. Concerns of hasty approval to COVID-19 vaccine

Source- [The Hindu](#), [The Indian Express](#)

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

Synopsis- Concerns regarding hasty approval granted to the COVID-19 vaccines despite the lack of adequate efficacy data.

Background-

- The Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) approved the Subject Expert Committee's recommendation for emergency use of Serum Institute of India's **Covishield** and Bharat Biotech's **Covaxin**.
- Covishield is the same vaccine as developed by Oxford- AstraZeneca, which has got emergency use approval in the UK.
- In the case of Covaxin, concerns have been raised about the **absence of efficacy data**, which is generated during Phase 3 of human clinical trials.

However, experts have voiced their concerns on the approval process and the lack of publicly released efficacy data for Covaxin.

How India's credibility as manufacturer of vaccine is at stake?

The hasty nod for Covaxin has put India's credibility as a manufacturer of vaccines is at a stake and has raised eyebrows in the scientific and healthcare communities about a "public rollout of an untested product.

- **First, Covaxin has no clinical efficacy data-** Bharat Biotech's Covaxin vaccine is still in stage 3 clinical trials in India and the final results are yet to be released. The recommendation comes despite the lack of efficacy data for Covaxin.
 - Efficacy data is an indication of how effective the vaccine is in preventing the virus attack.
 - Moreover, the decision is a violation of the criteria in the draft regulatory guidelines for the development of COVID-19 vaccines published by CDSCO, in which it is clear that safety and efficacy data is required for approval of vaccine, but the indigenous vaccine from Bharat Biotech does not have efficacy details because the trials are underway.
- **Second, credibility of regulator at stake-** This lack of transparency could lead to a lack of trust in the vaccine. There are several issues with the way the approval has been granted, which can lead to people losing confidence in the regulatory system.
- **Third, approval an untested vaccine makes it nearly impossible to conduct a proper phase-3 trial.**
 - It will be unethical to expect volunteers to participate in a trial where there is only a 50% chance of being administered the actual vaccine, when they have the option of the real dose elsewhere.
- **Fourth, Pharmaceutical giants like Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca have given a go-ahead only after partial results of vaccine's abilities in their own populations.**
- Whereas in India similar data for **vaccine ability among Indian population** has not been published. As it is a possibility that vaccine response among India population may not be the same as among the European Population.

The rush to approve COVID-19 vaccine without proper clinical trial may do more harm than good. So, it would be better to wait for the preliminary data from the phase-III trials to come in, and then grant the approval.

What is the way forward?

- In light of the intense concerns arising from the absence of efficacy data, the Use of Covaxin should be treated as extended clinical trials.
- For the larger scale implementation of vaccines, Government needs to carefully monitor immune response to different vaccines and assess the efficacy across populations.

2. Government initiatives for welfare of Scheduled Castes (SC)

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 – Social Justice – Schemes for vulnerable section

Synopsis: Government has recently launched post-matric scholarship scheme for SCs, apart from many other steps taken for the welfare of Scheduled Castes (SC) in India.

Post-matric scholarship scheme

- Government has recently passed an **outlay of Rs 59,000 crore for the post-matric scholarship scheme** for students from Scheduled Caste groups.
- Almost 60 per cent of the cost of scheme will be borne by Central government and rest by the states.

How this scheme promotes welfare of Scheduled Castes (SC)?

- More than **four crore SC students** would benefit from this allocation in the next five years.
 - These students were facing challenges in pursuing higher education because of the financial constraints but this decision will provide them a sense of hope.
- The **gross enrolment ratio of SC students in higher education** will increase with the help of this scheme.
 - **Proper education** will provide the next generation of Dalits paths for upward mobility, dignity and recognition in the society.

Other Government initiatives for welfare of Scheduled Castes (SC)

Development of SC concentrated villages

- The Union government identified almost 27,000 such villages where a government programme will make sure the **dedicated implementation of welfare schemes** to improve infrastructure and reduce socio-economic gaps in 2019.

Political empowerment

- The current government has ensured meaningful representation for Dalits within the organisation and government.
 - For example, the youngest woman MLA from Gujarat, Malti Maheshwari, and numerous other leaders, are now making themselves heard and are suitably voicing the concerns and aspirations of Dalits across the country.

Promotion of entrepreneurship

- Schemes such as **Stand-up India and MUDRA** have significantly benefited young people from the community in the last 6 years.
- Milind Kamble, the chairperson of **Dalit Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DICCII)**, has been working with the government to create opportunities for entrepreneurship and self-employment for Dalit youth.
 - “Be Job Givers and not Job Seekers” is a theme for the government.
 - Milind kamble has a team of more than 5,000 entrepreneurs from SC and ST groups.
- Several youngsters have benefitted from schemes like a **venture capital fund for SCs and a credit enhancement guarantee plan**.

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- The youth who want to become entrepreneurs are being **supported through a network of growth centres and aiding financial assistance architecture.**

Way forward

- India should become extremely inclusive in its foundation, review its approach and focus on making the country a leading light in the new world order.
- Sustained economic empowerment, political representation and educational opportunities like the boost in the post-matric scholarship for SC students should be provided so that Dalits become an inseparable part of the New India story.

3. Way forward for India at UNSC

Source: [Click Here](#)

Syllabus: GS -2, International Relations

Synopsis: As India assumes UNSC membership for the 8th time as one of the 10 non-permanent members, it should integrate UNSC functions with national objectives while adjusting to changed realities.

Introduction

Dynamics at UNSC have changed completely since the cold war, while India's attitude has changed from the reactive to the proactive.

India needs to align its goals of national objectives at UNSC with the present dynamics at UNSC to achieve maximum gain.

- India's new term should be led by **purposeful and pragmatism.**
 - **Purposefulness** is about tightly incorporating UNSC meeting with India's broader national goals.
 - **Pragmatism** requires adapting to the changed conditions at the UNSC and avoiding overly ambitious goals.

How UNSC and India evolved post-cold war?

- **During 1991-92**, India's term at UNSC was influenced by collapse of the Soviet Union.
- Delhi was fixing its broken economy and was reorganising its foreign policy to survive in the post-Soviet world.
 - Countries Like EU and Us wanted to transform this "inter-national" forum into a "supra-national" institution, to interfere actively in the matter of countries.
 - India had to resist external solutions to its problems on issues like the Kashmir question and the nuclear.
 - Thus, India was not vocal and adopted a defensive approach at that time.
- **In 2011-12**, revived Russia and a rising China began influencing UNSC to resist west.
- India witnessed rapid economic growth in the first decade of 21st century which resulted in improvement of its own relative position in the meeting.
 - Delhi was less defensive than in the 1990s, but was struggling to change its new strengths into practical outcomes.
- **At present UNSC term of India**, it is facing the challenge of sharp competition between US, China and Russia. Which is enforced by closeness of Russia-China and disagreement between US and EU.

What objectives India would be taking along at the UNSC?

To make its present term fruitful, India needs to work towards 5 objectives;

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- **Firstly, making the UNSC effective.** Except brief moment of cooperation in 1990s, UNSC is dealing with the divisions among 5 permanent members, making it less effective.
 - India needs to carve out the larger room for itself and try to create an atmosphere of cooperation as done by US and USSR on nuclear proliferation.
- **Secondly, making the UNSC more representative.** India wanted permanent membership since the end of the Cold War but China does not want India and Japan to join the UNSC as permanent members.
 - However, India should push its efforts in partnership with Brazil, Germany and Japan, to expand the UNSC.
- **Thirdly, India has to deal with China's growing enmity.** On the issue of cross-border terrorism china continues to protect Pakistan from the international pressures and also tried to get the UNSC to focus on India's constitutional changes in Kashmir.
 - India should try to get the wind in its favour by presenting real facts
- **Fourthly, the engagement with peace and security issues at the UNSC.** India will be able to strengthen its new coalitions.
 - For example, the Quad which brings together Australia, India, Japan and the US.
 - Collaboration with its European partners like France and Germany in the security field.
- **Fifthly, Delhi should renew its ties with its old partners.** Delhi should express the peace and security concerns of the global south in UNSC. Supporting the rule and survivability of the island states is a critical political task for India.
 - 60 per cent of UNSC documents and 70 per cent of its resolutions are about peace and security in Africa. There is an opportunity for Delhi to deepen India's engagement on peace and security issues in Africa at bilateral, regional and global levels.

4. Rising vaccine hesitancy and its solution

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- **GS2 -2** Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Synopsis- As the country readies to implement its COVID-19 vaccination programme, vaccine hesitancy could be an issue that the government needs to address forthwith.

Introduction-

- Prime-Minister hailed the approval of two made in India COVID-19 vaccines by the drug regulator and said India is on the threshold of beginning the largest vaccination programme in the world.
- However, the COVID-19 vaccination intent is decreasing due to increasing hesitancy.

What is the general perception around the world regarding vaccine drive?

Following are the findings that validates the increasing Vaccine hesitancy.

- Recently, a survey with approximately 11,000 respondents was conducted in India, to understand the openness to take the vaccine,
 - **About 53 per cent of the respondent were unsure about taking COVID-19 vaccine.**
- A survey by New Delhi's citizen-survey platform Local-Circles found that about 69 per cent of respondents saw no urgent need to get immunized.
- Key reasons cited for hesitancy were **limited information about efficacy, side-effects**, and perceived high immunity level.

Moreover, COVID-19 vaccination intent is decreasing globally. Since August, intentions to get vaccinated have dropped in 10 of 15 countries, most of all China (down 12 points), Australia (down 9), Spain (down 8), and Brazil (down 7).

What is World Health Organization's view on Vaccine Hesitancy?

The SAGE Working Group on Vaccine Hesitancy concluded that vaccine hesitancy refers to **delay in acceptance or refusal of vaccination** despite availability of vaccination services. Vaccine hesitancy is complex and context specific, varying across time, place and vaccines. It is influenced by factors such as **complacency, convenience and confidence [3C model]**.

- **Complacency**- Refers to a low perceived risk of vaccine-preventable diseases and therefore it is assumed vaccines are not needed. Other issues are considered more important.
- **Convenience** - Vaccination convenience is a significant factor that entails physical availability, affordability and willingness-to-pay. This continuum ranges from total acceptance to complete refusal.
- **Confidence**- Refers to a lack of trust in the effectiveness and safety of vaccines, the system that delivers them – including the reliability of the health professional – and/or the motivations of policy-makers who make determinations about vaccines.

What needs to be done to remove Vaccine Hesitancy?

Misinformation, specifically online, is a big threat to trust in Vaccines and their programs as proved by losses suffered by poultry sector due to erroneously linking consumption of chickens to the disease.

Communication strategies are critical for tracking, negotiating and shaping perceptions around the vaccines and the programme.

- **First**, strategies need to be shaped around four key themes- **Product development, prioritization strategies, programme rollout activities**, and **AEFI** (Adverse Effects Following Immunization) and **AESI** (Adverse Effects of Special Interest).
- **Second**, it is very important to **give confidence to the public** by discussing the robustness of various processes involved in drug/vaccine development such as clinical trial designs, conduct, monitoring, analysis, reporting and the regulatory reviews that happen before it is approved.
 - This will make the public aware about the rigorous processes followed for clinical trials, and the approval, as followed by regulators.

Thus, communicating consistently, transparently, empathetically and proactively about uncertainty, risks and vaccine availability will contribute to building trust.

5. Why central deputation to 3 Bengal police officers not right?

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.

Synopsis- Central orders, three IPS officer from Bengal to serve central deputation to as part of an exercise to fix responsibility for the alleged lapses.

Central Deputation

Officers on deputation serve as substitute for regular duty posts in the event of service officers holding duty posts being temporarily away from their cadre. Officers perform regular functions of the posts against which they are posted as substitutes.

Background-

- The Centre has asked for the **three IPS officers to be sent on deputation** with the Government of India following an attack on BJP president J P Nadda's motorcade outside Kolkata, these officers were in charge of security.
- **But Bengal government refused to send** three IPS officers on central deputation. The state government in its refusal has cited a shortage of IPS officers.

Why Centre's decision is not legitimate?

The Centre's decision not only reeks of vengeance but goes against the norms governing deputation of officers to the Centre.

- First, putting blame on the three IPS officers for the attack without even a perfunctory inquiry goes **against the norms of justice**.
 - A formal enquiry should have taken place, then the penal actions.
- **Second, forcibly deputed to central organization-** The concerned IPS officers have been assigned new responsibilities at Centre: Bholanath Pandey has been deputed as SP, Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD), Praveen Tripathi as DIG, Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and Rajeev Mishra as IG, Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).
 - The forceful deputation can demoralize the serving officer which eventually affects their service performance as they go with the perception that they have been deputed on grounds of inefficiency or as a punishment.

What is the process of deputation in India?

The movement of officers from the state to the Centre and back is of mutual benefit to the states and the government of India on the one hand and to the officers concerned, on the other.

- **First**, in normal case, officers willing to be deputed to the Centre are asked to apply through the States.
 - A panel of selected officers is prepared after which they are deputed to various Central Armed Police Forces [CRPF, ITBP, SSB etc.] and Centre police organization on the basis of merit.
- **Second, in case of disagreement** between Centre and State—**Rule 6(1) of the Indian Police Service (Cadre) Rules, 1954** says about deputation: In case of disagreement between Centre and state over deputation of an IPS officer, the Centre's will shall prevail.

Why government reducing the CDR of IPS officers?

Central government proposes 50 percent cut in the IPS central deputation quota because—

- First, the **state governments do not spare their IPS officers** for central deputation and more than 60 per cent posts remain vacant.
 - It is observed that at present only 428 IPS officers are working on Central Deputation against the authorized strength of 1075 officers.
- Second, most officers avoid Central deputation as they enjoy **better perks and powers in the States**.
- **Third**, Central deputation could mean **a posting in the Northeast** or in a **Left-Wing Extremism-affected State**.

Thus, Centre decision to call West Bengal IPS officer to serve in central deputation seems absurd and such arbitrary decision must be avoided.

6. India-U.K. relations after Brexit

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2– International Relations

Synopsis: India and UK have shared a past and they need to plan a different future together.

Introduction

PM Modi invited the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson as the chief guest for India's Republic Day parade this month. However, British PM has expressed his inability to attend the ceremony due to COVID-19 mutations in the UK. In Britain's opinion, the invite from India was quite casual and unplanned.

- It is the prime minister's decision to choose the chief guest for the Republic Day parade and he or she does not have to consult others in or outside the Cabinet.
- **PM Modi selected the following guests:**
 - U.S. President Barack Obama in 2015.
 - French President Francois Hollande in 2016.
 - The Crown Prince of the United Arab Emirates in 2017.
 - The ASEAN leaders in 2018.
 - South African President Cyril Ramaphosa in 2019.
 - Mr. Bolsonaro in 2020, and Mr. Johnson for 2021.
- The PM has mostly chosen the leaders from the west out of the 193 countries in the United Nations. **Britain is invited for the 6th time.**

Discuss India-Britain relationship in the context of Free Trade Agreements.

- **India has been unsuccessful in negotiating a trade agreement** with the European Union since 2007 and Britain was considered the reason behind this failure.
- Now due to Brexit, UK might make every effort to pursue commercial gain in Asian countries with high growth rates.
- However, India might face similar hurdles as faced with the EU during FTA negotiations i.e.
 - **Both UK and India's** export profile is primarily focused on services.
 - **Britain** will mention its new **points-based system** for immigrants for free movement of professionals. While **India**, after withdrawing out of RCEP, is **wary about discussing any new trade agreement**, and will place greater pressure on aspects related to country of origin and percentage of value addition in exports.
 - Both the countries may settle for a limited agreement covering pharmaceuticals, financial technology, chemicals, defence production, petroleum and food products.

Why close relations with UK are important?

Ties between India and U.K. are considerably important because of following reasons:

- **Firstly**, 1.5 million people from Indian origin live in Britain which also includes 15 Members of Parliament, three members in Cabinet and two in high office as Finance and Home Ministers.
 - Before the pandemic hit the world, there were half a million tourists from India to Britain annually and twice that figure from Britain to India.
- **Secondly**, approximately 30,000 Indians study in Britain regardless of limited opportunities for post-graduation employment.
- **Thirdly**, Britain is among the top investors in India and India is the second-biggest investor and a major job creator in Britain.

7. A multi-dimensional approach to tackle malnutrition

Source: – [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus – GS- 2 – Hunger and Malnutrition

Synopsis: Solution to the issue of malnutrition is not solely dependent on increasing food intake, but it requires a multidimensional approach including women empowerment.

Introduction

- National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) has provided **mixed results**.
- **Positive results** include fall in infant mortality rates and under-five mortality rates, increase in institutional births and child immunisation rates. **Negative results** include worsening nutrition level.
- For dealing with the issue of malnutrition, it is important that direct nutrition interventions are ensured during pregnancy, breastfeeding and in the early years of a child's life.
 - hot cooked meals with adequate protein, milk, and green leafy vegetables should be provided to the pregnant women, lactating mothers and young children.

HOW TO IMPROVE THE NUTRITION LEVEL BY A MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH?

1. Hot cooked meals

- Many states have replaced the provision of **take-home rations** with the daily **hot cooked meals** for mothers
- It also **provides an opportunity** for the front-line workers to **give pregnant women iron, folic acid and calcium tablets**.
- Moreover, women coming to the anganwadi to take hot cooked meals, instead of take-home ration delivered at their homes, provides workers with an opportunity to engaged in early childhood stimulation activities by **counselling and parenting sessions** with the pregnant women.

Intergenerational cycle of malnutrition?

A **malnourished** mother will give birth to a low-birth-weight baby; the low-birth-weight baby will grow as a **malnourished** child, then to a **malnourished** teenager, then to a **malnourished** pregnant woman, and so the **cycle** continues.

2. Adoption of life cycle approach

- To **stop the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition**, a life cycle approach needs to be adopted, which goes beyond “first thousand days” approach.
- This approach includes **prevention of child marriage** by supporting girls to stay in high school by grassroot programs and improving their nutrition level by Mid-day meal scheme.

3. Economic empowerment

- Childhood care enables girls to **become self-dependent** by earning their livelihood. Economic empowerment of women is directly linked to the nutrition level of children.
- To assist mothers working without concern of their children's safety and well-being, Mobile creches for younger children should be provided at worksites.

4. Strengthening Anganwadi system

- **Worker's development:** Supervisors of anganwadis should be provided with the facilities like interest-free loans and fuel allowance for two-wheelers.
- Upgradation of Skill level of Anganwadi workers and supervisors should be facilitated through online sessions, trainings and certificate courses on nutrition and early childhood stimulation.

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- **Infrastructure development:** Facilities for cooking, playing of children, water connection should be upgraded.
 - Double-burner stoves, gas cylinders, pressure cookers and sufficient steel cooking vessels should be provided to cater to multiple meal requirements.

5. Empowerment at gram panchayat level

- There are around 2, 50,000 gram panchayats in India, and nearly 14 lakh anganwadis, the majority of these are in rural areas.
- Every Gram panchayat must have an anganwadi committee, which would meet every month on a fixed day and will present an action plan for Gram Panchayat.

6. Tackling issue of Exclusion and convergence

Local governments are capable of dealing with both the issues effectively.

- It can ensure the inclusion of the Poorest, migrants, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities in social welfare programs.
- Panchayats are best place to deal with the child marriage due to their social reach and influence.
- Convergence can also be brought by Panchayats by using its funds in strengthening of Anganwadis. It can work with Anganwadi workers, ASHAs, ANMs and anganwadi supervisors to ensure the beneficiaries are provided with immunisation, antenatal care, maternity benefits and nutrition services.

Women empowerment is the key for tackling the issue of malnutrition and local level government are best placed to make this empowerment possible. All the possible assistance should be made mandatory by the government to anganwadi and program focussed on the welfare of women.

8. NFHS-5 data suggest improvement on various social indicators

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2

Synopsis: Overall trends of NFHS data suggest an improvement in population control, use of modern contraception, reproductive and child health, immunisation, and social determinants of health.

Introduction

The National Family Health Survey-round 5 (NFHS-5) covers about 6.1 lakh sample households to provide estimates for 707 districts. In the first phase, data from 22 states and UTs has been released from the latest survey conducted in 2019-2020.

What are the major findings in the first phase of the report?

- **One, the data on Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** has come down to 2.1 or below (replacement level) in all states and UTs. Bihar (3), Meghalaya (2.9) and Manipur (2.2) are exceptions in this.
- **Two,** the data shows that **the overall use of modern methods of contraception** has increased in 20 out of 22 states. The most dominant method being female sterilisation.
- **Three,** the data confirms that **the number of women marrying before the legal age** has reduced in 17 out of 22 states and UTs, with Nagaland, Maharashtra, Jammu & Kashmir and Sikkim as the top performers.
 - Indicators on teenage marriage and childbearing have also improved in 17 states/UTs.
- **Four,** 17 of 22 states/UTs saw an increase in **antenatal care visits** during the first trimester (Nagaland, Bihar and West Bengal saw the highest rise).
- **Five, the data shows consumption of IFA tablets** by pregnant women for 180 days or more has increased in almost all states/UTs (except Karnataka) albeit this has not resulted in reduction in anaemia levels among pregnant women.

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- There is a need to consider adding IFA tablets which contain more natural sources of iron, folic acid and other micronutrients in the diet.
- **Six**, 14 out of 22 states and UTs had more than 90 percent **of new-borns delivered in institutional facilities** and 14 out of 22 states/UTs have seen a drop in neonatal mortality.

What does the NFHS data suggest on the indicators of women empowerment?

Women's empowerment is a widespread concept. However, indicators like household decision making, control over personal hygiene choices and possessions like bank accounts and mobile phones are decent indirect means for evaluation.

- The data indicates that the majority of women (80 percent) participated in at least three household decisions.
- **Hygienic methods of protection during menstruation** are being used by more than 64 per cent of younger women in each of the 22 states/UTs, except Bihar at 59 per cent.
- **Personal possessions** such as mobile phone and bank account have increased to over 70 per cent across each of the 22 states/UTs of India (except Nagaland) in 2019-2020 amongst women.

What does the NFHS data indicate about the public health in India?

- All states and UTs show a drastic increase in **the number of households with a constructed toilet, improved drinking water** and clean cooking fuels which are the indicators critical in improving public health in India.
- There has been a rise in **malnutrition rates, wasting and underweight children** in half of the states which reported an increase in exclusive breastfeeding and adequacy of diets.
 - Stunting can be affected by multiple factors such as indicators of the mother a child, financial situation, adequacy of diets, water and sanitation facilities, as well as interventions for nutrition promotion and health.
- NFHS-5 data also show an increase in **the rates of obesity in children** and risk factors for chronic diseases in adults like hypertension and blood glucose.

Conclusion

One should not simplify these results for the whole country because data from phase 2 is yet to come and summary figures may oversee how relative health and nutritional results of the population can be.

9. UK-India Free Trade relations and Cairn Energy PLC issue

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Synopsis: With the conclusion of UK-EU trade agreement, now there is an opportunity to work towards UK-India Free Trade Agreement but resolving **Cairn Energy issue must be a priority for that.**

Introduction

Present developments provide an opportunity for both India and UK to move the bilateral economic plan forward.

- Both countries have **common interest in the issues**, such as climate change and the green economy, economic recovery of both the countries from COVID-19.
- After the conclusion of **UK-EU trade agreement**, UK can now focus on concluding trade agreements with key partners like India.

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- The **Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine** which has been approved in the UK was developed in collaboration between the Pune-based Serum Institute of India and the Wockhardt factory in the UK.

Importance of resolving Cairn Energy PLC issue

The recent ruling of arbitration court in the favour of Cairn Energy PLC marks an end to the long-running dispute between Cairn Energy PLC and the Indian government over a retrospective \$1.2 billion tax demand imposed in 2015.

For India-UK trade to move forward and save the cost of arbitration, this issue need to end here.

- Cairn Energy PLC was one such global investor whose **belongings in India were held in an Indian company in which Indians sat on the board**, which had Indian senior management, where many of the engineers were Indian.
- **The Cairn India got success from a significant calculated risk.** The resources which Cairn Energy PLC bought from an international major had failed to find hydrocarbons on the land.
 - The purchase came with a major capital risk to drill several wells to totally explore the fields in Rajasthan.
 - After the oil discovery, Cairn Energy PLC then developed these fields and installed new technology to extract the oil and transport it to refineries.
 - During this entire period Cairn Energy PLC paid all taxes and dues on time and also invested in the local community, creating valuable infrastructure and jobs.

Thus, there is no reason for dragging this matter any further.

Why resolving Cairn India issues will be beneficial for India?

The Indian government has publicly stated in the past that the decision of the court would be honoured, so the decision of the court should end the matter.

- **Firstly**, timely and logical settlement of this dispute would lead to an instant validation of the desirability of India as an investment destination and also to India's status in the international and domestic debt and equity markets.
- **Secondly**, a practical solution to the Vodafone and Cairn Energy judgments would improve India's position at the top table of global economic powers.
- **Third**, as stated above, it was one of the thorny issues in the India-UK relations and good relations with UK will open many opportunities for India in the EU region.

10. Dilemma of Reservation and merit system

Synopsis: For decades, merit system and reservation has been seen as opposites, but these differences are getting blurred.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS-2

Introduction

The year 2021 is the centenary year of the “**Communal**” **Government Order (GO) in Madras Presidency**. It introduced reservations based on castes and communities.

GO was the acknowledgment of the social inequalities prevalent in the society, by the British. Reservation became one of the most divisive public issues, dividing them into ‘reserved’ and ‘general’ categories. The reservation was seen as the opposite of a merit system.

Reservation, the especially caste-based reservation has been established as bad, whereas the reservations **in the name of ‘Merit Stream’** for the wards of employees or alumni of universities and colleges is seen as right and justified.

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- **For example;** some of the colleges reserve postgraduate seats for the students enrolled in their own undergraduate honors programs. But officially this system is called the 'Merit Stream'.

However, now with the EWS quota and entry of reserved category students in unreserved categories this difference is getting blurred.

Are the merit system and caste-based reservation, mutually exclusive?

- If not segregated by the ideological differences, all reservations use merit-based criteria for the selection of eligible candidates. Thus, they are not mutually exclusive.
- Even **in the merit-based system**, reservation like arrangements has been established that built **exclusionary access**. merit is achieved by a mix of ability, effort, and social capital and the social capital plays the most crucial role in it.
 - **For example;** expensive private schools or coaching institutes are affordable for the rich only, thus ability and effort only cannot get a student admission in them.
- Most recent judgment in the **Saurav Yadav vs. State of Uttar Pradesh case**, reiterate the judgment of Mandal judgment, that un-reserved category must be open to all and selection should be merit-based, including for those belonging to categories entitled to reservations.
- Thus, the reserved candidates making their way into the unreserved categories by the competition with the unreserved candidates should be appreciated.

11. How to deal with Avian influenza?

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2

Synopsis: Avian influenza must be stopped before continuous spread amongst humans.

Influenza type A viruses cause Bird flu, a highly contagious viral disease. Normally birds are carriers of this virus, takes it across the continent, though unaffected themselves, affect a large population of other birds.

These viruses mainly affect poultry birds such as chickens and turkeys. Although rare, this virus sometimes also affects mammals such as pigs, horses, cats, and dogs.

H5N8 and H5N1 are subtypes of avian influenza Virus:

- **H5N8** has been found in crows in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.
- **H5N1** strains have been found in ducks in Kerala and migratory birds in Himachal.

Introduction

The highly pathogenic avian influenza subtypes named as H5N1 and H5N8, have been reported in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Kerala.

- **Death count of poultry birds in Haryana** is in thousands followed by Jharkhand and Gujarat. The cause of death in these three States is still unidentified.
- Crows in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, migratory birds in Himachal Pradesh, and poultry in Kerala have been **targeted by the two subtypes of the virus**.
 - Tests have confirmed H5N1 is responsible for the deaths of over 2,000 migratory birds in Himachal Pradesh.
 - H5N8 has been recognized as the cause of deaths of thousands of poultry in Kerala, and hundreds of crows in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

What is the origin of the spread of the virus and its causes?

A European Food Safety Authority report revealed that 561 avian influenza discoveries were made between August-December in 15 European countries and the U.K.

- H5N1 and H5N8 were two of three subtypes found in Europe, these were mainly found in wild birds along with a few poultry and captive birds.

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- **Migratory birds have been largely responsible** for spread of the virus into India during winter. It spreads further through movement of local residential birds and poultry.
- Genetic analysis suggested that a tenacious transmission of this virus strain is coming from **wild birds in Asia to west-central Europe**.
- **Movement of men and material from poultry** farms has also been a cause for the further blowout.

What is being done to stop the spread?

- **Firstly**, more than 69,000 birds which included ducks and chickens were culled in Alappuzha and Kottayam in accordance with India's 2015 national avian influenza plan, in an attempt to stop the spread.
- **Secondly**, all the states have been asked to be watchful of any unusual deaths or disease outbreak signs amongst birds, particularly migratory ones as they are considered to be one of the causes of the spread.
- **Thirdly**, states have been asked to disinfect and dispose of the dead birds properly, biosecurity of poultry farms needs to be strengthened.

Conclusion

- It is very rare that avian influenza viruses cross the species barrier and directly infect humans but mutations in the virus can create a new avian influenza virus which can result in continuous transmission between humans, leading to genesis of pandemic influenza.
- Hence, it is suggested to carry out genome sequencing of virus samples to track the evolution of the virus.

12. Preparing workforce for COVID vaccination

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2

Synopsis: India needs to prepare healthcare professionals who are trained for treating and providing vaccines for immunization, to set an example of healthcare infrastructure for the rest of the world.

Introduction

With the permission of two COVID-19 vaccines for emergency use, a hope of an end to the pandemic is nearing. But for the administration of vaccination and treatment properly and skilfully, a trained and effective workforce is required.

Present strength of healthcare workers in India

- In India, over 4, 00,000 frontline workers have been trained to respond to COVID-19.
- It includes people with no prior experience also. Thousands have been trained for contact tracing, quarantine strategies, ventilator management, personal protective equipment, and psychological issues.

What is project ECHO?

India was a recipient of an effective global innovation called Project ECHO.

- **ECHO is a low-cost way out for growing the size of health workers** in underserved communities to offer patients with the best possible care and facilities.
- ECHO was utilised as a strategy for treating Hepatitis C in the beginning but now is being used **for newly trained experts in HIV, malaria, tuberculosis**, addiction, mental health, and many other conditions.

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- Under this project, health workers, nurses and doctors are trained through **video conferencing technology**. They learn specialty care from subject matter experts and from each other's community informed knowledge.
- **ECHO provides the ability to spread healthcare workers in the most remote areas** of the country and give them training similar to what a healthcare worker in one of our largest cities would receive.

What needs to be done before the vaccine arrives?

India is led by the Serum institute of India which has the largest manufacturing capacity in the world. However, certain aspects need to be figured out and planned before the covid-19 vaccine becomes widely available:

Firstly, real skills need to be cultivated for planning out the following:

- Delivery system of these vaccines needs to be figured out.
- Storage and handling of the vaccines.
- India needs to overcome cultural and religious obstacles for those who are unwilling to accept a vaccine.
- People need to be counselled about the side-effects of the vaccine.

Secondly, more trained health experts are required to support vaccine treatment.

Thirdly, further preparation of the ECHO model can be done to identify new healthcare workers who can be trained to be COVID-19 experts.

13. India's counter-coercive strategy against China

Source: [Click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2

Synopsis: India has done quite well in countering Chinese moves in eastern Ladakh with its coercive strategy.

Introduction

There is an opportunity for middle powers like India to redefine their position in the world order as decline and rise of Chinese and American powers continue.

- Alexander L. George, an American political scientist, is best known for his work on coercive diplomacy. The happenings in eastern Ladakh can be understood with reference to **four variations of coercive diplomacy**:
 - **A gradual turning of the screw.**
 - **A try-and-see.**
 - **A tacit ultimatum.**
 - **A full-fledged ultimatum.**

How the four variations of coercive diplomacy were used in the border standoff?

- **China attempted to alter the existing status quo** in eastern Ladakh, this resembled gradually **turning the screw** and then waiting to see India's reaction.
- **India adopted a try and see approach.** India wanted to engage in mild forms of coercion that involved the building up of forces to achieve parity on the ground.
- IAF was displaying its capabilities in Ladakh indicating that India wanted PLA to restore the status quo without any threats.

After India failed to compel the PLA to withdraw by mid-july, it had two options according to **Alexander George's escalatory ladder**:

- **First**, India could have issued an indirect or **tacit ultimatum** that would involve an unspoken and firmly controlled tactical action, by this means signifying resolve and intent.

- **Second**, it could issue a **full-fledged ultimatum** followed by multi-dimensional military action that could lead to a limited conflict.

What approach did India took to handle china?

At the operational and strategic level, the Chinese did not expect the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force to mobilise and get into their operational roles at high altitude with effortlessness.

- **Indian Army** lowered the psychological high ground gained by Chinese by occupying key heights overlooking Chinese PLA.
- **At the strategic level**, India's political establishment did not push the panic button and synergised politico-diplomatic-military approach was adopted.

Conclusion

- India has militarily recovered well, diplomatically played ruthlessly and strategically postured skilfully in spite of the restrictions of the ongoing pandemic. However, it is too early to predict the course of events; it can only be fair to say that India has done well in countering Chinese coercion in Ladakh with its own brand of counter-coercion.

14. Post-Central vista verdict: Need to improve process of developing Public project?

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2- Governance

Synopsis: The issue of Central Vista Project has reiterated the need for holistic solutions for the issues in process of the redevelopment projects.

Introduction

The majority ruling decided that the government had followed all processes as required by the regulations and could go ahead with the construction.

However, it is only the one instance, which is visible, the problem of redevelopment project is much bigger. For instance, Amaravati project as the proposed capital for Andhra Pradesh.

- In this project firstly land was acquired through controversial methods and later on the project was abandoned, creating problems for farmers.

Thus, thoughtful solutions to the issues, is required that can be common for all such projects

What are the areas require improvement?

Public participation and architectural services procurement are the 2 of several areas that are in urgent need of improvement;

The issue of public Participation

- **Horizontal accountability** ensures check on government, by creating connected state organisations such as heritage committees and environmental regulators.
- **Vertical accountability requires citizen oversight. Citizens are asking for improved participatory process.**
 - Government argues that horizontal accountability is in the place. Provisions for consultation although are not absent, but the process of consultation is vague.
 - Judgment in central Vista is also not clear on the matter of public participation.
 - Development of Land Acquisition act provides a few lessons that has spelt out consent required from a minimum number of landowners.

Process of architectural services procurement

- Process of choosing a **designer for a public project need improvement** as there is lack of evaluation criteria and standards for design. Also, weightage is given to lower fee instead of better designs.

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- **The architecture firms face entry barriers** as their expertise is judged on the basis of their company's turnover. The unreasonable revenue conditions make it difficult for many firms to qualify and also reduce pool of choice.

What regulatory changes can be made?

- **First**, for improving consultation, regulations and process have to clearly state what prior disclosures are required, when meetings have to be held and reasons for accepting and declining suggestions should be listed properly.
- **Second**, the government adopted the Quality and cost based selection (QCBS) for choosing designers. This method specifies requirements for consultants, places higher weightage on their technical capability and lower weightage on financial proposals.
- **Third**, in order to reduce the entry barrier, one can consider the suggestions made by the Architects' Council of Europe. It suggests dropping turnover requirements and emphasized on qualitative selection criteria.
 - Weightage given to design value has to be clear and fixed as more than 65% of the registered architects in India are below 35 years and many firms are medium-sized, such changes are all the more required.

Way forward

- Policymakers maintain that developing countries like India have a quite low state capacity. Therefore, higher standards set in the matured economy and continued by governments with higher capacity cannot be suddenly implanted.
 - The dominant argument is that practices will improve as economic growth happens and as the country builds capabilities. However, this incremental approach to be moderated.

General Studies Paper - 3

General Studies – 3

1. Impact of Diluting disclosure requirement in Patent Rules, 2003

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 3

Synopsis: The dilution of patent working disclosure rules obstructs the success of India's compulsory licensing regime.

Background

According to the new Patent Rules, 2020, licensees are **no longer required to annually submit to the Patent Office** disclosing the degree to which they have commercially worked or made the patented inventions available to the public in the country.

What were the requirement of disclosure in Patent Rules, 2003?

The purpose of granting patents itself is to ensure that the inventions are operated in India and are made available to the public in adequate amounts at rational prices.

- The information about **the degree at which these patentees are operating in India** is very important to check abuse of patent monopoly. For example, excessive pricing or scare supply of the invention
- **Courts have refused a temporary ban in cases** charging violation of a patent which has not been operated in India.
- **Section 146 (2)** asks every licensee to submit to the Patent Office an annual statement explaining the extent to which they have worked the invention in India was not found in patent laws.
- **The disclosure is to be made in the Form 27** format as suggested under the Patent Rules, 2003.

Irregularities and PIL filed

- **The amendment to the form was made after a PIL** was filed by Shamnad Basheer before the Delhi High Court in 2015. The PIL was about the non-filing and defective filing of Form 27 by licensees and wanted an action against the violators.
- **The PIL also called for a reform of Form 27** because the information it sought was totally insufficient to determine the level of the working of the patent.
- Court directed the government to bring an amendment to strengthened the patent working disclosure rules.
- However, after 2 years, instead of strengthening, government introduced an amendment that dilutes the disclosure requirements.

How government changed the disclosure requirement?

The amendment in patent laws has considerably weakened it and is defeating the whole purpose of the amendment exercise. The requirement of submitting a lot of important information was removed. The form now requires the patentees to provide only for the following information:

- **Firstly**, whether the invention has worked or not and the revenue generated from it (manufacturing and importing). Reasons for the invention not working and the steps being taken towards it to make it work.
- **Secondly**, they don't have to provide data about the amount of the invention manufactured in India and imported which is vital for proper assessment.
- **Licensees can just self-certify** that they've worked the patent without having to prove the claim with the data on how they've done it, including through licensing/sub-licensing the patent.

- **For instance**, the disclosure of this data by Bayer in Form 27 played a crucial role in grant of India's first compulsory license to Natco for the anti-cancer drug Sorafenib/Nexavar.

What are its impacts?

- Doing away with the condition of providing inventions for public requirement at a reasonable price, will have negative impacts on the affordability of new medicines in India.
- Doing away with the condition to disclose price and demand will make it difficult to assess the quantum of invention made available to the public in sufficient quantity and at an affordable price.

Conclusion

- The government must reconsider its amendments as it is going to **impact public interest**. Some inventions may remain inaccessible to public because of the lack of information. Such lack of accessibility in case of patented medicines could have adverse consequences for public health of the country.

2. Solving the issue of Urban employment through platform/gig economy

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- **GS Paper III** (Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment)

Synopsis- With no urban equivalent to the NREGA as yet, there must be a focus on supporting new forms of urban employment in the form of the gig economy.

Background- Debate around GDP contraction and V-Shaped recovery has ignored the prevalence of unemployment in India.

Data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy points to a gradual slowdown in employment recovery which is evident from the fact that **national unemployment rate** has been increased from 6.51% to 9.06%.

How does the rural economy provide better employment compared to urban?

For the labour population moving back to rural India, National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGA) provided employment support, which witnessed a 243% increase in person workdays.

Whereas many Indian cities, during this pandemic, shut down the employment avenues for millions of workers, who either migrated to rural areas or took up new forms of platform work. Gig economy became their only source of employment.

What is the Gig Economy?

A labour market characterized by the prevalence of short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs.

Performance of gig/platform works

The Fairwork Foundation published its report related to the gig economy and its annual review of platform labor gains prominence. It used the following metrics to evaluate the wellbeing of gig workers.

1. Fair Pay
2. Fair Conditions
3. Fair Contracts
4. Fair Management
5. Fair Representation

Findings

In this report **platform giants, namely, Uber, Ola, Swiggy and Zomato are at the bottom** of the ranking. Only Urban Company and Flipkart scored fairly.

How to increase urban employment?

As in Urban India, **there is no scheme like NREGA**. Government must focus on evaluating, regulating and supporting platform/gig employment.

1. Issue of evaluation-

- Current understanding regarding the scale and impact of these platforms is only based on the limited disclosure by the companies themselves.
- Moreover, there exists no authoritative estimate on the total number of gig workers in India.
- There is a need to create a valid database regarding platform works and workers to facilitate evaluation.

2. Issue of regulation- This step is significantly more sensitive as it revolves around the variable nature of gig work.

- As these platforms are used both as a “side hustle”, and primary source of employment.
- One-size-fits-all regulatory strategy further complicates the matter as regulations might also hurt the freelancing works that provided avenues to highly skilled workers during Pandemic.
- For that, Government can enter into partnerships with platforms like it did by flagship scheme. **Swiggy’s Street Food Vendors programme under the PM SVANidhi scheme.**
- **Under this scheme**, Swiggy employed 36,000 street food vendors **and also** ensured the registration of each vendor and their certification by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India.
- The simultaneous creation of jobs, alongside the voluntary adoption of quality standards is an example of a mutually beneficial partnership between the state and a platform.

3. Urban employment -

- **Similar collaborations** can be done by the government for urban employment, that require labour platforms to comply with disclosure norms and worker compensation standards to access government support. ,
- It would not only **bring down costs** significantly (for both the state and their partners), but would also create an environment where **firms would be more likely to cooperate with the state.**

Way Forward

India must take significant steps to tackle the challenge of urban unemployment in the present reality.

With Industry 4.0 platforms absorbing increasing numbers of the urban workforce, the government must focus on evaluation, collaboration, and regulation.

By now, India must have its own understanding of the future of work. For that, the state needs to ensure that this future is defined not only by the quantity of jobs it creates but also by the quality of livelihoods they provide for.

3. Increasing energy efficiency among consumer

Synopsis: Recently released electricity rules should also focus on the problem faced by DISCOMS that can be sorted out by increasing energy efficiency.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus – GS-3 – Energy-related issues

9 PM Compilation for the Month of January (Second week), 2021

Recently published Electricity Rules, 2020 lay down uniform performance standards for discoms and makes them liable to consumer compensation in case of violations of their rights.

Rules have been framed keeping in mind the decreasing payment rates for electricity bills due to rising consumption and limited finances.

[Electricity Rules, 2020](#)

Challenges faced by Discoms

1. **Firstly**, by 2030, residential electricity consumption in India is expected to double. Moreover, increase in electric appliances is creating doubts around the discom's ability to provide reliable supply at affordable rates.
2. **Secondly**, some of the daily use appliances are not Energy Efficient.
 - Out of the 90% households using fans, only 3% are using energy-efficient fans,
 - 60% of T.V. are energy-guzzling CRT (cathode ray tube) models and
 - desert coolers are not even covered under the labelling programme.
3. **Third**, Indian Discoms are facing difficulties in managing their finances that required govt. to sanction liquidity relief to help discoms. But it is only temporary relief.

Way forward

As mentioned above, discoms might not be able to keep up with the demands of consumers in the long run. Thus, following steps are required to reduce the energy demand;

1. **Firstly, availability and affordability of energy-efficient appliances need to be improved.**
 - Although BEE is planning to bring ceiling fans under mandatory labelling from 2022, it would double the costing, which would create a barrier.
 - Manufacturers should be provided with lucrative offers to produce efficient technology at scale and bring it within purchasing capacity.
2. **Secondly, nationwide consumer awareness campaign should be launched for energy efficiency.**
 - Awareness level among small towns and rural areas is very low compared to residents of metros and tier-1 cities.
 - Thus, a consumer-centric engagement strategy with the cooperation of State governments, discoms and retailers should be evolved to create mass awareness.
3. **Third, supply quality and changing consumption pattern should be monitored on real time basis.**
 - Smart metering should be used to monitor actual saving by consumer due to energy efficient appliances.
 - It would create a confidence among people and would also be crucial for enforcing consumer rights rules.

India has many examples of success in creating awareness for energy efficient appliances. UJALA scheme transformed the market for LED bulbs. Now, 90% of Indian homes use LED lamps or tubes resulting into reduction of carbon emission equivalent to 82 million tonnes. More such programs are required to be fast-tracked.

4. Digital technology worsen financial exclusion in rural India

Source- [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS Paper III – Economy – Financial Inclusion

Synopsis- Internet Services base payment system is worsening the financial exclusion prevalent in rural India.

Introduction

9 PM Compilation for the Month of January (Second week), 2021

Internet services have provided much comfort to the user. But for the majority of the rural population digital technology has become troublesome due to lack of technical knowledge and nexus of service providers, middleman, government officials and others.

We need to find solutions so that the fruits of digital technology will be borne by all the rural population.

Introduction of the digital payment based solution in rural India

- Direct Benefits Transfer (DBT) was launched with an aim of improving financial inclusion in 2011. Since 2015, it has become synonymous with the **Aadhaar Payments Bridge Systems (APBS)**.
- Money is transferred to the various beneficiaries of programs under DBT such as maternity entitlements, student scholarships, and wages for MGNREGA.
- To deal with the **“last mile challenges”** facing beneficiaries in accessing their money, banking kiosks known as Customer Service Points (CSP) and Banking Correspondents (BC) were promoted.
 - These are private individuals who offer banking services through the Aadhaar Enabled Payment Systems (AePS).
 - At these kiosks, beneficiaries can perform basic banking transactions such as small deposits and withdrawals.

However, it doesn't solve the basic issues that are being faced by the lower strata of the rural areas in receiving their own money from their bank accounts.

What are the issues faced by rural population?

The process of transition from older payment systems and the APBS technology needs to be scrutinised which impact all DBT programmes.

- **Lack of technical knowledge**– Workers have little clue about where their wages have been credited and what to do when their payments get rejected, often due to technical reasons such as incorrect account numbers and incorrect Aadhaar mapping with bank accounts.
- **Lack of accountability**– State governments have not set any accountability for APBS and AePS/payment intermediaries and there is no grievance redressal mechanism for the same.
- **Lack of consultation**– The workers/beneficiaries have rarely been consulted regarding their preferred mode of transacting.
- **Creation of new forms of corruption** – All the above factors have resulted into new form of corruption. For Example; Massive scholarship scam took place in Jharkhand, where many poor students were deprived of their scholarships owing to a nexus of middlemen, government officials, banking correspondents and others.

Findings of the new report by LibTech India

LibTech India recently released a research report based on a survey of nearly 2,000 MGNREGA workers across Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Rajasthan. The survey explains the experiences of workers in obtaining wages in hand after they were credited to their bank accounts.

- **Access to wages from banks becomes arduous**– Rural banks are short-staffed and tend to get overcrowded. Hence, it requires more hours and multiple visits to access wages from banks.
- **Technical issues**– CSP/BCs appeared to be a convenient alternative to banks due to their proximity. However, an estimated 40 per cent of them had to make multiple visits to withdraw from CSPs/BCs due to biometric failures.

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- **Too much travel cost is involved** – To get their DBT share, MGNREGA workers need to spend too much on travel leading in addition to the loss of their daily wage on the day of travel. E.g. **the average travel cost for one visit to a bank in Jharkhand is Rs 50 which becomes Rs 100 for two bank visits.**
- **Passbook related issues**– The only way for rural bank users to keep track of their finances is through their bank passbooks. However, more than two-thirds of time workers were denied the facility to update their passbooks at banks, some workers are even charged **(45 per cent in Jharkhand)** for this free service by CSPs/BCs.

Way forward

The right to access your own money in a timely and transparent manner is a basic right of every individual that must be protected by government at any cost.

- There are just 14.6 bank branches per 1 lakh adults in India. This is sparser in rural India. Despite hardships of access, most workers preferred to transact at the banks. Hence **Branch expansion** into rural unbanked locations will significantly reduce poverty.
- **The technological solutions must be coupled with a governance structure**, in which protection of rights and choices of individuals must be fundamental.

5. Why lightning kills so many Indians?

Source: [Click Here](#)

Syllabus: GS3: Disaster and disaster management.

News: According to a report, Lightning strikes have caused 1,771 deaths between April 1, 2019 and March 31, 2020 in India.

Facts:

- The report has been prepared by Climate Resilient Observing Systems Promotion Council (CROPC), a non-profit organisation that works with India Meteorological Department (IMD), Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), India Meteorological Society (IMS) and World Vision India to disseminate early lightning forecasts.

Key Takeaways:

- **State Wise Deaths due to Lightning Strikes:** Uttar Pradesh with 293 deaths, Madhya Pradesh 248, Bihar 221, Odisha 200 and Jharkhand 172 deaths together accounted for more than 60% of the numbers which are 33% of total fatalities from all natural disasters during the time period.
- **Highest Lightning Strikes State:** Odisha had 11.20 lakh plus lightning strikes—the highest in the country—with 200 casualties. During Cyclone Fani, the state saw more than one lakh intense lightning strikes in 2019.
- **Deaths due to Lightning:** The reason for death due to Lightning is because people are unaware and about 78% deaths took place due to people standing under isolated tall trees. About 22% of the people were struck in the open.
- **Why are lightning strikes increasing?** The report mentions that the lightning is direct promulgation of climatic extremities like global warming, deforestation, depletion of water bodies, concretisations, rising pollution and aerosol levels have cumulatively pushed the environment to extremes.

Recommendations:

- **Lightning needs to be listed as a notified disaster** by the Ministry of Home to get required attention in national policy directives and developmental programmes.

- **Implement a local lightning safety action plan** like installing Lightning Protection Devices.
- **Need of Scientific and Community Centric approach:** National Disaster Management Authority(NDMA) has issued guidelines for preparations of Lightning action plans to states. But the large number of fatalities show the implementation also needs a more 'scientific and focused community centric approach' as well as convergence of various departments.
- **A National Lightning Resilience Programme** is needed to identify the precise risk in terms of lightning frequency, current intensity, energy content, high temperature and other adverse impacts.
- **Early lightning warning** to farmers, cattle grazers, children and people in open areas.

Additional Facts:

- **What is Lightning:** Lightning is the process of occurrence of a natural electrical discharge of very short duration and high voltage between a cloud and the ground or within a cloud accompanied by a bright flash and sound and sometimes thunderstorms.
- **Types:** Inter cloud or intra cloud(IC) lightning which are visible and are harmless. It is cloud to ground (CG) lightning which is harmful as the 'high electric voltage and electric current' leads to electrocution.
- **Technology:** CROPC has a MOU with the India Met Department (IMD), Ministry of Earth Science(MoES) to disseminate early lightning forecasts which uses satellite observations, inputs from 'network of Doppler and other radars', 'lightning detection Sensors' among others.
- **Origin of Lightning:** Most Lightning strikes originate from Chotanagpur Plateau – the confluence of Odisha, West Bengal and Jharkhand—and extended to Bangladesh to Patkai plateau of Meghalaya affecting other North eastern states.

6. Issue of single law for different regions of agriculture

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 3

Synopsis: Present agriculture reforms have not considered the ground level issues faced on the regional level and vertical level.

Introduction

Recently, the current government has opened up the output market with the purpose to let market forces improve effectiveness and create more value for farmers and the economy.

- New farm laws state that farmers are now free to sell all their products anywhere and to anyone beyond the APMC markets.
- The laws also promote contract farming by creating partnerships between farmers and food-processing companies and license unlimited notice of food except in special conditions.

However, reforms cannot be forceful and should be implemented as per the requirement of farmers.

What do the farmers want?

The farmers gave 3 main suggestions in the enquiries held with them:

- **Firstly**, the selling price of their produce should include the cost of production and reasonable profit margin.
- **Secondly**, rise and fall in prices should be nominal.
- **Thirdly**, Farmers are not comfortable in dealing with legal or administrative officials, so there should be little or no interface between them.

What are the issues with new laws?

There will be no control over the new markets by anyone which creates a lot of uncertainty.

- **First, concerns related to Mandi-market system:**
 - Farmers could go to local leaders in case of malpractices in Mandis but there is no authority to report to in the new system.
 - **There is no certainty over the continuation of the mandi-MSP system** as if the alternative traders offer better prices, farmers will go there and not to the mandis.
- **Second, Issues related to contract farming:**
 - **There is an advantage to the corporate-buyers** as they can choose to not buy the full quantity and delay payments. The corporates have access to several lawyers, so the poor farmers can't complain or compete against them.
 - **This is a contract between unequal and will result in unequal outcomes.** Farmers do not have the resources or are not educated enough to deal with traders or corporates.
- **Third, Issues related to similar solution for different problem**
 - **The conditions of different regions are not similar as** country is diverse with some 15 agroclimatic zones and has over 50 crops grown.
 - It is also the reason behind farmers from outside the wheat-rice belts in northern India are not protesting.
 - Thus, a comprehensive law for all the regions with different cropping patterns and climatic conditions might create troubles for farmers later.

What are the steps should be taken?

- The problem of lack of progress and high input prices in agriculture can be resolved through an efficient approach suggested in **the M.S. Swaminathan Commission and/or the Ashok Dalwai Committee.**
 - For example, a solution should be worked out for farmers to switch from water-soaking paddy crops to other crops in Punjab and Haryana in the next five years.
 - They would reduce the area under paddy by 25-30%, and the loss they suffer in the short run, will be compensated for by the government. This could also be done for sugarcane in western Maharashtra.

7. Issue of privacy and Personal Data Protection Bill 2019

Source- [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS Paper 3

Synopsis- Present data-based technological development and Personal Data Protection Bill 2019 presents a unique challenge to the privacy of individuals.

Introduction-

By Puttaswamy v India (2017) case, privacy was established as a fundamental right. In other cases, MP Sharma v. Satish Chandra (1954) and Kharak Singh v. Uttar Pradesh (1962), as well, Privacy rights were upheld by SC.

However, the development of global technology and implementation of the Aadhaar biometric programme in India have diluted the effect of these rulings. Now there is an urgent need to take a new look at the legal position of privacy in India.

As depicted by Aadhaar based technology and global social media platforms, data has become a new oil i.e., it has become a **tool for economic and political gain.** It created a stream of data protection legislations, globally. India is also trying to join the league by Personal Data Protection Bill 2019 (DPB).

In India, the **Personal Data Protection Bill 2019 (DPB)** is currently under consideration by a parliamentary committee. There are various issues in this bill that go against the privacy rights of individuals.

Commercial and Political consequences of the Data Protection Bill (DPB):

1. Data Collection related issues

- **First-** Bill will negatively impact the **emerging technologies market of India dealing in the creation, use, and sale of data that is valued at \$1 trillion by 2025.**
- **Second-** The bill requires digital firms who want to operate in India to obtain permission from users before collecting their data.
- **Third-** Bill also declares that users who provide data are, in effect, the owners of their own data and may control its usage or request firms to delete it.
 - **European internet-users are able to exercise a “right to be forgotten” and have evidence of their online presence removed.**
- **Fourth-** The bill allows the government to use “critical” or “sensitive” personal data, related to information such as religion, to protect national interest.
- **Fifth-** Open-ended access to government could lead to misuse of data. **Mr. B N Srikrishna, the chairman of the drafting committee of the original bill, warned that government-access exemptions risk creating an “Orwellian state”.**

2. Issues related to Establishment of Data Protection Authority (DPA)

- Bill aims to establish a **Data Protection Authority (DPA)**, which will be charged with managing data collected by the Aadhaar programme.
 - Authority will consist of a chairperson and six committee members,
 - Members will be appointed by the central government on the recommendation of a selection committee.
 - Members will be selected from senior civil servants, including the Cabinet Secretary.
- The **government’s power to appoint and remove members at its discretion** provides it an ability to influence the independence of agency.
- Unlike similar institutions, such as the Reserve Bank of India or the Securities and Exchange Board, the DPA will not have an independent expert or member of the judiciary on its governing committee.
- The UIDAI, for its part, has a chairperson appointed by the central government and reporting directly to the Centre.

3. Issues related to government use of data for surveillance

There are instances that suggest, **India is acquiring some features of a surveillance state.**

- As stated by the Union Home minister recently, **police used facial recognition technology** to identify people after the anti-CAA protests and the Delhi riots.
- There is a high possibility that police was matching the video offstage with the **database of Election Commission and e-Vahan, a pan-India database** of vehicle registration.

4. Issue related to the safety of data

There are instances of controversy where the government has shown a casual approach towards data safety and privacy of its citizens:

- **First,** Safety concerns were raised during **aadhaar data collection**, which stores biometric data in the form of iris and fingerprints which is a violation of the right to privacy.
- **Second** instance was of **Aarogya Setu contact-tracing app** which was allegedly not able to protect the data provided by citizens.

Way Forward

- The Data Protection Bill is a unique opportunity for India, a country with some 740 million internet users. It would be a standard setter for privacy of individuals.
- Inclusive debate needs to take place in the Joint Parliament Committee and then in Parliament to examine the Data Protection Bill and promote transparency.

8. How India is increasing its maritime domain awareness?

Syllabus: GS-3, Security

Link: [Indian Express](#)

Introduction

Foreknowledge was identified by the **legendary military theorist, Sun Tzu** as the critical element in the battle. It can be gathered only with specialized tools and by men who knew the enemy well.

Although modern warfare has become technology-based and more complex, **'foreknowledge'** is still critical as the enemy at sea has become more unrecognizable.

A normal fisherman or a port worker can turn out to be a terrorist, a pirate, a criminal, or a sea-robber. To observe and track suspicious movements, Law enforcement agencies require high-grade sensors and communication networks, and information sharing in real-time.

This enhanced consciousness at sea is called maritime domain awareness.

What are India's concerns regarding maritime domain awareness?

- People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is developing a **generation of stealthier submarines** that will be capable of passing through undetected under enemy surveillance.
- This breakthrough by the Chinese has been ascertained by a successful **test of shaftless rim-driven pump-jets**.

How India is increasing its maritime domain awareness?

Post-Galwan clash, Indian Navy is mainly focused on improving maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean, specifically in the seas around Andaman and Nicobar islands, to monitor the activity of China.

- **Coastal Radar network:** India has already integrated Mauritius, Seychelles, and Sri Lanka into the wider coastal radar chain network. Now, it is seeking to set up radar stations in the Maldives, Myanmar, and Bangladesh.
- **Monitoring:** India's **P-8I aircraft** are monitoring near-seas and Indian naval ships have patrolled the Andaman Seas and eastern chokepoints for People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) submarines.
 - India is planning to install an array of **undersea sensors** near the Andaman Islands in partnership with Japan.
- **Information cooperation: Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region** in Gurugram is fast emerging as the most prominent information hub in the Eastern Indian Ocean. Following countries are planning to post their officers at the centre;
 - Seven Indian Ocean countries — Maldives, Myanmar, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Mauritius, and Seychelles
 - At the centre, Indo-Pacific navies — Australia, Japan, the U.K, and the U.S.
 - Whereas, France has already posted an officer at the IFC.
- **India has also posted a Liaison Officer in**
 - Madagascar at Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC)
 - India has recently joined the RMIFC as an observer.
 - It is a key center of maritime information in the Western Indian Ocean

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- In Strait of Hormuz (EMASOH) at European Maritime Awareness
- It is helpful in monitoring maritime activity in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Relations with France: India signed a logistics agreement with France in 2019.**
 - France has been key for India's participation in the Western and South-Western Ocean.
 - France facilitated an 'observer' status for India at the Indian Ocean Commission.
- **Sagar:** India is furthering its **Philosophy of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)** as a 'security provider' and 'preferred partner' in the Indo-Pacific region.
 - India has entered into shipping agreements with 21 countries in the Indian Ocean.
 - GSAT-7A, India's military satellite, will facilitate a real-time sharing of maritime information with partners.

However, India's maritime initiatives are not just focussed on strategic considerations but also generating cooperative synergies in the neighborhood.

9. USTR slams India's Equalisation levy

News: US Trade Representative (USTR) has released the findings of the Section 301 report.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

The report has said that India's 2% equalisation levy is unreasonable or discriminatory potentially attracting withdrawal of US trade concessions or duties on Indian exports.

What is Equalisation Levy?

- **When was 2% Equalisation Levy introduced?** In the Finance Bill 2020-21 a 2% digital service tax (DST) was imposed on non-resident e-commerce operator in India.
- **Eligibility:** Companies with a turnover of over Rs. 2 crore, will pay this levy on the consideration received for online sales of goods and services.
- **Purpose:** The purpose of the levy is to ensure fair competition, reasonableness and exercise the ability of governments to tax businesses that have a close nexus with the Indian market through their digital operations

Why USTR is concerned?

- USTR is mainly concerned as 72% companies that will face the levy are American.
- Aggregate tax bill for US companies will exceed US \$ 30 Million.

What does the Special 301 Report say on Equalization levy?

The USTR report has said that the Equalisation Levy is a violation of international tax principles:

1. **Firstly**, it is discriminatory as the law explicitly exempts Indian companies while targeting non-Indian firms.
2. **Secondly, levy** is contravening the international tax principle that companies absent a territorial connection to a country should not be subject to that country's corporate tax regime.
3. **The third** issue is of taxing revenue instead of income. This is inconsistent with the international tax principle that income—not revenue—is the appropriate basis for corporate taxation.
4. **Fourth, levy is discriminating against US companies.** As shown above, majority of the affected companies will be American.

What are the justifications by the Indian Government?

1. India has said that **levy does not discriminate against US companies** as it applies equally to all non-resident e-commerce operators irrespective of their country of residence.
2. The levy **does not have extraterritorial application** as it applies only on the income generated from India.
3. **Government is in its rights to tax digital transactions** as the levy is recognition of the principle that in a digital world, a seller can engage in business transactions without any physical presence.
4. In addition, Equalisation levy was one of the methods suggested by the 2015 OECD/G20 Report on Action 1 of BEPS Project which was aimed at tackling the taxation challenges arising out of digitization of the economy.
5. Equalisation levy is a way to tax foreign digital companies and seen as a temporary alternative to the **GAF A** (Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon) **tax** until such measure is well defined in India.

Additional Facts:

1. **Special 301 Report:** It is prepared annually by the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) that identifies trade barriers to United States companies and products due to the intellectual property laws, such as copyright, patents and trademarks in other countries.
2. **GAF A Tax:** It is a proposed digital tax named after digital giants Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon. GAF A tax is levied on large technology companies and Internet companies. Recently France has decided to introduce 3% of GAF A tax on revenues from digital activities within their territory.