

9pm

Compilation

January, 2021 (Third Week)

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

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General Studies Paper – 1

1. WEF's "Indian Cities in the Post-pandemic world" report mentions cities critical role in post-covid India

Source: [Click Here](#)

Syllabus: GS-1 urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

News: World Economic Forum(WEF) has released a report titled "Indian Cities in the Post-Pandemic World".

Facts:

- **About the report:** The report has been produced in collaboration with IDFC Institute, Mumbai.
- It compiles insights from leading global and Indian urban experts across seven thematic pillars— planning, housing, transport, environment, public health, gender and vulnerable populations.
- **Purpose:** The report highlights the country's most pressing urban challenges that were exacerbated by the pandemic. It also provides insights for translating the lessons learned from the pandemic into an urban reform agenda.

Key Takeaways from the report:

- **Impact on Cities:** Cities have borne the maximum brunt of the covid-19 outbreak, but they will also be key to India's post-pandemic growth. They account for nearly 70% of the country's GDP and an average of 25-30 people migrate to cities from rural areas every single minute.
- **Households:** About 25 million households in India—35% of all urban households cannot afford housing at market prices.
- **Impact on Different Population Groups:** The impact of the pandemic has been profoundly uneven on different population groups. Vulnerable populations, including low-income migrant workers have suffered the dual blows of lost income and weak social-protection.

Recommendations:

- **Greater decentralization and empowerment of local governments**, which will allow for more proximate and responsive governance.
- **Collection of data to help cities** in managing and directing emergency operations during a crisis.
- Government have to **create a new urban paradigm** that enables cities to be healthier, more inclusive, and more resilient.
- **Ensure the infrastructure** that has adequate functional capacity, aligned with current and future demands.
- **Prioritise action** on environmental sustainability, air pollution and disaster management in urban rebuilding efforts.
- **Prioritising inclusivity** by addressing the biases and impediments faced by women and vulnerable populations in accessing urban opportunities.

2. HC Ruling under the special marriage act

Source: [Click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 1

Synopsis: Interfaith couples now have the option to not give public notice under Special Marriage Act. This comes as a sigh of relief for them.

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Introduction

The Allahabad High Court ordered that those people marrying under the Special Marriage Act, 1954, **can choose not to publicize their union with a 30 days advance notice.**

Earlier, under section 5 of the special marriage act, the couple had to give notice to the marriage officer and the officer had to publicise it and call for objections under sections 6 and 7 of the act.

Read more – [Importance of Allahabad HC judgment on Special Marriage Act \(forumias.com\)](#)

Important points from the judgment

- **The marriage officer can make the marriage official** if a couple gives it in writing that they do not want the notice publicised.
- The Act's understanding and interpretation should be in a way **that upholds fundamental rights and not violate them.**
- **Laws should not invade liberty and privacy**, "including within its sphere freedom to choose for marriage without interference from state and non-state actors, of the persons concerned".

How would it impact the present anti-conversion ordinances?

Remarks on 'state and non-state actors' made by justice Chaudhary will certainly have an impact on the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, that intends to target inter-faith marriages.

- The new ordinance states **conversion of religion for marriage to be unlawful.** It orders a 60-day notice to the District Magistrate and also requires the Magistrate to conduct a police inquiry to find out the categorical reason for the conversion of religion.
- The law was enacted in November 2020, since then **there have been 54 arrests by the U.P. police.**
- The HC ruling can now be quoted all over India to prevent public notices under the Special Marriage Act.

Way forward

Inter-faith couples will hope that when the Supreme Court hears appeals on the U.P. conversion law, it will take inspiration from progressive verdicts, like the 2017 Aadhaar ruling, on the right to privacy as a basic right, and the 2018 judgment on Hadiya, upholding the student's right to choose a partner, a Muslim man in Kerala, as essential freedom.

3. Trends in Housework valuation

Source: [Click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 1

Synopsis: The work women perform for the family should be given due recognition and valued at par with a men's work.

Introduction

Kamal Haasan's Makkal Needhi Maiam party recently promised salaries for housewives as a part of the party's election manifesto, has invigorated the discussion on the acknowledgment of domestic work as work.

Read more – [Wages for housework: An Analysis – ForumIAS Blog](#)

State of household work in India

159.85 million Women stated household work as their main occupation whereas only 5.79 men referred to it as their main occupation in the 2011 census.

- As per Time Use in India-2019 Report, **Indian women spend 299 minutes a day on unpaid domestic services** for household members. Whereas men spend just 97 minutes.
- The economic value of services provided by women is equivalent to making **\$612.8 billion** annually.

Global trends on the recognition of housework

Male and female domains have been marked separately for centuries. Market is considered as a male domain whereas home is considered as a female domain. These segregations justified husband's control over family assets.

- Until 1851, Women had no right over their own earnings in or out of the home, all over the world. Their wages used to be collected by husband as it was considered his right back then.
- Shortly after 1850, laws in US started allowing **wives with property rights on earnings from their personal labour**.
- However, after civil war economic census in US, household worked were tagged as **unproductive. It also excluded earning of women engaged in income producing work.**

Trends in India

- **The Married Women (Protection of Rights) Bill, 1994** provided that a married woman shall be authorised to have an equal share in the property of her husband. It also provided women with a right to dispose of her share in the property by way of sale, gift, debt, will or in any other manner.
- Census 2001 which had categorised those who provide household services i.e., about **36 crore women in India as non-workers**.
- **The United Progressive Alliance government** had suggested a monthly 'salary' for wife by her husband in 2012.
- Supreme Court in Rajendra Singh case, 2020 observed that the services **offered out of love cannot be calculated with money**.

Way forward

- There should be measurement and quantification of unpaid domestic activities of women. Their calculation in GDP so that the actual economic contribution of women is highlighted. **the United Nations committee on elimination of discrimination against women**.

Women on one hand are denied equal rights and on the other hand are compared to goddesses in our country. **Matrimonial property laws** do give women their share but only when the marriage is broken and so there should be a bill to safeguard women's interest even during the marriage.

4. Socio-Economic and Caste Census: A Need for reforms

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 1 – population and associated issues

Synopsis: Socio-Economic and Caste Census is suffering from many issues. All the issues must be removed before the next exercise is conducted.

Introduction

The Census of India is one of the largest exercises which counts and collects demographic and socio-economic information on the Indian population. It has its own history, context, and purpose.

About the Census

The census was a colonial exercise practiced since 1881. It has evolved with time. It is used by the government, policymakers, etc. to estimate the Indian population and its access to resources.

- Census Commissioner for India in 1941 had pointed out that the **census is a very powerful tool. But** it is not a suitable tool for detailed inquiry about the population.
- Later, many scholars also found census not useful enough for a **detailed and comprehensive understanding of a complex society.**

The Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) was conducted in 2011. It was the largest exercise of the listing of castes and has the potential of finding inequalities at a broader level. However, there were many concerns associated with it.

What are the main apprehensions with regard to the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC)?

First, This census has the potential to solidify the caste identities of individuals. It won't be helpful in eliminating discrimination from society.

Second, SECC has not been able to cover the effects of the caste system on social structure from the local, to the regional, and national scales.

Third, the data captured by the census is considered confidential under the census act of 1948. Whereas the personal data captured by SECC is open for use by Government departments. It makes the SECC data prone to use and for misuse by govt.

Fourth issue is the time **duration between each census** and the **delay in the release of data after it is done**. It makes the data obsolete and unusable to estimate the present status of issues. **For example**, a sizeable amount of data collected under SECC has not been released even a decade later.

What can be done?

There should be transparency on the use of existing caste data by the government for granting or withdrawing benefits. Further, the following steps should be taken:

- **First, the collected census data should be linked with other databases** of national sample surveys or the National Family Health Surveys that cover issues such as maternal health. This will help in the utilization of this data for dealing with social issues in a better way.
 - Scholars like Mamta Murthi have suggested linking the data of surveys in the past.
- **Second**, This linking of data sources that involve the Census should be **inclusive and non-discriminatory**.
- **Fourth, there should be a closer and continuous engagement** between officials of the Census and SECC. It is because the Census and the SECC are projects of governance as well as of academic interest.
- **Fifth**, there should be an evaluation of the previous exercise before the next SECC is conducted.

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Way forward

Concerns regarding methodology, significance, rigidity, spreading, transparency, and privacy needs to be taken seriously.

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General Studies Paper – 2

General Studies - 2

1. Re-imagining the school education in India

Source: [Indian Express](#)

GS-2: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education.

Synopsis: We need to reimagine our school education system to ensure quality education for all and to make India a knowledgeable super power.

Background:

- Currently, the school as an institution has been criticised by many experts for **turning into caged jails**, for being run like factories, functioning like corporate enterprises and for forcing the curriculum into the child.
- In this backdrop, we will evaluate how the school system has been envisaged by great personalities, **what are the drawbacks in our present schooling system and how we need to improve it to make school education inclusive, knowledgeable and as an institution for self-discovery.**

How the school system has been envisaged by great personalities?

Progressive thinkers have always envisioned “free schools” for children. They always believed that school should be made to fit the child rather than the other way round. For example,

- **Leo Tolstoy** (Russian Novelist) himself founded a school for the children of poor peasants at his home (Yasnaya Polyana) without any strict schedule, homework or physical punishment.
- **Maria Montessori** (The first Italian woman to become a doctor) educational philosophy too emphasised on children’s freedom and choice.
- **Rabindranath Tagore** in his classical tale **The Parrot’s Training (Totaakahini)** has vehemently criticised the **rote learning method** followed in the Indian school system.

What are the issues with government schools in India?

Government schools in India faces the following challenges,

- **Firstly**, the **poor Infrastructure** in government schools leading to instances such as roof collapse.
- **Second, lack of effective governance and monitoring.** For example, Children’s falling sick after consuming mid-day meals.
- **Third**, there is a deep segregation of school systems in India, ignoring the **1966 Kothari Education Commission’s** recommendation for a common school system.
- **Fourth**, existing inequality among children’s due to **widening digital divide**, the poor do not have access to mobiles, laptops and internet connectivity.
- **Fifth, lack of political will** to strengthen the government schools in India which can be understood from the point that government is pushing towards privatisation by handing over land and managements to private organisations.

What needs to be done?

We need to improve on the following areas to provide a healthy education to our younger generation.

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- **Firstly**, we need to improve the **schooling infrastructure** by providing Clean toilets, drinking water, library, a tinkering lab, and a playground.
- **Second**, we need to think on having classes with **mixed age groups** instead of segregating children by age. This will allow children to learn at their own pace and make learning a fun activity. For example, **David Horsburgh's Neel Bagh School in Kolar, Karnataka**, Here, Children's could study Class V Telugu, Class III English and Class VII math all at the same time.
- **Third**, we need to **identify the champions** from within the government system and use them as effective resource people. This will surely motivate many teachers to perform better and achieve excellence.
- **Fourth**, **government** needs to cooperate with best NGO's like **PRATHAM** to bring in best practices from all over the country.
- **Fifth**, we need to envision a plan to **bring tens of thousands of retired professionals** as teachers as they will bring years of practical experience to learning.
- **Sixth**, as we reimagine the school system, we must strive to bring more **neighbourhood learning spaces as places for community learning**. This can be done by utilising community halls in large housing societies and by creating an "**activities centre**" in each housing society.
- **Seventh**, we need to build a free archive for Indian languages such as **archive.org** where nearly 1.5 million people log in every day. The recent announcement by the government that it will buy bulk subscriptions of scientific journals to make them **accessible for all** is a step in the right direction.
- **Lastly**, we need to reimplement the success of Delhi government schools throughout India where government schools have become better than private ones by improving infrastructure (no stinky toilets), giving dignity to teachers, **constituting school management committees** and by involving many good NGOs for **innovating learning methods**.

We need to reimagine our school as a place where children with different backgrounds class, caste, religions, abilities can study together and learn to care and empathise. They should also be trained to excel in **soft skills** such as cooperation, group work, **compassion, human dignity and plurality of opinions**.

2. What are the issues in ailing American democracy?

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

Synopsis: The rioting by the Donald Trump supporters in the **US Capitol** seeking to stall President-elect Joe Biden's certification by Congress personifies the **decaying Democracy in America**.

Background

- Recently, a violent mob (loyal to President Donald Trump) in an attempt to overturn America's Presidential election stormed the U.S. Capitol and forced lawmakers into hiding.
- This act of violence indicates that **American democracy is critically ill**.

What are the reasons to perceive that American democracy is under threat?

According to the author, American democracy suffers from five disorders.

- **Firstly**, the major headache of what the American democracy is witnessing is the breakdown in the culture of **bipartisanship** (opposing political parties find common ground through compromise) that was so intrinsic to American politics and kept the system working.
- **Bipartisanship** in America has been replaced by **ideological chauvinism** built on a **psychology of hate** that sees competitors as the enemy within. This mindset particularly is incapable of compromise, consensus and difficult to cure.
- **Second**, is the **rise of the plebiscitary leader** which is similar to **Max Weber's concept of charismatic personality** has created a **partisan constituency**.
 - A Plebiscitary leader speaks to his followers, directly, bypassing institutions, that are supposed to limit his powers. It is like every person voting on every policy-matter.
 - For example, the ideologies built by Mr. Trump such as “**make America great again**”, “**drain the swamp**”, “**lock her up**”, “**stop the steal**” has exaggerated the feeling of grievance and have created a partisan constituency.
 - In this type of politics, institutions becomes weaker and locus of power shifts to the political leader.
- **Third**, is the **weakening of America's democratic institutions** by disrupting its checks and balances by Mr. Trump. For instance,
 - Bureaucrats who have opposed his views, have been replaced immediately and media too was suppressed by dubbing their reports as **Fake news** when they highlighted about his transgressions
 - **Institutions are the life and soul of a democracy** as they check the excesses of power, socialise elected representatives into democratic politics, embody the rules and conventions to maintain balance between private and public interests. Any nation that subverts its institutions, do not thrive.
- **Fourth**, is the evolution of the political formula **of neo-liberalism** that has been used by capitalist elites to not just accumulate wealth but to make the non-elite feel that such accumulation is in the public interest.
 - These Political formulas **gives legitimacy to elite rule** and American democracy today has become the **textbook example** of the political formula of neo-liberalism.
- **Fifth**, is the **increasing inequality in American society, which provided lifeblood to all of the above problems**. With the help of charismatic leadership of Trump and use of vigilante **politics** the government was successful from diverting the citizens from the real issue of rising inequality in American society.
 - **vigilante politics**: an organized effort outside legitimate channels to suppress or eradicate any threats to the status quo American democracy will need to **self-examine** itself and need to fix the loop holes that allowed a **narcissistic leader**, with **plebiscitary power** to expose the fragility of its institutions. It needs to reform itself to set a precedent to other nations such that this model of politics, **the politics of hate** will not be entertained in any other country.

3. Gulf reconciliation

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

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Synopsis – Gulf leaders have signed a solidarity and stability agreement towards ending the diplomatic rift with Qatar in the 41st Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit in Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia.

Background-

- In 2017, Saudi Arabia and its allies [UAE, Bahrain and Egypt] decided to boycott Qatar and imposed a naval, air and land blockade.
- Qatar was charged to be too close to Iran and backed radical Islamist groups.
- The four countries presented Qatar with **13 demands** as conditions for ending the embargo, which included-
 - Closing Al-Jazeera and other Qatar funder TV network,
 - closing a Tusking military base in Qatar,
 - Reducing diplomatic ties with Iran and
 - Ending interference in other countries internal affairs.

However, Qatar did not budge despite the heavy economic cost.

What are the impacts of 2017 boycott on Qatar?

Qatar showed resilience and manage the economic blockade. Qatar was able to deepen its relations with Turkey and Iran during the embargo, as both countries provided vital support.

- **First**, When the Saudi and Emirati airspaces were closed, **Iran offered Qatar global connectivity**.
- **Second**, Turkish **troops arrived in Qatar** and **Iran increased shipments of supplies** to the import dependent country. Qatar also **bolstering its ties with Turkey** during this period, which is eager to play a bigger role in West Asia.
- **Third, Qatar played an important role in the U.S.-Taliban deal** and continued to host talks between Taliban representatives and the Afghan government.

Saudi Arabia and its ally's embargo on Qatar failed in its objective and Members of the GCC signed a deal in AlUla, Saudi Arabia to remove all the sanctions over Qatar and re-open their land, sea and air borders to Qatar.

However, Qatar has made few concessions to reach the reconciliation. The 13 specific demands were replaced by a broad agreement on non-intervention in other countries' internal affairs and cooperating to ensure regional stability and security

What are the main reasons behind reconciliation?

- **First, to counter Iran-** The move is mainly aiming to create a regional bloc to counter Iran as the rift in the gulf helped Iran.
 - Iran, reeling under U.S. sanctions, got some financial relief from Qatari payouts for using its airspace. Lifting the air and sea blockades, the Saudis and the Emiratis could deny Iran of those funds.
- **Second, bridging the Gulf between two American allies-** The reconciliation also a signal of unity for incoming administration of President Joe Biden.
 - By resolving the feuds, Saudi Arabia will be able to put forward a much more united stance in front of US against Iran as Joe Biden is preparing to renegotiate the Iran nuclear deal.

Way forward-

- Although the Gulf reconciliation is a progressive step, especially in warming relations between Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Saudi Arabia should learn from the mistakes and build ties based on mutual interests and cooperation.

4. Kenneth Arrow's paradox and why elections are flawed

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- GS-2

Synopsis- **Theory of Arrow's paradox and the impact of loss of concentration**

Introduction-

- The mechanics of all elections are flawed. The mathematician Kenneth Arrow laid bare the flaws in elections.
- The internet helps the minority voice to instigate a large part of the populace. The recent U.S. presidential election is an example of this.

What is Arrow's paradox?

The theorem is named after mathematician and Nobel laureate **Kenneth Arrow**, who demonstrated the theorem in his doctoral thesis in 1950.

He identified that in any electoral system where three or more options exist, a curious paradox comes into play. Views of the minority voice can dictate the broader choice. His finding is now called Arrow's Paradox.

For example-

- A set of population has three preferences in the run-up to an election which pits binary choices against each other – A= go to war or B= Don't go to war.
- the voters will be distributed along three lines as follows:
 - **The minority** – The hawks, those who want to go to war.
 - **The majority of voters but are roughly equally split.**
 1. The doves, who prefer not to go to war under any circumstance.
 2. The realists, who don't want to go to war unless it's absolutely necessary.
- The minority hawks have the ability to dictate the outcome by convincing the realists by prevailing on the realists that war is actually needed.
- Arrow's Paradox can cause an election which should have a predictable outcome to become a farce since the outcome can be gamed to allow minority factions to prevail.

How arrow paradox theory swayed US elation result?

People now generally lose concentration after eight seconds, highlighting the affects of an increasingly digitalized lifestyle on the brain.

- The recent events such as **Proposition 22** in US elections have proved this phenomenon.

Proposition 22

- Uber, Lyft and other gig industries poured money into their '**Yes on Proposition 22**' campaign, raising over \$200 million and the courts to preserve their business model by keeping drivers from becoming employees eligible for benefits and job protections.
- **Misleading campaigns-** 58% of more than 11 million voters choosing to keep drivers classified as independent contractor, without the additional steps needed after that to get to the truth.
- The outcome was a defeat for labor unions that had pushed for a state law aimed directly at Uber and Lyft, mandating they provide drivers with protections like minimum wage, overtime, health insurance and reimbursement for expenses.

It is certain that there will be future attempts at influencing elections using both intense messaging which takes advantage of our shortened attention spans as well as the setting of agendas of electoral choice which Arrow first described.

5. Diplomatic practices

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2

Synopsis: India is unwilling to interfere in the political turmoil of Kathmandu and Beijing on the other hand is making efforts to preserve the unity of ruling party in Nepal. Stances of both the countries are very different from their traditional foreign policies.

Introduction

Interventions in the happenings of neighbouring countries have been a permanent feature of Indian and Chinese foreign policy.

- China's intervention in Nepal is a part of its interventionist strategy across Asia and beyond.
- Big nations like China and India always interfere in other nations but ward off possible threats to their own sovereignty. For example, India countered intensely the Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's comments on the farmers' distress.

On what factors does India's national sovereignty depend upon?

The national sovereignty has always depended on **the ability of the nation to secure it by its widespread national power**. Big nations tend to intervene more, and the smaller ones find ways to manage this through the politics of balancing against their large neighbours.

- **First**, India has to carefully manage the unavoidable and active interaction between the domestic political processes of India and its neighbours.
 - **Active and direct intervention** in the domestic politics of neighbours must be a sensible exemption rather than the rule in India's regional diplomacy.
- **Second, the bitter past of partition** leave the domestic political connotations of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan knotted together and complicate their relations as distinct sovereign bodies.
- **Third**, the concept of national **sovereignty and effectiveness of third-party intervention is limited by circumstance**. Outside mediations in the domestic politics of neighbours are rarely successful and yield unplanned penalties.

What are the steps to be taken?

It is extremely hard for even the most powerful nations to make the smallest states agree to do what is right on issues such as democratic governance, minority rights and federalism.

- **India can only encourage and not force Colombo and Kathmandu** to respect the rights of Tamils and Madhesis but given the complex web of linkages across South Asian borders, Delhi can't avoid dealing with these challenging issues either.
- **India should try to be a dependable partner and reliable friend** and should be committed to strengthening bilateral ties "on the basis of mutual trust, mutual interest, mutual respect and mutual sensitivity" as promised by the minister of external affairs to the political leaders in Sri Lanka.

Way forward

- Delhi's constant quest of this agenda could help India in managing the multifarious dynamic with its neighbours a little better.

6. Dialogue and deliberation with beneficiaries are a prerequisite for Welfare Policymaking

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Important Aspects of Governance, Transparency and Accountability, E-governance-applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential.

Synopsis: The state and central government can learn from the good practices of Rajasthan on **dialogue and deliberation** with beneficiaries while policy making to transform from mere governance to good governance.

Background

- The recently enacted **Farm laws** were passed without any consultation with the farmer community.
- Even when policies are made in good principles, for effective programme implementation, **consultations and deliberations** are needed during the initial stages of law making.
- If the farm laws were made by taking consultations from the relevant stakeholders especially from the farming community, we could have avoided the ongoing Farmers protest in Delhi.
- **The case of Rajasthan**, that has a healthy tradition of consulting with worker groups and civil society organisations during the **initial stage of policy formulation** and to take continuous feedback from the field to carry out periodic midway course corrections serves as a shining example for effective policy making.

How Rajasthan shines as a text book example for effective policy making?

- The example of the implementation of the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** in Rajasthan can illustrate this better.
- Though MGNREGA wages are now directly credited from the central government to a worker's bank account this system faces the **Issue of payment rejections**. There are numerous reasons for rejection, for example,
 - There are instances where block level data entry operators make errors in entering the account or **Aadhaar** details of workers.
 - There are instances where money does not get credited due to technical issues, for example, the **issue of 'Inactive Aadhaar'**. This happens when the linkage of the worker's **Aadhaar** and their bank account is broken in the software maintained by the NPCI.
 - Sometimes banks are not able to transfer money as the beneficiary account remains

How the Rajasthan government was able to solve the Issue of payment rejections?

- To resolve payment rejections, the **Department of Rural Development of the Government of Rajasthan** has held numerous discussions which resulted in conducting **periodic workshops** with the relevant stake holders.
- Through workshops the worker groups and civil society organisations interacted directly with the aggrieved workers, administrative officers from the village level to the State level, and bankers.
- Through **Continuous dialogues** with aggrieved workers, they were able to finalise a detailed guideline with well-defined responsibility, clear timelines, and monitoring and protocols to be followed by officials to resolve the issue.

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- This has resulted in a significant reduction in payment rejections in Rajasthan. Within a period of 1 year, the Rajasthan government was able to clear ₹380 crore worth of payments to workers that were earlier stuck due to rejections.
- By resolving the payment issue through **dialogues, deliberations and constant feedback**, the government ensured that every person who has worked, gets their full payment on time
- There is also another case of **Jan Soochna Portal** similar to **MGNREGA** where government through a 'digital dialogue' involving government officials and numerous civil society organisation have designed and formatted each scheme of **Jan Soochna Portal**.
- **Jan Soochna Portal** was launched to facilitate **The Right to Information (RTI) Act** that was obscured by issues such as **ill-defined formats, inaccessibility**
- The JSP is a single platform in the **public domain** providing information across 60 departments of over 104 schemes. The JSP makes **disclosure of information accessible for all**.

Federalism and good governance require constant constructive engagement between people and officials through Deliberation and debate. A constitutionally committed government should listen to the voices of the marginalised before making welfare policies.

7. Paying women for domestic and care work

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Synopsis: Paying women for domestic and care work will not reduce or redistribute their burden. It will only lead to mere recognition of their efforts.

Background

- Women bear a disproportionately **high burden of unpaid domestic work and care work** in India.
- According to the **all-India Time Use Survey (2019)** data, females bear more than 83% of the burden of **domestic and care work** both in Tamil Nadu and India.
- To end this disparity, recently, Kamal Haasan's political party, **Makkal Needhi Maiam**, proposed that homemakers should get due recognition through payment for their work at home.
- This proposal has generated curiosity and reopened the unsettled academic debate of Paying women for domestic and care work.

Can the proposed policy address the huge gender disparity in unpaid care work?

Evaluation of **Makkal Needhi Maiam** party's proposal reveals that though it will be a progressive step, it has the risk of furthering the gender disparity in unpaid work within homes.

- According to economist Diane Elson (2017), the **public policy** should aim at closing the huge **gender gap in unpaid domestic and care work** through '**recognition, reduction and redistribution**' (**Triple-R**).
- The **Makkal Needhi Maiam** party's proposal only satisfies the first component of Triple-R, that is 'recognition'.
- Since it is women who predominantly carry out unpaid domestic and care activities, often at the expense of their employment prospects and health, the monetary reward is a recognition of their contribution to the well-being of the household and the opportunities forgone by women. The proposal appears progressive, for this reason.

However, the proposal also has the potential to increase women's burden. This is because

- Firstly, paying monetary benefits will endorse the social norm that domestic and care work are 'women's work', for which they are being paid.
- Secondly, paying monetary benefits for women makes redistribution of the burden of unpaid work impossible. This is because, paying women for domestic and care work will give rights to men that women are bound to do these unpaid activities as they are being compensated.
- Instead of incentivising men to participate more in household work and reducing women's burden by redistributing the responsibility, the current proposal might do the opposite.

The electoral promise of paying women for domestic and care work cannot possibly address the 'strategic' gender needs of reducing and redistributing women's burden. What is needed is to incentivise men, to participate more and spend longer hours in sharing unpaid work.

8. Formalising the work of community workers

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs2: Development Processes and the Development Industry — the Role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.

Synopsis: Government should strive to formalise the work of community workers such as **Anganwadi, ASHA and National Health Mission workers** to make them accessible for various **social security benefits** such as safety, insurance, risk allowance and fixed wages etc.

Background

- In India, there are about a lakh **ASHA worker**, 1.3 million **Anganwadi workers** and another 1.2 million **Anganwadi helpers**. (Community workers)
- At present, community workers are classified as "**honorary workers**" and are denied of **minimum wages**, leave and other conditions that is available to formal workers.
- Even in the best paid states, this **honorarium** is not even close to the government-mandated **minimum wages** offered to workers doing comparable jobs.
- Also, the state by preferring to call them as "volunteers" denies the opportunity to recognise their crucial work as **care service providers**.
- This led to the two-day **nationwide strike** by **Anganwadi, ASHA and National Health Mission workers** demanding safety, insurance, risk allowance and fixed wages during the pandemic

What is the importance of community workers to society?

- Firstly, during the COVID-19 the **Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) and Anganwadi workers**, women "volunteers" functioned as the **frontline warriors** in the battle against the pandemic.
- Second, these community workers serve as the **connecting link between the community** and the state machinery. This was very much visible when there was uncertainty and fear of the virus.
- Third, the services of community workers are essential to **facilitate localised approaches** to problems as they have robust contacts at the grass roots.

What is the way forward?

- Firstly, there is an urgent need to **recognise Community workers as workers**. It can be done by Implementing the recommendation of **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour** to formalise the work of community workers.
- Second, Recognition of care work in the public sphere could also help in settling the issue of gendered and unequal division of house work and **unpaid care burden**.

It is high time that the state recognises the contributions of these women and accept them as workers. The recognition of **ASHA and Anganwadi volunteers** as workers will be a tribute to their contribution during the **pandemic** and also it gives a fresh start towards the structural understanding of **women's labour** and their status in the labour market leading to **Gender sensitive policy making**

9. Allahabad HC judgment on Special Marriage Act

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

Synopsis: Allahabad high court recently ruled that interfaith couples want to register under Special Marriage Act can refrain from publishing the mandatory 30-day notice for their intention to marry. It will have a significant bearing on our society.

About the Special Marriage Act

- **The Special Marriage Act** was originally enacted in 1872 to provide a framework for inter-caste and inter-religious marriages.
- As per **Section 5 of the Special Marriage Act**, marriages irrespective of the religion of the couple require parties to give a 30-day **public notice of their intention to marry** before solemnizing their marriage (performing the public ceremony/rites of marriage.)
- The public notice produced by the parties is displayed at the office of the marriage officer. It invites potential objections to the marriage.

About the case

- Recently, a writ petition was filed in Allahabad High Court.
- While hearing the case the court found that, though the couple wanted to marry under the **Special Marriage Act**, the mandatory provision for 30-day notice compelled them to take the easier route of **religious conversion**.
- **Thus, Section 5 of the Act** has been a barrier to inter-faith couples' marriages who wanted to marry under the **secular law** rather than taking religious conversion routes.
- Consequently, Court allowed not to publish the mandatory 30-day notice of their intention to marry.
- Also, the court allowed the individuals, who desire to have more information about their counterparts, to opt for publication of notice under Section 6 of **the Act**. Such publication of notice under free will not be violative of their fundamental rights.
- The court also noted that when marriages under personal law do not require a notice or invitation for objections, such a requirement for inter-faith couples' is obsolete in secular law and cannot be forced on a couple.

What were the reasons given by the court to nullify mandatory 30-day notice?

The court has made the following observations against the mandatory provision for 30-day notice,

- It is an **invasion into the fundamental rights of liberty and privacy of individuals**.
- Also, it **violates the right to choose a partner for marriage** without interference from state and non-state actors.
- It is **against the changed social circumstances and progress in laws** proposed by the **Law Commission**".
 - As **the Special Marriage Act** was originally enacted in 1872, It is **unethical** to force the present generation living with its current needs and expectations to follow the customs and traditions adopted nearly 150 years back.
- It is against the previous judgments of the Supreme Court on the **right to privacy**. The court cited the following landmark judgments;
 - Right to Privacy **recognized by SC in 2017 Aadhaar case**.
 - The **2018 Hadiya case** (a medical student who converted to Islam to marry a Muslim), which held that the right to choose a partner is a fundamental right.
 - The 2018 ruling in which the court **decriminalized homosexuality**.
- The court also cited the example of Himachal Pradesh High Court, which in 2012, had struck down provisions that required notice of intention in case of religious conversion in the **Himachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 2006**, citing that it violates the fundamental right to privacy.

What would be the impact of this judgment?

The judgment will have the following impacts on our society,

- **First**, it will remove hindrances to inter-faith marriages and bring relief to inter-faith couples who are being increasingly targeted by **vigilante groups**.
- **Second**, as the **Special Marriage Act is a central legislation**, couples across the country seeking to marry under the law will benefit from the liberal ruling of the provisions.
- **Third**, it paves way for abolishing and cleansing obsolete **Victorian-era protectionist provisions** in other laws as well.
- **Fourth**, it will be a body blow to **Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020** which have provisions such as
 - Declaring conversion of religion by marriage to be unlawful
 - Mandating a 60-day notice to the District Magistrate
 - Requiring the Magistrate to conduct a police inquiry to know the real intention behind the conversion.

10. Strategic guidelines for COVID vaccine program: Challenges and suggestions

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

GS-2: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/ Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Synopsis: Government has issued strategic guidelines for the effective rollout of COVID vaccine program. There are challenges in the way of the Vaccine program that should be tackled as soon possible.

Strategic guidelines for COVID vaccine programme

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With limitations of Vaccine related to efficiency and efficacy in mind, government has framed **strategic guidelines** for COVID vaccine programme

- Guidelines were framed using the knowledge acquired over three decades of implementing the Universal Immunisation Programme. It aims to cover 30 crore people by July 2021.
- It **has specified involvement of 19 departments**, donor organisations and NGOs at the national, state, district and block level **in the roll out of COVID vaccine programme**.
- The guidelines have also clearly mentioned the **priority criteria**. Citizens eligible for the first round of **COVID vaccine programme** includes the following,
 - The **caregivers and front-line workers** working under the department of health, defense, municipalities, and transportation.
 - Persons above the age of 50.
 - And persons below the age of 50 who suffers from **comorbidities** such as diabetes, hypertension, cancers, and lung diseases are all included.
- The strategic guidelines have also clearly stated in detail,
 - The skills, roles, and responsibilities of the required human resources.
 - The quantum of logistics required for delivering vaccines at point of use.
 - The requirement of physical infrastructure, monitoring systems based on digital platforms, and feedback systems for reporting adverse events.

However, it has been criticised that the guidelines are ideal and have failed to provide solutions for real-time issues of our health system.

What are the challenges involved in effective rollout of COVID vaccine programme?

There are many challenges to roll out COVID vaccine programme. They are,

- **First, unequal distribution of cold storage facilities among states.** For example, out of the 28,932 cold chain points, half are in the five southern states, Maharashtra and Gujarat.
 - Whereas the eight states in the North and Odisha that account for over 40 per cent of the country's population have only 28 per cent of the cold chain points.
- **Second**, pertaining issues in our health care sector such as **poor human resources, a weak private sector**, poor safety and hygiene standards, frequent power outages, poor infrastructure will reduce the capacity to implement the vaccine programme with speed, quality, and accuracy.
- **Third**, a massive **immunization programme for 30 crore people** can distort the routine health service delivery and affect other immunisation drives, and can lead to exhaustion of health care workers.
- **Fourth**, acquiring the data for under the 50s with **comorbidities** will be challenging though we have data for the above-50-year-olds in the electoral rolls.
- **Fifth**, there are also challenge of tackling **Fudging, false certification, and siphoning off vaccines to private facilities** in the event of vast price differences between private hospitals and public hospitals.
- **Sixth**, the non-availability of efficacy data could result in huge wastage and gives scope for errors and duplication during the procurement and supply of vaccines.
- **Seventh**, the trust among the people on COVID vaccines are decreasing leading to suspicions and fears due to various reasons such as
 - Non-transparency of data on either of the two vaccines proposed for use in the program.

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- Opacity with which the licenses were given etc. **For example, have not completed the Phase 3 trials** that confirm the safety and efficacy of the vaccine.
- Above all, India hasn't signed the **advance purchase agreements** for vaccines that have completed Phase 3 trials from other countries.

What is the way forward?

- **First**, avoid the complexity of listing the **priority groups** throughout our country. It should be replaced by covering the complete area in one go, instead of sequencing them into different groups.
 - The areas could be ranked on the basis of a **vulnerability index** based on **disease burden, caseload of COVID infections, demographic profile**, health-seeking behavior and availability of infrastructure, etc.
- **Second**, to create confidence in the community we need to establish an independent team of experts under the aegis of the WHO to ensure adherence to recruitment standards, consent conditions, adverse event record management, compensation standards.
- **Third**, to build trust about vaccination programme we need to plan for large-scale public education and information programme through State- and local-level networks where people are informed, sensitised and their feedback was taken.
- **Fourth, People should be involved in decision-making.** For this Local leader from public figures, religious leaders, self-help groups, the media, and even educational institutions need to participate to help citizens understand its importance and build trust
- **Fifth, Science, evidence, and data analytics** need to be extensively used for effective policymaking.
- **Finally**, vaccination is not a complete solution to end the epidemic. We need to adopt safe behavior through a **communication strategy**. For this, the government can use its experience of controlling the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The need of the hour is a winning strategy against epidemic that has drained us economically, socially and psychologically. Government needs to understand that the effective way of improving uptake of the vaccine while reducing costs is by creating participatory frameworks of engaging experts and communities and building effective and reliable public information, and transparency.

11. Issues in SC Mediation step on farm laws

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2

Synopsis: The Supreme Court's decision to take a route of mediation, instead of judgment on the legality of the law, is being criticized by some experts. Let's have look at the criticisms?

What are the issues in SC mediation process?

Supreme Court-appointed a committee and put a stay on implementation of the laws. Although it is officially not called a mediation committee, but the Court does **mention its role in helping the negotiations between the farmers and the government.**

The committee route that SC has adopted should have been a legislative and executive exercise. Moreover, if it is an attempt to mediate, there are issues in it;

- Firstly, Mediation should be Voluntary. i.e. all parties must provide their consent to it. Major farmer's union have denied participating in it; thus, it is not a successful attempt.

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- Secondly, **the mediators must be fair and neutral. Majority of its members have a positive attitude towards bill. Thus, it is not fair and neutral.**

What are the steps to be taken?

The Chief Justice of India said that the dialogues seem to be going nowhere, and something urgent needs to be done. If the Court wants to mediate due to the government's reluctance in doing so, then it must observe some prerequisites.

- **First**, the committee should be made of such people who give out **an image of impartiality, ability and seriousness**. The committee should have knowledge and respect so that it can influence sceptics to give the process a try.
- **Second**, assurance should be taken from the government that its **ministers at high posts will meet the committee and participate** in the proceedings as this will assure the consent of all parties.

Way forward

- Once discussions start and are properly guided, solutions are possible. It may well be that once the important elements get focused upon and the key concerns expressed, approaches will open up which will secure legitimate interests to the maximum extent possible. All this is possible only when mediation is on the lines of principles.

12. New opportunities for India in Afghanistan

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 – India and its neighborhood

Synopsis: Change of power in the US has provided India with an opportunity to re-engage with Afghanistan.

Introduction

- The National Security Advisor(NSA) Ajit Doval paid a 2-day visit to Kabul. It was the first trip to Afghanistan, by a top Indian official, since the start of Doha Talks between Taliban and Afghan republic representatives.
- Both sides discussed efforts for building regional consensus on supporting peace in Afghanistan and counter-terrorism cooperation.

What has been the course of events in Afghanistan?

- **The US has agreed to withdraw all its troops from Afghanistan** after an agreement with the Taliban.
- **Although the dialogues between the Taliban and the Kabul delegation** were still ongoing, President Ashraf Ghani is suspicious of Taliban's intentions. It is due to Taliban's refusal of a ceasefire and a high level of violence.

Now the Presidency in the US is changed. It will be tough foreign policy tasks for the Biden Administration, to take onward the Afghan process started under the Trump government.

Why are India's stakes in the Afghanistan Peace process?

The main concern of India is linked to Pakistan's involvement in the process;

- **First, Pakistan has been key to bring the Taliban to the talks table.** Thus, at present, it has an upper hand compared to India.

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- **Second**, Pakistan's intelligence agency has friendly relations with the Taliban and the Haqqani network.

What Opportunities does India have to increase its presence?

The Change of power in the US has provided an opportunity to both India and the Afghan government, to raise apprehensions about the Afghan process to Washington.

- **Firstly**, Kabul will pressure for the conditions for talks that the **Taliban must agree to a ceasefire**. Afghan Foreign Minister is looking for India's help in this.
- **Secondly**, the new administration in the US is expected to be **more sensitive to the concerns of other participants in Afghanistan**. For example, concerns of women and rights groups about the return of the Taliban.
- **Thirdly**, External Affairs Minister of India said that Delhi **might increase "military assistance" to Afghanistan**.

Way forward

- Now is the right time for India to **increase its presence in the Afghan peace process**. India should rethink the "temporary" closure of the Indian consulates in Afghanistan.

13. Factsheet for administration of COVID-19 Vaccine released

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

Synopsis: Government has released a Vaccine **Fact sheet** that contains guidelines for administering both vaccines (**Covaxin and Covishield**).

Background

- Union Health Ministry has sent a **comprehensive fact sheet** for both vaccines (**Covaxin and Covishield**) to all states and immunisation officer.
- The Centre has also asked the states and immunisation officers to disseminate the fact sheet to all programme managers, cold chain handlers, and vaccinators before the rollout.

What is this fact sheet?

The fact sheet contains the general guidelines that should be followed during the initial phase of the **Covid-19 vaccination drive**, while vaccinating the priority **group** (3 crore people).

The fact sheet contains the guidelines on the following aspects,

- Physical specifications such as dosage, cold chain storage requirements.
- Specific guidelines on contraindications (a factor due to which the vaccine is to be withheld to certain categories of people)
- Guidelines on adverse events
- Details on special precautions.

Now we will examine in detail, the exceptions, precautions, and possible adverse events that are mentioned in the fact sheet.

First, the **general guidelines** in the fact sheet contain the following directives to ensure that proper care is taken while administering the vaccine.

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- Only **people over the age of 18 years** are eligible for vaccination.
- Since **2 doses of vaccines are required** per person, every Person should be administered the same vaccine in both the dosage. It is to deal with the issue of possible interchangeability.
- While administering the vaccine to a person with a history of any bleeding or coagulation disorder, platelet disorder, clotting factor deficiency, or coagulopathy, it should be done with caution.
- Both **Vaccines have to be stored at +2°C to +8°C** and needed to be protected from light. If it is found frozen it has to be discarded.

Second, the **specific guidelines on contraindications**. The three categories of people for whom the vaccine should not be administered. They are,

- Persons who have shown a history of an allergic reaction.
- People who show an immediate or delayed onset of an allergic reaction to vaccines or injectable therapies, pharmaceutical products, and food items.
- Pregnant and lactating women.

Third, guidelines on **temporary contraindications**. 3 categories of persons for whom vaccination is to be deferred for four-eight weeks. They are,

- Persons showing active symptoms of SARS-CoV-2 infection.
- Covid-19 patients who have been treated with anti-SARS-Cov-2 monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma.
- Acutely unwell and hospitalised patients (with or without intensive care) due to any illness.

Fourth, the fact sheet under **not contraindicated**, specifically mentions that persons suffering from following health conditions can get vaccinated. However, the response to the Covid-19 vaccine may be less in these individuals. They are;

- Persons with a past history of Covid-19 infection.
- Persons with a history of chronic diseases and comorbidities (cardiac, neurological, pulmonary, metabolic, and malignancies).
- Persons with immunodeficiency or HIV, and patients on immune suppression due to “any condition” can be administered with the Covid-19 vaccine.

Fifth, the fact sheet has also separately mentioned the **Possible Adverse Reactions** for both the vaccines along with the required precautions to be taken during the adverse reaction.

Guidelines provide the list of mild adverse events and rare adverse events that may follow the vaccination from both **Covishield and Covaxin**. **It also provides for the precautions and medication that will be required in the above cases.**

For example; In case of Mild adverse events for Covishield like myalgia (deep muscle pain), malaise (a feeling of overall discomfort), common painkiller **paracetamol** may be used.

How Covid-19 vaccines administered in other countries have performed till now?

Though the overall performance is found to be safe so far, there were few adverse events recorded in a small section of the population. For example, in the case of the US,

- The **US Centers for Disease Control (CDC)**, monitoring by the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System detected 21 cases of anaphylaxis (a severe, life-threatening allergic reaction that occurs rarely after vaccination) out of a reported 1,893,360 first doses of the **Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine**.
- Whereas in the case of **Modern’s mRNA vaccine**, which was authorized for emergency use in the US, the CDC said data is still limited.

14. UK report classified India among 'difficult four' countries

Source: [Indian Express](#)

GS-2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora.

Synopsis: The report released by the Royal Institute of International Affairs (UK) recommends an arm's length relationship with India due to rise of religious intolerance.

Background

- Recently, the **Royal Institute of International Affairs** (UK) have proposed a blueprint titled "**Global Britain, Global Broker**", for Britain's future foreign policy after **Brexit**.
- As a matter of concern for India, the report has paid less attention to India's role in the futuristic vision of a "Global Britain".
- The report **has classified India as one of the "difficult four" countries** along with **Russia, Turkey and Saudi Arabia**. India will be counted among the UK's "rivals" or "awkward counterparts".

What was the reason given in the report for classifying India as one of the "difficult four" countries?

The report highlights two major issues for that

- **First**, according to the report the rise of **Hindu nationalism** in India is weakening the rights of Muslims and other **minority religious groups**.
- This rise in **intolerant majoritarianism** is damaging the vision of a **secular, democratic India** envisioned by Nehru.
- **Second**, the report labels India as a **half-hearted supporter of liberal democracy** and a country with mixed approaches to **human rights abuses**.

Why the report's criticism towards India is meaningless?

Criticism of India over **growing religious intolerance** and the **suppression of critique and dissent** is not a surprise. Most of the diplomats from various countries have consented regarding this. For example, the Canada has voiced against the **Kashmir internet shut down**.

But second criticism is particularly pointless. Despite being the world's largest democracy, labelling India as a half-hearted supporter of **liberal principles** and institutions abroad is not correct, because,

- India for long been unwilling to step up on the global stage to the responsibilities of "**committed democracies**" due to uneven playing field in today's international order.
- The 21st century Global order produces **unevenly distributed rights, obligations, and burdens** for post-colonial nations and the principle of equality and sovereignty of states still remains as a myth.
- Even today, the post-colonial states such as India, **do not enjoy full political and economic independence** on how they make decisions at home, nor in their efforts to shape the agendas of international institutions.

Thus, 2nd criticism of India can be precisely summarised in the words of **Former Indian foreign secretary and national security advisor** Shivashankar Menon. He said, "**Encouragement by western international partners for India to "behave responsibly" usually means doing what they would like us to do**".

What is the way forward for India?

- **First**, India need not look into the issue of UK distancing from India too seriously. No nation today can move forward without factoring in India. Even the report has highlighted this.
- **Second**, India's high-profile international activity in the next 2 years as elected member of the **UN Security Council** and as **host of the 2023 G20 Summit** should be effectively used to leverage India's positions of influence in the international sphere.
- **Third**, India needs to build on the critical and normative resources to inspire greater **equality, legitimacy and inclusivity** in the international sphere.

15. Issues in Standardisation of research

Source: [Indian Express](#)

GS - 2: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Synopsis: Standardisation of research based on the basis of standards in European institutions is harmful to the very essence of research, particularly for subjects like social sciences and humanities.

Why standardization of research is harmful to research practices?

The recent case of **Elsevier, Wiley, and ACS** filing lawsuits against pirate websites such as **SciHub** and **Libgen** which allows access to millions of research papers can help us understand the **issue of control and governance over knowledge in academia**.

First issue is applying “**global**” standards based on the practices of American and European institutions to higher education in the global south as well. This system has many issues.

- **Such** Precise point-based measurements of **knowledge production** is often incompatible with the educational systems in countries like India.
- Moreover, there is no clarity of the relevance of such knowledge in societies, even in Europe and America.

Second, in an Indian context, the UGC mandated “standardisation” process has particularly impacted social sciences and humanities research in Indian universities. **How?**

- In India, UGC has been the regulatory body responsible for maintaining standards in higher education.
- The UGC is using an objective criterion to evaluate institutions. It is creating many issues;
 - Institutional funding has been linked to ranking and accreditation systems like NAAC and NIRF.
 - In faculty research, Universities are being ranked based on citations in global journal databases like **SCOPUS**.
 - Moreover, ranking of universities based on citations fails to distinguish between the various disciplines like **STEM (science, technology, engineering and management) and social sciences**. For example,
 - In **STEM disciplines**, research is often highly **objective and quantified**, and conclusions can be published more easily as reports.
 - The same in the case of **social sciences and humanities** research is difficult as it is subjective, **analytical and argumentative**.
 - It impacts research in **social sciences and humanities** by **devaluing books as authentic forms of research as**, social science disciplines like history,

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sociology, politics researchers are more confined to writing books rather than publishing articles in journals.

- **Third**, the **issue of Peer review** is affecting scholars research in the following ways,
 - Since the continuous publication of research has been linked to the growth of Teachers. They spent less time in **pedagogy and research** and most time on getting their articles published.
 - A large surplus of articles has surfaced on the same topic due to that, competing with each other for citations.
 - Moreover, the **Peer review process** itself is subjective and depends upon the knowledge and inclination of the particular reviewer.
 - For example, there are many instances where the same article received two opposite reviews.
- **Fourth**, the issue of **ghettoization of research** in journal databases. The **paid subscription** makes **research inaccessible for students** in universities.
 - This has made **access to knowledge inequitable** by favouring the elite institutions and their Students.
 - This has also led to the **growth of Pirate websites** such as **Libgen and Scihub**.

What is the way forward?

- **First**, “**Regulating**” research needs to be replaced with “**facilitating**” research. Regulations without facilitation will merely bureaucratize the governance of knowledge without generating any pathbreaking research.
- **Second**, to improve the research potential of teachers and to raise the Indian education standards to global levels, the following issues impacting scholars research must be resolved.
 - Uncertainty in employment.
 - Longer teaching hours accompanied by a dismal student-teacher ratio.
 - Lack of career break, research, and travel grants.
 - Lack of access to research facilities and office space.
 - Decreasing expenditure on public institutions, including education.

16. 6th meeting of Nepal-India Joint Commission

Source: [The Hindu](#)

GS-2: India and its Neighbourhood– Relations

Synopsis: Nepal’s Foreign Minister co-chaired the 6th meeting on Nepal-India Joint Commission.

Background:

- Recently, Nepal’s Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali took a three-day visit to India to attend the **6th meeting of the Nepal-India Joint Commission**.
- Following **this meeting**, Nepal’s Foreign Minister delivered the speech at the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) on “Nepal-India Relations”.

What are the recent developments that have taken place in the meeting?

During the visit both sides, India and Nepal discussed the entire bilateral relations, including **COVID-19 cooperation** and **border management**. However, the issue of border dispute was not discussed.

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- **First**, during the Joint Commission meeting, Nepal has raised the Kalapani boundary dispute with India. But no discussions were carried from India's side.
 - But this holds significance because for two reasons,
 - **One**, this is the first time that the Foreign Minister of Nepal has presented the boundary dispute to India since the issue erupted in November 2019.
 - **Two**, the observations from **the meeting** about the border dispute reveal a slight positive change in Nepal's articulation of the dispute.
- **Second**, they also took up Kathmandu's vaccine requirements to fight the **COVID-19 pandemic**. Kathmandu approved Serum Institute of India's (SII) **Covishield vaccine**.
 - India assured that the requirements of Nepal would be prioritised after the roll-out of vaccines.
- Third, India raised the **issue of "submission"** of the report on the **"review of the Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1950"** which is yet to be submitted by **Eminent Persons Group (EPG)** constituted by Mr. Oli in 2016 to the Indian Prime Minister.
- Finally, they **reviewed the development partnership** between both sides.
 - While both sides welcomed the commencement of construction of the **third Integrated Check Posts (ICP) at Nepalgunj**, they also discussed the benefit of the **(ICP)** at Birgunj and Biratnagar.
 - As a developmental aid, India also conveyed that it would build two **cultural heritage projects** in Nepal on the **'Pashupatinath Riverfront Development'** and the **'Bhandarkhal Garden Restoration in Patan Durbar'** through grant assistance.

17. Importance of nutritional security to improve immunity

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

Synopsis: There is a strong case to provide **Nutrition sufficiency** among citizens to increase immunity against infections.

Why we need to provide nutrition sufficiency?

The need for adequate nutrition is summarized as follows,

- **First**, the strength and duration of the vaccine response do not depend entirely on the vaccine, it also depends on age, nutritional status, and existing health condition among the persons receiving the vaccines.
- **Second, nutrition is an important influencer of both natural immunity and adaptive immunity.** Ignoring the nutrition aspect will lead to **neglect of nutrition in public health policies**.
- **Third**, the body's reaction to vaccination depends on nutritional status. For example, diets having high levels of **ultra-processed foods** may incite high levels of inflammations in the body, and also, they adversely affect the composition of **healthy biomes in our gut** thereby adversely affecting our immunity.
- **Fourth**, even studies from various vaccination drives such as cholera, Rota virus have shown that specific nutrition's are vital for our immunity. For example, **Zinc, selenium, vitamin E** can enhance natural immunity.
- **Fifth**, Recent studies have shown that even **cellular immunity** is influenced by nutrition. For example,
 - Studies from Japan tested with mice states that nutritional state is important for preventing the infectious disease from vaccination

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- Similarly, a study from France revealed that elderly persons who have received Zinc, selenium supplements were able to develop more antibodies and fewer respiratory infections compared to others who didn't receive Zinc, selenium supplements.

What needs to be done to achieve nutritional security?

- **First**, we can think of **providing nutrition counseling during mass immunization Programme**. Enabling people to consume nutritional food will enhance their immunity levels and help to build a robust immune response.
- **Second**, we need to **reconsider our agricultural priorities** and need to reshape our food systems.
 - For this, we need to **replace processed foods and cereal stripped of Fibre foods with pulses, millets, vegetables, nuts, and fish**.
- **Third**, we need to plan effective strategies for mitigating the adversities of climate change. For example, a recent study from Columbia has found that **climate change can negatively impact the nutritional quality of staples** resulting in an increase in zinc-deficiency, protein-deficiency, and iron deficiency.
 - Diversification of crops by **replacing rice cultivation partly with sorghum, millets** can improve **nutritional food security in India** along with enhancing Indi's climate resilience.
- **Fourth, ultra-processed foods** can be regulated and taxed to improve their production, promotion, and consumption.

India needs to think on a **nutritional strategy** that makes consumption of nutritional foods available and affordable which can enable people for consuming **balanced diet** that promotes good growth and good health. The above steps not only will increase nutritional security but also **reduces the risk of Zoonotic infections like Covid 19**.

18. Why Politicians should be given priority in Vaccination drive?

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS – 2 – Health-related issues

Synopsis: The policy of vaccinating health workers on priority is correct and justified. But, should elected representatives be given priority in vaccination drive?

Introduction

As the first phase of vaccination began on 16th January, nearly 2 lakh healthcare workers received Covid-19 Vaccination. It is an apt decision to give priority to the healthcare workers due to their contribution and vulnerability.

Why Health Care Workers are getting priority?

Providing priority to the healthcare workers in Vaccination drive is important due to the following reasons;

- Healthcare workers have been fighting the contagious virus from the frontline ever since the pandemic began; many frontline workers also lost their lives to the virus.
- Including priority workers is also important due to the fact that health workers are more prone to infection, and it will curb the transmission rate.

Should politicians be included in the priority list?

Bihar, Odisha, and Telangana requested the Center to include elected representatives in the priority population. It would be a feasible step due to the following reasons:

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- **Firstly**, giving lawmakers the title of frontline workers won't cost much. This would mean an **addition of only 6000 people to the priority list, in the first phase.**
- **Secondly**, Parliamentary activities were restricted for the last 10 months but with the vaccine coming in, legislative functions **could be resumed.**
- **Third**, vaccinating political leaders with permitted COVID vaccines will boost public confidence in them.
- For example, leading figures of the country's healthcare system including the director of AIIMS, Randeep Guleria, took the shots on the first day of the drive in India.

19. Need and ways of Decongesting Indian prisons

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Reforms in Indian criminal justice system

Synopsis: Health Experts are calling federal prisons a “breeding grounds for uncontrolled transmission” of the virus. There is an urgent need of decongesting them. What are the ways to decongest Indian prisons?

Background

- In India there are around 1,400 prisons, ‘housing’ over **5 lakh prisoners.** These prisoners are facing the threat of Covid pandemic, with no organisational support.
- Whereas, in the countries such as U.K and U.S, activists are strong enough to influence public policy and voice against **human rights abuse** in prison.
- Also, these Countries have accurate data over the impact of pandemic on prisoners in **public domain.** For example
 - The data from Texas state shows that the pandemic has killed more than 230 people in prisons, 80% of whom had not been convicted of a crime.
 - Similarly, The United Kingdom Ministry of Justice figures shows that prisoners testing positive in October stood at 1,529, with five deaths.
- However, **India lacks such crucial data on Prison Statistics in public domain** and also such statistics are not being demanded of our criminal justice system.

How a lack of effective criminal laws is affecting under-trial prisoners in India?

According to the **Prisons Act of 1894**, prisons come under the exclusive responsibility of State governments. Over the years, despite being upgraded to the status of **correctional homes**, these prisons are facing the challenge of **Congestion of Under Trial Prisoners (UTPs).**

- According to the **National Crime Records Bureau's** report for 2019 out of 4.5 lakh prisoners, 3.3 lakh are ‘**under-trial prisoners**’, i.e., investigation or trial is supposed to be ‘in progress’.
- These **UTPs** are detained under **Section 167 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)** which provides for “Procedure when investigation cannot be completed in 24 hours”.
- The original Cr.PC of 1898 specified the period of detention as 15 days. Later, through amendments, it was extended to periods that can go up to 90 days and, in some exceptions, to an indefinite period.
- Out of 3.3 lakh, about 2.2 lakh are either not likely to be even charge-sheeted, or they are likely to be acquitted.”
- This is a huge **violation of the basic human rights of UTPs**, who are already facing the issue of **inadequate healthcare facilities and torture by other rowdy prisoners.**

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- Moreover, it is a **huge injustice to the families of the UTPs**. For example, their children are denied a normal childhood, proper education, and are exploited by a cruel section of the society and are **forced to take to the path of crime**.

What needs to be done?

Pandemic provides an opportunity for an immediate review of all **prisoners' vulnerability to the epidemic**,

- First**, we need to conduct repeated testing in all prisons, especially sub-jails. An arrangement for the isolation and hospitalization of who testing positive needs to be planned.
- Second**, to **de-congest prisons**, the **Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Act, 2005**, which contains the much-needed Section 436-A needs to be activated.
 - it provides for an under-trial to be released on a personal bond, with or without sureties if the under-trial has spent half of the period of prescribed imprisonment in detention.
- Third**, 'Prisons' is purely a **'State subject'**. But it is imperative of the centre to support the states as the **Constitutional responsibility** of handling **infectious and contagious diseases listed in the Concurrent List**.

It is the duty of the state to vaccinate inmates at the 'Hospitals of Correction'. It is similar to anyone in a state hospital may rightly expect to be vaccinated on a priority against the virus.

20. India-US relation under Joe Biden administration

Synopsis: Biden's administration is focussed on ensuring economic security of the middle class by reducing the **expansive globalist ambitions**. What does it mean for India?

Source: [Indian Express](#)

GS- 2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora.

Background

- Two important themes** that are at the centre of Biden's vision are,
 - To **"restore the soul of America"** by resolving the multiple economic and political challenges confronting the US.
 - To rebuild the backbone of the nation, **the middle class**.
- Biden's emphasis on the middle class is not very different from Trump's emphasis on **"America First"**. But it will not be called the same due to negatives associated with it.

Understanding this continuity of "America First" policy under Joe Biden will help India to engage productively with the new American administration.

What are the possible elements of Biden's foreign policy?

The report titled **"Making US Foreign Policy Work Better for the Middle Class"**, co-authored by Sullivan (designated National security advisor under Biden administration) **offers insight into the future of American foreign policy**. It has pointed the following observations,

- Economic anxiety and discontent** in the American heartland are deepening.
- Similar to Trump's view on **Free trade**, the report highlights that **trade liberalisation has not benefitted everyone in the US**
 - The report recommends addressing the **deepening income inequality at home** and domestic investment and industrial strategy that will allow America to become more competitive in the world.

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- It recognizes that the **expansive globalist ambitions** of the American foreign policy have lost much domestic political support. For example,
 - Escalating a new Cold War with China.
 - Or waging struggle between the world's democracies and authoritarian governments.
- Pointing to the overreach of American foreign policy in recent decades the report proposes for a **“less ambitious” foreign policy** in the future.

The report signifies under Biden's administration, the US will adopt a **less interventionist approach** in geopolitical issues, reduced international military interventions, **absence of trade wars** as against Trump years.

What does it mean to India?

- **First**, in trump years India-US relation saw both developments and confrontations going together. For example, sharpening tensions on trade was going parallel with deepening defence and security cooperation
 - Under Biden administration, India finds an opportunity to overcome the bilateral differences on trade and elevate defence cooperation to a higher level.
- Second, India's pragmatic international orientation to the **Atmanirbhar strategy** could open some space for working with Biden on **reforming the global trading system** and make it more politically sustainable.
- Finally, America that plans for a less **ambitious” foreign policy will** need strong partners like India who can contribute more.

A political understanding of **strategic burden-sharing** would help India-US to develop deeper military cooperation and more intensive diplomatic coordination in the **Indo-Pacific**.

21. RERA 2016 protects the interest of Homebuyers

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs2: Statutory, Regulatory and various Quasi-judicial Bodies

Synopsis: As compared to RERA 2013 act, the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act (RERA) 2016 was successful in empowering the home buyers. This has reduced the incidence of unfair trade practices in the real estate sector.

How RERA 2016 act was better than RERA 2013 act?

The RERA 2013 act had the following issues;

- It did not cover either “ongoing projects” or “commercial real estate”.
- Also, the minimum limit for registration of projects was so high that it excluded many projects from the coverage under law.
- These exclusions made the 2013 bill meaningless and harmful to the interests of home buyers.

However, the 2016 RERA act has fixed all the loopholes in the RERA act 2013,

- First, after a holistic review along with multiple stakeholder consultations both “ongoing projects” and “commercial projects” were included in the act.
- Second, the minimum limit for registration of projects was reduced to cover more projects. It reduced evasion under law.

How the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act (RERA) 2016 has contributed to the empowerment of consumers?

RERA act addressed the existing power gap in the real estate sector between buyers and promoters. It further empowered the consumers in the following ways.

- First, the real estate sector which was largely unregulated is now being regulated under RERA.
- Second, RERA along with demonetization and GST has reduced the use of black money in the real estate sector.
- Third, it has the mandatory rules of getting approval of competent authority for project plans.
 - Also, according to the RERA act, the builder needs to register with a regulatory authority.
 - This stringent regulation has ended the practice of selling real estate based on false advertisements.
- Fourth, to prevent fund diversion, Promoters are required to maintain funds of a specific project in separate bank accounts.
- Fifth, disclosure of unit sizes based on “carpet area” has been made mandatory. It has reduced the scope for unfair trade practices.
- Sixth, it promotes equity by making it mandatory for payment of “equal rate of interest” by the promoter or the buyer in case of default.

Federal issues in its implementation

RERA is a product of cooperative federalism. Though the Act was introduced by the Central government, state governments are empowered to notify the rules, appoint regulatory authorities and the appellate tribunals. Currently, RERA is notified in 34 states and Union territories. However, the act is facing implementation-related issues in some states such as Maharashtra and West Bengal.

- **First**, in the case of Maharashtra, the state enacted its own law in 2013. The law was not consumer-friendly, and it has created a disadvantageous position for homebuyers in Maharashtra.
 - However, the center repealed the state act and enforced the RERA act 2016 for the regulation of real estate sector.
- **Second**, in the case of West Bengal, the state government ignored RERA act 2016 and enacted its own state law (the West Bengal Housing Industry Regulation Act (WBHIRA)) in 2017.
 - Even after multiple efforts by the Centre, West Bengal refused to implement RERA.
 - Though there was a central law on the subject, Knowingly, the state government enacted WBHIRA in 2017.
 - This act of WB government is a violation of constitutional principles and has been challenged in the court.

As SEBI is to securities market RERA will be to the real estate sector. RERA act 2016 will provide huge impetus to the growth of real estate sector while significantly contributing to the needs of Urban India.

22. Issue of Big Tech’s increasing power

Source: [Indian Express](#)

GS-2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India’s interests, Indian Diaspora.

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Background:

- Recently, sitting US President Mr. Trump's account was removed from online platforms like Twitter, Facebook.
- This has divided the world with two contrasting views.
- Few people say that the social media companies were right to suspend Trump's accounts.
- While others are concerned about the enormous power that these platforms wield over the **public discourse**, and their impact on democracy.

Issue of Parler app removal from tech giant platforms

- **Parler is a social networking site** that remained as an alternative to Twitter.
- Recently, **Amazon** removed it from its cloud hosting service **Amazon Web Services (AWS)**. Similarly, Apple and Google removed Parler from their app stores.
- This incident demonstrated the enormous power that Amazon wields as a web infrastructure service provider.
- This has also raised concerns about how the bigger tech players can destroy new competition due to their stronghold over the cloud infrastructure. For example,
- AWS controlled 45 per cent of the cloud infrastructure in 2019, while Google and Microsoft control much of the rest.

Issues in action against Trump

In many instances, the tech giants have responded with inconsistency in their actions. It has been discussed below with examples.

- **First**, In March 2020, Facebook and Twitter deleted posts by **Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro** and **Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro** for **Covid19 misinformation**.
- But no action was taken against Trump, who was also propagating misinformation about the Pandemic.
- **Second**, during the **Black Lives Matter protests** Trump tweeted **"When the looting starts, the shooting starts"**. This was an act of glorifying violence. However, Twitter responded very late to remove the tweet.
- **Third**, the action against Trump was only taken after he **lost his political leverage**. Congress had ratified the victory of President-elect Joe Biden before that.
- **Fourth**, Digital platforms are **for-profit corporations**. Over the years, digital platforms have never been **neutral arbiters** and are acting in the **nexus with the state governments**.
 - For instance, these platforms have repeatedly **blocked the ability of Wikileaks** to accept donations on PayPal and other payment intermediaries.
 - **Fifth**, after a 2018 court order, Trump was forced to unblock several dozen followers. The argument was put forward by petitioners that they were entitled to follow the official announcements and comment on public affairs of the handle.
 - If the same logic is applied in the case of Trump ban, he cannot be stopped from making public announcements by a social media company.

What is the way forward?

- Experts agree that the rules and guidelines of social networks are not being consistently applied throughout the world.

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- The issue should be resolved by setting up a common global rule for social networks.
- EU countries are the pioneers in regulating the tech giant with investigations, fines, and legislation. They have taught the world how to control these giants without expelling them from the country's economy.

23. New transition in India-Nepal relations

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Synopsis: Recent Joint Commission Meeting in Delhi was a positive development for bilateral relations of India and Nepal.

Introduction

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal, Pradeep Kumar Gyawali visited New Delhi for the sixth meeting of the India-Nepal Joint Commission.

What was discussed in the meeting?

In this joint meeting discussions on the following project and assistance took place. It will strengthen India-Nepal relations: –

- India assured an early delivery of vaccines to Nepal, in its fight against the pandemic.
- **Cross-border rail connectivity projects**, including a possible Raxaul-Kathmandu wide-scale railway line, were discussed.
- Further easing of cross-border movement of people and goods through ICPs was discussed.
- **Integrated Check Posts (ICPs)** at Birgunj and Biratnagar were inaugurated recently. These ICPs have helped in the smooth association of people and trade.
- These ICPs will ease trade and transit for Nepal, since it is dependent on India's seaports for majority of trade.
- Nepal has shown support **for India's permanent membership of an expanded UN Security Council (UNSC)** to redirect the changed balance of power.

However, India declined Nepal's request of including boundary issues in the commission meeting. India suggested finding a fresh mechanism for that purpose.

What are the possible reasons behind this positive development?

- India is not getting involved in any internal political conflict of Nepal and willing for deeper engagement with all sections. It has sent a positive signal in Nepal.
- After a brief period of friction, PM Oli is himself trying to reach India now. This policy change is also a result of China's hyper-interventionism in Nepal's politics.

Way forward

With the increasing demand for restoring the monarchy, Nepal cannot afford to enter another round of political volatility. India has always played a positive role in Nepal, a good India-Nepal bilateral relation in this regard is mutually beneficial.

24. Challenges to internationalisation of higher education

Source: [Indian Express](#)

GS-2: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources

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

Synopsis: NEP, 2020 has an objective to attract International branch campuses (IBCs) of top Universities in India. But there are several challenges associated with it.

Background

- Recently, National Education Policy-2020 (NEP-2020) was introduced in India. **NEP-2020**, for the first time has highlighted **internationalisation of higher education** as an objective.
- To achieve this, **NEP-2020** allows the **top 100 World Class Universities** to open **international branch campuses (IBCs)** in India.
- The reason behind this is to raise the standard of research and teaching to international levels and **reduce the out-bound mobility** of Indian students.

In this article. we will discuss the challenges that needs to be addressed at the implementational level before allowing International branch campuses (IBCs) in India.

How IBCs will help to increase the inflow of foreign students?

- In April 2018, India launched **Study in India Programme** with generous scholarships to increasing the inflow of foreign students. However, it did not succeed in attracting foreign students on a large scale.
- It is expected that, the establishment of IBCs in India will increase **in-bound mobility of students and scholars**.
- The international standards maintained by the IBCs will attract international students to explore and experience Indian education and culture.

What are the challenges that need to be addressed?

Top universities are willing to open **international branch campuses (IBCs)** in India. But they need clarity in areas essential for operationalisation of branch campuses in India.

First, such universities are not driven by state **sponsored infrastructures**. For example, the **Dubai Knowledge Hub**, that offered ready to move in campus, office space. IBCs wants to accumulate profits like any other business enterprise and **repatriate income to their home**.

Second, which subjects and areas of research to be allowed for IBCs is an area of concern. Most of the time **Humanities and Social sciences** are not considered due to low profits in them.

Fourth, IBCs demands for **more autonomy** in curriculum design, daily functioning of the institution etc. Thus, they might take decisions against the local requirement if they feel it is not profitable.

Fifth, IBCs will also **expect to be treated on par with Indian institutions** in matters of government funding and scholarships.

25. Vaccine diplomacy

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs2: India and its Neighbourhood- Relations.

Synopsis: India's Vaccine diplomacy will raise India's Stature at the global arena.

Background:

- Till now, India has supplied Covid19 vaccines to Maldives, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal, Myanmar and Seychelles. The initial supplies of Covid19 vaccines have been sent free of cost.
- It is expected that India will be distributing vaccines to other countries including Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.

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- By supplying vaccines at quick interval, India has delivered on the commitments it made to these countries.

What is the significance of Vaccine diplomacy?

First, it will lead to new kind of diplomacy based on the **common good and common interests** of the South Asian people.

Second, India's prevailing good reputation over manufacturing medicines will only increase in the **south Asian region**. This will increase the scope of **Medical tourism** in India.

Third, Sale of Covid19 vaccines will be economically beneficial. For example, Countries such as Myanmar and Bangladesh have started negotiating for **commercial agreements** with manufacturers for more quantities.

What is the way forward?

India should refrain from entering into contest with China for supply of vaccines to its Neighbours. Because,

- First, **Vaccines are a global common good**.
- Second, the demand for **anti-COVID 19 immunization** across the world is increasing. it is the responsibility of all countries with the capability to manufacture the vaccine to make it **available equitably to all**.
- Third, Immunization is in every country's interest, as it is crucial to **restore the movement of people and goods across nations**, to build a global immunity prior to COVID19 situation.

26. Privacy and surveillance

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2

Synopsis: Issue of WhatsApp privacy policy has again raised the concern of data privacy in India. What are the options available with the government to handle this issue?

Introduction

Facebook's revenue model uses data on its platform to allow advertisers to target relevant consumers.

Now Facebook Inc. wants to integrate the services from WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook. The intent behind this step is to monetise their use by consumers.

WhatsApp is one of the most used Social Media App in India. It is capable to share user metadata and mobile information of Indian users with Facebook, its parent company.

Now, Indian government is looking for ways to protect the data privacy of Indian Users.

What are the steps that government can take?

The Ministry of Electronics and IT has sent WhatsApp a series of queries. It includes, why Indian users would be sharing information with Facebook, unlike EU.

- Data protection laws in the EU have strict restrictions on storage and transfer of user data. Thus, data transfer from WhatsApp to Facebook is not possible in such regions.
- Whereas, in 2019, government in India diluted the provisions of Data protection bill. For, example, it only set the requirement of keeping sensitive personal data in India. Whereas, in the Srikrishna Committee recommended the same for all personal data.
- The Indian government should also bring in a strong data protection bill which aligns with the recommendations of the Srikrishna Committee.

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- The committee tried to address concerns about online data privacy in line with the 2018 Puttaswamy judgment.

However, data localisation also carries the possibility of domestic surveillance over Indian citizens.

Way forward

Privacy is better addressed by stronger contractual conditions on data sharing and better security tools being adopted by the applications that secure user data. Thus, with the data localisation, stronger checks on state surveillance are also required.

27. Are courts encroaching on the powers of the executive?

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2

Synopsis: The instances of court's intervening in the executive matters without providing comprehensive legal reasoning are increasing. SC's recent decision to put stay on farm laws has been analysed in this context.

Introduction

The Supreme Court is trying to make a political settlement between farmers and the government. It has put a stay on farm law and made a committee for mediation. But the court has not provided any legal or constitutional reasons for that.

What are the contradictions in this decision of SC?

The following reasons suggests that the **decision of SC to stay farm laws was a clear encroachment into the domain of executive.**

Firstly, the petition was filed on the argument that **only states are eligible to enact farm laws under Seventh Schedule** to the Constitution. SC should have analysed the validity of such basis.

Secondly, the court is giving the example of the **protests during Maratha reservation case** in which it had issued a stay on the law in question. But in that case the stay was given on constitutional grounds.

Third, the reason given by the court for its decision was not a legal reason. It provided that this step will ease the hurt feelings of farmers and it will become easier to bring them on the negotiation table.

Fourth, In the recent years, SC has been **hesitant to take up constitutional challenges to similarly politically controversial moves.** This decision by SC also falls into the same category. For Example; the cases of Article 370, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, reservation quotas for economically weaker sections, electoral bonds, and the 'love jihad' laws.

Fifth, Earlier SC Held protests as **completely legal and part of the exercise of citizens' rights** under Article 19 of the Constitution. But in a related case told that the question of whether the tractor protests should be allowed or not is a **'law and order' question and the decision will be taken by Police.**

SC is under question of the critics these days, but the positive roles played by it cannot be ignored due to that. In the Navtej Johar case (Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India) court acted in a counter-majoritarian manner and decriminalised Homosexuality.

28. Impacts of devaluing domestic work

Source: [Indian Express](#)

GS-2: *Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and issues arising out of their Design and Implementation*

Synopsis: There are negative social impacts of devaluing the household care activities of women.

Background

- The following incidents have brought the issue of valuation of Women's household activities.
 - Recently, Kamal Hassan the leader of the **Makkal Needhi Mayam (MNM) party** made an election promise of a salary for Women's unpaid care work at home.
 - A recently released Malayalam film, **The Great Indian Kitchen** has highlighted the hard labour of women in the kitchen.
 - **As per time-use survey 2019**, nearly 4.5 lakh Indian women spend nearly five hours every day on unpaid domestic work. This time duration is 98 minutes daily for men.

Why household care activities by women need to be valued?

- **First**, like other work, household care work demands skill, creativity, and organization.
- **Second**, The household work performed by a majority of Indian women helps to sustain households. Also, it enables men to take up productive paid jobs, without hindrance at home.
- **Third**, the culture to take up unpaid care activities at home by women is one of the leading causes for their declining **labour force participation**. (one of the lowest in the world).
- **Fourth**, It denies women an opportunity in a formal employment. For example,
 - A study by economist Ashwani Deshpande found that the **gender gap in domestic work** reduced during the lockdown, but widened again when many men returned to employment.
- **Fifth**, it compromises the rights of women **to participate in a democratic protest**.
For example,
 - A recent statement by SC chief justice that women farmers from Punjab should leave democratic protests and return home.

Is Paying salary for housework by the state a good decision?

The proposal will only recognize the value of women's household care, but it will not address the following issues.

- **First**, the proposal does not challenge the **notion of fundamental hierarchy** in the patriarchal home. It establishes that a woman's place is in the home.
- **Second**, a salaried worker is entitled to bargain for higher wages, and exit her workplace. But, such negotiations cannot take place at home.
- **Third**, a woman cannot get a fair price for her domestic works at her home. It is because the household care work is not seen as valuable in fundamental societies.

How this practice of devaluing household care work affects society?

- **Impact on marginalized people:** The practice of devaluing household care work allows caste-privileged women and nearly all men to pass on this work to those from lower castes and the marginalized for low wages.

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- **Impact on work culture:** It creates a **work-culture** that gives preference to males. It is because they can afford to work 24×7 and can ignore the demands of the home.
- **Impact on domestic workers:** It leads to low wages paid to domestic workers. It is evident from the struggle of **ASHA workers**.

Removing the hierarchies of patriarchy and making women independent at home will make the family a happy place.

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General Studies Paper – 3

General Studies - 3

1. RBI's expansionary policy and challenge of the impossible trinity

Synopsis: RBI need to exit out of its expansionary policy and manage **'the impossible trinity', i.e. Capital inflow, inflation and exchange rate.**

Syllabus: GS-3, Economy

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Introduction

- RBI adopted the extraordinary expansionary policy after Covid-19.
- It reduced policy interest rates aggressively to increase the liquidity in the market. It also provided targeted assistance to especially distressed sectors.
- But, now RBI should consider an exit plan out of expansionary policy to avoid any loss in the macroeconomic terms.
- In this process RBI might face the challenge of managing **'the impossible trinity', i.e. Keeping doors open for capital flows while simultaneously maintaining a stable exchange rate and restraining inflation.**

What are the challenges in managing 'the impossible trinity'?

Firstly, RBI need might face a **dilemma of managing Inflation and support to economic recovery.**

- Inflation is above the RBI's target band for the past several months and is expected to remain above target for the next several months.
- Whereas, MPC is not able to decide against expansionary monetary policy, out of concerns for growth and financial stability.
- MPC expects inflation to soften by itself due to bumper winter crop and normalisation of supply chain post-lockdown.

Second, RBI need to think about the **savers, offered low interest rates at a time of high inflation.** Thus, value of their saving is getting reduced.

Third, RBI require to withdraw the 'excess' liquidity from the market.

- Banks are routinely depositing trillions of rupees with the RBI is the evidence that the liquidity increase by RBI is not giving the intended results.
- Mispricing of risk of too much liquidity for too long can lead to financial crisis.

Fourth, RBI might face the challenge of **'taper tantrums'** at the later stage, which triggers the panic sell-off by the investors in the market.

- **Taper tantrum:** In May 2013, U.S. Federal Reserve Chairmen announced that they were considering gradually tapering/reducing 'quantitative easing'.
- **Although the announcement should have been taken as signs of a robust recovery in the economy, instead panic sell-off started in the financial market.**
- Thus, RBI also need to frame their communication strategy in a way that it doesn't trigger the panic sell-off.

Fifth, RBI will have to **stop the rupee from appreciating,** in the face of policy change.

- Current Account Surplus this year together with massive capital flows has caused increase in flow of dollar in the system.
- It is putting the upward pressure on the Rupee, which is already overvalued in the real terms.
- RBI has already absorbed this year, nearly \$90 billion to prevent exchange rate appreciation and to maintain the competitiveness of the rupee.

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- Thus, RBI's ability to keep the Rupee value in control will be constrained by increasing inflation.

In the upcoming days, managing the impossible trinity will be a tricky challenge for RBI given the condition of the economy after COVID-19.

2. Efforts to increase Electric mobility in India

Source: [The Hindu](#)

GS3: Infrastructure: Energy, Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation.

Synopsis: Significance of shifting towards electric vehicles for India and how the government has actively facilitated this process

What are the significances of shifting to electric vehicles for India?

Transition to electric vehicles is important for India as not only it will save public money but also the environment.

- The progression to electric vehicles **will make India sustainable** as it has the potential to reduce carbon emissions and build self-reliant domestic energy sector.
- it can **reduce dependence on crude oil** and help to save government money especially the **FOREX**. For example, **India is the third-largest oil importer in the world** in terms of value. In 2018–19, India imported 228.6 MT of crude oil worth \$120 billion.
- Besides being an economically and environmentally viable option, India's transition to electric vehicles will also **allow us to improve our infrastructure**.
- This will also have a **significant impact on our foreign policy** as our energy security dependence will shift from **West Asia to Latin America**.

Sourcing Lithium

In India, In the last two years, **lithium imports have tripled from \$384 mn to \$1.2 bn and its demands are being** fulfilled by imports from China, Vietnam, and Hong Kong.

- Latin America's famous **lithium triangle** Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia, encompasses about 80% of the explored lithium of the world.
- Currently, India's majority of trade from Latin America is concentrated on crude oil which includes 14%-20% of India's total crude oil imports which is likely to change towards Lithium and cobalt.
- government is looking to buy **overseas lithium reserves** to develop domestic battery manufacturing capacity.
- In 2019, a **joint venture agreement** was signed between three Indian **CPSE's** (National Aluminium Company (NALCO), Hindustan Copper Limited (HCL) and Mineral Exploration Corporation Ltd (MECL)) to form **Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL)** that has the objective to explore **strategic mineral assets** like lithium and cobalt abroad for commercial use and to meet the domestic requirement for battery manufacturers.

What were the steps taken by government to facilitate the shift towards electric vehicles?

With the vision to have 30% electric vehicles plying the roads by 2030 the government of India has taken up the following initiatives.

- First, under the **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles** and **Fame 2.0**, the government has allocated **\$1.3 billion in incentives** for

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electric buses, three-wheelers and four-wheelers to be used for commercial purposes till 2022, and earmarked another \$135 million for charging stations.

- Second, **NITI Aayog** has proposed for a **\$4.6 billion subsidy** for battery makers to facilitate domestic manufacturing of **Lithium batteries**.
- Third, In September 2019, government gave its nod to set up a manufacturing unit in Gujarat by Japanese consortium (Suzuki Motor+ Denso+ Toshiba) to venture into the production of lithium-ion batteries and electrodes.

The Indian government's **pre-emptive policy** action will not only help the lithium and cobalt industry to grow domestically but also help India to chalk out a long-term solution to **clean our cities**, build new markets, and **skill people** for new jobs towards an '**Atmanirbhar Bharat**'.

3. Issue of K-shaped recovery: How government budget can deal with it?

Source- The Indian Express

Syllabus- GS-3: Indian Economy- Growth and development

Synopsis –The macro-implication of K-shaped recovery and labour market pressure. How government budget will deal with it?

Introduction-

- **COVID Vs Economic Mobility** –India has broken the link between COVID virus proliferation and mobility earlier and more successfully.
- India's GDP estimates for 2020-21 show that the economy is expected to perform much better than earlier projections.
- However, the present economic recovery is very hopeful developments but, juxtaposed with a stronger-than-expected recovery, is confirmation of labour market scarring.

What are the present economic developments in India?

- **Industrial sector** - The large firms have endured the crisis better and are gaining market share at the expense of smaller firms.
 - Although it will increase medium-term productivity, but it will also increase the dominance/pricing power of big companies in the market.
- **Employment** – CMIE's [Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy] labour market survey reveals 18 million fewer employed (about 5 per cent of the total employed) compared to pre-pandemic levels.
 - These labor market projections not incompatible with a sharper near-term rebound, as this recovery is led by capital and profits, not labour and wages
- **Household sector** – Households at the top of the pyramid are seen their incomes largely protected, and savings rates forced up during the lockdown, increasing 'fuel in the tank' to drive future consumption.
 - Meanwhile, households at the bottom are likely to have witnessed permanent hits to jobs and incomes.

What are the implications of a K-shaped recovery?

K-shaped recovery happens when, following a recession, different sections of an economy recover at starkly different rates or magnitudes. The macro-implication of K-shape recovery in India are-

- **Firstly, issue of Income-** Upper-income households have benefitted from higher savings for two quarters. Present recovery is led by these savings.

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- But lower-income households are facing loss of income in the forms of jobs and wage cuts. This will be a recurring drag on demand, if the labour market does not heal faster.
- **Second, the issue of Consumption**– To the extent that COVID has triggered an effective income transfer from the poor to the rich, this will be demand-hindering because the poor have a higher marginal propensity to consume (i.e. they tend to spend (instead of saving) compared to higher marginal propensity to import among rich.
 - **Consumption pattern**– Passenger vehicle registrations (proxying upper-end consumption) have grown about 4 per cent since October while two-wheelers have contracted 15 per cent.
- **Third, increases the inequality**– COVID-19 reduces competition or increases the inequality of incomes and opportunities between rich and poor.
 - This could affect the trend growth in developing economies by hurting productivity and tightening political economy constraints.

How upcoming budget may help India to deal with K Shape recovery?

Policy needs to look beyond the next few quarters and anticipate the state of the macroeconomy post the sugar rush, for the wellbeing of poor citizens and increase its income level.

- **First**, Policy will look for the **private sector to start re-investing and re-hiring**, and thereby sets the economy onto a more virtuous path. Barring that, the labor-market hysteresis could sustain with the manufacturing and service sectors.
 - Private investment revival policy may be implemented first for recovery of the private sector.
- **Second**, Ensure **exports should benefit** from increasing global growth as the world gets vaccinated steadily.
- **Third**, Government may **invest in large physical and social** (health and education) infrastructure push. It may provide employment for who lost job due to COVID. It may **reduce inequalities**.
- **Fourth**, a **reliable medium-term fiscal plan** will be key to anchoring the bond market and underscoring an adherence to macro stability.
- **Lastly**, the investment model for **public investment must be balanced** to push and financed by aggressive public asset sales.

4. Reviving consumption demand for economic growth

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

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

Synopsis- Expenditure side of National Income is showing signs of stress. The government should try to revive the consumption side to return to the growth path.

Introduction

- The first advance estimates of GDP growth for FY21 is more optimistic than the projections provided by many institutions, global and domestic.
- However, the figures still have a substantial chance of uncertainty as the source of data is not reliable [Very little up-to-date primary information is available for the estimation].

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What are the areas of concern?

On the expenditure side, except for government final consumption expenditure, alternative drivers of demand are down sharply. Non-Public Consumption Expenditure is predicted to contract 9.5 per cent while capital formation has contracted by 14.5 per cent, with imports and exports also contracting.

The economic performance was dented by sharp de-growth in the following three sectors-

- **A sector-wise breakup of data for FY21 shows the sharpest fall in trade**, hotels, transport, communication, and broadcasting services at **-21.4 per cent** from 3.6 per cent growth last year.
 - This is followed by **12.6 per cent contraction within the construction** sector as against a growth of 1.3 per cent last year.
- **Manufacturing is declining by 9.4** per cent in 2020-21 from 0.03 per cent growth last year.

The estimated losses in these three sectors account for 93.5 percent of the total loss for the whole year. Hence, fiscal policy needs to focus on priming demand to return to the trend growth path.

What policy interventions are needed to increase consumption?

- **First, Government should focus on enhancing credit flows to the small and marginal farmers**
 - KCC (Kisan Credit Cards) constitute 60% of Major outstanding bank credit due to COVID and Agri stress.
 - To encourage consumption among farmers, interest payment by farmers should be sufficient for their KCC loan renewal.
 - It may result in a reduction of the NPA of the banks from KCC.
- **Second, the government should try to mainstream the tenant farmers**
 - There are almost 3-4 crore tenant farmers, not receiving PM-KISAN benefits.
 - The government should try to formalize the credit delivery to tenant farmers by issuing tenancy certificates on the line of Andhra Pradesh.
 - Another way is the formation of SHGs to enable formal lending.
- **Third, waive tax on Senior citizen saving scheme**– The government should make SCSS interest income to be tax-free.
- **Fourth, Launch Adopt-a-family scheme**– The scheme is voluntary and taxpayers with income up to over Rs 10 lakh could be incentivized for supporting a BPL family for a year. The government can incentivize taxpayers with around Rs 50,000 tax deduction apart from exemption offered under-80C.
- **Fifth, take the following steps** to bring more FDI and increase Ease of Doing Business rankings;
 - Withdraw all tax appeals.
 - Accept all domestic arbitration decisions against government department/agencies
 - Clear above outstanding dues within a stipulated time.
- **Sixth, the Government should increase investment in the health and education sectors;**
 - The government can introduce a medical savings account.
 - Interest earned by the depositor can be deducted by government to provide the person with Mediclaim policy.
- **Lastly**, the government should bring down its stake in state-owned banks to less than 50 percent.

Way forward-

By fulfilling these criteria, India can improve its position on the Ease of Doing Business ranking.

5. Need for social media Policies on hate and incitement

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS Paper III (role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges)

Synopsis- Social media platforms need clear policies on which they commit to a consistent refusal to help heads of state incite violence.

Introduction- On January 6, when the extremists stormed the United States Capitol building, Trump's social media accounts were active and communicating.

- After this incident, social media companies blocked particular communications including videos of the speech, and then suspended Trump's accounts.
- Eventually, Trump was barred from using Facebook and Twitter.

How a ban on Trump has been justified by companies?

Soon after the ban, Critics pointed out that social media companies should not "censor" a president for making 'Politically biased decisions'.

As per social media companies, Trump did not stop at expressing dissatisfaction about the electoral outcome. But he chose to insist that the election was "stolen", calling for action. This took his speech beyond the realm of political opinion into the realm of incitement. Thus,

- A head of state cannot be allowed to incite violence.
- If restrictions were not enforced, Social media would have amplified the incitement, given the connection between his words and the violence.
- Moreover, Trump has access to the mass media, thus it doesn't affect his freedom of expression.

Challenges in front of Social Media Companies:

The First challenge is regarding what to allow on the platform

- Social Media platforms have a major impact on public life, thus **platforms ought to follow international human rights law, especially the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.**
- For example; they must ensure they do not facilitate genocides such as the Rohingya genocide in Myanmar.
- On the other hand, Social Media need to ensure democratic debates on the imp. Issues like the COVID-19 virus, vaccines, abortion, Kashmir, LGBTQ rights, or marital rape.

The Second challenge is linked to the speaker

- Barring a whistle-blower would have more impact compared to the head of state. Because Whistle-blower has no access to mass media.
- In contrast, a head of state like Trump who is barred from social media has access to the mass media.

The third challenge is regarding the measurement of communication effectiveness

It also varies depending on the speaker and the audience.

- Incitement by a head of state is more dangerous than incitement by a powerless, ordinary individual because an influential speaker is much more likely to actually incite violence.

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- A powerful leader can persuade his followers that it is acceptable and even righteous to engage in violence.

Why a policy is required?

- Earlier in mid-2020, Facebook refused to regulate the US President's inflammatory posts due to its "newsworthiness" exception.
- Earlier, while Twitter suspended another account posting copies of Trump's tweets for glorifying violence, left the president's tweets up. This was because of Twitter's exception for public or elected officials' speech which is seen as being in "public interest".
- Now, these platforms have taken a step against incitement once the election result is confirmed.

Way Forward

Social media needs to deal with this kind of issue in future very seriously. The platforms like Facebook and Twitter (Fourth Pillar of Democracy) should not be circulating speech that is very likely to cause violence. They need clear policies in which they commit to a consistent refusal to help heads of state incite violence.

6. Why caution is required in formation of Bank Investment Company (BIC)?

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 3

Synopsis: Amid to requirement for bank-led growth to deal with a pandemic induced slowdown, government is facing the challenges of infusion of capital in NPA ridden PSBs. Government is looking to form BIC to handle its investment in PSBs. But a clear strategy is required in its constitution to save BIC from ineffectiveness.

About Bank Investment Company (BIC)

BIC is envisaged to become a holding company for government's share in PSBs. Its formation will ultimately transform all PSBs into BICs' subsidiaries.

Why government is looking to form Bank Investment Company (BIC)?

- As government is focussing on bank-led growth strategy, Public Sector Banks (PSBs) have a challenge to manage their balance sheet due to increasing NPAs.
- But government is hesitant in assisting PSBs by capital infusion this time, because
 - **Despite, capital infusion of nearly Rs 3.1 lakh crore from 2015-16 to 2019-20, PSBs have underperformed.**
 - Their gross non-performing assets (GNPAs) is projected to increase to 16.2 per cent.

Thus, as per few reports' government is planning to form **Bank Investment Company (BIC) to consolidate government shareholding in PSBs.**

About Bank Investment Company (BIC)

P J Nayak Committee (formed in 2014 by RBI) Proposed formation of **Bank Investment Company (BIC).**

Committee was tasked with analysing the governance at public and private sector banks. It analysed that recapitalisation will only incur fiscal costs without any return. Thus, **government can either opt for privatisation or complete reformation of bank governance.**

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In case of complete reformation of bank governance, a 3-step process is suggested:

1. Government to disassociate from operations, management and governance of PSBs.
2. Reconstitution of PSB board on professional lines.
3. Transformation of BICs from an owner to an investor with an aim to protect the government's financial investment in the banks by raising the returns.

Thus, BIC proposal is a right step towards PSB reforms. However, caution is required in formation of BIC as well.

Suggestion for BIC formation

- Firstly, BIC will need to be allowed to bring in the essential talent and expertise, and operate with freedom. In the absence of freedom, it will result into another reform like Banks Board Bureau (BBB);
- BBB which was tasked with appointments and strategic decisions for PSBs is no more independent after inclusion of representatives from the RBI and the government.
- **Secondly, the goals of the BIC should be clear.** If capital raising is one of the goals, It need to maintain a proper portfolio of relatively better performing and non-performing banks to attract investments.
- RBI also raised its reservation regarding BIC structure, as investors might face challenges in assessing relative risks, returns and performance of the banks.

Way forward

It is important that government deal with the challenges in formation of BICs in advance. Otherwise, privatisation can also be considered by repeal of the Bank Nationalisation Acts and the State Bank of India Act.

7. Ensuring Intergenerational Equity in Mining in India

Source: [Click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 3

Synopsis: For ensuring Intergenerational Equity, it is important to ensure availability of resources for future generation. For this, sustainable mining should be ensured.

Introduction

India's **National Mineral Policy 2019** states that "natural resources, including minerals, are a shared inheritance where the state is the trustee on behalf of the people to make sure that future generations receive the benefit of inheritance."

But Present trend of mining as much as possible, is not according to the role of trustee acquired by the government in its policy. The extraction of oil, gas and minerals is effectively the sale of this inheritance.

What are the issues in mining trends at present?

- **First**, governments without their role of trustee in mind, end up with a mineral price that is considerably lesser than what they are worth.
- For example, it is projected from the yearly reports of Vedanta that from 2004 to 2012, Goa lost more than 95% of the value of its minerals. They sold mineral wealth worth 100 rupees for 5 rupees.
- **Second**, extractors try to extract as much as possible and move on quickly to reduce their cost and maximize their profits from an area.

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- **Third**, the government also allows the hasty extraction, as it perceives more mining equals more government revenue.

What are the steps to be taken?

The Government Accounting Standards Advisory Board needs to correct this error in the standards for public sector accounting and reporting for mineral wealth.

- There should be **legal safeguards against unregulated mining** and minerals should be considered as a shared inheritance.
- The state as **trustee of mineral wealth must collect the full economic rent** i.e., sale price minus the cost of extraction and cost including profit for the extractor. The full value of the extracted minerals should be received by the state, according to India's national mineral policy 2019.
- India can also maintain the entire mineral sale profits in a **Future Generations Fund** like Norway did. This Fund could be submissively financed through the National Pension Scheme framework.
- The Supreme Court gave a judgement in Goa Foundation vs UOI & Ors and ordered the creation of a Goa **Iron Ore Permanent Fund in 2014**, which already has an amount of ₹500 crores.
- This may be distributed as a citizens' dividend, equally to all the owners and future generations would benefit from the dividend in their turn.

Way forward

- The principle of fair mining in return of its real value is fully constitutional, promoting justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. The reduction in losses would also limit corruption, crony capitalism and growing inequality.

8. Ensuring accountability in the new Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020

Source: [The Hindu](#)

GS-3: Infrastructure: **Energy**, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Synopsis: the consumer protection rules will not guarantee better power supply quality without strong accountability provisions.

Background

- Many States in India are not able to provide a **quality supply of electricity, specifically** to rural and small consumers.
- To resolve this issue, recently, Union **Ministry of Power** has promulgated the **Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020**. The rules provide consumer with the **rights of power**.
- It is expected that the new **Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020** will protect and empower electricity consumers' rights.

Read more – [Electricity Rules 2020 | ForumIAS Blog](#)

What are the limitations of the Rules?

The following issues highlights the need for implementation of existing provisions in letter and spirit along with strong accountability provisions.

- **First**, Discoms are unable to provide quality supply. Reason for this is not lack of rules or regulations but the lack of accountability mechanism to enforce them. For instance,
- Many rights provided in rules 2020 **already exists in** Standards of Performance (SoP) of various **State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs)**.

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- **Second**, the past efforts such as **the draft National Tariff Policy**, the proposed **Electricity Act amendments**, or various committee processes did not address the accountability concerns.
- **Third**, it is also doubtful that how Discoms will automatically compensate its consumers in the event of failure of power supply. Because, till now the availability of power supply is not monitored properly.
- **Fourth**, compensating consumers in the event of failure of power supply has serious financial implications. For example,
 - In August 2020 rural areas received only 20 hours of supply. If existing regulations are followed it would cost hundreds of crores to discoms.
- **Fifth**, the new rules dilute the progressive mechanisms that exist in few States. For example,
 - As per the new rules faulty meters should be tested within 30 days of receipt of a complaint.
 - However, states such as Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh have rules that mandates that such testing needs to be conducted within 7 days.
- **Sixth**, the rules that the **Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum** should be headed by a senior officer of the DISCOMS company is a regressive provision.
 - Because, it will reduce the number of cases that are decided in favour of consumers.
 - It also questions the credibility of the new **Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020**.
- **Seventh**, some provisions are confusing and requires clarity. **For example**,
 - **The rules guarantee** net metering for a solar rooftop unit less than 10 kW. But it is not clear whether solar rooftop unit above 10 kW can also avail net metering.
 - This confusion will lead to unnecessary litigation which will increase investments costs in rooftop solar units.
 - It will discourage medium and large consumers from opting an environment-friendly, cost-effective option.

What steps are required?

To ensure accountability, we need to consider implementing the following solutions,

- SERCs needs to be tasked to **assess the SoP reports of DISCOMs** and revise their regulations more frequently. Also, **SERCs** should be assisted in setting up **public grievance mechanisms**, to help consumers raise their concerns.
- Further, DISCOMs should be directed to ensure automatic metering at least at the 11 kV feeder level. This information should be available online.
- Apart from this, **The Central Electricity Authority of India** can also be directed to collect supply quality data from DISCOMs, publish data in public domain and prepare analysis reports.
- Finally, the Central agencies too can support in independent surveys and nudge State agencies to enforce existing SoP regulations.

The enactment of the new Rules will not change the status quo. Governments, DISCOMs and regulators should demonstrate the commitment and the will power to implement existing regulations to make the new **Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020** successful.

9. Why Chinese forces are weakening?

Source – [the Hindu](#)

Syllabus Topic – International Relations – India and its neighborhood

Synopsis: In the beginning of this year, Chinese President Xi Jinping instructed his armed forces to be “combat-ready to act at any second”. However, in reality Chinese forces are facing too many inside challenges.

Why China is becoming aggressive?

First, Policies of new US President Joe Biden favours **freedom of navigation operations** in the South China Sea and Taiwan straits. By this aggression, China wants to show its confidence and military preparedness in response to new U.S. policies.

Secondly, China is preparing for possible military conflicts due to **its aggression in South China Sea, Taiwan and Ladakh**.

Thirdly, after a **series of setbacks in Ladakh**, China's Western Theatre Command (WTC) has realised that it is still not well prepared. It suffered a high number of casualties in the June 15 Galwan valley clash. Moreover, the Indian Army also captured the strategic mountainous heights at Rezac La and other passes.

Reasons for poor performance of Western Theatre Command (WTC) in Ladakh

As mentioned above, Chinese WTC forces were outperformed by Indian troops in Ladakh. It brought many weaknesses of WTC in light, i.e.

- Chinese troops have not faced any combat for last 41 years. They crumbled when faced with the strong opposition by Indian forces.
- Chinese forces are facing the promotion related issues. It has negatively affected their morale.
- **For example**; many senior officers are not getting promotions due to a doubt over their loyalty to Mr. Xi.
- Chinese soldiers are not able to face the extreme high-altitude climate.
- Recently, 10,000 troops from the WTC were moved to lower locations due to fatigue and other complications.

Issues facing Chinese forces

- **Firstly**, Promotions in Chinese army are based on the loyalty to Chinese President Xi.
- **Secondly**, most of the recruitments are forced due to policy of compulsory military service. Personnel forced into military lack motivation to fight a war.
- **Third**, Chinese army is more of a political force and lack professionalism.
- **Fourth**, the concept of Joint Theatre Command has been introduced to promote to deal with regional threats. This idea is not feasible due to lack of coordination between different Chinese forces.

Chinese forces have shown too much aggression everywhere recently, but in reality, it is suffering from many issues from inside.

10. SC ruling on Section 32A of IBC

Synopsis: Supreme Court uphold the validity of Section 32A of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

Syllabus – GS –3

Source – [Indian Express](#)

Section 32A was introduced in the IBC by the amendment act of March, 2020.

By this section, government provided protection to successful bidders during corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP). These bidders offer reasonable and fair value for the corporate debtor.

Why this Provision was introduced?

Since implementation of IBC in 2016, insolvency resolution plan for many big companies could not be implemented. It was because of investigations by agencies like ED and SEBI.

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- **For example**, In 2017 Bhushan Power and Steel with more than Rs. 47,000 crore debt, entered into insolvency proceeding. After a long bidding process, JSW Steel won the rights to take over Bhushan steel. However, ED jumped in and attached their assets worth Rs. 4,000 crores for the fraud by company's previous owner.

What was the case and ruling of Supreme Court on that?

Petitioners of the case argued that section 32A closes the door for individual investors to recover their claims from the new management. Thus, they are left with the only option of pursuing remedies under criminal law against the former management.

- Supreme Court in its recent decision **uphold the validity of Section 32A of IBC.**
- **Justice Joseph stated that** the purpose behind amendment was to **enable a new and clean beginning for the new management** and a clean break from the company's past.
- Thus, **a new management cannot be prosecuted for an offence committed prior** to the commencement of the corporate insolvency resolution process.
- It will also be **immune from investigations** being conducted either by any investigating agencies ED or other statutory bodies such as SEBI. Immunity is granted only for the matters linked with prior management.
- However, such immunity would **be applicable only if there is an approved resolution plan**, and a change in the management control of the corporate debtor.

This will provide the corporate bidders with a confidence to proceed with confidence while bidding on disputed companies and their assets.

11. WhatsApp Privacy Policy Issue: Need for Data Protection Law

Source: [Indian Express](#)

GS-3: Security and related issues

Synopsis: Draft data protection law needs to be enacted in India to curb data privacy violations in India.

What is the issue?

- Recently, WhatsApp updated its **terms of service (ToS)** and **privacy policy for users.** It permits WhatsApp to share users' data with Facebook and its companies with their consent.
- This data would include transaction data, mobile device information, IP addresses, and other metadata on how users interact with businesses on WhatsApp.
- This is a classic case of an organization using its near-monopolistic power against the **interest of Consumers.**
- The government responded strongly by asking the platform to withdraw proposed changes. Along with this, the government sought their response to 14 queries related to their practices in India.

Why it is a cause of concern?

- **First**, Even though sharing will be done by notifying the user it is against the **Principle Of Purpose Limitation. The principle has been used to address Privacy concerns at a global level.**
- **Second**, Facebook has a poor record on data protection of its users. For example, **Analytica data scam** during the 2016 US elections and **Brexit.**
- **Third**, recently there were reports stating that Facebook is **entering into data-sharing deals** with other tech firms like Apple, Amazon, Spotify.

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- **Fourth**, it is a cause of concern because WhatsApp's growth was mainly due to its **virtue of protecting user privacy through end-to-end encryption**. But, with the change in the **privacy policy on users**, they are breaking away from their core virtue.

Principle Of Purpose Limitation

1. A specific and legitimate reason is needed for the collection of any personal data.
2. Personal data can only be used for the specified reasons
3. Exceptions could be made if further processing is for any of the following purposes:
 - archiving in the public interest
 - scientific or historical research
 - statistical reasons.

What is the way forward?

- **First**, the government should pass the **Personal Data Protection Bill (PDPB) 2019** because of the following reasons,
 - It has the provision on **Principle Of Purpose Limitation**. This would have restricted WhatsApp's action as it is illegal against the **Principle Of Purpose Limitation**.
 - Such practices are not allowed in the EU. Their users' private data is protected by **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**.
- **Second**, given the digital proliferation in the country tech giants needs to be monitored closely through competent legal and regulatory frameworks.

In India, the User base of social media for communications and business is increasing at a fast pace. Hence, it should be the priority of the government to **ensure a safer digital space**.

12. The Cost of Guaranteed MSP

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 3

Synopsis: Farmers want guaranteed MSP which has no legal backing as of now. It is feasible and won't cost very high for the government.

Introduction

Farmer unions are protesting to achieve two fundamental demands.

- **The first demand** is to take back the three agricultural reform laws enacted by the Centre.
- **The second demand** is to provide a legal guarantee for the minimum support prices (MSPs).

How can MSP be made legally mandatory?

This can be done in 2 ways:

- **First, the private buyers are enforced to pay** it, and then no crop can be bought below the MSP. It would also act as the floor price for bidding in mandi auctions.
 - **For instance**, in sugarcane, mills have to pay farmers the Centre's "fair and remunerative price" within 14 days of supply as per the law.
- **Second, the government itself has to buy** at MSP, the entire crop that farmers grow.

How much of farmers' produce can the government buy at MSP?

MSP is currently applicable on 23 farm commodities including 7 cereals, 5 pulses, 7 oilseeds, and 4 commercial crops. The MSP value of all 23 commodities was around Rs 10.78 lakh crore in 2019-20.

- However, the entire produce is not marketed as farmers retain a part of it for self-consumption, as a seed for the next season's sowing, and for feeding their animals.
- Therefore, the **MSP value for the marketable crop** which farmers actually sell would be around **Rs 8 lakh crore**.

What would be the government expenditure to ensure MSP?

The earlier mentioned amount will not be the amount the government has to spend because of the following reasons:

- **Firstly**, sugarcane should be excluded from the calculations. **MSP for sugarcane is paid by sugar mills and not the government.**
- **Secondly**, the **government is already buying several crops** like paddy, wheat, cotton, pulses, and oilseeds which made the combined MSP value of these crops more than Rs 2.7 lakh crore in 2019-20.
- **Thirdly, Government need not buy the entire produce of farmers.** Even if the government buys a quarter or third of the crops available in the market, it is enough to lift the prices.
 - For example, CCI has so far bought 87.85 lakh bales of cotton out of the current year's projected crop of 358.50 lakh bales. This has led to open market prices crossing the MSPs.
 - **Fourthly**, the **crop bought by the government also gets sold.** The profits gathered from sales would partially balance the costs from MSP procurement.
- **Lastly**, the maximum amount the government has to spend on buying crops to guarantee MSP to farmers, will not be more than **Rs 1-1.5 lakh crore per year.**

Government buying crops at MSP is a better option rather than forcing private buyers.

Way forward

Economists suggest guaranteeing minimum incomes instead of minimum prices to farmers. This can be done by direct cash transfers either on a flat per-acre like done in the Telangana government's Rythu Bandhu scheme or per-farm household basis, under the Centre's Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi.

General Studies Paper – 4

General Studies – 4

1. Contributions of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS – 4

Synopsis: Dr. King helped the U.S. to become a more inclusive society. His movements and ideas still have universal appeal.

Introduction

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s ideas for a more inclusive society and polity assume significance amid the persisting racial discrimination in the US that resulted in the Black Lives Matter movement.

What were the ideas Dr. king presented in his speech?

Amid the persisting racial discrimination, he dreamt of an inclusive America and turned it into a movement in the 1950s and 1960s.

- In 1963, he gave his most remembered “I have a dream” speech at the Lincoln Memorial. There he **expressed his vision for an inclusive and equitable America.**
- In his speech, he expressed his desire that one day America will live out the true meaning of its creed that **all men are created equal.**

Importance of DR. king's contribution to the Civil Rights Movement

Dr. King's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement was extraordinary. He was a unique leader among the ones who propagated freedom and dignity.

- **First**, the Uniqueness of Dr. King's movement lies in reforming the architecture of movements. He propagated his ideas by a relentless and nonviolent movement.
- **Second**, the civil rights movement **adopted ideas from India's civil disobedience.** For instance, the 381-day Montgomery bus boycott validated the potential of nonviolent mass protest and stimulated the Civil Rights Movement.
- **Third**, his ideas renewed the benchmarks of equality, justice, and dignity in the US society and provided African-Americans with a better version of it.
- **Fourth**, his movements ultimately resulted in **path-breaking laws such as Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965**, which ended several residues of racial discrimination and led to the empowerment of African Americans.

Way forward

Martin Luther King devoted his entire life to his dream of a better and inclusive America. He was imprisoned almost 30 times, his house was bombed, he was stabbed once, and was finally assassinated, but he still remains an inspiration for America.

India should also draw inspiration from his ideas and try making its society more inclusive, equal, and just because there is continuing violence on the SC/STs and minority communities due to a hierarchical social structure.