9pm Compilation

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General Studies Paper - 2

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General Studies - 2

1. Issues Associated with Election Commission of India
Source: [The Hindu](#)
Gs2: Powers, Functions and Responsibilities of ECI
Synopsis: Recently, the Election Commission of India was in discussion**.** Many questions and doubts are being raised regarding the model Code of Conduct and powers of ECI under Article 324.

Background
- M**odel code of conduct (MCC)** is a set of guidelines that ECI issues. The political parties, candidates, and governments need to follow MCC during an election.
- **T.N Seshan** (former chief election commissioner) enforced the **model code of conduct (MCC)** for the first time using the powers under **Article 324.**
- It brought the issue of **ballot rigging** and the use of Muscle power during elections under control.
- Apart from **MCC,** the ECI also gives directions, instructions, and clarifications on other issues that emerge during the election.
- However, some issues linked to the model code, and the exercise of the ECI under Article 324, requires clarity.

What is Article 324?
- Article 324 empowers the Election Commission to direct, control, and conduct elections to Parliament and Legislature of every state. It also conducts elections to the offices of the President and Vice President
- In **Mohinder Singh Gill case,** the SC stated that Article 324 gives plenary powers to ECI to ensure free and fair elections.

What are the issues?
1. **First**, with respect to the Model code, the question about the enforceability of the code remains unresolved.
    - The Model Code was framed on the basis of a consensus among political parties. It has no legal backing.
    - But the commission has the power to suspend or withdraw recognition of a political party. If, it refuses to follow the MCC according to the **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968**.
    - Now, the question is, since the MCC is legally not enforceable, how can the ECI take punitive action; such as withdrawal of recognition against a political party.
2. **Second,** ECI's intervention in the administrative decisions of a Union or State government during elections is questionable. For example, ECI recently stopped the Kerala Government from continuing to supply kits. It was containing rice, pulses, cooking oil, etc.
    - According to the MCC, if the ECI believes that such actions will affect free and fair elections, It can stop a government from taking any administrative action.
    - The issue here is, whether the distribution of food will affect free and fair elections.
    - Further, The SC in **Subramaniam Balaji case** held that distribution of colour TVs, computers, cycles, goats, cows, etc., that is in accordance with the **directive principles of state policy**, is permissible during an election.

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o Also, according to **Section 123 (2)(b) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951**, the declaration of a public policy will not amount to interfering with the free exercise of the electoral right.

3. **Third**, under **Article 324,** ECI has the power to abruptly transfer any senior officials working under State governments. If it believes that the presence of those officials will adversely affect the free and fair election.

o However, in **Mohinder Singh Gill's case,** the Court had made it clear that the ECI can draw power from Article 324 only when no law exists which governs a particular matter.

o Transfer of an official is within the exclusive jurisdiction of the government. It needs the concurrence of the State governments.

o Further, Article 324 does not confer absolute powers on the ECI to do anything in connection with the elections.

No constitutional body has absolute power. Because in the words of justice **S.M. Fazalali**, if ECI is armed with unlimited and arbitrary powers and if it becomes partisans, it might lead to a constitutional crisis. Integrity and independence of the electoral process are important and indispensable to the democratic system.

2. What led to the abolition of Intellectual Property Appellate Board?
Source: [The Hindu](#)
Gs2: Statutory, Regulatory, and various Quasi-judicial Bodies.
Synopsis: A lack of effective government support provided to the Intellectual Property Appellate Board has led to its demise**.**

Background

▪ The **Intellectual Property Appellate Board** (IPAB) established in 2003. It aimed to specifically deal with matters of intellectual property including copyright, trademarks, patents, and geographical indications.

▪ Further, since 2007 **Novartis' patent case**, the IPAB has been authorized to hear and decide upon the appeals made by the Patent Controller under the **Patents Act**. Therefore, all pending appeals of Indian High Courts under the **Patents Act** transferred to IPAB.

▪ However, the IPAB stands abolished after the passage of Tribunal reforms (Rationalisation and condition service) ordinance 2021.

▪ India has been a good example for the world with regard to legislating **TRIPS** compliant Patent laws. For example**, anti-evergreening provisions, compulsory licensing regime**.

▪ However, by the abolition of IPAB, India has the missed opportunity to develop an effective indigenous appellate mechanism on patent law.

What are the reasons for the failure of IPAB?

1. **First**, IPAB was not able to perform its adjudicatory functions due to administrative reasons. Many issues were pending in the court for resolution. For example,

a. Petition on the constitutionality of the IPAB.
b. Petitions to fill up the vacancies before the High Court in Delhi and Chennai.
c. Also, Petitions in the Supreme Court for extension of the term of the chairperson.

2. **Second**, the issue of understaffing. For example, it was functioning without a chairperson for almost two years. Also, there were subsequent delays in the appointment of the technical member for patents.

3. **Third**, lack of judicial and institutional independence of the IPAB. Previous chairpersons raised this issue publicly.
4. **Fourth**, lack of Power. For example, the highest authority on protecting technology and innovation working had to function during power cuts without any viable backup.
5. **Fifth,** lack of efficiency. For example, the disposal rate was about 20 patent cases a year. Further, nearly 70% of the patent cases filed were either pending at some stage.
6. **Sixth,** finally, the apathy of the government towards IPAB led to its demise. For example, most of the significant amendments to the Patents Act since 1970 came through, not by way of an Act passed by Parliament, but through an ordinance.

An appellate mechanism allows for the correction of unjustified patent grants at the Patent Office, by error or oversight. An effective appellate mechanism on patent law is critical for the innovation ecosystem.

3. Importance of Secondary Level Health Services

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

Synopsis: The load on tertiary health services can be reduced by strengthening the secondary level care health services. For rural areas, the focus should be on community health centres and for urban regions, peripheral hospitals at the secondary level.

Background:
- The Indian health system is generally divided into the primary, secondary and tertiary level.
- The second wave of Covid-19 has exposed the deficiencies in the current reactive approach of the government.
- People are dying due to a lack of access to treatment facilities rather than inadequate solutions to treat the virus.

Reactive approach:
- Under this, the government transforms well-performing facilities at the tertiary level into state-of-the-art COVID-19 hospitals.
- Similarly, many temporary COVID-19 facilities are created by hiring buildings and open spaces providing only beds.
- The government has also created many first-line treatment centres under this approach.
- This approach is being adopted in the majority of states.

Concerns associated with Reactive approach:
- People are unable to access their routine hospital services from these facilities. Because routine hospitals are turned into COVID facilities.
- The temporary structures without adequate infrastructure were unable to cater to the needs of patients in real-time situations.
- First-line treatment centres are failing to generate trust among people and were shut down when the cases went down.

Therefore, many experts are now advising the government to leverage the potential of the secondary level.

New Approach of using Secondary Level Health Services:
- Under this, the functional facilities at the secondary level can be converted into exclusive COVID-19 care centres. It will be useful to treat those patients who don't need ICU support.
- In rural areas, the Community Health Centre (CHCs) can cumulatively add up to 50000-75000 beds.
  - A CHC covers a population of 80,000-1,00,000 in rural areas.
  - It functions as the first referral unit for curative care services referred from primary health centres (PHCs).
- The PHC (Primary Health Centres) must be strengthened to cater to the needs of people for other curative care services.
- In urban areas, states must develop peripheral hospitals at the secondary level within the government sector. Ideally, 100-150 bedded hospitals for every 3 lakh population.

Benefits of the Secondary Level Health Services:
- It will **reduce the workload on tertiary care** especially in states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, which possess poor health infrastructure.
- Specialists for these secondary centres can be easily directed from district hospitals or medical colleges. Thereby providing **better feasibility.**
- These new centres can be used for sample collection and vaccine delivery as well. As the centres are **already functional and command a certain level of trust**.
- Post the Pandemic, these facilities can return to their normal work and won't be closed like temporary structures.

Way Forward:
- The states must leverage the potential of this new secondary level approach.
- They should provide the secondary level units with sufficient funds and personnel so that they can duly function as COVID-19 care centres.

In a nutshell, we can say that adoption of this new approach will improve delivery potential, augment people's trust and contribute to strengthening health services in the long run.

4. Why India-Russia Relations Demands Reconsideration?
Source: [The Hindu](#)
Syllabus: GS 2 – Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India
Synopsis: The recent visit of Russia's Foreign Minister to India has once again highlighted the issues in India-Russia bilateral relations. As Russia has been a good friend to India, it demands a reconsideration.

Background:
- The year 2020 witnessed a break in the annual India-Russia bilateral summit. Before this, the leaders of two countries met every year for the last 2 decades.
- Russia's Foreign Minister visit aimed at preparing the ground for the next India-Russia bilateral summit.

Outcome of the visit:
- A joint statement was released on areas of cooperation and collaboration.
- The diverging issues were less focused like views over Afghanistan.
- The Russian foreign minister was not able to meet the Indian PM. This was an unprecedented event and shows the existence of numerous concerning issues between the countries.

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Concerning Issues in India-Russia relations:

- **Indo-Pacific region:** Russia doesn't welcome the use of the term Indo-Pacific. Because it symbolizes US leadership, thus it prefers to use the term 'Asia Pacific'.
- **QUAD Group**: Russia views the grouping as a political-military alliance against the Russia-China grouping. Furthermore, the US wants to use the grouping as a tool to counter China's rise as a superpower.
- **Declining India-China relations**: The recent border clashes in Galwan region have marked a new low in relations. On the other side, there has been an enhanced collaboration between Russia and China. For instance, Russia accounted for 77% of China's arms imports in 2016-20.
- **Russian closeness with Pakistan**: Russia is increasing its proximity with Pakistan as seen especially in the defense sector. Consequently, it is now Pakistan's second-largest defense supplier, accounting for 6.6% of its arms imports in 2016-20.
- **CAATSA**: Many Russian companies are listed as adversaries under the CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act). This may impair future Russia-India interaction.

Importance of Russia:

- **All-weather Friend:** The bilateral relations between the countries had stood the test of time. Russia provided constant support to India since its independence.
- **Defence Cooperation**: The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) records that Russia supplied 49% of India's arms imports in 2016-20.
- **India's Strategic Interest**: The geographical location of Russia and India automatically demands cordial relations amongst them. Because this would fulfill India's strategic interest in Central Asia and West Asia. Further, it will help in materializing projects like the International North-South Transport Corridor.

Way Forward:

- India needs to **carefully glide through the new alliances** in the world order. The gliding must enable the country to maximize its global influence.
- Further, the country should leverage Russian potential in its future endeavors like India's manned space program.
- Both the countries should **cooperate on current commitments** like a $1 billion Indian line of credit for projects in the Russian Far East and activation of a Chennai-Vladivostok maritime corridor.

5. Misuse of Ordinance Making Power
Source: [The Hindu](#)
Gs2: Separation of Powers between various organs Dispute Redressal Mechanisms and Institutions
Synopsis: Ordinance Making Power by the executives has been misused increasingly. A vigilant Legislature and Court can reduce this menace.

Background

- **Recently,** the central government Re-promulgated **the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Ordinance, 2020**
- This raises questions over the constitutional validity of issuing ordinances and that of repromulgating ordinances, that too without their ratification by Parliament.

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About Ordinance making power of executives
- The **Article 123 and Article 213** empowers the central and State governments to make laws when Parliament or the State Legislature are not in session.
- The Constitution states that the ordinance will lapse at the end of six weeks from the time Parliament or the State Legislature next meets.
- Originally, it was conceived as an emergency provision and was expected to be used rarely.

Misuse of the Ordinance making power
- **One,** the number of Ordinance issued by the centre has increased from an average of 7.1 per year in the 1950s to 15 in 2020.
- **Two,** States have also been using the ordinance route to enact laws. For example, in 2020, Kerala issued 81 ordinances, while Karnataka issued 24 and Maharashtra 21.
- **Three**, further repromulgation of Ordinance by both centre and state is also increasing. For instance, The Indian Medical Council Amendment Ordinance by the centre and Kerala University of Digital Sciences, Innovation and Technology by Kerala are two recent examples.

What is the court's view regarding promulgation and promulgation of the Ordinance?
- **In the D.C. Wadhwa case,** the court took up the issue of promulgation of 256 ordinances, of which 69 were repromulgated in Bihar between 1967 and 1981.
- The supreme court ruled that repromulgation of ordinances is against **Constitutional morality** and is an **act of Colourable legislation**. Because through ordinance making power the Executive encroaches into the law-making function of the Legislature.
- Further, the court said that there was no such practice of repromulgation by the centre.
- Later, the Centre too started to follow the lead of Bihar. For example, in 2013 and 2014, the Securities Laws Ordinance promulgated 3 times, Land Acquisition Act twice.
- In 2017, the matter came up again in the Supreme Court. This time, the court gave a strong verdict. It declared that Re-promulgation of ordinances is a fraud on the Constitution and a subversion of democratic legislative processes.
- However, the Centre and states are not following this judgement. It is evident in the current case of the Commission for Air Quality Management.

The principle of **Separation of Powers** and **Checks and balances** empowers the legislatures and the courts to check the encroachment of the Executive. However, by allowing for repromulgation of ordinances, the Legislature and the court are abdicating their responsibility to the Constitution.

6. Roadblocks to achieve universal vaccination
Source: The Hindu
Gs2: Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.
Synopsis: India needs to develop a practical plan. Presently, it is facing many roadblocks to achieve universal vaccination for all.

Background
- Initially, India decided to prioritize vaccination for the most vulnerable citizens (nearly 300 million).

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- The main reason for that was the limitations of India's manufacturing capacity to provide for vaccination of its whole population.
- Thus, only about 5% of the intended beneficiaries have been vaccinated till now.
- However, a combination of panic, public pressure, and the magnitude of the second wave has forced the government to authorize vaccines to anyone above 18.
- Further, the state government's control over procurement has been liberalized.
- But achieving the goal of **universal vaccination** for all is still a distant dream due to a lack of planning and preparedness.

What are the roadblocks to achieve universal vaccination for all?

- **First,** lack of foresight has led to shortages in the supply chain. India unlike other countries did not foresee a devastating second wave. Hence, India did not make purchase agreements with other vaccine manufacturers. India also applied different standards, while waiving critical trials for Covaxin, it applied stringent requirements for foreign companies.
- **Second,** liberalizing states to procure vaccines will not help. This is because of two reasons,
   - **One,** already international vaccinators such as **Pfizer and Moderna** have supply commitments to other countries.
   - **Two**, States in India are weak in finances and negotiating power.
- **Third,** with the resurfacing of lockdown due to second-wave, the administration of logistics will be challenging.

India could have avoided this situation with effective foresight and planning. Now, India should work with Pragmatism and preparedness to achieve the goal of universal vaccination for all as soon as possible.

7. A Lost Opportunity to Reform the Educational System
Source- [The Hindu](#)
Syllabus- GS 2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to education.
Synopsis- Pandemic provided a vital opportunity to initiate sustainable reforms in the education system in India. But bureaucrats and administrators failed to take advantage of it.
Introduction-

- The pandemic offered an opportunity for bureaucrats and administrators to re-examine the educational system, but nothing has changed.
- As a result of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, students in schools and higher education institutions have once again been affected, as they were last year.
- Instead of assisting institutions, faculty, and students in overcoming uncertainty, administrators focused on excessive bureaucratic centralization.

The phenomenon exposed the administrative inadequacies of the past year.

Why it is a lost opportunity for bureaucrats and administrators?
The pandemic provided the bureaucrats and administrators an opportunity to initiate sustainable reforms in the educational system in the following ways-

- **Collaborate with teachers to discuss their concerns –**
- **Could consider promoting better student-teacher relationships.**
- **The exam system could have been reformed.** They could create a better system for determining the qualifying grade for students to progress to the next level of study.

However, administrators lost this opportunity because-

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- Rigid emphasis on rote learning.
- Failure to acknowledge that test results are not the only indicators of a student's skills.
- Unwillingness to collaborate with teachers.
- They ignored plans to evaluate the mental health of teachers, non-teaching staff, and students.

What needs to be done?
Decision-makers need to learn from previous mistakes and take the following steps to find a sustainable solution.
1. Bureaucratic administrators should consult with Academic stakeholders before any decisions.
2. **Institutions need to reconsider their approach** –
   o Schools and higher educational institutes need to find alternative forms of assessment for promoting students.
   o Need to come up with new ways to assess the teaching and learning process.
   o **Make academic evaluation more rigorous and sustainable** encouraging students to write creatively. The concept of open-book exams must be considered.
   The bureaucracy must acknowledge that '**one order fits all'** approach to improving educational system is not feasible.

Way forward-
Administrators need to concentrate on assisting institutions, faculty, and students in overcoming uncertainty. Thus, they should decentralize decision-making.
- It is important to avoid responses such as canceling and/or postponing exams and remaining fixated with the completion of the academic term.

8. Need of Granting Interim Bail to Pregnant Women Undertrials
Source: The Indian Express
Syllabus: GS:2 Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.
Synopsis: Even though Pregnant women and children cannot get the Covid-19 vaccination, they continue to remain in prisons. The court has to provide interim bail to women**,** children and other vulnerable sections in prison.
Introduction:
Long pending prison reforms, overcrowded prisons made the situation of prisoners in India, very cruel. The state of women's prisons is much worse than male prisons. But so far the courts do not consider this condition in granting bail to the persons.

Status of women prisoners:
- So far, bail jurisprudence does not empathize with women and children, or the elderly.
- Similarly, the courts do not consider Custodial rape, pregnancy, or childbirth and degrading treatment of women prisoners as cruel, inhumane.
- While granting bail the court does not consider the rights of children of imprisoned parents.

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The recent case:
- In **State v. Suman Kumari case**, Delhi High Court made a departure from bail jurisprudence. The court regarded the Rights of children of an imprisoned parent and provided bail to a woman.
- This was a case of dowry murder allegation. In this case, the court mentioned that the imprisoned woman (accused sister-in-law of the dead victim) was also the mother of a 21-month infant. From December 9, 2020, the mother was in prison.

The reasons stated by the court for granting bail:
The court granted bail by mentioning that the Imprisonment of mothers amounts to the "**de facto detention of their infant/toddler wards**". The court also observed,
1. This is a serious violation of Article 37 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989.
2. Furthermore, the court also held this as a violation of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015. As under Section 3 of the JJ Act, the best interests of the child are considered paramount. Further, the Act suggests "institutionalization of the child as a step of last resort".
3. The court also points out that the child under "de facto detention" must not suffer worse custodial conditions than the children in conflict with the law.
4. In this case, the court considered "empathy" as "the ground for bail".

Impact of the Covid-19 in Prisons:
This order is more significant as the Covid-19 virus attacks increased in prison. The Covid-19 cases in prisons include,
- In Tihar Jail, so far(up to April 17) 117 prisoners and 14 jail staff found infected with the Covid-19.
- 55 prisoners and 4 jail staff infected with the Covid-19 from the Sabarmati Central jail.
- In Maharastra, 198 prisoners get infected due to the Covid-19.

Disaster Management Act, 2005 on prisons:
At the beginning of the Covid-19, the Disaster Management Act, 2005 (DMA) mentioned overcrowded prisons as hotspots of mass contagion. Further, as per the Act, the state government needs to take mandatory mitigation, rescue, or relief works.
Section 61 of the DMA mentions that the state must provide compensation and relief to the victims of a disaster. The Act also mentions the state shall not discriminate based on the ground of sex, caste, community, descent, or religion.

Earlier committees on women prisoners:
1. In 2020 the NHRC recommended state governments for releasing women prisoners. Especially the pregnant women and mothers with children from prisons. But, most states did not fulfill the recommendations.
2. Similarly, in 2020, the high-powered committee of the Delhi High Court did not release all pregnant women or mothers with infants. The high-powered committee mentions the type of offence, duration of sentence, nationality, etc as a condition to release women in prisons. The committee upheld the Prison rules above the DMA.

The high-powered committee failed to read the DMA along with the prison rules. If it read it together, then the most vulnerable population in Prisons such as women, children, and transgender prisoners might receive relief, mitigation, and compensation.

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Suggestions to improve the condition of vulnerable prisoners:
1. The court while hearing the case, shall consider the **release of women, children, and trans-prisoners**. Also, the court should provide support for their survival.
2. The court should consider situations like Custodial rape, pregnancy, or childbirth and **move towards Gender-Sensitive prisons**. This is feasible by creating a system of imprisoning women, children, sexual minorities irrespective of their offense, nationality, or exceptional laws**.**
3. The Courts also need to **strengthen the law's legal journey for humanity** instead of historical attachment to the custody of prisoners.

9. Demands for Delinking of State and Religion
Source: [The Hindu](#)
Syllabus: GS 2 – Constitution – features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure
Synopsis:
Some religious groups in Tamil Nadu are demanding delinking of state from religious affairs. However, minimal state intervention to promote justice and equality is permitted by the constitution.

Background:
- Amidst the electoral process, some Religious groups are demanding delinking of state and religion in Tamil Nadu.
- They are opposing laws like Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR&CE) Act 1959. The law allows the state to intervene in the affairs of Hindu public endowments.
  o Under this, the government can appoint a State Commissioner for general superintendence over all Hindu religious endowments.
  o The commissioner will further appoint executive officers to temples. They will ensure that the funds are being properly applied.

Arguments by protestors in favour of delinking:
- **First**, intervention by the state is against the secular and democratic credentials of India.
- **Second**, intervention undermines their freedom of religion which is guaranteed by the constitution under Articles 25 and 26.
  o Article 25 gives the freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion.
  o Article 26 protects group rights. It grants to every "religious denomination" the right:
    ▪ to establish institutions;
    ▪ to manage its own affairs in matters of religion;
    ▪ also, to own and acquire property; and
    ▪ administer that property in accordance with law
- **Third**, there is an unequal degree of control amongst religions. They argue that a lenient attitude is shown towards other religions like Islam and Christianity.

Arguments against Delinking:
- **No credible successor**: Apart from the state, no institution or group can curtail the evil practices surrounding a religion.
- **Strengthening Evil practices:** Delinking might uphold the interest of dominant communities and strengthen the evil hierarchical division in society.

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o For instance, the government of Madras formulated a law in 1927 to intervene in the management of religious establishments. As powerful castes and communities within the Hindu fold appropriated control over them.

- **Indian Concept of Secularism**: The constituent assembly adopted a model based on the <u>notion of principled distance</u> and not complete isolation like the western model. It allows intervention for establishing a free and egalitarian society.
- **Constitutional Provisions**: Articles 25 and 26 are subject to public order, health, and morality. This gives ample scope to the state to frame a law regulating any economic, financial, or other secular activity associated with religion.
  o Using this, the government of Madras enacted a Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act in 1951. It was later replaced by the 1959 Act.
- **Judicial Backing:** The supreme court in Shirur Mutt Case (1954) case upheld the 1951 Act. The court said the act was in consonance with the state's power under Articles 25 and 26.
- **Laws for other religions**: There are laws for other religions as well. The amount of intervention depends on the gravity of the situation.
  o **For instance**, the Waqf Act 1995 gives the government substantial supervisory control over the management of properties dedicated for religious purposes under Muslim law.

Way Forward:
- Complete state isolation is not possible as per the constitutional directives. Although the deficiencies in HR&CE law must be re-examined on its merits.
- People should constantly demand transparency and hold the state responsible to the administrative standards prescribed under the law.

10. Police Reforms Needed to Ensure Political Neutrality
Source: [The Hindu](#)
Gs2: Role of Civil Services in a Democracy.
Synopsis: There is a need to ensure a right balance between the government's role in appointing or removing the police chief and the need to safeguard the Police's operational autonomy.

Background
- Recently, the State government removed Param Bir Singh (Mumbai Police Commissioner) from his post.
- It brings back the focus on the long-overdue reforms require, in the process of appointing and removing police chiefs.

History of recommendations for police reforms
- In 1979, **National Police Commission (NPC),** suggested for an independent body for the appointment and removal of police chiefs. The rationale was to avoid Political intervention and to maintain independence of the police.
- Further, the Supreme Court (SC) of India in its judgment, in **Prakash Singh Case (2006)** reaffirmed the **NPC** suggestions**.**
- Further, the Supreme court entrusted the **Union Public Service Commission** (UPSC) to shortlist candidates. After that, the State government can appoint the police chief from this list.
- However, the **Model Police Bill, 2015** placed the responsibility of shortlisting candidates on the **State Security Commission** (SSCs).

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o SSC is a multiparty State Police Board. It consists of government officials, the Leader of the Opposition, independent members from civil society.

What reforms are needed?

First, need to ensure **bipartisanship** in the appointment of police chiefs. For that, the constitution of the State Security Commission (SSCs) is needed. For instance,

- Around 26 States and the Union Territories have established SSCs. However, not a single state adheres to the balanced composition suggested by the SC. Some states do not include the Leader of the Opposition, others do not include independent members.
- Also, in as many as 23 States the governments retain the sole discretion of appointing the police chief.
- Further, there are concerns over concern over non-functioning SSCs. For example, according to RTI information, only four SSCs have held meetings since 2014.
- As a result, the commissions still remain dominated by the political executive.

Second, institutionalise an independent and transparent selection process for appointment and removal of police chief based on objective criteria. For instance,

- The Model Police Act require the SSC to shortlist candidates on some requirements. It includes the length of service, service record, and range of experience, and a performance appraisal of the candidates over the past 10 years.
- However, the criteria's used are more subjective rather than objective. For example, what qualifies as a "good" range of experience?
- Further, there is no scrutiny process to justify removals from tenure posts.
- This allows for the use of Subjective terms such as "on administrative grounds" or "in the public interest" to justify the removal.
- This is against the Supreme Court ruling in **Senkumar vs Union of India case**, 2017.
- The SC ruled that satisfaction of the government" alone is not a sufficient ground to justify removal from a tenure post in government. Rather, it needs to be based on verifiable material that can be objectively tested.

What needs to be done?

- **First, objective** benchmarks need to be integrated into decision-making processes, both on appointments and removals. It will prevent politically motivated actions**.**
- **Second,** learning from UK's example to improve transparency of the review process**. UK's 'The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act, 2011',** introduced **public confirmation hearings** as an additional layer of check for the appointment of police chiefs.
- This provides the police chief an opportunity to respond to the allegations leading to their removal.

11. China Model to Contain Pandemic

Source: Indian Express

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

Synopsis: The Centre should step in to coordinate policy measures across states to contain the Pandemic, rather than putting the onus on the states. China's model to contain pandemic should be studied and replicated in India

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Background

- The central government recently adopted decentralised decision-making approach, to contain the spread of Covid second wave.
- The government has given free hand to the states to decide on lockdowns and other measures.
- Further, Prime Minister in his recent speech appealed to the youth to form small committees to ensure adherence to COVID-19 restrictions.
- However, the **China model centralised planning** along with local mobilization shows a different story. It was immensely successful in containing the spread of COVID-19.

How the China Model functioned?

China Model included the **Residential Committees (RC)** at the grass-root level and the **Central leadership** to assist the RCs with resources.

About Residential Committees

- RCs were officially not part of the state and defined as **institutions of self-governance.** It had a large number of voluntary Youths and college students.
- They had to perform administrative tasks, implement policy, mediate local disputes. Also, they had a task to assist government agencies with maintaining public surveillance, health, and sanitation, etc.,
- After the outbreak of the Pandemic, the RCs were the main authorities that enforced rules and assisted people with their necessities. For example,
  o They strictly enforced rules of entry and exit. No residents were allowed to leave, and no non-residents were allowed to access the community area other than for essential medical needs.
  o Also, they assisted people by providing home delivery of daily food necessities, tracing contacts, registering and visiting each individual, etc.,

Role of Central Leadership

- Further, the central leadership quickly acknowledged the efforts of the **"first line of defence"** the Residential Committees.
- The government also supported the RC workers with subsidies, provision of health equipment, insurance, publicity, and other institutional support.

The China Model though had certain challenges the epidemic has been successfully contained.

How the China Model can be replicated in India?

- In urban India, many have residential associations and local governments that can undertake similar mobilization like RCs in China.
- Through the support from Central leadership and a centralised plan of action, it can support them through resources and authority from central to local organisations.
- This will help in the effective mobilization of volunteers for better information dissemination, service delivery, and promoting social distancing.

Allowing states to their own means will only increase policy inconsistency and unequal access between states with different fiscal capacities and healthcare infrastructure. The need of the hour is for the central leadership to step up and coordinate policy measures across the country.

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12. Criteria for Selection of Experts in Tribunals Needs More Clarity
Source: The Hindu
Gs2: Statutory, Regulatory and various Quasi-judicial Bodies.
Synopsis: Centre needs to enact rules for selection of Experts in NGT Tribunals with clarity and objectivity.

Background
- The Criteria used for the appointments of NGT members are not clearly defined by the central government, giving way to litigations.
- Recently, the appointment of former IAS officer, Girija Vaidyanathan, as Expert Member in the Southern Bench of the NGT was challenged in the Madras High court.

Why Tribunals are formed?
- **One,** the need for specialisation and expertise to decide complex cases of a technical nature. Experts appointed to these tribunals bring in special knowledge and experience.
- **Two**, tribunalisation' of justice will be cost-effective, accessible.

What are the criteria for the appointment of Expert members to the tribunal?
As per the NGT act there are two criteria for the appointment of Expert members to the NGT tribunal. A candidate has to fulfil only one of them.
1. **One based on qualifications and practical experience**: a masters' or a doctorate in science, engineering or technology, with 15 years' experience in the relevant field, including five in environment and forests in a national level institution, is needed. The fields include pollution control, hazardous substance management and forest conservation.
2. **Two, administrative experience in the field:** This condition is not clearly defined. It merely stipulates 15 years' experience, of which five should have been in "dealing with environmental matters" in either the Centre or the State or any reputed institution.

Why the appointment of Girija Vaidyanathan has been challenged?
- In Ms. Vaidyanathan's case, she has served in Environmental related sectors for only 28 months that is less than the prescribed criteria of 5 years.

What did the court say?
- The court opined that the appointment is valid considering her tenure as Health Secretary.
- However, the court declined to interfere with the appointment, as the jurisdiction of this matter comes under the domain of Parliament.

What is the way forward?
- **One,** government should redefine the criteria for appointments through administrative **experience** with clarity and objectivity.
- **Two**, need to implement Supreme Court directions to constitute a **National Tribunals Commission** to supervise the appointment and functioning of tribunals.

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13. Making Education Accessible and Affordable
Source: GS-2
Syllabus: click here
Synopsis: The AIR and DD, and Internet service providers are some possible solutions for making education accessible and affordable.
Introduction
Access and affordability continue to impact teachers and students. Teachers and policymakers are working, but the results are not encouraging.

- Exams have lost their reliability and learning has taken a back seat. The health of students and teachers is suffering due to continuous exposure to screens. Some of them suffer financially as well.
- Access to education is entirely dependent on online classes. Internet penetration in India is 50% which is one reason for the less than efficient performance in the online education sector.

What are the possible solutions to improve the access to education?
Almost everyone has experienced poor connectivity. In rural areas, online access remains an aspiration. However, the government can come up with a solution. The Indian Government has its own airwaves.

- **Firstly, Prasar Bharati is India's broadcasting corporation** that handles both radio and television in India. All India Radio (AIR) has 470 broadcasting centres which cover 92% of the country's geographical area and 99.19% of the population.
- **Secondly,** Doordarshan (DD) handles television, online and mobile broadcasting in India and in the world. It has 34 satellite channels, 17 well-equipped studios in State capitals and 49 studio centres in other cities.
    - **AIR and DD can be used to broadcast lessons.** Education is one of the three functions of the two agencies under the Prasar Bharati Act. These two agencies can be used to satisfy the needs of the education sector.
- **Thirdly, educational broadcasts for classes 10, 11 and 12 can be done in the ratio of 4:1** (four hours of radio and one hour of TV). The courses in which demonstration and where physical activity is needed can be broadcast on TV. This will require some training and effort.
    - If implemented well, there will be less strain due to screen time for our teachers and students. The heavy strain on financial resources will be drastically reduced as DD and AIR are free.
- **Fourthly, teachers should be involved in the planning of policies.** Training can be provided to teachers by a set of trainers for scriptwriting and programming.
- **Fifthly, Further, after training, these teachers can create appropriate tools for evaluation over radio and TV.** The Central and State educational boards should support, monitor and provide feedback to improve the system.
- **Sixthly, If regular radio is not enough, digital radio can also be used.**
- **Lastly,** the government can ask Internet Service Providers to **offer many hours of free Internet usage to teachers and students.** This will not be easy, but the government should call the shots and make a decision that is in the interest of the people.

14. Need to Strengthen Panchayati Raj System
Source: The Hindu
Gs2: Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Devolution of Powers and Finances up to Local Levels and Challenges Therein

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Synopsis: There is a need to strengthen the Panchayati raj system to make the participation of the people in governance a reality.

Evolution of Panchayati Raj System
- **First**, during the Ancient period, the Cholas pioneered the formation of local bodies to oversee the implementation of State plans.
- **Second**, during the British period, in 1884, **the Madras Local Boards Act** was passed. After that, unions in both small towns and big cities were formed to ensure better administration.
- **Third**, gram panchayat laws were enacted in 1920. It allowed people over 25 years of age the right to vote and choose their panchayat members.
- **Fourth**, Gandhiji was one of the pioneers to emphasise the importance of local bodies. He stressed the importance of autonomously ruled villages.
  - He quoted that, "The voice of the people is the voice of god; The voice of the Panchayat is the voice of the people,"
- **Finally**, only in 1992, after the 73rd and 74th Amendments, local bodies were given constitutional recognition. This provided many positive changes such as,
    - Powers to grama Sabha,
    - Reservation for the downtrodden and women,
    - Consistency in economic development,
    - Mandatory local body elections once in five years,
    - Formation of the State Election Commission, Finance Commission,
- However, the Panchayati raj is not being given due importance by the state administration which is affecting the participation of the people in governance.

Case Study: **Apathy towards Panchayati raj in Tamilnadu**
- It is mandatory that Gram Sabhas should meet at least four times in a year, according to the rules framed by the Tamil Nadu government.
- Also, as per the constitution 73rd amendment, local body elections must be conducted once in a five years.
- Further, Gram sabhas are empowered to take opinions and the consensus of the people on significant issues.
- However, in Tamilnadu these mandatory norms are being violated. For instance,
  - One, holding of elections to local bodies is being postponed by the government by giving irrelevant excuses. For the first time, in the last 25 years, local body elections were not held.
  - Two, consensus of the people on significant issues such as an eight-lane highway project and hydrocarbon project are not being taken.
  - Third, lack of women's representation in major administrative roles in the local bodies.

Way forward: Need to strengthen our Gram Sabhas
- Proper allocation of funds,
- Ensuring the efficiency of administration by making eligible appointments,
- Ensuring decent remuneration to Panchayat chiefs and councilors
- Giving powers to Gram Sabha to revoke appointed members and representatives.

The demand for federal rule in the Centre and autonomous rule in the States should resonate along with the need to have autonomous local bodies too. A peoples' movement can ensure the strengthening of Panchayati Raj.

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15. Measures to Control the Covid-19 Second Wave

Source: The Hindu

GS2: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

Synopsis: The current rapid spread of the Covid-19 is a result of poor political choices, poor communications, and neglect of public health principles

Background
- India is witnessing a more intensive spread of Covid 19 in the second wave. For example, more than 3 lakh daily cases are reported, fatality rate has increased (2,000 deaths daily).
- This poses a threat to the economic and social well-being of the Indian people.

What are the reasons for the spurt in Covid 19 infection?
It is due to combination of many factors, such as
- **Demography:** India hosts the second largest population in the world. As the disease is contagious it spreads faster in high density population areas. Example, Cities like Delhi, Maharashtra.
- **Diversity:** India is geographically a large state and it is a socially diverse country. This makes controlling the corona virus more challenging.
- **Lack of effective Political leadership:** During the first wave of infection, successful efforts to enforce social distancing and other public health measures helped in containing the spread of Covid19. However, the large political rallies and religious gatherings (Kumbh Mela festival) have contributed to the sudden surge in infection.
- **Natural factors:** Consistent mutation of the virus resulted in the production of more deadly variants. For example, India is now faced with "double mutant" strain of SARS-CoV-2.
- **Ineffective public health management:** Limited efforts towards genomic surveillance has resulted in lack of data to guide policy decisions.

What needs to be done?
First, need to break the chains of transmission by imposing Short-term targeted lockdowns. However, it has to be reminded that lockdowns cause a terrible economic and social cost and should be used as a last resort.

Second, need to expand access to vaccines. However, efforts must be made to overcome the logistical challenges to administer vaccines to a large number of populations.

What can be done to minimise the number of lockdown days?
- **First,** the Health functionaries should increase the testing rate with the goal of getting the positivity rate under 5%.
- **Second,** society has to be made responsible. Universal mask-wearing should be followed mandatorily as it is largely helpful in curbing the spread of the disease.
- **Third,** sensitive decision-making by the political agents. Restriction on all major indoor and outdoor events, including rallies, religious festivals, weddings, is essential.
- **Fourth**, Vaccine manufacturers should be incentivised to produce Vaccines at a large capacity and at faster rate. In all likelihood, India's pandemic will end if enough Indians are vaccinated.

Focus on public health measures, improve vaccinations, universal masking, and effective coordination across public health efforts can get back life to normal.

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16. The New CJI Needs to Address Present Issues in Judiciary
Source: The Indian Express
Syllabus: GS-2: Structure, organization, and functioning of the judiciary
Synopsis: The new Chief Justice must seriously consider the Challenges in Judiciary. He must free himself from the bias in constituting benches. Also, he should take concrete steps to revitalise the administration of justice.
Introduction:
Justice N V Ramana will be the next Chief Justice of India. But there are certain serious challenges in Judiciary. One of the most important ones is to reform the Judiciary to provide "Justice to all".

Constitution on Supreme Court:
1. The framers of the Constitution understood the importance of the oath of office of judges of the Supreme Court of India (SC). They carefully designed its language.
   o The oath contains "without fear or favour" to "uphold the constitution and the laws". These words show the significance and stress the court to a ferociously independent.
2. Similarly, Article 50 of the Constitution provides "The State shall take steps to separate the judiciary from the executive in the public services of the State"

Constituent Assembly debate on Separation of Judiciary:
- K T Shah moved an amendment to Article 50 proposed an important amendment. He proposed "separation of powers as between the principal organs of the State. I.e., the Legislative, the Executive, and the Judicial. He mentions the separation of Judiciary alone will result in the following. Such as,
   o This will make Judiciary open to suspicion from the Executive and the Legislative
   o The separation of Judiciary and Executive will also rule out the possibility of translation from a high judicial office to an equally high executive office and vice versa.
   o Over a period of time, the Judiciary will suffer from their personal privileges or personal ambitions.
   o Overall, this will affect the civil liberties in the country.
- On the other hand, Shibban Lal Saxena was of the opinion that the complete independence of the Judiciary from the state was an important one.
   o He mentions that the High Courts at that time were are not independent. They are influenced by the political consequences of their actions.
   o So he wanted the future Judiciary to be free from these influences.
   o Further, he also mentioned that the Supreme court has to observe the principles inherent in the constitution. I.e. a clear-cut mention of functions and procedures to avoid any influence of government in the Judiciary.
- But B R Ambedkar rejected these views. Furthermore, he was of the opinion that the chances of influencing the conduct of a member of the judiciary by the Government are very less.
   o He predicted that the judiciary will very rarely decide the cases between citizens and the Government.
   o He also predicted that the judiciary will decide the cases in which the Government has very little or no interest at all.
   o But history shows even a great man can go wrong. Today the Judiciary is deciding numerous cases in which the government has a direct interest. CJI

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being a Master of the Roster is constituting these benches and allocate matters.

Challenges in Judiciary:

There are various challenges in Judiciary. These are,

- The SC is expected to look for strict <u>accountability from the legislature and executive</u>. Moreover, the SC also corrects any violation of the Constitution and laws. <u>But this is not happening in reality</u>. There are many instances where the court sided executive of the day and not stand for the people of India.
- The Judiciary is also facing few fundamental challenges. Such as,
  o [Millions of cases pending in Judiciary](#)
  o [Quality of Judges and Judiciary](#)
  o Organisational issues in the Judiciary such as [gender gap in Judiciary](#), etc.
  o Challenges to integrity and impartiality of Judiciary.
- All these challenges in the Judiciary deprive and elude Justice to the common man, especially the vulnerable sections of society. The present CJI also highlighted this deprivation of Justice.

Suggestions to improve the Judiciary:

1. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution begins with ""We, the people of India". So the powers of the Judiciary is also come from the people, like the executive and the legislature. The Judiciary has to accept this.
2. **Revitalising the administration of justice:** This is feasible if the CJI take concrete steps such as
   a. Freeing himself from the bias in constituting benches and allocating cases
   b. He can seriously introspect and review the actions of his immediate predecessors,
3. All this will restore the "**rule of law"** and the proper fulfilment of the provisions of the Constitution.

During the NJAC judgment (2015) one of the Judges observed that the decisions of CJI have immeasurable political and financial consequences. Further, he also mentions the far-reaching public interest of CJI's decisions. So, the current CJI has to make serious efforts to address these challenges.

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General Studies
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1. IMD's new Dynamical Forecast Model

Source- The Hindu

Syllabus- GS 3 – Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

Synopsis – IMD recently updated the status of the monsoon and predicted a normal monsoon this year. IMD has adopted a new forecast dynamical model. It will allow farmers, government officials, disaster managers, and other stakeholders to better prepare for their activities.

Introduction-

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast a normal monsoon for this year.
- The southwest monsoon in 2021, which will begin in June, is forecast to be regular, with 98 percent of the Long Period Average rainfall (LPA).
- During the monsoon season, weak El Nino conditions are likely to prevail, with severity decreasing as the season progresses.
- Rainfall between 96 and 104 percent of the **Long Period Average** [LPA] is considered normal.

What is the importance of the new Dynamical monsoon Model?

New Dynamical Monsoon Model uses the evolving weather patterns to predict monsoon**.** It is unlike the traditional method, in which the forecast was based on a fixed set of meteorological variables.

- Also, dynamic models are useful for predicting rainfall over smaller spatial and temporal scales. It is not possible with IMD's previous statistical forecasting method.
- IMD will forecast rainfall for June and September, using this model. It was previously difficult to predict due to the monsoon's arrival and departure.
- There will also be forecasts for the monsoon core zone [MCZ]. It represents most of the rain-fed agriculture regions in the country.

Why is it important to correctly forecast rainfall?

1. **For disaster preparedness –** Accurate forecasts will aid in the implementation of preventative measures, the reduction of vulnerabilities. It can also prevent extreme events from turning into disasters.
   - **For example**- Preparation of a heat plan/forest fires plan in case of hot summer.
2. **For agriculture purposes –** Farmers can decide on sowing time based on local conditions. Also, they can decide the type of crop that is best suited to the conditions, using accurate forecasting.
3. **For Government planning-** the Centre and states can prepare better joint plans with respect to agriculture; such as drought action plan, MSP and buffer creation. It can better use and optimize government schemes
4. **For several business and service sector industries** which need weather products.

Way forward-

IMD's move from a statistical to Dynamical model will improve the accuracy of its forecast. So that farmers, policymakers, local administration, scientists & aid organizations can make most of it.

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2. Introducing Green Targets for Corporates
Source: [The Hindu](#)
Syllabus: GS-3: Conservation, environmental pollution, and degradation
Synopsis: The government can introduce green targets and obligations on corporates. Adoption of such targets will help the global fight in Climate change.
Introduction:
The massive levels of production, consumption, and disposal of goods and services benefited economic growth. But it slowed the replenishment cycle of limited resources. This is evident from the impacts of Climate Change.

Both the consumers and corporations have to equally bear the growth of large-scale manufacturing and services and their impact on Climate Change. So the loss of resources and increase in greenhouse gas emissions is the responsibility of both the consumers and corporations.

Consumers can reduce their usage through awareness campaigns. But so far, everyone is focussing on sustainable efforts by the government and their policies. But the impact of corporations is neglected. Indian corporations can become a major help in India's story of sustainable growth by achieving 'green targets'.

What are Green targets?
These are commercial contracts. Under this, the contracting parties set a mandate to cut down greenhouse gas emissions at different stages of delivery of goods/services. This includes all the phases of industry such as design, manufacturing, transportation, operations, and waste disposal.

How India can enforce Green Targets?
1. The government can introduce the green targets when the companies participate in the tender process. During these '**green tenders**,' the government can introduce '**Green qualifications**'. This includes a range of qualifications from pre-defined usage of 'green energy' to adequate on-site waste management, reducing carbon emissions, etc.
2. Once the bidding process is complete, then the government can sign a contracting agreement (**green contract**). Under this, the government can prescribe the '**green obligations**'.
3. These green contracts are necessary as this makes the obligations binding and legally enforceable for the corporates. Further, these green contracts will vary from one industry to another.
4. Thus, the green targets can help in cutting down emissions. The targets can provide good quality and energy-efficient infrastructure, reducing noise, air, and water pollution and ensuring eco-friendly means of transportation within corporates like bicycles, etc.

How to enforce these 'green obligations' and achieve 'green targets'?
1. The government can formulate measurement criteria and conduct performance audits against these 'green obligations'.
2. During these, the government has to identify the non-performer. Further, the government has to prescribe penalties for non-compliance with such green obligations.
3. The government can also make the green obligations trickle down to all levels of the supply chain.

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The economic cost of executing green contracts may be greater than normal contracts. But the corporates have to undertake such green targets to attain greater benefit to the environment.

3. India needs to be cautious before joining Global Minimum Tax rate
Source: The Indian Express
Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.
Synopsis: A Global minimum tax rat
https://blog.forumias.com/india-needs-to-be-cautious-before-joining-global-minimum-tax-rate/e is beneficial for the US. But India need to rethink before joining such international tax proposals
Introduction:
The US Treasury's call for a global minimum tax rate is gaining a global endorsement. But the goal of a global minimum tax is not only to end the race to the corporate tax but also to end the right to the tax of developing countries.

Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) Programme:
1. Big tech companies are able to conduct economic activities in countries without their physical presence. Further, they also move profits to low-tax jurisdictions.
2. The **Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) programme** were **initiated in 2013**. It aims to curb practices that allowed companies to reduce their tax liabilities by exploiting loopholes in the tax law. But to tax Big tech companies the countries have to sign a BEPS agreement among themselves.
3. So the OECD also asked the countries in the BEPS framework to adopt a consensus-based outcome instead of the country's individual moves.

Challenges to BEPS Programme:
But there are few countries that are not ready to sign BEPS agreements.
1. Over the past decades, there are many countries that enacted tax policies specifically aimed at attracting multinational business. These countries **attract investment by lowering corporate tax rates**. This, in turn, has pushed other countries to lower their rates as well to remain competitive.
2. Also, there are few Developing countries as well that are not sure if they will receive the right to tax the mobile incomes of Big tech companies

The OECD policy to solve BEPS issues:
Addressing this concern, the OECD published a policy note. In that, it bifurcated the challenge of BEPS into two pillars.
   a. **Pillar 1:** It addresses the issue of reallocation of taxing rights to all the countries
   b. **Pillar 2:** This pillar aims to address all the remaining issues in the BEPS program.

Concerns with the OECD policy proposal:
The blueprints of this policy proposal were released in October 2020. But, the experts mention few concerns with the OECD policy note. Such as,
   ▪ **Complexity in taxing Big techs:** The experts found the policy of OECD as a more complex one to implement.
   ▪ **Profit allocation:** This is the most contentious provision of the policy. As the policy allocated only a fraction of the profits of Big Techs to the markets(Operating country of Big techs). The policy also allocated more profits to the source country.

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Intermediate Taxation of Big Tech:

▪ With the blueprints are under consideration, the Big techs gained profits. On the other hand, the tax base of countries, including India, remains exposed to the risk of under or non-taxation.

▪ To fix this situation, countries implemented digital services tax on revenues of Big tech companies.

▪ But the US on the other hand launched inquiries on these countries under their Trade Act 1974.

The path to global minimum tax rate:

After the Biden administration came into force in the US, it agreed to work on a consensus-based solution.

1. Further, the US Treasury suggested that it will apply the **pillar 1 proposal** to the top 100 companies. This includes showing a non-discriminatory policy to the US companies in the top 100. Further, the US also working on simplification of the proposal.

2. With regard to **pillar 2 proposals,** the US decided to raise the corporate tax rate to 28 percent. This is decided along with the **harmonisation of rates across countries.** This includes,

   o **Defining minimum tax rate** for the world, **after the global consensus** on the effective tax rate for companies. (So, the minimum tax rate is not yet decided)

   o After fixing the minimum tax rate, the countries will compare the multinational enterprise's effective tax rate in each jurisdiction. Especially in places where the low tax rate is paid.

   o A **top-up tax** will apply for the remaining profits. But there is an ambiguity on who will tax these remaining profits?

   o In general, the country, where the ultimate parent entity resides, is where the tax is first applicable. Applying that concept, then **30 percent of the Forbes 2000 companies are located in the US**. So, the **implementation of this proposal best serves the needs of the US**.

Can India join the minimum tax rate proposal?

1. India needs to assess the situation carefully. Because the proposal will apply to companies with global revenues above Euro 750 million. So, committing wrongly will lose India's taxing rights.

2. Moreover, India also witnessed a consistent rise in the effective tax rate, which is now close to 26 percent.

3. Further, committing such a minimum tax rate also need India to reform its tax systems accordingly. Especially allowing foreign countries to tax the incomes that are perceived to be under-taxed in India.

For the past few years, India adopted **legal measures** to tax incomes of companies that avoid physical presence in India. But if global consensus is there for a minimum tax rate, then it is necessary for India to reflect the two pillars of international tax reform.

4. Measures to Create Safe Online Spaces For Children

Source: The Hindu

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

Synopsis: This article explains the concerns about child safety in online spaces and suggests measures to create safe online spaces for children.

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Background

- The children of the current generation are exposed to a world that is increasingly powered by **virtual reality** and **artificial intelligence** (AI). For example, **Alexa, YouTube wormholes**,
- The Industrial revolution 4.0 has brought two main concerns towards Child's safety and growth opportunities.
    - One, universal access to digital connectivity
    - Second, secured digital space for Children

What are the possible threats to Children due to their premature exposure to AI?

- **First, concerns over Child safety**. For instance, many digital platforms such as Fortnite, Battle Royale, provide online space for children to socialise with their friends. But such platforms also serve as "honeypots" for child predators. Surveillance or supervision by parents over Child's Online activity has also become more difficult due to the Digitalisation of education.
- **Second, digital addiction** is another major concern among children. The AI-driven video games and social networks are designed to keep Children attracted to their online sites. This makes them prey to digital addiction.
- **Third, it disturbs their cognitive growth** at a very young age. For instance, their earlier exposure to the negative side of the digital space (such as fake news, conspiracy theories, hype, online bullying, hate speech) disturbs their understanding of this world.
- **Fourth**, **concern over hacking and spying on children**. For instance, many AI toys are used to promote enhanced literacy, social skills, and language development. However, they also collect data on the children in the absence of any regulatory framework. Recently, Germany banned **Cayla**, an Internet-connected doll, because of concerns that it could be hacked and used to spy on children.
- **Fifth,** though the usage of AI in education improves educational outcomes it also brings new challenges**. For instance,** pedagogical approaches to the child's needs such as intelligent tutoring systems, tailored curriculum plans, engaging interactive learning experiences can improve educational outcomes. However, algorithms can also amplify existing problems with education systems. For example,
    - **One,** failure in AI's algorithm can deprive thousands of students of college admissions and scholarships.
    - **Two,** open access to educational and performance data on children can harm their future opportunities

What needs to be done?

- **First,** need to reduce the **digital divide gap** by providing Internet access to all children. According to UNICEF and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), nearly two-thirds of the world's children do not have access to the Internet at home.
- **Second,** need for legal and technological safeguards to regulate AI products. For example,
    - **Technological safeguards like**– trustworthy certification and rating systems,
    - **Legal safeguards like-** banning anonymous accounts, restriction on algorithmic manipulation, profiling and data collection, etc.,
- **Third, the need** to create greater awareness among parents, guardians, and children on how AI works to prevent them from future online risks.

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- **Fourth**, enforcing ethical principles of **non-discrimination and fairness** in the policy and design of the AI system.
- **Fifth,** need to develop online culture tools that help prevent addiction and also promote attention-building skills, social-emotional learning capabilities**.**
- **Sixth,** Laws and policies to prevent a range of abuses and violence, such as the National Policy for Children (2013), can be extended for children in a digital space.
- A recent, landmark decision by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and fulfilling all children's rights in the digital environment is a step in the right direction towards ensuring **Ethical AI for Generation AI.**

5. Concerns Associated to Ken-Betwa Link project
Source – [The Hindu](#)
Syllabus – GS 3 – Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.
Synopsis –The Ken-Betwa link project raised serious concerns about the project's benefits and the massive environmental impact it would have.
Introduction-
- On **World Water Day (March 22nd),** MP and UP signed a tripartite agreement with the Centre to introduce the Ken-Betwa link Project (KBLP).
- But the project will have a significant environmental impact, and its benefits are uncertain.
- The project would be wasting significant sums of public funds. Whereas the project will do little to address Bundelkhand's water shortages.

What is KEN-Betwa Project?
The Ken-Betwa Link Project (KBLP) **aims to transfer surplus water** from the Ken river in MP to Betwa in UP. It will provide water to irrigate the drought-prone Bundelkhand area, which is spread across two states' districts.
- Ken-Betwa Link Project is the first project under the National Perspective Plan for t**he interlinking of rivers.**
- The central government has proposed a 90:10 funding pattern for the Ken Betwa Interlinking Project. The centre bearing 90 percent of the total estimated cost.

Advantage of Interlining of Ken-Betwa Rivers-
1. **First, Irrigation –** The project will provide sustainable means of irrigation water to the Bundelkhand region in U.P. and M.P. It will reduce excessive dependence on groundwater.
   a. The to-be-built Daudhan dam will irrigate nearly 6,00,000 hectares in four districts in M.P. and 2,51,000 hectares in four districts in U.P.
2. **Second, Disaster mitigation-** The river linking project will be a solution to recurring droughts in the Bundelkhand region.
3. **Third, Electricity Production-** The project will generate 103 MW of hydropower and provide drinking water to 62 lakh people.

Concern related to the project
- **First, Environmental concern-**
  o The **12,500 hectares of land will submerge** by the project.
  o The project would harm **Panna tiger reserve.** It will cause irreversible damage to around 40% of the tiger reserve's area.
  o **Disrupting ecosystems –** Approximately 7.2 lakh trees will cut down. This will have an impact on the rainfall of the region.

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- **Second, The project is not economically viable-**
  - In the past few years, the river did not always flow in a steady stream.
  - There is a significant financial expense associated with project implementation and maintenance. It is increasing as a result of project delays.
  - Another challenge would be that the Ken River flows 60-70 feet lower than the Betwa River. It requires at least 30% of the 103 MW produced power to pump the water up.
- **Third, Clearance issue-** The Supreme Court's Central Empowered Committee, which had raised questions about the Ken-Betwa project, did not issue a clearance.

Way forward-

The sustainable and cost-effective alternatives to the Ken-Betwa project have not been considered.

- Government should consider **multiple water-harvesting** and **water-conservation methods.** It could adequately store and efficiently make use of rainfall the region receives annually, without the need for building a reservoir and dam.

6. Short Term Targeted Approach to Achieve Net Zero Emissions Target

Source: The Hindu

Gs3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution, and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment

Synopsis: India needs to follow a sector-wise Short term targeted approach with a focus on achieving short-term targets. Rather than admitting the long-term goal of achieving Net-Zero emissions target by 2050.

Background

- The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 1.5 °C report** called for global carbon emissions to reach net-zero by 2050.
- Presently, the target to achieve the net-zero target by 2050 is strongly put forward as the solution to achieve **Paris climate targets**.
- The US will organize the 'Leaders' **Climate Summit** this week, consequently, India is under pressure to adopt a net-zero target by 2050.

Should India adopt net-zero target by 2050?

- India is a climate-vulnerable country and therefore India must also contribute to limit global temperature rise.
- However, India should factor in the history of global climate negotiations and its own developmental needs before announcing its contributions. For example,
  - India is still a very poor country with a significant development deficit. Further, India's per-capita carbon emissions are less than half the world average.

Further, India should compel developed countries to reach net-zero before 2050. Since developed countries made use of a larger portion of the carbon space.

How India Could Contribute?

- India needs to focus on Short term targeted approach of low-carbon development pathways that combine competitiveness, job-creation, distributional justice, and low pollution. This approach will be consistent with India moving towards net-zero emissions.
- A pragmatic approach towards low carbon development in the Power sector is illustrated as an example below. A similar approach to other sectors can be adopted.

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What changes the power sector requires?
- De-carbonizing power sector will help India achieve its net-zero emissions. Since it is the single largest source (about 40%) of India's greenhouse gas emissions.
- Till now, India has focused only on expanding renewable electricity capacity. For instance, 175GW of renewable capacity by 2022 and 450GW of renewable capacity by 2030.
- But India should also aim at limiting the expansion of coal-based electricity capacity. Coal accounts for roughly 75% of the electricity today.

How to bring about those changes?
1. **First**, India needs to pledge that it will reach peak coal electricity capacity by 2030. It would be beneficial for India, since coal is increasingly uneconomic, and phasing it out will bring local gains, such as reduced air pollution, climate mitigation, etc.,
2. **Second, the** creation of a multi-stakeholder **Just Transition Commission** representing all levels of government and the affected communities. This is necessary because the transition costs of a low-carbon future should not affect India's poor.
3. **Third,** address existing problems of the Power sector such as the poor finances and management of distribution companies.
4. **Fourth,** India should aim to become a leader in technologies of the future such as electricity storage, smart grids through a partnership with the private sector.
5. **Fifth,** India's electricity transition should couple with job creation and global competitiveness.
6. **Sixth,** Enhancing the efficiency of electricity use is important to decarbonize the electricity supply. For instance, Air conditioners, fans, and refrigerators together consume about 60% of the electricity in households. Increasing the efficiency of electric appliances will not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions will also lower consumer electricity bills.

Way forward
1. Such a sector-by-sector approach can be developed for other sectors to set India on the path toward net-zero emissions target.
2. Going further, India may even consider committing to submit plausible pathways and timelines to achieving net-zero emissions target as part of its future pledges. It will give India adequate time to
   - One, undertake detailed assessments of its development needs and low-carbon opportunities.
   - Two, to assess the seriousness of the net-zero actions by developed countries,
   - Three, to assess the potential geopolitical and geo-economic risks of over-dependence on certain countries for technologies or materials.
   - Four, to develop a strategic road map to enhance its own technology and manufacturing competence as part of the global clean energy supply chain.

7. Data Revolution and New Global Order
Source: Click Here
Syllabus: GS 3 – Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security
Synopsis:
The Digital Data Revolution will shape the new global order. It would give Asia a strategic advantage in the world. India must also be prepared to play a key role in the hyper-connected world.

Background:
- There has been a shift of global power from the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific in recent times.
- This shift is marked by advancement in "Digital Data Revolution' while the earlier order was created by the Industrial Revolution.
- However, this data revolution has created some strategic implications.

Strategic Implications of the Data revolution:
- Data has created a symbiotic (mutually beneficial) relationship between military and civilian systems. Today cyber security has become national security. Thus, it demands a new military doctrine and a diplomatic framework.
- Data has **blurred the line between domestic and foreign policy** and calls for establishing new global rules.
- Further, a growth in smart phone-based e-commerce is generating massive amounts of data. It would give a **sustained productivity advantage to Asia**.
- Data streams have acquired a central position in Global trade. Further, a country's economic and national power is dependent on data.

These factors allow India to negotiate new rules as an equal with the U.S. and China. The rules must be formulated keeping in mind the new dynamics.

New Dynamics:
- **China**
  - It has made use of data streams and emerged as the second-largest economy.
  - It also has a $ 53 trillion mobile payments market and acquires a global share of 50%.
  - Furthermore, It has formed a joint venture with SWIFT for cross-border payments. The country also suggested foundational principles for interoperability between central bank digital currencies at the Bank for International Settlement.
  - However, it is still highly dependent on semiconductors and unable to avoid US sanctions on banks, 5G, and cloud computing companies.
  - Thus, it is trying hard to overcome this weakness by
    - Distorting dollar-based trade through its e-yuan
    - Launching a $1.4 trillion science and technology strategy
- **U.S**
  - The conventional deterrence capabilities of US have reduced. It now puts more focus on diplomacy than military power to resolve conflicts with China.
  - In the mobile payments market, only around 30% of consumers use digital means and the total volume of mobile payments is less than $100 billion.
  - The country appears to be losing its dominant position to China in the global order.
- **India**
  - In the mobile payments' sphere, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) volume is expected to cross $1 trillion by 2025.
  - The goal is to create a $5-trillion economy by 2025.
  - It faces a challenge of :
    - Balancing engagement with major powers and
    - Retaining its data for innovation and competitive advantage.

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Factors showing India's crucial position in shaping the new global order:

- China is India's largest trading partner despite recent border clashes. Also, both the countries are uncomfortable with:
    - Treating Western values as universal values
    - The U.S. interpretation of Freedom of Navigation rules in others' territorial waters
- The US wants to invest heavily in India and leverage the Indian markets, a strategy similar to China's belt and initiative. Further India is seen as a reliable partner to curb Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific.
- New Delhi's Indo-Pacific vision is premised on 'ASEAN centrality and the common pursuit of prosperity'.
- The EU is also determined to enhance its influence in the Indo-Pacific region. This automatically induces the grouping to improve its relation with India.

Way Forward:

- India is part of both U.S. and China-led strategic groupings which gives it a robust development potential.
- Further, the country must be prepared to play a key role in moulding rules for the hyper-connected world. This would help it in realising its potential of becoming the 2nd largest economy.

8. Need to Prioritise Vaccination for Migrant workers
Source: [Indian Express](#)
Gs3: Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.
Synopsis: The migrant workers contribute significantly to the economy, however, they are also more vulnerable to the Covid crisis. Hence, the government needs to prioritize Vaccination for the migrant population.

Background

- COVID-19 vaccines are being rolled out across the nation and nearly 105 million Indians have been vaccinated so far.
- Priorities for vaccination in India are based on occupation, age and health conditions.
- But the migrant community with no specific definitions based on any criteria, are not on the priority list for vaccination

Why Migrant population needs to be added in the priority list for vaccination?
First, the Migrant Population is more vulnerable to the Covid crisis than any other community. For instance,

- One, Covid crisis has severely impacted their livelihood opportunities. During lockdown, millions of migrant workers lost their jobs, forcing them and their families to poverty.
- Two, owing to their informal employment, they lack access to adequate healthcare, nutrition, housing as well as sanitation facilities.
- Three, the COVID-19 crisis displaced nearly 200 million migrants.it was the second-largest population displacement since Partition

Second, despite their informal nature they contribute significantly to the Indian economy. For instance,

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o Out of 90 percent of work in the informal sector, 75 percent of work comes from migrants. Further, <u>vulnerable circular migrants</u> manage most of the essential services.

Third, lack of access to vaccination will deprive them of employment opportunities. This will result in a drop in developmental indicators such as the health and education of migrant families. The migrant community needs an adequate support system to survive this Pandemic.

Fourth, further, failure to prioritize their vaccination will result in an economic crisis such as Low productivity, increasing unemployment, and breakdown of the critical informal services.

Welfare measures for the migrant population

To ensure food security, the government announced a Rs 1.7 lakh crore spending plan for the poor through cash transfers and other measures.

o One, the average daily wages under the MGNREGA were increased to Rs 202 from the earlier Rs 182.
o Two, free food grains for 80 million migrant workers through PDS were also announced.
o Three, the government-operated separate buses for the stranded migrants.
o Four, the Centre issued an order instructing landlords not to demand rent and employers to pay wages without deduction during the lockdown period. (the order regarding payment of wages was later withdrawn)

Issues in welfare measure for migrants

Despite these efforts, the welfare measures have not been able to effectively address the problems of the migrant population.

▪ One, migrants were <u>unable to benefit from the food security schemes</u>. Because ration cards were area-specific and some fair-price stores were inaccessible during the lockdown. Further, lack of awareness about One Nation, One Ration Card schemes denied them access to free food grains.
▪ Two, the <u>Supreme Court denied a plea</u> requiring payment of the minimum wage to the migrant population. It stated that labourers had already been supplied with free food at the relief camps.

9. Future of Cryptocurrencies in India

Source: Click Here

Syllabus: GS 3 – Money and Banking

Synopsis: The Government is planning to ban all private cryptocurrencies in India while supporting an RBI-backed cryptocurrency.

Background:

- The proposed Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021 bans all private cryptocurrencies.
  o It lays down the regulatory framework for the launch of an "official digital currency".
  o Further holders of private cryptocurrencies will have a 3-6 month exit period before banning the trading, mining, and issuing of cryptos.
- The Reserve Bank of India is also working on a Central Bank digital currency (CBDC) using DLT (Distributed Ledger Technology).
  o DLT is a digital system for recording the transaction of assets. It records the transactions and their details in multiple places at the same time.

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o Unlike traditional databases, distributed ledgers have no central data store or administration functionality.

Rationale behind such proposals:

- **Check on Volatility:** Private Cryptocurrencies are too volatile and pose a threat to India's financial stability. A fiat currency shouldn't portray such volatility. For instance, Bitcoin's price has risen more than 10-fold over the last year due to:
  - Increased institutional exposure to Bitcoin
  - Global progress in fostering a friendlier legislative environment for cryptocurrencies
  - Supply reduction coupled with increasing demand.
- **Curb Illegal Activities**: In April 2018, RBI banned banks and other regulated entities from supporting crypto transactions after digital currencies were used for frauds. In March 2020, the Supreme Court clarified that crypto transactions were not illegal in India.
- **Ascertaining the Magnitude of Undisclosed Holdings**: Once private currencies are banned, then all investors would have to declare their true digital holdings in order to exit within the permissible window.
  - As per an unofficial estimate, Indian investors hold around $1.5 billion (Rs 10,000 crore) in digital currencies.

Way Forward:

- The government needs to clear the uncertainty regarding the legal status of cryptocurrencies in the minds of Indian investors.
- Further, it also needs to ascertain the economic and social impact of closing startups that function on private cryptocurrencies like Unocoin, Zebpay, etc.

10. National Hydrogen Energy Mission (NHEM)
Source- The Hindu
Syllabus- GS 3 – Energy and Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation
Synopsis – Challenges and suggestion to enhance commercial scale operation of green hydrogen in India.

National Hydrogen Energy Mission NHEM-
Indian prepares to launch the National Hydrogen Energy Mission (NHEM).

- The global target is to produce 1.45 million tonnes of green hydrogen by 2023.
- India currently consumes approximately 5.5 million tonnes of hydrogen, which is mainly derived from imported fossil fuels. With NHEM, India will be able to reduce its reliance on fossil fuel imports.
- **Steel, chemical, and transportation industries** are among the industries that will benefit from the NHEM. Owing to the amount of fossil fuels they consume, which can be directly substituted with hydrogen, they contribute to one-third of greenhouse gas emissions.

What is green hydrogen?
Green Hydrogen is pure hydrogen generated by using renewable energy such as solar power and wind energy. The by products are water and water vapour.

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Challenges-

- **Transportation cost –** Majority of low-cost renewable energy resources are located far from potential demand centres. As a result, the cost of transportation from the plant to the demand centre rises.
- **High cost of production –** The technology used in production of green hydrogen is still in its early stages and is costly, which raises the cost of production.
- **Storage related issues**

Recommendations for scaling up commercial scale operation of green hydrogen in India-

o First, **Decentralized hydrogen production –** Decentralization must be promoted through open access of renewable power to an electrolyser (which splits water to form H2 and O2 using electricity).

    o This can be done by **transporting renewable energy directly from the plant to the refinery**, which **will reduce transportation costs by 60%** compared to shipping hydrogen through trucks.

o Second, **Continuous access to renewable energy for decentralized hydrogen production.**

o Third, **Need to blend green Hydrogen into existing conventional hydrogen process-**

    o This would also aid in the development of a scientific understanding of the processes involved in large-scale hydrogen handling.

o Fourth, **Investment for R&D on green Hydrogen technology is required**– Green hydrogen processing technology is still in its early stages, requiring extensive research and development to advance.

    o This requires substantial investment in the research and development of hydrogen technologies. Policymakers need to facilitate investments.

o Lastly, **Focus on domestic manufacturing**

    o Need to establish an end-to-end electrolyser manufacturing facility.

    o Needs to secure supplies of raw materials.

    o Need manufacturing strategy that integrates with the global value chain and can maximize existing strengths.

Way forward-

With decentralized hydrogen production, continuous access to renewable energy, increased investment in R&D, capacity building, compatible legislation, and the ability to create demand among its vast population, India can be in a unique position to benefit from the green Hydrogen.

11. Important of Stepping Up National Climate Action Plans

Source: click here

Syllabus: GS 3

Synopsis: Governments must effectively step up their national climate action plans. There is an opportunity to bring consensus for that in the upcoming Leaders' Summit hosted by the United States.

Introduction

It is time for bold climate action. We need to limit global heating to 1.5 degrees Celsius to stop the climate crisis from becoming a permanent disaster.

- Reaching net-zero emissions of greenhouse gases by mid-century is needed. Every country, city, business, and the financial institution needs to join this league and adopt solid plans for reaching net-zero.

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- The governments should be able to match this long-term ambition with solid actions to re-engineer our future.
- Under the Paris Agreement, all countries are committed to set their own national climate action plans and strengthen them every five years. To achieve them, decisive and effective actions are required.

What actions should be taken?

The new national plans must reduce global greenhouse gas pollution by at least 45 percent by 2030. Clearer policies should be set up to adapt to the effects of climate change and lift access to renewable energy.

- **Firstly, governments must step up their ambitions,** mainly the biggest-emitting countries. Removing coal from the electricity sector is a very important step to achieve the 1.5-degree goal.
    - Global coal use in electricity production must reduce by 80 percent below 2010 levels by 2030. This means developed nations have to phase out coal by 2030 and other countries must do this by 2040.
- **Secondly, no new coal plants should be built anywhere**. One-third of the global coal task force is more costly to run than building new renewables and storage. COP26 must indicate an end to coal.
- **Thirdly, workers in affected industries and the informal sector should be supported** as they switch jobs. Women and girls must be supported to drive transformation.
- **Fourthly, the developed nations should commit to provide** and assemble $100 billion yearly by:
    - Doubling current levels of climate finance.
    - Devoting half of all climate finance to adaptation.
    - Stopping the international funding of coal.
    - Shifting subsidies from fossil fuels to renewable energy.
- **Fifthly, the G7 Summit in June provides an opportunity** for the world's richest nations to step up the needed financial commitments. It will confirm the success of COP26.
- **Lastly, the decision-makers everywhere have an important role t**o play. By COP26, all multilateral and national developments banks must have clear policies in place to fund the COVID recovery and change into strong economies in developing countries.
    - This should be done taking into account crippling debt levels and huge pressures on national budgets.

12. Green Hydrogen – The Fuel of the Future

Source – Down To Earth

Syllabus – GS 3 – Energy and Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation.

Synopsis – Green hydrogen is becoming a new alternative to fossil fuel. Currently, many countries are taking steps to move towards a hydrogen economy.

Introduction-

- Hydrogen is an energy carrier. It is converted into electricity by fuel cells, which generate electricity by mixing hydrogen and oxygen atoms.
- It will play an important role in delivering zero-emission transport. The pathway to use hydrogen economy includes **hydrogen production, storage, transport, and utilization.**

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Importance of Hydrogen as a fuel
1. **Environment friendly-** Hydrogen is a clean fuel that, when consumed in a fuel cell, releases only water as a by-product. Due to their high efficiency and zero-or near zero-emissions operation, hydrogen has the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emission.
2. **Readily available –** It is a basic earth element and is very abundant, but challenging to separate hydrogen gas from its companion substances.
3. **Alternative to fuel –** It produces three times more energy than other fossil fuels.
4. **Hydrogen as an Energy Storage System-**
5. **Future' fuel –** Fossil fuels can no longer be used to meet the world's energy needs.

Concerns-
1. **Cost –** The greatest challenge for hydrogen production, particularly from renewable resources, is providing hydrogen at lower cost.
2. **Storage-** Moving even small amounts of Hydrogen is a very expensive matter. For that reason alone, the transport and storage of such a substance looks impractical.
3. **External energy source is required to isolate hydrogen** – It does not occur naturally as a gas on the Earth. It is always in combination with other elements such as water (H_2O).
4. **Lesser production of green hydrogen –** Around 120 tons of hydrogen are produced annually and less than one per cent is green hydrogen.
5. **Low production of Electrolysers** – There is currently no major Indian manufacturer of **Electrolysers [splits water into hydrogen and oxygen].** As a result, India is reportedly importing electrolysers, which makes the cost uneconomical.
6. **Limited technology for** compressing and storing hydrogen for automobiles.

Initiative taken by different nations and global companies in field of green hydrogen-
- **European Union-**
  - In June 2020, EU announced to install 40GW of renewable hydrogen electrolysers. It will produce up to 10 million tons of renewable hydrogen by 2030.
- **Saudi Arabia-**
  - Saudi Arabia is setting up a $5 billion solar and wind energy plant to produce green hydrogen. On completion the plant will be the world's largest green hydrogen facility, producing 650 tons of green hydrogen.
- **India-**
  - During Budget 2021-22, FM launches the **National Hydrogen Energy Mission (NHEM).** The goal is to produce 175GW of green hydrogen by 2022. It has set aside Rs 1,500 crore for the mission.
- **7 global companies launch Green Hydrogen catapult initiative-**
  - World's leading green hydrogen companies unite to drive 50-fold scale-up in six years. The New initiative aims to reduce costs to below $2 per Kg, to transform energy across most carbon intensive industries, speeding the race to zero emissions.

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Way forward-
- Green Hydrogen must be cost-competitive with conventional fuels. To reduce overall hydrogen cost, research must focus on improving technologies related to compressing and storing hydrogen for automobiles.
- Electrolyser manufacturing and deployment must be scaled up from the current capacity of 0.3 GW to nearly 5,000 GW by 2050.
- India should focus on pilot projects to get better understanding of the usage.

13. Importance of Decentralised Approach in Tackling the Pandemic
Source: Indian Express
Syllabus: GS 3 – changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.
Synopsis:
The first wave of Covid 19 highlighted the importance of a local and decentralised approach in tackling the adverse impact of the Pandemic. The government should focus on this approach to minimize the vulnerabilities for the poor and marginalized in the second wave.

Background:
- Under the second wave of Covid 19 pandemic, the marginalised and vulnerable people are craving for the government's support.
- The pandemic struck the country in 2020 and highlighted the poor condition of India's economic system. This was followed by a series of lockdowns that brutally impacted the informal sector.

Dismal State of Indian Economy:
- 90% of the Indian economy is composed of the informal sector that provides no social security benefits or job security.
- Since 1991, there has been jobless growth" in the formal sector and the new liberalisation policies showed little respect to ecological needs.
- A surge in the size of the informal workforce has been occurred as:
  o State policies have been formulated to serve the interests of the capitalist/industrial class. This is proven as the richest 5 percent of Indians now earn as much as the remaining 95 per cent.
  o The caste, class, and gender discrimination in society doesn't allow social mobility.
  o Lack of governmental efforts to make agriculture a lucrative profession
  o Displacement of people due to dams, mining, express ways, etc. projects with poor or no rehabilitation
- Very few informal workers enjoy some degree of security. These include the ones whose resource base (land, nature, tools, etc.) is intact or those who are able to access the benefits of the MGNREGA scheme.
- Despite such poor conditions, some alternate local models provided a ray of hope for poor people.

Successful Alternate Local Models during the Pandemic:
- Dalit women of the Deccan Development Society (DDS) ensured sustained food access for numerous villages of Telangana in 2020.
- Community health systems in Sittilingi panchayat, Tamil Nadu played a pivotal role in reducing the Covid spread.
- In Assam, Farm2Food worked with several thousand students to continue local food growing in schools and communities.

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- ▪ Beejotsav Nagpur, the Gurgaon Organic Farmers' Market, and others ensured that farm produce reached a local consumer base. This averted economic collapse for thousands of farmers.

Lessons from these models:
- **Local Self-reliance and Localised exchange of goods** are more effective in giving livelihood security than encouraging inter-state migrations.
- The focus should be on **incentivizing local communities.** While the present focus is on big industry players producing household goods like soaps, footwear, furniture, etc.
  - o This will generate additional sources of livelihood apart from agriculture and would create cheaper goods.
- **Creation of buffer opportunities** is desirable to relieve the communities from undue stress in difficult times.
  - o For instance, Maati (a women's collective) has created a buffer of ecotourism for farmers and craftspersons in Uttarakhand.

Way Forward:
- The government should reconsider its current industry-centric approach.
  - o For instance, reconsidering the three farm laws which may give agricultural control to corporates. It will create an even bigger pool of exploitable labour.
  - o The model of Aatma Nirbhar Bharat needs reconsideration. It is actually increasing the control of distant markets and companies over people's lives.
- The focus must be on decentralized and localized models.
  - o For instance, Kerala's Kudumbashree programme enabled dignified livelihoods for several million women. This resulted in the rural revitalization and reduced outmigration.
- Further, the Local self-reliance has to go along with worker control over the means of production, more direct forms of democracy (swaraj), and struggles to eliminate casteism and gender discrimination. This would imply –
  - o Better implementation of 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendment to strengthen local democracy
  - o Better implementation of laws like the Forest Rights Act that provide greater ownership of forest resources to the tribals
    - ▪ In central India, some communities had legal control over surrounding forests, and mobilised towards adivasi swasashan (self-rule). They survived the COVID lockdown much better than those who did not have such control.

Adherence to the above steps will ensure economic security in one's own village and town. This would prevent millions from going back to insecure, undignified jobs in cities and industrial zones.

14. Issues in Pricing Mechanism of Covid-19 vaccines
Source: click here
Syllabus: GS 3
Synopsis: A single price for Covid-19 vaccines will fuel production and ensure efficient vaccination.
Introduction
Economists suggest market-based solutions for covid-19 vaccines due to their claimed efficiency. The market depends on the price mechanism and the forces of supply and demand.

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- Increased competition pushes up supply and pushes down prices. This combination leads to an efficient allocation of scarce resources.
- However, the Market mechanism works well, when there is no **externality** is associated with the good.
  - An externality occurs when the production or consumption of a good results in the cost or benefit to an unrelated third party.
- Vaccines have a positive externality because their use benefits the vaccinated person and also reduces transmission t0 others.
- Almost everyone ignores the full set of benefits from goods with positive/negative externalities. Thus, the market isn't the most suitable tool for the distribution of such goods.

How the new Vaccine policy could result in vaccine failure?

The government is not considering the large positive externality attached to vaccination. This may result in inefficiency in vaccine delivery.

- **Firstly,** manufacturers have to declare their prices in advance for their 50 percent supply to the open market. However, there **is no limit on the retail price** they would charge. This might result in **vaccine inequality.**
- **Secondly, low-income people are naturally prone to infect others** because of their nature of work. Low income has a higher negative externality and thus vaccinating them first is more beneficial to society. However, these **people cannot ordinarily afford the vaccine.**
- **Lastly,** when the market is allowed to deliver vaccines, richer people will be prepared to pay more and **will have better access.**
  - The market will **ignore those with lower purchasing power**, in spite of them having a higher chance of spreading the disease. The bigger the income difference between the two sections, the larger will be the degree of market failure.

What is the solution?

The new policy could lead to possible efficiency loss. The effective solution for addressing market failure is that a **single price can be paid to vaccine makers for all the doses that they supply**. The price should be high enough to fuel them to rapidly increase production.

- **The government will have to pay the vaccine maker** or the hospital managing the dose. The suggested solution is similar to the fertiliser subsidy, which is now paid to companies only after actual sales to farmers.
  - A subsidy is not paid on any bag unless the purchase, along with the farmer's biometric authentication and other details, is captured on a point-of-sale machine at the retail outlet linked to a central server.
- **The vaccine producer gets the full market price** after a person gets vaccinated. It will also ensure no deviation or grey market. It is in our own interest to get not just ourselves, but also others vaccinated.

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