

9pm

Compilation

June, 2021 (First Week)

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General Studies Paper - 1

General Studies - 1

1. Reason behind the decision to shift the National Museum

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 1 – Art & Culture and History of India

Synopsis:

The government is planning to shift the National Museum in Delhi to the North and South Blocks. This would serve the collection, comfort, and audience experience needs of the Museum in a better way.

Background:

- The National Museum in Delhi is a repository of India's rich history and proud heritage.
- However, now the government has planned to shift it to the North and South Blocks.

Why the national museum is being shifted?

- **Bigger space:** The new location is four and a half times bigger than the current space. This would enable **organizing bigger and better cultural events**. Bigger space would also allow hosting national and international travelling exhibitions, which is not possible in current space.
 - Advancement in technology has increased the speed of excavations in the country. This would generate greater artefacts in future which would **require bigger storage space**.
- **Enhanced display potential:** Current building only displays 6% of its 2 lakh cultural collections available with the museum. The new museum would enable the creation of additional galleries for **enhancing display potential**.
- **Expansion of National Museum Institute:** The new building would **enable the expansion of the National Museum Institute (NMI)**. The students of NMI would benefit from a large increase in laboratory, gallery and teaching facilities.
 - Further, it will allow incorporation of NMI's programmes in Museology, Art History and Conservation along with other programmes in Archaeology, Archival Studies and so on.
- **Vulnerable & old design:** The current building is of outdated design and more vulnerable to disasters and pests attacks.
- The move is in line with **international practices**. For instance, the Egyptian Government is planning to replace the crowded Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square in Cairo with an impressive Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza.

Way Ahead:

- There are certain [challenges associated with the National Museum](#). But, the revamped National Museum would become the foundation for a vibrant museum movement in India.
- The government should duly preserve the artefacts until the new building is completed. Upon completion, there should be careful movement of artefacts with safe packing and robust transportation facilities

General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies - 2

1. Effects of Pandemic on Young Healthcare Workers

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2

Synopsis: Attention needs to be given to the requirements of the most vulnerable members of the caregiving team i.e. young healthcare workers.

Introduction

young medical interns, postgraduates, nurses, physiotherapists, pharmacists, etc are the lowest steps in the hierarchy of training. It seems fair from an academic view and is according to any professional training path. However, this structure is apathetic for young Health care workers.

- Even before the pandemic, duty hour restrictions were not followed for young healthcare workers. Sleep-deprived postgraduates used to work for 100-hours in a week.
- The stipends provided to them are inconsistent. For example, Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh offer the lowest monthly stipends to first-year residents at Rs 35-37,000.

What are the adverse effects of the pandemic on young healthcare workers?

During the pandemic, most public hospitals had young interns, postgraduates, nurses, and technicians staff in fever clinics, wards, and ICUs. They were overworked by the huge volume of patients.

1. **Firstly, they are physically distressed by working for 8-12 hours** in a stuffy PPE suit and tightly-fitted face mask. One cannot even take a toilet break.
 - **It requires a tremendous cognitive effort to manage complex ventilator settings and drug interactions.** Especially when the patient is admitted to the Covid-19 ward with multiple co-morbidities.
2. **Secondly, as the second wave hit, hospitals increased their beds and ICU capacity. But the healthcare workers remained overstretched.** The burden further increased by poorly-informed public health measures and an increase in public frustration and indifference.
3. **Thirdly, the NEET postgraduate exams this year have been delayed.** The shortage of workers will continue to overburden them.
4. **Fourthly, the growing amount of disinformation on social media** which adds to distrust against doctors and nurses has left most trainees in an unfortunate position. They are defending their worth and the firmness of scientific evidence that updates medical practice.
 - **They also have to defend themselves against the several instances of violence** and abuse by patient attendees.
5. **Fifthly, all of these factors have taken a toll on the well-being of young trainees. They are away from their families** and the uncertainty about their safety amidst a global pandemic **affects their mental health.**
6. **Suicide has claimed the lives of students, interns, and postgraduates in the last year across the country.** Reasons were the stress of persistent duty hours, (some even suffering from severe conditions themselves).

The conclusion

- It is time we bring an end to our indifference towards young healthcare workers. There should be some amendments to the Epidemic Disease Act to protect frontline

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workers from exploitation. They should be provided with centrally-sponsored insurance schemes.

- Citizens must now speak out against the exploitation of young trainees. It should be a moral responsibility to end this toxic culture that feeds off public apathy.

2. Issues with Tarun Tejpal case judgment

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Synopsis: Tarun Tejpal case judgment needs to be overturned. Else, it will remain as a bad precedent that impedes the workplace safety of women.

Background

- Tarun Tejpal, the former Tehelka editor-in-chief was accused of sexually assaulting his female colleague.
- Followingly he was arrested and released on bail by the Supreme Court.
- Recently, an Additional Sessions Judge had acquitted Tarun Tejpal from charges of rape.
- The judgment transforms the accused into the victim and the survivor into the accused. The judgment has been criticized on the following grounds.
 - The court had dismissed the rape charges based on unfounded rationality.
 - Further, this judgment will be in history as an example of the worst kind of victim-blaming and shaming to benefit the accused.

What are the reasons for criticising the Tarun Tejpal case judgment?

- **First, the judgment is criticized for its unprecedented interpretation in support of the accused.**
 - **One**, the court denied accepting the victim as a sterling witness. It was stated that the survivor did not fit into the court's preconceived ideas of a rape survivor's behaviour.
 - This disregards the women's struggles that forced changes in law, in case law, and in approaches to victims of rape.
 - **Two**, even some evidence against the accused were ignored. Such as the accused's personal apology, the draft of an official apology, and the conversations recorded by the survivor with the senior woman officer negotiating on behalf of the accused.
 - The judgment holds that the apology and the statements made by the accused were not sent voluntarily. But that it was under pressure and intimidation by the survivor.
- **Second, violation of privacy.** Section 53A in the **Indian Evidence Act** rules out reference to past sexual history. However, the survivor was subjected to answer even intimate details of her life and her friendships.
- **Third, the judgment criminalizes the right of a survivor to approach activists and lawyers for their help.** Senior members of the Bar such as Indira Jaisingh were accused of doctoring and also of adding to incidents in support of the victim.

3. The Case of Caste-Based Violence against Women

Source: [Click Here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 – mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections

Synopsis:

The Supreme Court convicted the accused of rape under Section 376 of IPC (Indian Penal Code) in the recent Patan Jamal Vali v. State of Andhra Pradesh case. However, the conviction under the Prevention of Atrocities Act (PoA) was set aside. It shows insensitivity towards the recognition of caste-based violence against women in India.

Background:

- In **Patan Jamal Vali v. State of Andhra Pradesh case**, the trial court and the High Court had sentenced the accused to life imprisonment. He was found guilty of rape under Section 376 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and under Section 3(2)(v) of the PoA Act.
 - Both of them viewed a connection between the caste, gender, and disability of the woman as she was a 22-year-old blind Dalit woman.
- However, the Supreme Court diverted from this view. It found the accused guilty of rape under section 376 but not under Section 3(2)(v) of the PoA Act.

About SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 or PoA Act:

It was enacted to protect the marginalized communities against discrimination and atrocities.

It was amended in 2015 to specifically recognise more atrocities against Dalit and Adivasi women including sexual assault, Devadasi dedication, etc.

Section 3(2)(v) imposes a punishment of life imprisonment on a non-SC/ST person who has committed an offense under IPC on SC/ST person. However,

The offense should have a minimum punishment of 10 years and

It should be committed against the victim on the ground that such a person is from an SC/ST community.

The section was amended in 2015, to change the phrase “on the ground that such a person is a member of SC/ST” to “**knowing that such person** is a member of SC/ST”.

Analyzing the judgment:

Positive Aspect:

- It **recognised the intersectional discrimination** faced by women on the grounds of sex, caste, and disability. This recognition would help the judges to take into account the multiple marginalities that the victim faced.
 - Intersectional discrimination arises when the identity of a woman intersects with her caste, religion, disability, and sexual orientation. Due to this, she may face violence and discrimination on two or more grounds.
- The court also laid down directions to train judges, the police, and prosecutors to be sensitized in such cases.

Negative Aspect:

- It set aside the conviction under the PoA Act like many other previous judgments of the Supreme Court.

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- In Asharfi v. State of Uttar Pradesh (2017), the court held that **the evidence and materials on record** did not show that the appellant had committed rape on the ground that the victim was a member of an SC community.
- In Khuman Singh v. State of Madhya Pradesh (2019), the court affirmed the fact that the victim was a member of an SC community. However, there was no evidence to show that the offense was committed only on that ground and hence the conviction was set aside.
- The court in the current case stated that there was no evidence to establish whether it was caste, gender, or disability that led to the commission of the offence. Hence, it acquitted the accused under the PoA Act.

Why was Conviction under the PoA Act desired?

- **First**, the repeated setting aside of convictions under the PoA Act strengthens the allegations that the law is misused by marginalised sections.
- **Second**, the high acquittal rate motivates the dominant communities for continuing atrocities on the SC/ST community. As seen in the recent Hathras rape case, 2020. Concludingly, we can say that the judgment was a missed opportunity for the court to use intersectionality to uphold the conviction under the PoA Act. Further, it should have at least referred the matter to a larger bench in order to attain clarity over the critical elements that determine conviction under PoA Act.

4. Indian Model presents a viable solution to Israel-Palestine Conflict

Source: [Click Here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 – India and its neighbourhood- relations

Synopsis:

The Israel-Palestine conflict has been going on for almost a century now. The recent escalation took place on 11th May and took the lives of many people on both sides. Experts believe that both countries should adopt a peaceful solution by drawing inspiration from the Indian Model of coexistence.

Background:

- The recent 11th May 2021 encounter between Hamas and Israel started a proxy war between the two sides. They fought for 11 days until a ceasefire was declared on 21st May 2021.
- The encounter is neither the first nor likely to be the last of its kind. The conflict has been going on and off for almost a century now.
 - Both the parties claim their control on religious grounds. The holy land of Jerusalem is home to the three religions of Abrahamic monotheism, viz., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Brief History of Israel-Palestine Issue:

Year	Event
1917	British expressed official support for a Jewish “national home” in Palestine under the Balfour Declaration.
1947	The UN gave a partition plan for independent Jewish and Arab states in Palestine. This was accepted by Jews but not by Arabs.
1948	The Jewish declaration of Israel’s independence induced surrounding Arab states to attack. At the end of the war, Israel controlled around 50 percent more territory than originally envisioned in the UN partition plan. The country did Nakba (a Holocaust) on

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	the Palestinian people and expelled about 80% of Arabs from its territory. Jordan controlled the West Bank and Jerusalem's holy sites, and Egypt controlled the Gaza Strip.
1964	The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed as the national representative of the Palestinian people.
1967	A six-day war took place between Israel and Arab states. After the war, Israeli forces seized the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank & East Jerusalem from Jordan, and Sinai Peninsula & Gaza strip from Egypt.
1973	The Yom Kippur War took place between Israel and a coalition of Arab states led by Egypt and Syria. The victory of Israel made it certain that the country is here to stay for a long time.

Looking at the vicious cycle of violence, many experts have suggested the adoption of the Indian Model of coexistence by both parties.

What is the Indian Model of Coexistence?

- It is based on the principle of democracy and secularism.
- It accommodates religious, ethnic, linguistic, and other diversities through nonviolent discourse.

Why should the Indian Model be adopted?

1. **First**, it would **bring lasting peace to the region**. Because the model would be formulated on the principle of the mutual bargain. This would keep in mind the interests of Jews as well as Palestinians.
2. **Second**, the model has been successful in keeping India strong and united despite having huge diversity. The diversity and region of the Israel-Palestine is much smaller and hence, there is a **higher probability of accommodating sectional interests**.
3. **Third**, both **Hamas and Israel are here to stay for a long time**. Further use of violence has not yielded desired results in the past.
4. **Fourth**, the other alternative i.e the **European model of annihilation** of natives has not delivered fruitful outcomes in the past. The latest being the unsuccessful attempt by Nazis to dominate the jews in Germany.
5. **Fifth**, considering the current positions, **the probability of creating two states as per 1967 boundaries** is almost impossible.
6. Palestinians are sparsely spread over the land in scores of non-contiguous pockets. That makes a cohesive state unviable.
 - Further Israel would be required to free a significant amount of occupied territory in order to realise the 1967 border. This is unlikely to happen in the future.

In a nutshell, the Indian model will help in creating a modern democratic state with equal rights and opportunities for everyone.

5. How govts can support Covid Orphans?

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

Synopsis: Short, medium- and long-term solutions are needed for the care and protection of covid orphans.

Vulnerability of Children due to the impact of Pandemic

Children's safety, health, holistic development, and even their very futures are at risk. For instance,

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- Many children are in danger of being trafficked or forced into child labor.
- Teenage girls are at risk of being pushed into child marriage.
- Many suffer exclusion, marginalisation, abuse, and even violence owing to Poverty.
- Large numbers of children are being cut off from formal education.
- Many children are orphaned due to loss of their parents.

How govt can support covid orphans?

Short term solutions

1. **First**, orphaned children should be allowed to be in kinship care with extended family rather than putting them in institutional stay for longer periods.
 - In this regard, the **Child Welfare Committee** should consider the wishes of the child, and the ability of the family members to care for them.
2. **Second**, fake messages about adopting “**Covid orphans**” should be firmly dealt by law enforcement agencies. Foster care and adoption of children who have lost parents to Covid-19 should take place only through the legal process.
3. **Third**, Meal supplementation through anganwadis and schools, growth monitoring of young children. Also, counseling of pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers should continue.

Midterm solutions

1. **One**, need to plan for a possible third wave of Covid-19 and its Impact on Children.
 - Children with mild-to-moderate cases of Covid-19 infection should be allowed to stay at home, with careful monitoring of their condition.
 - For children who need hospitalisation, a parent or guardian must be permitted to be with them.
 - **Child protection staff** must be positioned at hospitals to help with children who are in the care of child services.
2. **Two**, Children will need support to process their grief and recover from the loss of lives. For this, **Grief and trauma counsellors** will need to be identified and trained in districts.

Long-term solutions

1. **One**, government policy support for ‘**Covid orphan**’. Free education, access to free healthcare, monthly allowance, a mentorship Programme and fixed monetary support when they become adults should be considered.
2. **Two**, the post-pandemic curriculum should encourage children to share and reflect on their learning on emotional strength, maturity, and resilience that they witnessed during the Pandemic.
3. **Three, investments in infrastructure for children’s development.** The construction and renovation of anganwadis, schools, rural libraries, primary health centres and subcenters should be prioritised

6. Challenges of India’s COVID Diplomacy 2.0

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Synopsis: India’s Covid Diplomacy 2.0 is focused on managing many challenges. The majority of these challenges arise due to Covid mismanagement.

Read– [Proactive Diplomacy](#)

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Background

- During the first wave of the pandemic, India's Covid-19 diplomacy was focused on coordinating exports of COVID-19 medicines. Further, it focussed on the repatriation of Indians from abroad under '**Vande Bharat Mission**' and exporting vaccines worldwide under '**Vaccine Maitri**'.
- However, now, during the 2nd wave, the **focus of India's diplomacy or Covid Diplomacy 2.0 has changed** due to Covid mismanagement.
- Covid mismanagement has been the reason for Vaccine shortages in India. Three factors are responsible for this,
 - The failure of the Government to plan and place procurement orders in time.
 - The failure of the two India-based companies to produce vaccine doses they had committed to.
 - MEA's focus on exporting, not importing, vaccines
- Owing to Covid mismanagement strategies, The Ministry of External Affairs has had to deal with many challenges.

What are the challenges facing India's Covid Diplomacy 2.0?

- **First**, the most urgent task for Indian diplomats was to deal with **oxygen and medicine shortages**. The Ministry of External Affairs has completed the task of bringing in supplies in a timely manner, and with success.
- **Second**, the challenge of dealing with **vaccine shortages** in India.
- Currently, India is looking to the U.S. for help to manage the vaccine shortages in India. Multiple options have been worked out to boost vaccine supply with the help of the U.S.
 - One, requesting the U.S. to share a substantial portion of its stockpile of **AstraZeneca doses**.
 - Two, requesting the U.S. to release more **vaccine ingredients** that are restricted for exports.
 - Three, to buy more stock from the three U.S. manufacturers, Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johns
 - Four, to encourage the **production of these vaccines in India**.
- However, every option has its own challenges. For instance,
 - One, The U.S. government is holding up its **AstraZeneca exports** until it's own United States Food and Drug Administration approves them.
 - Two, the U.S policy on releasing vaccine ingredients and components has not changed. Although it has supplied a small amount of vaccine ingredients and components.
 - Three, the Production of Johnson & Johnson single-dose vaccines in India will take time.
 - Four, even buying vaccines directly has its own challenges.
 - The U.S. companies are seeking a waiver on the need for bridge-trials prior to clearance as well as **Emergency Use Authorisation** prior to supplying them that goes against India's principles.
 - Further, the **U.S. manufacturers want centralised orders**, with payments up-front. It will go against the center's decision to decentralize vaccine procurement.
- **Third**, Indian diplomats are faced with the challenge of convincing countries for a **temporary TRIPS waiver** at WTO. But, since WTO works on the basis of consensus, getting a Waiver on Intellectual Property rights will be a time taking process.
- **Fourth**, regaining trust for India's vaccine and pharmacy exports among neighbouring countries after the **Vaccine collapse** is a big challenge ahead. For instance, Bhutan was solely dependent on India for Vaccines was asked to arrange vaccines for themselves.

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India's neighbors have now sought help from China and the U.S. to complete their vaccination drives.

- **Fifth**, understanding the pathways of emergence” of SARS-CoV2 is significant to tackle the future Covid waves.
 - WHO has listed four possibilities **Direct zoonotic transmission, an intermediate host, cold chain or transmission through food, or a laboratory incident.**
 - The fourth possibility of being a laboratory incident has gained prominence after scientists and agencies around the world are calling for more research and transparency from China.
 - India is one of the largest victims of Covid19. Thus, it should seek for a more definitive answer at the global and demand accountability.

Way forward

- India should raise its voice for a stronger convention to regulate any research that could lead, by accident or design, to a pandemic.
- It is necessary to revamp the **1972 Biological Weapons Convention** to institute an implementation body to assess treaty compliance and build safer standards for the future.

7. Child labour in India- Need of Effective Policy making and programmatic interventions

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Synopsis: India needs to address the causative factors for Child labor through effective Policymaking and programmatic interventions. It should aim at the elimination of child labor in all its forms by 2025.

Background

- The Pandemic has amplified the contributing factors for Child labor in India. For instance, School lockdown, increasing unemployment, etc.,
- However, not all the factors that contribute to child labour were created by the pandemic. Most of them were pre-existing and have been exposed or amplified by it.
- According to **Census 2011 reports**, India has 10.1 million working children in the age group of 5-14 years.
- Out of this, 8.1 million are in rural areas, mainly engaged as cultivators (26%) and agricultural laborers (32.9%).
- Child labour causes long-term and devastating consequences on child's education, their skill acquisition, and their future possibilities to overcome the **vicious circle of poverty.**
- Effective Policymaking and programmatic interventions can save children from the misery of Child labor.

How right policymaking and programmatic interventions can reduce the instance of Child labour?

- Child labour in India decreased in the decade 2001 to 2011 owing to right combination of policy and programmatic interventions.
- Policy interventions such as (MGNREGA) 2005, the Right to Education Act 2009, and the Mid-Day Meal Scheme have helped working Children in receiving formal education.

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- By Ratifying International Labour Organization **Conventions Nos. 138 and 182** in 2017, the Indian government further demonstrated its commitment to eliminate child labour.
- India also has a dedicated online portal (pencil.gov.in) for effective enforcement of child labour laws.
- However, owing to the Pandemic, the rate of reduction has slowed by two-thirds in recent years.

What are the factors that need to be addressed to eliminate Child labor in India?

- **Increase in 'out of school' children:** UNESCO estimates that around 38.1 million children are "out of school".
- **Economic crisis:** The economic contraction and lockdowns lead to income reductions for enterprises and workers, many of them in the informal economy.
- **Socioeconomic Challenges:** caused by the return of migrant workers has compounded the problem.
- **Issues in the Indian Economy:** India experienced slower economic growth and rising unemployment even before the pandemic.
- **'Digital divide':** Lack of access to the internet, Digital devices have forced challenges in distant learning and online learning for children. According to the NSS Report titled **'Household Social Consumption on Education in India'** only 24% of Indian households had access to an Internet facility.
- **Other reasons:** increased economic insecurity, lack of social protection and reduced household income, children from poor households Children are being pushed into child labor.

Way forward

- Strategic partnerships and collaborations involving government, employers, trade unions, community-based organizations, and child labor families can reduce the menace of child labor in India.
- The government needs to reinforce its commitment to protect children from unacceptable forms of work. It will ensure achieving **Sustainable Development Goal 8.7**. (Ending child labour in all its forms by 2025)
UN's declaration of 2021 as the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour will ensure that the world countries will take swift actions against Child Labour.

8. Twin challenge of COVID-19 Pandemic and Non-communicable diseases

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

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

Synopsis – There is a correlation between Non-Communicable Diseases [NCD] mortality rates and COVID-19 case fatalities. Government should focus on reducing the impact of Non-Communicable Diseases(NCD).

Introduction-

- Studies showed that over **70 per cent of mortalities associated with COVID are due to underlying non-communicable diseases (NCD)** like diabetes, cardiovascular ailments, and cancer.
- Prevention and control of NCDs have played a crucial role in the COVID-19 response.
 - **For example-** India's previous efforts to minimize NCD-related deaths have resulted in lower Covid-19 case fatality rates.

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- At 1.16 percent, India's COVID case fatality rate is approximately half that of the world average of 2.17 percent.
- Every 10% reduction in the underlying NCD mortality rate results in a 20% reduction in COVID fatality rates.

What is India's NCD strategy?

India developed a multi-sector NCD action plan to reduce the number of global premature deaths from NCDs by 25% by 2025.

Major initiatives-

- **Strengthening health care system-**
 - **Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat scheme** – The government would invest around Rs 64,000 crore in rural and urban health and wellness Centers [HWC] as part of this programme.
 - Around 1,20,000 PHCs being converted into HWCs to provide primary care for NCD.
- **Providing financial protection –**
 - **PM's health insurance scheme** – The initiative covers 100 million of the most vulnerable population. It reduces out-of-pocket expenditures on health by expanding the scope of primary healthcare to include screening and diagnosis of NCD like CVD, cancer, and chronic respiratory diseases.
- **To address household air pollution –**
 - **PM Ujjwala Yojana** – The use of LPG instead of polluting wood in 90 million households has reduced the risk of the chronic lung diseases and cancer that women were exposed to.
- **Suggestions to tackle the twin challenges of the COVID pandemic and NCD morbidities**
- Ensuring universal access to screening for NCDs.
- Using Artificial Intelligence with telemedicine to continue healthcare for NCD patients during lockdown.
- **Need to put focus on enhancing care policies for prevention and treatment,** particularly in low- and middle-income countries to meet their UN SDGs to reduce NCD mortality by a third by 2030.

Way forward-

Achieving the SDG target by reducing one-third of premature mortalities due to NCD will make India more resilient to future viral pandemics. Thus, India must strengthen its health infrastructure through the Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat programme.

9. Need of Transparency in Covid related Policies

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS- 2

Synopsis: Government should ensure transparency in the policies related to the Covid-19 pandemic in India. Official privacy on pandemic policies intensifies a crisis.

Introduction

The government created the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for COVID-19 (NEGVAC) in August 2020. It is a central agency to take decisions on all matters related to vaccine administration and rollout.

- The details of the NEGVAC's meetings were asked under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. The Health Ministry responded that it does not know where the concerned documents are.

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- The information about the dates and minutes of meetings of other task forces constituted to deal with the pandemic was denied. The reason stated was “The information is not in the public domain”.
 - The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the ICMR and Bharat Biotech for the rollout of Covaxin was also not provided.
- Such privacy runs through the full range of COVID-19- related matters. This includes vaccine manufacturing, pricing decisions, lockdown planning and running of the ₹10,000 crore-plus PM CARES fund. The officials are keeping the pandemic and vaccine policies a secret by avoiding the RTIs.

Implications of Secrecy

- The government is denying information on important policies and decisions.
Opacity serves as a cover for over-centralization and misgovernance.
- **Fourthly**, effective planning and management cannot happen in an opaque setting. As per experts, the Covid-19 related death toll also increased because of mismanagement and lack of preparation.
- **Confidentiality is reducing the ability of scientists, public health, and policy experts to give feedback and suggestions to the government.** Over 900 scientists have appealed to the Prime Minister for access to information and data.
- Amartya Sen wrote about famines in colonial India that mass hunger and death do not occur where information flows freely.

Way forward

- Sections 4 and 7 of the RTI Act provide for proactive and urgent disclosures where there are consequences for life and liberty.
- The Supreme Court should order the government to suo motu reveal information related to COVID-19 policies under the above provisions.

10. Government Amended Pension Rules for Central Civil Services

Synopsis- Center has amended [pension rules](#) for Civil services. Restrictions on government servants before and after retirement under CCS conduct rules.

Amendment in pension rules and its consequences-

- The Centre has amended pension rules for civil servants [working in organizations mentioned in the Second Schedule of the RTI Act].
- **It restricts former officials of security and intelligence organizations under the 2nd Schedule of the RTI Act from writing anything without prior clearance. Such information includes;**
 - The domain of the organization, including reference or information about any personnel and his designation.
 - Information relating to their expertise or knowledge gained by virtue of working in that organization.
 - Sensitive information that might endanger India’s sovereignty and integrity, [security](#), geopolitical, scientific, or economic interests, or its relationship with a foreign state.
- **The Second Schedule of the RTI Act includes 26 organizations, including**
 - IB, Research and Analysis Wing, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Central Economic Intelligence Bureau, Directorate of Enforcement, NCB, Aviation Research Centre, Special Frontier Force, BSF, CRPF, ITBP, CISF, NSG, Assam Rifles, SSB, CID and Andaman, and Nicobar.

Consequences of the amendment-

- The amendment means that pension can be withheld or withdrawn if the pensioner disobeys the said rules.

Why center has amended the rule?

There are some incidents where some high profile retired police and intelligence agency officials have sensitive **revealed information** in books. Or they **regularly write columns in newspapers and magazines**.

As a result, the Centre has amended the pension rule to prohibit retired officials from publishing information without prior clearance.

What restrictions are government employees under CCS Conduct Rules while in service?

- **Rule 7** – It restricts them from resorting to or abetting any form of strike or coercion.
- **Rule 8** – It restricts them from owning or participating in the editing or management of any newspaper or media.
 - If they write or speak in public media, they **shall at all times make it clear that the opinions expressed are their own and not that of the Government**.
- **Rule 9** – Restricts them from making statements of fact or opinion in writing or in a telecast or a broadcast that **criticize any current or recent policy or action of the Central Government or a State Government**.

What about political activity while in service?

- The Conduct Rules bars government servants from being associated with any political party and from taking part or assisting any political activity.
- Every government employee shall at all times maintain political neutrality.
- Every government employee commits himself to and upholds the supremacy of the Constitution and democratic values.

But after retirement, they can join politics and there is no cooling-off period. However, rules restricts a pensioner from any commercial employment for one year after retirement.

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

11. Lessons from Naomi Osaka Episode

Source: [Click Here](#)

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

Synopsis:

The withdrawal of Naomi Osaka from the French Open has raised the issue of the mental well-being of the athletes. The situation exposes the deep pressure through which an athlete has to go for fulfilling its commercial obligations.

Background:

- The world number 2 tennis player (Naomi Osaka) has withdrawn from the recent French Open tournament.
- The withdrawal was on account of extreme mental stress and anxiety through which the athlete was going since the 2018 US Open tournament.

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Understanding the issue:

- Naomi wrote about the compulsion to attend post-match press conferences four days before the onset of the French open tournament.
- Later, she skipped her first post-match conference and was fined \$15000.
- Subsequently, a joint statement of 4 great slams threatened her with defaults and suspensions in future tournaments.
- However, this statement backfired, and she withdrew from the tournament on account of severe mental stress posed by press conferences.

Lessons from this episode:

- **First**, the issue of mental stress and anxiety is present in almost every sporting event.
- **Second**, the organizers' insistence on media interaction may leave a deep impact on the mental well-being of an athlete.
 - The media doesn't shy away from asking personal questions for raising the TRPs in their interview. This generates higher revenues but impairs the mental health of athletes.
- **Third**, there are many athletes who are not as wealthy as Naomi. They are unable to quit the tournament and continue to face repeated mental stress.
- **Fourth**, the instance shows the existence of a disconnect between how critics and spectators interpret the sport's nature and what it actually is. The instance has once again proved that all that glitters is not gold.

Way Forward:

- The rules pertaining to press conferences should change in an ever-evolving sport.
 - The focus should be on making the process more player-friendly and nurturing a connection with journalists based on trust and empathy.
- Further, the issue presents an opportunity to augment conversation surrounding players' mental health.

12. Timely Implementation of Relief Schemes for Children is desired

Source: [Click Here](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 – Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States

Synopsis:

The government has announced numerous relief measures for supporting the children who lost their parents in the pandemic. This would give them some cushion for survival if the timely implementation of relief measures takes place.

Background:

- The pandemic has brutally impacted every section of society, but the situation of children losing their parents is most severe.
- The government has announced some relief measures by withdrawing funds from the PM CARES fund. However, the modalities of these measures were yet to be formulated.

Data on the Dismal State of Children:

- As per the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights', nearly 10,000 children are in need of immediate care and protection.
- These include 1,742 children who lost both parents, 7,464 who have lost one parent, and 140 who have been abandoned from March 2020 to May 29, 2021.

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Government Measures for Children:

- A corpus of Rs 10 lakh for each child would be created using PM CARES money when he or she reaches 18 years of age.
 - This would be used to give monthly financial support through a fixed deposit in the name of the child, from 18 years of age for the next five years. This would take care of his or her personal requirements during the period of higher education.
 - On reaching the age of 23 years, he or she will get the corpus amount as one lump sum for personal and professional use.
- The child will be assisted in obtaining education loans for professional courses and higher education in India as per the existing Education Loan norms. The interest on this loan will be paid by the PM-CARES.
- **For children under 10 years-** the child will be given admission to the nearest Kendriya Vidyalaya or in a private school as a day scholar.
 - If the child is admitted to a private school, the fees as per the RTE norms will be given from the PM CARES. The PM-CARES will also pay for expenditure on uniforms, textbooks, and notebooks.
- **For children between 11-18 years-** the child will be given admission to any Central government residential school such as Sainik School, Navodaya Vidyalaya, etc.
 - In case the child continues to live with grandparents or a guardian, then he/she would be admitted to the nearest Kendriya Vidyalaya or in a private school as a day scholar.
- **Further, all Covid-19 orphans** will be enrolled as beneficiaries under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme (PM-JAY) with a health insurance cover of Rs 5 lakhs. The premium amount for these children, till the age of 18 years, will be paid by PM-CARES.
- A sum of **Rs 10 lakh per district for non-institutional care** of Covid orphans would be awarded by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
 - The amount would be distributed by the respective District Magistrates as per the requirement of the Integrated Child Protection Scheme.

Way Ahead:

- The government needs to enhance the pace of their work as any delay can push the children into trafficking and the flesh trade. Healthy cooperation between the center and state governments is also desired.
- The government should also lay down the processes and establish monitoring mechanisms for initiating rescue and relief work. Further, there should be a continuation of the estimation work in order to identify the requisite number of beneficiaries.
 - For this, sincere implementation through committed staff, and use of existing systems such as 1098 for periodic identification of children is desired.

13. Growing Centralisation of Power Erodes Federal Structure

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure,

Synopsis: The tendency to centralise power by the Union government is increasing. It will alter the basic structure of Federalism in India.

Background

- Recently, a NITI Aayog Member, asserted that it was the lack of centralisation that has led to poor management of the ongoing COVID-19 vaccination drive.

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- The claim reinforces the practice of the growing centralisation of power practiced by the current union government.
- In this article we will discuss the challenges posed due to Centralisation of Power in the Economic, Political and Social sphere.

How the central government is affecting Political federalism?

There is a growing incursion of the Union government into sectors where State governments have a primary responsibility. For instance,

1. **One**, there has been increasing centralisation in resource allocations and welfare interventions. For instance, GST.
 - This has negatively impacted the finances of State governments, especially after the implementation of Goods and Services Tax (GST).
2. **Two**, the Centre has been encroaching into domains under State government control through **centrally sponsored schemes** in sectors such as education and health.
 - For example, NEET exam, meddling with the appointments of vice-chancellors in universities funded and run by State governments etc.,
 - It subverts the affirmative action policies developed at the regional level in response to local political demands.
3. **Three**, the Centre is increasingly ignoring elected representatives of State governments. It is holding direct meetings with State secretaries and district collectors on issues that are primarily under State control.
 - It subverts the Constitutional arrangement of Power-sharing between Centre and State.

How the central government is encroaching into Economic federalism?

- **Nepotism and crony capitalism.** It is evidently visible that big businessmen are getting benefits from the government.
- **Apathy towards small businesses.** The centre had strongly supported the Indian big business from global competition by sidelining the Regional **Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**. In contrast, the government has eroded the power of small businesses through GST and the call for a single national market.
- **Restricting the political funding for regional parties.** Regional parties rely on region-specific rent-thick sectors for political funding, such as mining and real estate. The ruling party has curtailed this by leveling corruption allegations and the use of central agencies against businesses supporting the regional parties. This weakens the ability of regional parties to compete with the ruling party electorally.

How the central government is encroaching into the social fabric of states?

- Besides the legal-constitutional aspects of federalism, it is diversity in the cultural foundation of regions that sustains Indian federalism.
- However, the center is trying to homogenize Indian culture. Markers of regional identities and regional socio-cultural practices are now interpreted as a pan-Indian Hindu tradition.
- For instance, Tamil, which has been a symbol of an anti-Vedic tradition, is now seen as a segment of that Hindu past. While Tamil Muslims and Christians becoming outsiders.

A federal coalition that looks beyond the legal-constitutional aspects of federalism is needed to preserve the idea of a plural India.

14. Lessons From EU's efforts to end Vaccination gap

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Synopsis: EU is helping other low-income countries to get access to vaccines. The same needs to be done by other countries to close the vaccination gap.

Background

- A widely vaccinated world population is the only way to end the pandemic. Otherwise, the Covid virus will undergo multiple mutations, and it will undermine the effectiveness of existing vaccines.
- Vaccination is also a prerequisite for lifting the restrictions that are depriving our economies and freedoms.
- Given the importance of vaccination for all, it is worrisome to know that, **Vaccination apartheid** exists.
- Till now, only 2.1% of Africans had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- If the vaccination gap persists, it is likely to reverse the trend in recent decades of declining poverty and global inequalities.
- In this context, the EU's lead role in helping low-income and middle-income countries to get vaccinated is a shining example of global solidarity.
- Other developing countries should follow the EU's path to ending the Pandemic globally.

What are the efforts made by the EU to supply vaccines to low-income countries?

1. **First, at an ideological level, the EU has rejected the idea of 'Vaccine nationalism'.** The EU has been vaccinating its own population while exporting large volumes of vaccines and contributing substantially to the roll-out of the vaccine in low-income countries.
2. **Second, contribution through Research and development.** EU's new generation of **mRNA vaccines** contributed significantly to the large-scale production of Vaccines. Till now, The EU has exported 240 million doses to 90 countries.
3. **Third, support through multilateral institutions. For instance,** The EU has been the main contributor to the COVAX facility. It enables poorer countries to access vaccines. Also, around one-third of all COVAX doses delivered so far has been financed by the EU.
4. **Fourth, through aid and Commercial channel. For instance,** European industrial partners have committed to deliver 1.3 billion doses of vaccines before the end of 2021 to low-income countries at no-profit, and to middle-income countries at lower prices.
5. **Fifth, funding to African nations to boost manufacturing capacity in Africa for vaccines. For instance,** Team Europe had allocated €1 billion funding from the EU budget and European development financial institutions. It aims to boost manufacturing capacity in Africa by working along with African partners.

Way forward

- All countries must avoid restrictive measures that affect vaccine supply chains. For example, Vaccine Nationalism, restriction in sharing key ingredients required to manufacture vaccines, etc.,
- Further, countries need to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and technology to boost vaccine production through a Voluntary licensing mechanism.

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- Also, the mechanism of **compulsory licensing** guaranteed under the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement and the 2001 Doha Declaration can be enforced.

Health is a global public good. To close the vaccination gap, global health cooperation is needed as foreseen by the **Rome Declaration** recently adopted at the **Global Health Summit**.

15. India needs to strengthen the rural health infrastructure

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Synopsis: Rural health infrastructure (SHCs, PHCs and CHCs) needs to be Modernised to cater to the health needs of the 65% of the population living in rural areas

Background

- According to **info**, out of 139 crore population of India, at least 91 crore people are living in 649,481 villages.
- The second wave of Covid-19 had impacted the rural community the most.
- Further, there is a growing incidence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension, diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular diseases in rural India. As per WHO, NCDs cause nearly about 5.87 million (60%) of all deaths in India.
- Accordingly, there is a need to focus on strengthening the existing rural health infrastructure.
- Prioritising the development of the rural health network (SHCs, PHCs and CHCs) will help in the effective delivery of Health services to rural people.

Inadequate and poor health infrastructure in the rural areas

According to the fact shared by the Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare in the Rajya Sabha. India is having inadequate PHCs, CHCs, specialists, etc.

- **Inadequate primary health centres (PHCs):** India has only 25,743 primary health centres (PHCs) though the estimated requirement of PHC's in rural India is 29,337. (Shortfall of 3,594 units).
- **Inadequate community health centres (CHCs):** Against the requirement of 7,322 CHC's, rural India has only 5,624 community health centres (CHCs).
- **Inadequate specialists in CHC's:** Data on CHCs, show that, overall, there is a shortfall of 81.8% specialists as compared to the requirement for existing CHCs.
- **Inadequate infrastructure:** According to the **Human Development Report 2020**, India has eight hospital beds for a population of 10,000 people, while China has 40 beds for the same number of people.

Significance of rural health infrastructure in effective delivery of health Services

1. Rural health networks will help to treat the diseases at the primary level. Further, it will also help us save a lot of money and the resources being spent at tertiary level health care.
 - For instance, if our Sub-HCs work effectively, there will be less pressure on PHCs. If the PHCs function well, then there will be minimal pressure on CHCs and so on.
2. It will enable people's participation in ensuring better functioning of rural health services.
 - For example, in case of Haryana, **Swasthya Kalyan Samitis**, or SKSs were constituted for all CHCs, PHCs.

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- It helped health providers to engage with all kinds of rural community organisations (panchayats, gram Sabha, notified area committees, municipal bodies and non-governmental organisations) in minimising the adverse impact of the pandemic on rural life.

Suggestions to improve rural health infrastructure:

1. Rural health networks should have **access to the health data of people** in their respective areas. It will enable them to identify those likely to slip into the secondary or tertiary care zone.
2. Need to **conduct Regular health camps**. It will help us to identify those on the verge of developing tuberculosis, hypertension, diabetes or any diseases owing to their socio and economic conditions.
3. A CHC or referral centre should be **modernized with effective and adequate health infrastructure**. For example, A single CHC should have least 30 beds for indoor patients, operation theatre, labour room, X-ray machine, pathological laboratory, standby generators' etc.,

WHO states that ensuring accessibility, affordability and Quality are Key to achieve **Universal Health Coverage**. The government should strive to provide regular and comprehensive healthcare needs in rural areas guided by the World Health Organization (WHO)'s principle of [Universal Health Coverage](#).

16. Improper Comments on Bangladesh will impact India Bangladesh ties

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: India and its Neighborhood- Relations.

Synopsis: [India Bangladesh ties](#) are highly sensitive and based on Mutual trust and respect. Disregarding any nation by words or action by Indian leaders will be detrimental to the consolidation of bilateral ties.

Background

- Recently, the Indian Home minister made **derogatory statements with reference to Bangladesh**.
 - The home minister described illegal Bangladeshi immigrants as vermin. He even mentioned that he would push them into the Bay of Bengal.
- Such actions of political figures in India will have potential ramification in [consolidating bilateral ties with Bangladesh](#)

Issues and Challenges in India-Bangladesh ties

- There are inevitable bilateral problems between [India and Bangladesh of long duration](#). For example,
 - A **perennially favourable balance of trade** for India
 - **Drought and flood in the 54 transboundary rivers** flowing from India to Bangladesh
 - The **smuggling of goods and vulnerable human beings** across the approximately 4,100-kilometre land border.
 - **Presence of militant Islamist groups** such as Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami, that have linkages and support from outside Bangladesh.

Significance of Bangladesh to India

- The Bangladeshi government under Sheikh Hasina has been so supportive to India. For instance,

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- She has **maintained vigilant supervision** over Muslim fundamentalist terrorists as well as on Northeast militant movements sheltering in Bangladesh.
- She has **improved connectivity** between India and its Northeast by land, river and the use of Bangladeshi ports.
- Indian investments in Bangladesh have been encouraged. Moreover, around 100,000 Indian nationals now live and work in Bangladesh.

Suggestions to improve India Bangladesh ties:

- First, India should view the developments in Bangladesh with gratification. For example,
 - Bangladesh will shift from 'least developed' to 'developing country' status by 2026.
 - Bangladesh has made steady progress in human development indicators
- Second, responsible individuals from both countries must be actively discouraged from words and actions detrimental to the consolidation of the existing friendship.

17. Significance of the Kedar Nath Singh Judgment on Sedition

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions

Synopsis:

The significance of [Kedar Nath Singh judgment for sedition cases](#) was once again highlighted in the recent Vinod Dua sedition case. The 1962 judgment upheld Section-124A of the Indian Penal Code, but it significantly narrowed down the provision.

Background:

- The SC struck down a sedition case filed under Section-124 A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) against [journalist Vinod Dua](#).
 - The case was filed over Dua's comments on his YouTube channel in which he criticized the government.
 - He was charged under sections 124A (sedition), 268 (public nuisance), 501 (printing matter known to be defamatory) and 505 (statements conducive to public mischief) of the IPC.
- The SC ruled that **every journalist is entitled to protection under the Kedar Nath Singh judgment** and thereby dismissed the sedition charges.

What is Section 124A of IPC?

- [Sedition](#) is defined as any action that brings or attempts to bring contempt or hatred towards the government of India. Sedition cases are punishable with a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.
- It was inserted into IPC in 1870. The section was introduced initially to deal with increasing Wahabi activities between 1863 and 1870. These activities posed a challenge to the colonial government.

Facts of Kedarnath Singh v State of Bihar (1962) case:

- Kedar Nath was booked for sedition for a seditious speech during his rally at Begusarai.
- In his speech, he equated elected congress representatives with local goondas (goons). He called for taking back the rule through a general revolution and reducing

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capitalists, zamindars and Congress into ashes. The aim was to establish a government of the poor and the downtrodden people of India.

- He was convicted for sedition by a lower court, and later he appealed in SC over the **constitutional validity of Section 124A**. As per the appeal, Section-124A violated the right to free speech under Article 19 of the constitution.

SC's ruling in Kedar Nath case:

- It **upheld the constitutional validity** of Section-124A however it restricted its scope for misuse.
- **What constitutes sedition?** – It said that any act which has an effect of subverting the Government by **violent means** or creating public disorder would come within the definition of sedition.
- **What is not sedition?** – However, mere disapproval of the measures of government with a view to demanding their improvement or alteration by lawful means is not sedition.
- **Right to criticize:** the Court agreed that a citizen has a right to say or write whatever he likes about the Government, or its measures, by way of criticism or comment.
 - **Limitations:** Provided it does not incite people to **violence** against the Government established by law or with the intention of creating **public disorder**.
- The court deduced that Kedarnath's speech gave a general reference to revolution and the element of inciting violence against the government was absent. Therefore, he was acquitted of sedition charges.

18. India needs to replace frequent elections with One nation One election

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- **GS 2** – Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure

Synopsis – India should hold simultaneous elections (**One nation one election**) to tackle various challenges associated with frequent elections.

About One nation one election:

- It is the idea of synchronising the elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies. It can be achieved by **restructuring the current Indian election cycle**.

Challenges in frequent Elections

1. **Huge incalculable expenditure** to conduct elections. **For example-** the Bihar assembly election alone in 2015 cost about Rs 3000 crore.
2. **Frequent elections impact the delivery of essential services**. Such as,
 - a. Teachers lost teaching weeks on election duty.
 - b. Officers and vehicles from practically every other department are "requisitioned" for election duty.
 - c. Frequent elections also disrupt **essential public work** such as road construction, welfare scheme supervision, etc.
3. **Imposition of the Model Code of Conduct:** This will impact the governance and implementation of key policy initiatives.
4. **The efficiency of a politician doing public good is also reduced during the campaign.** This is because most of them are putting in 16-18 hours of work each day doing only rallies and campaigning. As a result, important meetings and decisions get postponed.

5. Further, there is also a huge cost **involved in deploying security forces** repeatedly during elections.

Challenges in holding One nation one election in India

- India had concurrent elections **for the first two decades**. The first general elections held simultaneously to Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assemblies of the States in October 1951.
- But in 1968 1969 and 1970, the cycle got disrupted due to the premature dissolution of some Legislative Assemblies.
This is the reason that some experts believe that if a government loses its majority in the House, it eventually leads to fresh elections and disrupt One nation one election in India.

Suggestions to conduct One nation one election

It is virtually impossible for a ruling party/coalition to lose numbers with the current **anti-defection law**. Even if they do, there are certain global legal provisions available to maintain the electoral cycle.

- Coupling the **'no-confidence motion'** along with the **'vote of confidence' in an alternative government**. This vote of confidence will also mention a leader to head it. After passing both of them (no-confidence motion and vote of confidence), the alternate government will head the government for the remaining term. This helps to maintain the fixed term.

Benefits of having Simultaneous Elections

- Reduced Financial cost of conduction Election
- Reduced Cost of repeated administrative restrictions
- Reduced visible and invisible costs of repeatedly deploying security forces
- Reduced campaign and finance costs of political parties.

Way forward

There is a need to calibrate and club the elections in a mature and sensible way. So that it could come to a situation where all [elections are held simultaneously](#).

19. [The Right to a fair trial and the Indian Evidence Act](#)

Source: [click here](#)

Syllabus: GS- 2

Synopsis: Acquittals in rape cases are often based on stereotypes about rape survivors and their past sexual history. But that has to change if India wants to ensure the Right to a fair trial.

Background

During the recent judgement by the Goa session's court in [Tarun Tejpal case](#) the court referred to the survivor's sexual history in graphic detail. Further, the judgement held the following things,

- The court denied accepting the victim as a sterling witness. It was stated that the survivor did not fit into the court's preconceived ideas of a rape survivor's behaviour.
- This disregards the women's struggles that forced changes in law, in case of law, and in approaches to victims of rape.

Can the court go into the details of a survivor's sexual history?

No. Doing so would be a **form of discrimination by the court.**

- It violates **Article 14's** guarantee of **equality before the law** and the **equal protection of laws.**
- **Article 15** of the constitution also forbids the state from **discriminating against citizens based on stereotypes related to their sex and gender.**

There have been many cases wherein the Supreme Court of India has warned against stereotyping rape survivors. This is because it not only violates their fundamental rights but also leads to **divergent results in sentencing.**

Was the sexual history of a survivor admissible in court in the past?

Yes.

- Under **Section 155(4) of the Indian Evidence Act**, a rape survivor's past sexual history used to be acceptable. The rape accused could state that the rape survivor was of immoral character and claim that she consented to the sexual acts.
 - Past sexual history was used to suggest that the survivor was immoral and thus not a trustworthy witness.
 - This **section was removed** in 2003 after recommendations in the **Law Commission of India's 172nd report.**

Significant cases which led to amendments in the Indian Evidence Act:

- In **Aparna Bhat & Ors. vs State of Madhya Pradesh case**, the Supreme Court warned of the dangers of typecasting rape survivors.
 - **Rape myths:** It mentioned the prevalent **rape myths** which include fixed notions of chastity, resistance to rape, having visible physical injuries, behaving a certain way, reporting the offence immediately etc.
 - If the survivor had agreed to similar acts in the past should be irrelevant. The SC directed courts **not to doubt a woman's testament** just because she was **sexually active.**
- In **the Mathura rape case (Tukaram vs Maharashtra, 1979)**, the Supreme Court released two policemen accused of raping a 14-year-old Adivasi girl in a police station. Stating that she was sexually active and considered her proof as "a tissue of lies"(Not considered her as a witness).
 - This verdict led to **the introduction of Section 114-A of the Evidence Act.** It applied in serious rape cases where the accused was a police officer or member of the armed forces.
- In **1996, in the Punjab v Gurmit Singh case**, the SC warned courts against making remarks about the rape survivor's character. It stated that a **woman who was sexually active could still refuse to consent.**
- In **2013, the JS Verma Committee, created after the Delhi 2012 rape case**, suggested that a past relationship between the accused and the victim should be inapt while deciding whether the victim consented.
- **The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013** united many of such judgements and recommendations into legal law.
 - **Section 53A** of the Evidence Act **stops courts from depending on evidence of the character of the victim.** Such as her prior sexual experience with any person to decide questions of consent in sexual assault cases.
 - **The 2013 Act also amended Section 146 so** that a rape survivor cannot be asked questions about her immoral character or prior sexual experience to prove consent.

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- **The 2013 amendment also introduced a fixed minimum sentence of seven years** imprisonment for rape (This is increased in 2018 to 10 years) and 10 years for serious rape.

How the 2013 amendment impacted the conviction rates in rape cases?

Studies show that conviction rates fell after the 2013 amendment. In a review of 1,635 rape judgements passed by Delhi trial courts between 2013 and 2018, the **conviction rate fell** from **16.11%** under the old law to **5.72%** under the new law. This is due to the following reasons. Such as,

- **Survivors were doubted because of varying statements** at several stages of the trial,
- Failure to **reveal details of the incident to anybody,**
- Delay in registering the complaint.

Conclusion

The rape stereotypes and dependence on past sexual history are damaging for rape survivors and the criminal justice system. The right to a fair trial under Article 21 states that cases should be decided on facts. Acquittals based on stereotypes impair the faith of the public in the criminal justice system.

General Studies Paper - 3

General Studies - 3

1. Highlights of 43rd GST Council Meeting

Source- [The Hindu](#)

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

Synopsis- Key recommendations made during 43rd GST Council meeting and why it is a missed opportunity.

Introduction

43rd GST Council Meeting took place recently. Several measures were announced however, they failed to inspire any hope of recovery from the disastrous impacts of 2nd wave of the pandemic.

Key recommendations during 43rd GST council meeting

- **GST Amnesty Scheme for small firms pending GST returns–**
 - The scheme has been recommended for reducing late fees. Now Taxpayers can file pending returns, avail benefits of the scheme, with reduced late fees.
- **Annual Return Filing** – The Council has recommended amending the CGST Act 2017. It allows for self-certification of reconciliation statements, instead of getting them certified by Chartered Accountants.
- **The Council exempts import duty on Covid-19 relief materials-** The GST Council extends the GST exemption granted on relief material received for free from abroad for donations to State-approved entities.
 - The period for availing of this exemption has also been extended to August 31.
 - The medicine for Black Fungus [Amphotericin-B] has also been included in the exemption list for tax-free imports.
- **GST Compensation Cess to remain the same** – Same formula as last year will be adopted in 2021 too. A rough estimate is that the Central Government will have to borrow Rs. 1.58 lakh crores and pass it on to the states.

Key points missed in 43rd GST council meeting

1. **There were no discussions on putting fuel- petrol, diesel under GST**, despite high petrol prices.
2. **The Council failed to provide an immediate tax break for critical pandemic relief supplies** despite States and industry pressing for waivers.
3. **Inadequate relaxation in GST amnesty scheme** – There is no waiver from interest payment available to businesses with a turnover of over ₹5 crores.

Way forward-

- It would be beneficial, if all businesses were given a complete waiver of late fees for pandemic hit months.
- Waiting until June 8 for a final decision on extra GST exemptions for COVID relief operations are waste of time, when each day's delay in providing relief hurts thousands.

2. Factors Affecting Growth of Block Chain technology in India

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs3: Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-technology, Bio-technology

Synopsis: There are many positive benefits in utilising blockchain technology. However, regulatory uncertainties in Policymaking have impeded the growth of Blockchain technology in India.

Background

- **Satoshi Nakamoto** created the most popular cryptocurrency, **Bitcoin**, in 2008, as a fully **decentralised, peer-to-peer electronic cash system**.
- Since then, Bitcoins have seen phenomenal growth in market value. For instance, Bitcoin, which was traded at just \$0.0008 in 2010, commands a market price of \$65,000 this April.
- Many newer coins were introduced since Bitcoin's launch, and their **cumulative market value touched \$2.5 trillion**. Their value has surpassed the size of the economy of most modern nations.
- Despite its increasing acceptance globally, India has followed its usual approach of **'bar what you can't understand, ban what you can't control'**.
- In 2018, the Reserve Bank barred our financial institutions from supporting crypto transactions, but the Supreme Court overturned it in 2020.
- Further, the government has circulated a **draft bill** outlawing all cryptocurrency activities. It has been under discussion since 2019.
- More recently, the Reserve Bank has announced the launch of a private blockchain-supported **official digital currency**, similar to China's **digital Yuan**.
- However, **launching official digital currency** is impractical, and shows a lack of understanding of this disruptive innovation.

Why India is hesitant to accept cryptocurrencies?

Though Cryptocurrencies have many advantages there are few concerns associated with them,

- **One, extreme volatility.** For example, China's recent crackdown on cryptocurrency wiped out a trillion US dollars from the global crypto market within a span of 24 hours.
- **Two, it can be used as an instrument for illicit activities,** including money laundering and terror funding as there are no regulations.

What is the significance of Blockchain technology?

The underlying technology of Cryptocurrencies is Blockchain technology. Blockchain network performs functions such as verification of transactions and contracts and the updating and maintenance of these records in the form of tamper-proof ledgers. It serves many purposes.

- **One,** currently, intermediaries (including banks, credit card, and payment gateways) draw almost 3 percent from the total global economic output of over \$100 trillion, as fees for their services. Integrating blockchain into these sectors could result in hundreds of billions of dollars in savings.
- **Two,** Blockchain can make every aspect of e-governance, judicial and electoral processes more efficient and transparent.
- **Three, it can make our digital space more redistributive and fairer. For instance,** Tech firms, including titans like Google and Facebook, derive most of their value from their multitude of users. Blockchain could enable these internet

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customers to receive micro-payments for any original data they share in the digital space including ratings, reviews, and images.

Despite its significance, regulatory uncertainty is hampering the growth of blockchain start-ups in India. For instance, blockchain start-ups worldwide received venture funding of \$ 2.6 billion. Whereas, in India, less than 0.2 percent of the amount the sector raised globally have gone into the Indian blockchain start-ups

Way forward

- India has been a late adopter in all the previous phases of the digital revolution. Like semiconductors, the internet, and smartphone technology (4G and 5G).
- Currently, we are witnessing the next phase in a digital revolution led by technologies like blockchain.
- Channelizing India's human capital, expertise, and resources supported with the right policies will help India to make the most benefit of it.

3. Traceability Provisions Under the new IT Rules will encroach into User's Privacy

Source: [Click Here](#)

Syllabus: GS 3 – role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges

Synopsis:

The significant social media intermediaries (including whatsapp) are unhappy with the traceability provision under the new IT rules. This would end the encryption feature on messaging platforms and would undermine users' privacy. This calls for reconsidering the concerning provisions of new rules.

Background:

- The Information Technology (Guidelines for Intermediaries and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 came into force on 26th May 2021.
- The social messaging platform (whatsapp) has moved to the Delhi High court against the new rules, especially the traceability provision.

What is Traceability Provision?

- It requires significant social media intermediaries to identify the first originator of the information on its platform if required by judicial order.
- A significant social media intermediary is one with more than 50 lakh registered users.

Why does the Government want to invoke traceability provision?

- It will use the provision as a tool of last resort for special situations.
 - This includes prevention, detection, investigation, prosecution, or punishment of an offense related to the sovereignty and integrity of India, child sexual abuse material, etc.
- As per the government, such usage would be in line with the Puttaswamy judgment.
 - The judgment demands that any restriction to the right of privacy must be necessary, proportionate, and should have safeguards against abuse.

Concerns associated with Traceability provision:

- **First**, the compliance will require Whatsapp to break its end-to-end encryption service that allows messages to be read-only by the sender and the receiver. Breaking this would simply violate a **user's privacy**.

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- **Second**, the companies are unable to understand the additional requirement of traceability provision. The government can already seek access to encrypted data under **Section 69(3)** of the IT Act. **Further, Rules 17 and 13 of the 2009 Surveillance Rules** require intermediaries to assist with decryption:
 - when they have the technical ability to do so and
 - when a law enforcement agency has no other alternative.
- **Third**, the new rules don't have any independent or judicial oversight. This would allow the government to seek any user's identity on vague grounds. This could **compromise the anonymity of whistle-blowers** and journalistic sources.

The Government needs to revisit its position on traceability commitments of intermediaries. It should revise the IT Act, 2000 in line with the international standards and pass the long-pending Data Protection Bill.

4. Road towards a Global Minimum Corporate Tax

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources

Synopsis:

The US has proposed a 15% [Global Minimum Corporate Tax](#) that will prevent tax avoidance by companies. The tax would be beneficial for India. But many countries will not accept the tax structure.

Background:

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.

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 the BEPS framework:

- 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.
- 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 note:**
- Addressing these concerns, On 12 October 2020, the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) released 'blueprints' on Pillar One and Pillar Two.
 - It aims to reach a multilateral consensus-based solution to the tax challenges due to the digitalization of the world economy.
 - **Pillar 1:** It addresses the issue of reallocation of taxing rights to all the countries
 - **Pillar 2:** This pillar aims to address all the remaining issues in the BEPS program.
- The US has recently put forward a proposal to impose a 15% Global Minimum Corporate Tax on companies in consonance with Pillar two.

What is Global Minimum Corporate Tax?

- It is a type of corporate tax. Under this, If a company moves some of its operations to another country having low-tax jurisdiction, then the company have to pay the difference between that minimum rate and whatever the firm paid on its overseas earnings.
- **For example**, assume Country A has a corporate tax rate of 20 percent and Country B has a corporate tax rate of 11 percent. If the global minimum tax rate is 15 percent. Consider a situation, where Company X is headquartered in Country A, but it reports income in Country B. Then Country A will increase the taxes paid by Company X. This is equal to the percentage-point difference between Country B's rate and the global minimum rate (15 percent)
In short, Company X will have to pay an additional 4 percent of the tax to Country A.

The rationale behind the 15% Global Minimum Corporate Tax proposal:

- The US aims to minimize tax incentives and force companies to choose a place in a particular country based on commercial benefits.
 - For example, It is intended to discourage American companies from inverting their structures and operate outside the US, due to the increase in the U.S. corporate tax rate.
- The proposal, if passed, will give other countries the right to **"tax back"**. For example, countries can tax,
 - Other jurisdictions have either not exercised their primary taxing right or
 - Have exercised it at low levels of effective taxation.

Challenges surrounding the proposal:

- **First**, the OECD was considering a 10-12% Global rate. A high rate of 15% may not be accepted by smaller countries like Ireland. Ireland charges a marginal rate of 12.5 %. They argue that a Global minimum tax would impair fiscal autonomy for smaller jurisdictions to compete with larger economies.
- **Second**, the US had earlier proposed a rate of 21% that would have generated greater revenues. However, a proposal of a 15% rate may not be passed by the US congress.

India and the Global Minimum Corporate Tax rate:

- India did not object to the proposal as the same would generate additional revenue for the country.
 - **The State of Tax Justice report of 2020** states that India loses over \$10 billion in tax revenue due to the use of offshore structures. The popular locations include Mauritius, Singapore, and the Netherlands where there is an almost negligible rate of taxation.
- If passed, the Indian government can impose a tax on offshore subsidiary units of Indian companies. The taxation can be to such a level that it enables the imposition of an effective Global Minimum Tax on every company.

Suggestions

- The [acceptance of a Global Minimum Corporate Tax](#) would induce the countries to compete on other factors like better regulatory regimes, ease of doing business, access to global talent, etc.
- However, if consensus is not built on a 15% rate, then the US can apply its domestic law version of Pillar Two at a rate of 21%.
- Nonetheless, the countries should focus on encouraging trade and economic activity in the post-pandemic era rather than debating over disagreements on tax allocations.

5. The tussle of Digital Services Tax between India and US

Source: [Click here](#)

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

Synopsis:

The US has rolled back its increased tariff on products of 6 countries including India. It now wants to negotiate, over the [imposition of a digital service tax](#) by the 6 nations. It is even willing to engage in a future trade war.

Background:

- The six countries of Austria, India, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and the U.K. had imposed a Digital Services Tax (DST) on **non-resident e-commerce operators**.
 - In India, a [2% digital service tax](#) was levied on trade and services offered by non-resident e-commerce operators having a turnover of over 2 crores.

What is the Digital Services Tax (DST) imposed by India?

The DST imposes a **2% tax on revenue** (*revenue, not income. Both are different*) generated from a broad range of digital services offered in India, including

- Digital platform services
- Digital content sales
- Digital sales of a company's own goods
- Data-related services
- Software-as-a-service, and several other categories of digital services
- India's DST only applies to "non-resident" companies. The tax applies as of April 1, 2020, with no retrospective element (*retrospective taxation means tax has to be paid on income earned in the past*).

Based on this, The [Office of the United States Trade Representative \(USTR\)](#) began an investigation (in June 2020) to find out the discriminatory nature of these digital taxes imposed by six countries.

What did the USTR investigation find out?

- In January 2021, the investigations found the digital taxes to be discriminatory in nature.
 - With respect to India, investigations concluded that [India's digital services tax \(DST\) of 2% discriminates against US digital companies](#) and is inconsistent with principles of international taxation

How did US react to the findings of the investigations?

- The US announced 25% tariffs on over \$2 billion worth of imports from the six countries including India.

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- However, it immediately suspended the duties to allow time for international tax negotiations and due to the poor economic condition of countries during the pandemic era.

What does this retaliatory move by US indicate?

- **First**, the move shows that a **hefty tax can be imposed on other countries under Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act of 1974**.
 - The section authorizes the President to take all appropriate action, including tariff-based and non-tariff-based retaliation against foreign countries.
 - The objective is to obtain the removal of any act, policy, or practice that violates an international trade agreement or is unjustified, unreasonable, or restricts U.S. commerce.
- **Second**, the move shows the U.S.'s may be willing to **start a trade war** for protecting the interests of its tech giants against the imposition of Digital Taxes.
- **Third**, similar to the Trump administration, the new Biden administration also views digital taxes to be discriminatory in nature. It also wants dominance of the global playing field by the American tech firms without fear of being slapped with tax liabilities.

Way Ahead:

- The countries should engage and negotiate peacefully on the concerning provisions. Imposition of unnecessary barriers by either side would only generate adverse results.
 - For instance, U.S tariffs would impact \$118 million worth of Indian exports to the country.
- Co-operation is desired as the world can hardly afford another tariff war in the post-COVID era.

6. COP26 a last chance to fulfil Paris agreement goals

Source: [The Hindu](#)

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

Synopsis: There are certain issues that need to be addressed in the upcoming Cop26 to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Background

- The **Paris Agreement** aims to restrict the rise of global temperature this century below 2-degree Celsius, above pre-industrial levels. And also, to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- But an average global temperature rise of 2 °C, compared to 1.5 °C, would affect 100 million more people.
- Worryingly, the **Climate Action Tracker** estimates that countries' current emissions reduction targets will lead us to an average temperature rises of 2.4 °C.
- In this background, **COP26**, the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties is set to be hosted by the United Kingdom in **Glasgow** from November 2021.
- So, restricting the global temperature rise well below 1.5 degrees Celsius should be the main focus of **COP26**.

Steps taken by India to mitigate climate change

- **One**, India has committed to achieve significant domestic targets to have 450GW of renewable energy by 2030.

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- **Two**, India's leading role in establishing the [International Solar Alliance](#) and the [Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure](#) (CDRI).
- **Three**, India has played a critical role in delivering the landmark [Paris Agreement](#).
- **Four**, the 2030 UK-India Roadmap to facilitate green growth agenda in both the countries.

What areas should Cop26 focus on?

- **One, achieving [Net-zero emissions](#)**. CoP26 leaders should push for a global action to reach net-zero emission by the middle of this century. Ambitious short-term targets backed up by a net-zero target will lead to a low carbon future.
- **Two, addressing the issues of communities most vulnerable to climate change**. CoP26 leaders should address, plan and deliver for the communities most vulnerable to climate change. Flood defences, warning systems and other vital efforts to minimise, the loss and damage caused by climate change should be worked out. India's **CDRI initiative** is a step in the right direction.
- **Third, Climate Finance**. The CoP26 leaders should convince developed countries to deliver the \$100 billion they promised annually to support developing countries. Right flow of finance and technology will help to meet the needs of developing countries such as India in their transition.
- **Fourth, building consensus** among governments, international collaboration, businesses and civil society Partnership are key to achieve the Paris agreement goals