9pm Compilation

May, 2021 (Fourth Week)

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General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies - 2

1. Public Expenditure on Health Needs to be Reprioritised
Source: The Hindu
Gs2: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health
Synopsis: Stimulating Economic growth and Mass vaccination are key to overcome the pandemic-induced economic crisis in India. Increasing public expenditure on health can help India recover from the economic crisis.

Background
- A nominal growth of 14.4% was assumed in the Union Budget. However, because of a prolonged lockdown, India will witness a fall in the nominal GDP numbers assumed in the Budget.
- A reduction in nominal GDP numbers will lead to a lowering of **tax and non-tax revenues.** Whereas an increase in the fiscal deficit as compared to the budgeted magnitudes.
- Hence, the fiscal projections of Centre's 2021-22 Budget require recalibration. Further, the center needs to reprioritize expenditures.
- The allocation for the health sector should be increased substantially by reprioritizing expenditures.

Why the allocation for the health sector should be increased?
- **First, need to strengthen the health care infrastructure in the country.**
  - o The second wave of the Covid19 has exposed India's serious under-capacity in health infrastructure.
  - o Given the possibility of a third COVID-19 wave, there is an urgent need to increase the health and related infrastructure. Such as the number of hospitals and hospital beds, sources of oxygen supplies, and the manufacture of COVID-19 vaccines and drugs.
- **Second, inadequate budgeting for health care.**
  - o Centre's 2021-22 Budget for the Department of Health and Family Welfare is □7,597 crore less than the 2020-21 budget for Department of Health and Family Welfare.
  - o The budget 2021-22 for health care is quite inadequate for an economy challenged by COVID-19 for two successive years.
  - o Hence, the allocation for the health sector needs to be increased substantially by reprioritising expenditures.
- **Third**, investment in health care will have a multiplier **effect** on the economy. For example, Construction activities within the health sector will have high multipliers. Will benefit vulnerable groups of the society including migrant labour and the rural and urban unemployed
- **Fourth,** Speedy and larger vaccination coverage of the vulnerable population is key to minimise economic damage.

Why Centre government should procure vaccines?
- **One,** COVID-19 vaccination is characterised by strong inter-State positive externalities. This makes it primarily the responsibility of the central government.
- **Two,** if the center becomes the sole agency for vaccine procurement, the **economies of scale** and the Centre's **bargaining power** would keep the average vaccine price low.

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- **Three,** some smaller States may find procuring vaccines through a global tender a quite challenging.
- The Centre has had allocated ☐35,000 crore for vaccination as an amount to be transferred to the States. Rather than transferring the money to states, the central government should transfer the vaccines by acting as a single procurement agency for India.

2. WhatsApp Privacy Policy Comes into Effect : Issues and Challenges
Source: [click here](#)
Syllabus: GS
Synopsis: Whatsapp's new privacy policy came into effect from May 15, 2021. Whatsapp suggested users, who do not want to agree with their policy, should discontinue. It also claims that the new privacy policy is relevant to only the business version of the app, which is is not satisfying.

Introduction
The senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Arvind Datar reached to the Delhi High Court against WhatsApp's new privacy policy that came into effect from May 15, 2021.
WhatsApp defended its privacy policy in its affidavit to the Delhi High Court. It openly named Google, Microsoft, Zoom, Zomato, Republic World, and Public Companies such as Aarogya Setu, Bhim, Air India. It said that these apps have similar policies, depending on collecting user data.

What are the advantages of WhatsApp over other platforms?
- WhatsApp proposed that users who did **not agree to its terms and conditions could stop using the app. Apps such as Signal and Telegram** offer alternate dependable communication services.
- However, researchers working in rural and alienated sections have pointed out the **dependence on WhatsApp. It is because of the design of the app and facilities.**
- **WhatsApp has an advantage** with its messaging and audio-video calling even **in low-bandwidth Internet areas.** It also offers WhatsApp Pay which allows users to transfer money.

What are the issues with WhatsApp's stand?
The Competition Commission of India observed that WatsApp is abusing its dominant position. It seems relevant here due to the following reasons.
- **Firstly, the claim that the new privacy policy is only for the business version of the app is not satisfying.** Metadata, from the non-business versions, is already being exchanged with other services of Facebook.
- **Secondly, people using WhatsApp for businesses** will expect the **services to be more secure than the normal version**. Thus, there will be less privacy due to security-related features.
  - Now, less privacy increases the possibility that the exchange of important documents or ideas on the platform will be prone to be leaked. It can be either company or a third party.
  - It is also more likely because due to increasing competition, big companies either acquire or copy the innovative processes.
  - For example, the lessons learned from the United States v. Microsoft Corporation antitrust case from early 2000 would appear relevant in this context.

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- **Third, issue of a potential violation of the privacy of children through Ed-Tech apps.** It is due to the lack of complete ethics policy and a data privacy law like the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- **Lastly, the Personal Data Protection Bill of 2019** does not even attempt to provide a little protection to users for availing above-mentioned services.

The way forward
- The data protection Bill needs to be reformulated to make sure that it focuses on user rights with an emphasis on user privacy.
- A privacy commission should be established to enforce these rights. The government should respect the privacy of the citizens and strengthen the right to information. There is a central need for a strong data protection Bill.

3. Historical Reporting of Child Sexual Abuse under POCSO Act
Source- [The Hindu](#)
Syllabus- GS 2 – Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable section
Synopsis – There is an urgent need to reform POSCO Act to enable historical reporting of child sexual abuse.
Introduction-
- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012 enacted by the government to deal with child sexual abuse cases.
- The law made a significant contribution in dealing with the issues of child sexual abuse. It also protects children from offences like sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pornography.
- But the POSCO Act is unable to deal with historical cases of child abuse faced by a person.

What is historical child sexual abuse?
The term used to describe the cases of child sexual abuse that are reported or came into light very late after the actual incident. This could mean months, years, or decades ago.
The delay in reporting child sexual abuse may be due to the following factors-
- **Threats from the perpetrator**
- **Fear of public humiliation**
- **Absence of trustworthy confidant**
- **Intra-familial abuse** – Sometimes, it is difficult for the child to report the offense or offender at the earliest.
- **The accommodation syndrome** – Where the child does not reveal the abuse for fear that no one would believe it, which leads to accommodative behavior.
Why reporting historical child sexual abuse is difficult?
POCSO Act was enacted in 2012. Now if a person wants to file a report of **historical child sexual abuse that took place before 2012, i.e. before the POCSO act, it would be challenging.**
1. Firstly, Section 376 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) does not recognize, cases involving child sexual abuse, as rape.
   - Thus the case will be filed under the lesser offense of outraging the modesty of a woman (Section 354 of the IPC).
2. Secondly, under Section 354 of the IPC, CrPC bars any reporting of an offense, after more than three years of the date of the incident.

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What are the drawbacks of delayed reporting of child sexual abuse?

- **Lack of evidence to advance prosecution** – According to data, there would be less than 5% chance for gathering direct physical and medical evidence in delayed reporting child sexual abuse cases.
- **Lack of procedural guidance –** In India, there no detailed procedural guidelines on prosecuting historical cases.

Way forward-

- Child sexual abuse cannot and must not be viewed in the same manner as other criminal offenses.
- India must revise its legal and procedural methods to deal with historical child sexual abuse cases, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- There is a need to frame guidelines to direct effective and purposeful prosecution in cases that POCSO does not cover.

4. [Issues in Present Policy of Vaccine Procurement](#)
Source: [The Hindu](#)
Gs2: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health
Synopsis: Analysis on issues associated with the Liberalised and Accelerated Phase 3 Strategy of COVID-19 Vaccination

Background

- Many State governments have resorted to floating global tenders for COVID-19 vaccines due to Covid vaccine shortage in India.
- The Liberalised and Accelerated Phase 3 Strategy of COVID-19 Vaccination allows states to procure COVID-19 vaccines independently of the global market for people above the age of 18 years.
- However, the Liberalised and Accelerated Phase 3 Strategy of COVID-19 Vaccination has many disadvantages.
- A single global tender for vaccine procurement through the center will be more effective in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

What are the issues in the Liberalised and Accelerated Phase 3 Strategy of COVID-19 Vaccination?

- **First,** the Liberalised and Accelerated Phase 3 Strategy of COVID-19 Vaccination allows all persons, above 18 years of age to get COVID-19 vaccine doses.
  - However, expanding eligibility in the absence of sufficient vaccine supplies will only spread vaccines thinly.
- **Second,** the burden to procure vaccines for the population of the 18-44 years age group has been shifted to the States. This has many disadvantages,
  - **One,** determination of prices by an oligopolistic market favours unhealthy competition among States**.**
  - **Two,** States will have to procure doses at higher rates than a single national purchaser. As a result of the new strategy, each vaccine dose will be costlier in India than in any other part of the world.
- All these issues will result in unequal distribution of vaccines among states (**Vaccine inequity**).

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What needs to be done?

- **One**, government needs to revisit the vaccine policy and use the limited vaccine supply for the adult high-risk and vulnerable group of population.
- **Two,** vaccination for the 18-44 years age group can be reconsidered when vaccine supply is likely to stabilise.
- **Three**, Central government should coordinate with the States and make efforts to float a single global tender for vaccine procurement.
  - o The fact that the federal government has provided vaccines free to all, even in the United States, should be an eye-opener for India.
  - o Further, procurement of vaccines by the center and administration of vaccines by the states will ensure effective vaccine delivery. For instance, Polio.
  - o This mechanism of division of labour among centre-state should not be disturbed. The current vaccine strategy burdens States with additional procurement responsibilities that need to be done away with.

Article 21 of the Constitution guarantees the right to health. Right to health encompasses accessible, available, and affordable health care. Hence, it is the duty of the central government to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are accessible, available, and affordable.

5. The U.S exit from Afghanistan and Its Implications on South Asia

Source: The Hindu

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

Synopsis: The U.S withdrawal from Afghanistan will impact the peace and security in south Asia.

Background

- The **Afghanistan peace process** was set to be discussed in the **Istanbul conference** hosted by the United Nations. However, it remains suspended due to the reluctance of the Taliban.
- Further, the US under President Joe Biden, is insistent on withdrawing the troops on September 11, even without any power-sharing deal between the rival parties.
- The US withdrawing its forces from Afghanistan will have many consequences on Afghanistan's neighborhood and in Afghanistan. (India, China, Pakistan)

What are the impacts of the US withdrawing its forces from Afghanistan?

1. **First, Impact on Afghanistan.** Violence in Afghanistan will increase**.** Since the announcement of an exit date, Afghanistan continues to witness deadly attacks across its provinces. For instance, multiple blasts outside a girl's school in Kabul recently.
2. **Second, Impact on Pakistan.**
   - o **One,** The US's unconditional support towards Pakistan will end. The U.S. military in Afghanistan for almost two decades was reliant on Pakistan for operational and other support. Pakistan smartly used this factor against India. However, With the US withdrawing its forces from Afghanistan, this dependency will disappear.
   - o **Two,** Pakistan will be facing unconstrained refugee flows and terror attacks inside its territory if there is another cycle of violence in Afghanistan.
3. **Third**, **impact on China**. America's military presence in Afghanistan has suppressed many terrorist groups that threaten China directly or indirectly in

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Central Asia. It would now leave Beijing vulnerable to its spillover effects, particularly in the restive **Xinjiang province.**

4. **Fourth, Impact on India.** India had underlined the need for "a genuine double peace" (within and around Afghanistan). Thus, India supports an "Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled" peace process. Similarly, India is worried that a Taliban-dominated regime in Afghanistan might allow Pakistan to dictate Afghanistan's India policy.

6. Significance of Community Efforts in Tackling the Pandemic

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS 2 – Development processes and the development industry

Synopsis: The government should support community efforts in tackling the pandemic. It should recognize the best efforts and help them scale to a bigger level to make a larger impact.

Background:

- Community efforts have been immensely helpful in tackling social problems as the government or market can't always meet the needs of citizens.
- In the initial years of independence, community groups collected money and supplemented government efforts for development. However, with the passage of time, they took more institutional forms like NGOs who used to directly help the citizens.
- India's ethos, value systems, and cultural strengths have automatically generated new community groups. They are playing an active role in tackling the second wave of pandemic.

Positive Role played by Community Efforts:

- **Breathe India and HelpNow** apps are facilitating access to oxygen concentrators, hospitals, and ambulances. Both the apps have been developed by IITians.
  - o BreatheIndia managed to get nearly 200 concentrators and raise an amount of Rs 2.41 crore.
  - o Similarly, HelpNow has a mission to save lives by providing timely and quality medical help with neat and sanitised ambulances.

Challenges associated with Community Efforts:

- **First**, they are facing **information asymmetry** over various medical equipment and hospital delivery strategies. Which is hampering their efforts. Further, they lack clarity over the ever-changing rules and regulations by governments.
- **Second**, many NGOs are **not able to obtain foreign assistance** due to stringent FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) restrictions.
- **Third**, the **dearth of resources and support** prevent the scaling up of community initiatives at a macro level.

Way Forward:

- NITI Aayog should take multiple steps for supporting community efforts.
  - o It should engage with government institutions that encourage public participation.
  - o It should look into the weaknesses and failures of the existing framework in attracting community participation.

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- ▪ **The use of advanced technologies (ABCD** — artificial intelligence, blockchain, cloud computing, and data analytics) can bridge demand-supply gaps.
  - ○ It should partner with state governments to explore the launch of platforms that promote cross-learning and experience-sharing. This would help in scaling the community initiatives and prevent the asymmetric flow of information.
    - ▪ The Aayog currently has **a DARPAN portal** that creates and promotes a healthy partnership between VOs/NGOs and the Government of India.
- The focus should also be placed on **good local-level government initiatives.**
  - ○ For instance, the **Nandurbar district of Maharashtra** robustly tackled the second wave due to the efficient work of their district collector (Rajendra Bharud). The efforts made the region an oxygen and hospital bed surplus district.
- The **newspapers should report community efforts** on a larger scale for motivating people in depressing times.
  - ○ Heart-breaking pictures and reports have contributed to Takotsubo cardiomyopathy. A temporary heart condition that is brought on by stress.

7. Indo-US Synergy on Regional, Bilateral and Multilateral issues
Source: Click Here
Syllabus: GS 2 – Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India
Synopsis:
The visit of the Indian Foreign Minister to the US presents an opportunity to improve the strategic partnership. It highlights the India-US synergy on bilateral, regional, and multilateral issues.

Background:
- Indo-U.S ties are improving under the Biden administration. The relationship is now showing synergy on bilateral, regional, and multilateral issues. Earlier, They used to look at it as separate domains.
- The recent visit of Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar to New York presents an opportunity to deepen the same.

Synergy between bilateral, regional, and multilateral issues:
- The Indo-U.S defence cooperation laid the foundation of the QUAD group. It aims to ensure a peaceful and stable Indo-Pacific region.
  - ○ Earlier there used to be constant friction over regional issues between the two countries.
- The US is supplying essential items for vaccine production and delivering significant relief supplies to India post 2nd wave. This support is crucial for kick-starting the strategy to vaccinate the Indo-Pacific as agreed in the 1st QUAD meeting.
- Both the countries are currently the members of UNSC (United Nations Security Council). This establishes a synergy between bilateral and multilateral security.
- The US led the charge to end India's nuclear isolation and helped India in getting a Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) waiver. This allowed the supply of nuclear fuel to India for civilian purposes.

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Factors behind such synergy:
- **New Leadership in the U.S:** The new President (Joe Biden) discards America's unilateralism impulses that came to the fore under his predecessor Donald Trump.
  - Biden is keener to cooperate on multilateral agreements on trade, health, and climate change.
- **Common Rival**: China has emerged as a common troubling rival for both countries.
  - The US doesn't want to lose its top position to Beijing, especially in the economic domain. Overexposure to China has impacted their domestic manufacturing.
  - Similarly, India is also unhappy with China as:
    - It blocked India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group and Delhi's quest for a permanent seat at the UNSC.
    - It asked for the UNSC intervention against India's constitutional changes in Jammu and Kashmir.
    - It protects Islamabad from international pressure on the question of Pakistan's continuing support for cross-border terrorism in the region.
- **Geographical Proximity:** The Indo-Pacific vision covers the geographical boundaries of both countries. It automatically breeds regional cooperation.

Way Forward:
- Both the countries should now revive the strategy to vaccinate the Indo-Pacific as the second wave begins to recede in India.
- Further, the countries should cooperate in boosting the global resilience against the pandemics and frame new international norms.
- Convergence must be established over trade and climate change. India must take support of the US to achieve green growth and reduce its dependence on China.
  India is showing a keen interest to cooperate with the west as proved by its active support towards the European Alliance for Multilateralism. The change of leadership in the US presents India an opportunity to make multilateralism an important part of the India-US strategic partnership.

8. One State Solution for Palestine
Source: The Hindu
Gs2: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora.
Synopsis: The whole premise of the two-state solution is misplaced. The only alternative is that settlers (Jews) and natives (Palestinians) should together build a new state that is democratic and not against the Arab world.

Background
- Many world countries through the United Nations insist on a **two-state solution** to end the Israel-Palestine conflict.
- The support for the two-state solution is based on the reasoning that once two states become a reality, Israel will stop severe violations of the Palestinian civil and human rights.
- However, it is not a "conflict" as such rather it is a settler-colonial reality that began in the late 19th century.
- Late scholar, **Patrick Wolfe**, states that settler colonial movements are motivated by a logic called "the elimination of the native".

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- Sometimes it may lead to genocide, as it happened in North America, sometimes it gets translated to an ongoing ethnic cleansing operation as unfolded in Palestine.
- So, the two-state solution is not going to stop the ethnic cleansing instead, talking about it provides Israel international immunity to continue it.

How Israel has worked towards eliminating the native population so far?

World nations are insisting on the two-state solution to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict. However, Palestinians fear that the Israelis would not be content and will try to occupy as much of its territory as possible. This Prediction became true after a year.

- First, in 1948, the UN insisted that partition was the only solution for Palestine. Under the UN support, the new Jewish state took over nearly 80% of historical Palestine and ethnically cleansed almost a million Palestinians.
- Second, in 1967, Israel occupied the rest of historical Palestine, and in the process expelled another 300,000 Palestinians.
- Third, apart from Incremental ethnic cleansing, Israel also employed other means to achieve the old Zionist goal of turning historical Palestine into a Jewish state. Such as
    - One, Imposing military rule in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to restrict people's basic human and civil rights.
    - Two, Imposing a version of an Apartheid regime on the Palestinian minority in Israel.
    - Three, disregarding the demographic reality by refusing the 1948 refugees to return.
- Fourth, Israel passed a citizenship law in 2018. It *was* known as the nationality law to complete its strategy that included the partition of the West Bank, its Bantustanisation, and the siege of Gaza.
    - The law made sure that the Palestinian citizens become 2nd class citizens like the "Africans", in a new Israeli Jewish apartheid state.

Way forward

- The only alternative is to decolonise historical Palestine and build one single state for all its citizens all over the country.
- It should be based on the dismantlement of colonialist institutions, fair redistribution of the country's natural resources, compensation of the victims of the ethnic cleansing and allowing their repatriation.
- This will be an inspiration for the rest of the region which desperately needs such models.

9. India's Mucormycosis Threat

Source: The Hindu

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

Synopsis: There is a high incidence of Mucormycosis in India. Government should urgently look for solutions to limit the incidence of the disease.

Background

- The incidence of **mucormycosis** (a rare fungal infection) in patients who have been diagnosed and treated for COVID-19 is rising alarmingly in India.
- For instance, according to a study published in **Current Fungal Infection Reports** the estimated **burden of mucormycosis** in India is 14 per 100,000. This is almost 70 times higher than what is reported in other countries.

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- Even, some States, including Tamil Nadu, have declared mucormycosis as a notifiable disease under the **Epidemic Diseases Act**.
- A common use of Steroids such as Dexamethasone, methylprednisolone, etc., in the treatment of COVID-19, is one of the major reasons.
- So, to arrest this growing epidemic, Guidelines and protocols need to be adapted and modified rapidly.

About Mucormycosis
- **Causes:**
  o The most common cause is uncontrolled diabetes mellitus (raised blood sugars).
  o Other causes include the treatment of some cancers, steroids, chemotherapy or immunotherapy, and solid organ or stem-cell transplantations.
- **Occurrence:**
  o The common sites of occurrence include **rhino-cerebral involvement** (i.e., the fungus can damage the nose, paranasal sinuses, the eyes, and the brain), and **pulmonary involvement** (i.e., the fungus can cause pneumonia).
- **Non-contagious**:
  o Mucormycosis is not transmitted from one individual to the other.
- **Symptoms**:
  o Facial swelling on one side,
  o Protrusion of the eyeball,
  o New-onset visual disturbances,
  o Headache and vomiting,
  o New onset swelling or ulcers with blackish discoloration, and prolonged fever.
- **Morbidity**:
  o Mucormycosis is associated with very high morbidity and mortality.
- **Treatment**:
  o Treatment requires a multi-disciplinary team approach that includes microbiology, pathology, radiology, and other disciplines.
  o Treatment includes Surgery along with administering Anti-fungal drugs.

Why Mucormycosis is a concern for India?
1. **First,** one of the significant causes for mucormycosis is raised blood sugars and India is home to a large number of Diabetic patients.
   o For instance, according to a study in **The Lancet**, people with diabetes increased to 65 million in 2016 in India,
   o The highest prevalence of diabetes was observed in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Delhi. Further, there is an underlying higher genetic susceptibility to diabetes in Indians.
2. **Second**, apart from this natural cause of Diabetes, SARS-CoV-2 can potentially multiply in pancreatic cells and contribute to increased blood sugar levels in COVID-19 patients.
3. **Third,** during the treatment for Covid-19, Steroids are administered to lower death rates by reducing the cytokine storm phase. However, steroids when used excessively or prematurely, and without medical supervision can also increase blood sugar levels.
4. **Fourth,** treatment for **mucormycosis** requires a multi-disciplinary team approach. However, a multi-disciplinary approach is not feasible on a large scale, especially in areas with limited medical access

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5. **Fifth,** drugs available are either costly and out of access for the majority of Indians or produce side effects.
   o For instance, the standard drug is **liposomal amphotericin B**, which is heavily priced. Whereas, cheap drugs like Amphotericin B deoxycholate are associated with unfavourable toxicity, including kidney problems.

What needs to be done?
- **One**, Steroid use at home for COVID-19 should be only under the supervision of a healthcare worker.
- **Two**, monitoring of capillary blood glucose is essential while administering steroids. Health authorities should arrange for blood glucose monitoring for patients at home on steroids.
   o Further, awareness campaigns on the importance of controlled blood sugar levels need to be promoted.
- **Three**, widespread training of healthcare personnel including **Accredited Social Health Activists** (ASHAs) to raise awareness on mucormycosis while educating people locally.

10. Must Needed Reforms for Online Higher Education
Source: The Hindu
Syllabus: GS:2 Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to education
Synopsis:
There are many issues associated with school-level online education. But there are similar issues associated with online higher education as well. But, these can be removed with proper suggestions.
Introduction:
The government spent merely 3.2% of its GDP on education in 2020-21. Online education started in India, without any changes in infrastructure, training, etc. The government directed the higher education institutions to shift from classroom education to online education. The University administrations also followed the suit towards online education.

Online higher education in India:
Earlier teachers and students in higher educational institutions faced a lot of issues. Especially during their shift from the annual scheme of teaching to the semester scheme of teaching and the choice-based credit system. A similar issue happened during their shift from regular education to online education.
1. Centrally funded elite institutes such as the IITs, IIMs, NITs and Central universities **launched video channels and uploaded e-content** on institutional websites and digital platforms
2. On the other hand, **State universities struggle** without proper **Internet connectivity and bandwidth** on their campuses. There are several **vacant faculty positions** in universities. So, online education increased the work of already overburdened teachers.
3. **Problems for students:** Many of the students lacked the facilities to attend online classes.
4. **Problems with practical education:** Apart from these issues, online education **cannot replace practical field and laboratory-based learning** in higher education.

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Suggestions to improve online higher education:

A sudden shift to online education will not only serve any needs in education but also become counterproductive. The government can improve this by few suggestions. Such as,

1. **Increased consultation:** According to the All India Survey on Higher Education (2018-19), India has 993 universities, 39,931 colleges, 3.73 crore students and 14.16 lakh, teachers. The government can include wider stakeholder consultation regarding online education.

2. **Tackling the issue of internet penetration:** Internet penetration still low in India. So the government **has to provide financial aids** to obtain appropriate IT tools, platforms, devices, provide training, etc.
   a. Further, 25 lakh students belonging to the socially and economically weaker sections of society. The government can consider providing devices such as laptop/tablets to them to improve access to online education.

3. **Preparation of appropriate study material:** The government have to understand that only uploading scanned lecture notes or PowerPoint presentations does not fulfil education's full purpose. The government has to **explore application-based learning** for students.

4. Introduction of online education in a phased manner: A transition from conventional to online mode has to happen in a phased manner. State universities should first equip their infrastructure (both hard and soft) with complete government support.

5. **Development of other services:** The government has to invest more in developing massive open online courses (MOOCs), direct-to-home (DTH) content development, digital classrooms etc.

With more COVID-19 waves are expected, the government has to engage with academic stakeholders and invest adequately in online education as suggested by Fifteenth Finance Commission.

11. Controversies Surrounding Administrator of Lakshadweep

Source: click here

Syllabus: GS 2

Synopsis: The role of the newly appointed administrator of Lakshadweep is under controversy. Some of the recent steps go against the interest of people.

Introduction

Lakshadweep is a group of 36 islands in the Arabian Sea totaling 32 square kilometers. It has had a calm existence as a Union Territory. But recent governance changes introduced by the government have become a cause of concern.

An administrator is a representative of the President in the Union Territory like a Lieutenant Governor.

What are the controversial steps taken by administrator?

The draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation 2021 empowers the Administrator to take over land and forcibly relocate people. It provides for strict punishments for those who resist. Following are some controversial steps taken by the administrator;

- **Firstly, the consumption or sale of beef will be an offence punishable** by seven years in prison.
- **Secondly,** Those who have more than two children cannot contest panchayat elections.
- **Third,** under the new Goonda Act, anyone could be held in prison without reason for up to a year. It is in a place that has a very low crime rate.

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- o The traditional livelihood **of fishing communities has been obstructed by tedious regulations** that negate their access to coastlines.
- **Lastly, their sheds on the coastal areas have been demolished** on the ground of violating **the Coast Guard Act.** Dairy farms run by the administration have also been shut.
  - o A development like this is a serious threat to the people of Lakshadweep and the delicate ecosystem.

What are the issues involved?

Lakshadweep administrator is the first politician to become an Administrator. In the past five months, he has showcased a sole disrespect for the people's concerns and priorities.

- There are **fears of other motivations in the absence of any administrative rationale** in these deliberately random methods.
- **Commercial interests could be one of the reasons**. The land vacated by people could be transferred to buyers from outside.
- **There could also be ill-advised political plans to change the demography** of the islands. People are protesting, but the Administrator seems firm on his plans.

The conclusion

- Rajya Sabha Members from Kerala have urged the President to recall the Administrator in separate letters. The basis for carving out Union Territories as an administrative unit is to protect the unique cultural and historical situations of their people.
- The Centre is reversing its duty to protect into a licence to interfere. It must recall the Administrator and reassure the locals.

12. Cooperative Federalism is Necessary for the Success of GST in India

Source: The Hindu

Gs2: Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure,

Synopsis: Without a strong framework for 'Cooperative federalism' it is unlikely that the GST mechanism will survive in the future.

Background

- The GST Council is troubled with mistrust under the prevailing cloud of vendetta politics.
- Also, Cooperative federalism in India is witnessing a deep crisis due to the widening divide between the Centre and states.
- Further, the Covid induced Economic crisis is hampering state's revenues while uncertainty in GST revenue prevails**.**
- All the above issues are challenging the very existence of GST mechanism in India

What are the issues hampering Cooperative Federalism in India?

1. One, Centre backtracking on its promise to pay guaranteed GST compensation to the States during Covid 19 situation.
2. Two, stringent policy conditions by centre to grant approval to States for extra borrowing in the middle of the pandemic.
3. Three, Centre shifting its responsibility on states over the procurement of Covid vaccines. It has resulted in a high price burden on states.
4. Four, unilateral decision to implement farm laws.
5. Five, sudden lockdown imposed by the Centre with no consultations with the States that affected millions of migrant workers.

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6. Six, Centre is levying cess that gathers significant revenues for the Centre without sharing them with the States.
7. Seven, Centre's recent Government of NCT of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021 that deprived the elected Delhi government of its governance powers.
All these issues are hampering Cooperative Federalism in India.

What are the issues that are affecting the GST mechanism in India?

- GST was expected to deliver economic efficiency gains, improve tax buoyancy and collections, boost GDP growth, and achieve a greater formalisation of the economy.
- However, three years after its launch, GST had failed on all those promises. For instance, the **15th Finance Commission** report formally acknowledges that GST has been an economic failure that did not deliver on its early promises.

Problems in GST

- One, multiple rate structure.
- Two, high tax slabs.
- Three, the complexity of tax filings
- Four, the erosion of 'trust' and 'trustworthiness' between the States and the Centre.
- Five, the uncertainty in GST revenues compounded with the loss of fiscal autonomy of states possess a threat to States finances.
- Proponents of GST failed to factor in India's unique political economy and its ramifications. Striking a balance among the diverse interests of India's numerous parties in a larger political climate is significant along with the extension of revenue guarantee for the States for another five years to strengthen the GST mechanism in India.

13. Continuing Political Turmoil in Nepal and Opportunity for India
Source: The Hindu
Gs2: India and its Neighborhood- Relations.
Synopsis: Present Constitutional crisis in Nepal is an opportunity for India to engage with Nepal's political leadership. It can help them to establish a stable democratic rule in Nepal.

Background

- Recently, Nepal's President had dissolved the House of Representatives (lower house) late at the suggestion of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli.
- The decision to dissolve the house is viewed as a partisan move that disregards the Constitutional morality of Nepal.

Recent developments leading to Political turmoil in Nepal

- Oli (CPN(UML)), came to power with the support of Maoist Centre and enjoyed a near-absolute majority in the lower house.
- In May 2018, the two allies merged to cement their alliance and created the **Nepal Communist Party (NCP).**
- However, very soon there were disputes related to the power-sharing arrangement, worked out with Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'.
- Mr. Oli (CPN(UML)) was reluctant to run the NCP along with Prachanda as a co-chair and soon 'one person one post' policy demand surfaced openly.
- Amid rumours that Prachanda and Mr. Nepal (senior UML leader) were planning to move a no-confidence-motion against him, Oli got the President to approve dissolution of the House on December 20, paving the way for elections.

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- On March 7, the Supreme Court also overturned the UML-Maoist merger of May 2018 and ruled it invalid. This verdict allowed Mr. Oli to be in power.
- Again, Mr. Oli was sworn in by President Bhandari on May 14 as Prime Minister. Article 76(3) permits the **leader of the largest party** to be sworn in and give 30 days to demonstrate majority.
- But the Nepal lower house again stands dissolved after Mr. Oli failed to seek another vote of confidence.
- Opposition leaders have challenged the House dissolution in the Supreme Court but its outcome is uncertain.

How Domestic politics of Nepal is affecting India- Nepal ties?
- To distract the happenings in Nepal's domestic politics, Oli raised the issue of Kalapani dispute with India.
- India issued new maps following the division of the State of Jammu and Kashmir into Union Territories, Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.
- Though the new Indian map did not affect the India-Nepal boundary in any material way, Mr. Oli used this opportunity to raise anti-India sentiment among Nepali citizens.
- He raised the demand for restoring an additional 335 sq. km around Kalapani area.
- Further, in May 2020 when Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the 75 km road through Kalapani that linked to the Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage route.
- Oli to raise nationalist sentiment, got a new map of Nepal endorsed by the House and adopting a constitutional amendment to sanctify Nepal's new territory.
- This has strained India-Nepal relations in the last few months.
- India has traditionally supported constitutionalism and multi-party democracy in Nepal. India needs to remain actively engaged with all the political actors, and avoid being perceived as partisan to ensure democratic rule in Nepal.

14. New IT Rules 2021- No protection under the Section 79 of IT Act upon Non compliance
Source: Click Here
Syllabus: GS 3 – Challenges to internal security through communication networks
Synopsis:
The Information Technology Rules, 2021 have now come into force. Social Media companies will lose their protection under Section 79 of the IT Act if they fail to comply with new rules.

Background:
- The Information Technology (Guidelines for Intermediaries and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 came into force on 26th May 2021.
- They aim to regulate the flow of information over social media, digital news media, and over-the-top (OTT) content providers.

About the new IT rules:
- It mandates all social media platforms to set up a grievances redressal and compliance mechanism. This includes appointing a resident grievance officer, chief compliance officer, and a nodal contact person.
    - o Chief Compliance Officer shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with the Act and Rules.
    - o Nodal Contact Person will do 24×7 coordination with law enforcement agencies.

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- o Resident Grievance Officer shall receive and resolve complaints from users. The officer must acknowledge the complaint within 24 hours, and resolve it within 15 days of receipt.
- The platforms must submit monthly reports on complaints received from users and actions taken.
- Further, the platforms providing the feature of instant messaging need to track the first originator of a message.
- However, non-compliance with new rules would take away the protection granted to social media intermediaries under Section 79 of the IT Act.

What is Section 79 of the IT Act?
- It states that any intermediary shall not be held legally or otherwise liable for any third-party information, data, or communication link made available or hosted on its platform.
- The protection is available if the intermediary doesn't:
  - o initiate the transmission of the message in question,
  - o select the receiver of the transmitted message
  - o modify any information contained in the transmission
  - o tamper with any evidence of the concerned messages
- Further, the intermediary wouldn't be granted protection if it does not immediately disable access to the material under question as per the government order.

Genesis of Section 79:
- The need to provide protection to intermediaries from actions of third parties came into focus following a police case in 2004.
  - o Under this, the chief executive officer of bazee.com and his associates were booked for allowing the auctioning of pornographic material on their website. They were held guilty under Section 85 of the IT Act.
    - ▪ The section says that when a company commits an offense under the IT Act, all its executives should be held liable and proceeded against.
- However, this decision was overturned by SC in 2012. The court held that the website and its executives could not be held accountable since they were not directly involved in the said transaction. After this, the IT Act was amended to introduce Section 79.

Global norms on safe harbour protection for social media intermediaries:
- **Section 230 of the 1996 U.S Communications Decency Act** provides internet companies a safe harbor from content posted by users over them.
  - o The section states that "no provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider"
- This has enabled companies such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google to become global conglomerates without any fear of litigation.

What's Next?
- The prominent platforms including Facebook, Twitter, etc. have still not complied with the new rules. They have not appointed concerned officers nor have submitted the monthly reports to the government.
- This means the executives of these social media platforms no longer enjoy the protection of Section 79. They could be held liable for any social media post without any fault on their part.

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15. Challenges involved in Shifting the National Museum of India
Source: The Hindu
Gs2: Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.
Synopsis: Shifting the **National Museum of India** as per the **Central Vista Redevelopment Project** has many issues and challenges.

Background
According to the plans of the "**Central Vista Redevelopment Project**", the **National Museum of India** will be shifted to the South Block offices as well as the North Block offices of the Indian government.

What are the issues and challenges involved in shifting the National Museum of India?
1. **First,** the major issue is that the vision of urban planning for a single, linked cultural district is disregarded in the **Central Vista Redevelopment Project.**
   o For instance, the existing architecture plan in which the four cultural buildings are arranged form a single, linked cultural district. (Archaeological Survey of India, the National Museum, the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, the National Archives).
   o However, according to the **Central Vista Redevelopment Project,** all four cultural buildings will be set up in different places.
2. **Second,** implementing the Central Vista Redevelopment Project results in Disaggregation**,** rather than the unification of India's cultures. For instance, The National Museum's collections have to be split up. Some in the Red Fort, some in storage, some in new buildings.
3. **Third,** the scale of arranging for the packing and moving of each of the Museum's artifacts poses a big logistical challenge.
4. **For instance, the Museum** houses a variety of artifacts, from small delicate objects to as heavy as a tonne. For example, paintings on birch-bark, palm leaf, and paper, Pallava and Chola sculptures weigh many tonnes.
5. **Fourth, absence of more qualified conservation personnel and trained staff** to file documentation about the condition of the artifacts at the time of packing**. For example**, recently, Vacancies for 92 posts at the National Museum were closed as finding qualified specialists in India could not be completed for years.
6. **Fifth, the lack of public information** about the collections in a museum will reduce accountability and transparency in the shifting process. For instance, in many world museums, each artifact is connected to an online location index by providing a way barcode number.
   o It allowed curators, the conservators, and researchers with access to the collections even while they were in storage.
   o More importantly, they allowed the inventory to be safeguarded. However, the National Museum has more than 2,06,000 objects, but the official Museums of India website still only has a fraction of the collection on it.
7. **Sixth, issue of cost and time.** Refurbishing old buildings such as the North and South Blocks to provide the facilities for a museum will cost money and time. Also, it demands exceptional skill, and few architects have the necessary experience in adapting historic buildings.
8. **Seventh**, **lack of safety**. Many buildings in the North and South Blocks buildings are structurally unsafe and are ill-equipped to meet even the basic fire and earthquake safety norms.

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16. Need to Reform the Information Technology Rules, 2021
Source: The Hindu
Gs2: Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and issues arising out of their Design and Implementation
Synopsis: Though, the **Information Technology Rules, 2021** has many positives there are some ambiguities that need to be addressed.

What are the positive provisions in the Information Technology Rules, 2021?
- **Positives in the Information Technology Rules, 2021:** It mandates duties on social media platforms such as
  - Removal of non-consensual intimate pictures within 24 hours,
  - Publication of compliance reports increasing transparency,
  - Setting up of a dispute resolution mechanism for content removal
  - Adding a label to information for users to know whether the content is advertised, owned, sponsored, or exclusively controlled.

What are the ambiguities in the Information Technology Rules, 2021?
- **First**, **the Information Technology Rules, 2021 goes** against some landmark judicial precedents of the supreme court.
  - For instance, in the case of **Life Insurance Corpn. Of India vs Prof. Manubhai D. Shah (1992),** the SC had stated that 'the freedom to circulate one's views as the lifeline of any democratic institution'.
  - The **Information Technology Rules, 2021** by making the Government the ultimate adjudicator of objectionable speech online restricts the citizen's **right to dissent** against the government.
- **Second,** the act violates the legal principle of **colourable legislation, and** it is void.
  - For instance, the act was framed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeiTY).
  - Although, the **Second Schedule of the Business Rules, 1961** does not empower MeiTY to frame regulations for 'digital media'.
  - The power to legislate on digital media belongs to the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.**
- **Third,** no alternative option for fair recourse by the social media intermediaries**.**
  - **For instance,** an intermediary is now supposed to take down content within 36 hours upon receiving orders from the Government.
  - **However,** in the event of a disagreement with the Government's order, the Intermediary does not have an option for a fair recourse.
- **Fourth,** undermine the right to privacy by imposing a traceability requirement.
  - For instance, a User's privacy is protected by guaranteeing **end-to-end encryption.**
  - It does not allow intermediaries to have access to the contents of user's messages. However, imposing this mandatory requirement of traceability will break this immunity.
  - This will also render all the data from these conversations vulnerable to attack from third parties.
- **Fifth,** the rules empower a government authority to classify **Fake news.** In the event of the authority becoming arbitrary, ill-decisioned, and biased the purpose of eliminating fake news will fail.
- **Sixth,** the rules place a barrier on the "marketplace of ideas" and also on the economic market of intermediaries by adding redundant financial burdens**.**
  - **For instance,** the Rules requiring intermediaries to have Indian resident nodal officers, compliance officers, and grievance officers. Intermediaries are also required to have offices located in India.

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The above-mentioned issues in Information Technology Rules, 2021 need to be addressed. Further, provisions should be made to ensure citizen's right to have a private conversation, to engage in a transaction, to dissent, to have an opinion, and to articulate the same without any fear of being imprisoned.

17. India's Nepal policy needs to change for ensuring long-lasting friendship

Source: The Indian Express
Gs2: India and its Neighbourhood Relations.
Synopsis: There is widespread disbelief against India in Nepal. But that needs to be addressed by winning back the people's trust. This will strengthen India's Nepal policy

Background
- As of now, Nepal's parliament has been dissolved once again and dates for fresh elections are announced. The current dissolution has been challenged in the court by five political parties.
- It has to be remembered that the earlier dissolution of parliament was overruled by the Supreme Court as Unconstitutional.
- In this context, we will discuss the prevailing Nepali's scepticism about India and India's Nepal policy measures to ensure long-lasting friendship between the two countries.

Prevailing Nepali's scepticism on India
- So far, India's credentials have always been under Nepali's suspect. Currently, political and public opinion in Nepal is convinced that Mr Oli is now India's favourite.
- Further, there are rumours spreading in Nepal that Mr Oli will promote the return of Nepal to its Hindu Rashtra status under the monarchy and keep the Chinese at distance.
- Some rumours even claim that India is working to bring back the monarchy to Nepal.
- Though the Indian government has maintained silence on the current political developments in Nepal, India needs to assess the political situation in Nepal to serve the interests of India best.

Suggestions to improve India's Nepal policy
- **First,** the monarchy in Nepal has always been against the interest of India. The monarchy has always tried to distance Nepal from India and promoted a nationalism that takes hostility to India as its main driver.
  - So, to win the Nepali's people trust and also for its own interest, India should declare its **unconditional support to Nepal's republican democracy**.
- **Second,** India should remain fully engaged with Nepal at all levels and across the political spectrum. Through engagement, India **should advocate policies rather than persons**.
  - **The absence of India**'s engagement will **provide space for China**'s intervention. Further, India **should avoid advocating support for individuals** as it will create false apprehension over India's credential.
- **Third,** India's engagement with Nepal must find an important place for Nepali citizens, especially the **Madhesi population.**
  - Currently, through a **presidential ordinance**, the Nepal government had **reversed a constitutional provision** that denied citizenship to children born

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of Nepali mothers who had foreign husbands. This was directly targeted at the Madhesi population.

- o Though this provision stands removed, it **might be reintroduced after the political uncertainty** is over. **India should proactively support** the demands of **Madhesi population.**

- **Finally,** India needs to **facilitate the people-to-people links** including long-standing religious and cultural links, between our two countries.
  - o The future of India's Nepal policy lies in leveraging people-to-people links. No other country other than India has such an advantage.

18. [Need for real-time data on public health](#)
Source: [The Indian Express](#)
Gs2: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health
Synopsis: Having access to epidemiological real-time data on [public health](#) will help us to fight against the pandemic better by making informed choices.

Background
- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of data to governments in decision-making.
- However, India lacks real-time data on public health and the provision of health services.
- This necessitates the **need for data transparency and data sharing** in India to make informed decision-making.
- Hence, India **needs to create a charter for standardizing digital health data**.
- **How real-time data on public health can help fight against the Pandemic?**
- **First, it will help in data analysis and modelling**. For instance, the epidemiological concept of flattening the curve and its predictions are results of data analysis and modelling.
  - o Epidemiology refers to the study of medicine which deals with the incidence, distribution, and control of diseases.
- **Second, it allows us to measure our preparedness, and shape our responses to identify, manage, and care for new cases**.
- **Third, it will help to understand disease pathogenesis and severity. For example,** Epidemic outbreak data like case data, medical and treatment data can be used to understand disease pathogenesis and severity.
- **Fourth, it helps us to understand the transmissibility or infectivity of the virus.** For example, comparing genome surveillance data with the magnitude of fatalities or recovery will help us to understand the transmissibility or infectivity of the virus.
- **Fifth, it will help in predicting viral evolution and drug-treatment strategies**. Surveillance through studying genome sequencing of the virus, along with epidemiological data allows us to identify the evolution of the virus after the rollout of vaccinations.

Challenges in generating real-time data on public health
- **One, standardisation of data collection is the biggest challenge** due to many operational constraints**.**
  - o Ensuring data availability and quality under operational constraints is critical. This can be addressed by **reducing errors and enabling transparency.**

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- **Second, concerns of privacy and security while sharing personal health data.**
  - A systemic infrastructure with built-in safeguards has to be built. This will provide security and ensure privacy.

19. Resolving bottlenecks in procuring Pfizer's vaccine
Source-The Indian Express
Syllabus- GS 2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.
Synopsis – Pfizer has asked for certain conditions in order to supply 5 million doses to India between July and October this year.

Introduction
- According to reports, Pfizer is ready to supply five crore doses of the mRNA vaccines [developed with the German company BioNTech] between July and October.
- However, the company has requested certain protection from the Centre, as it has done with other 116 governments across the world, including the United States.
- Therefore, to seal the deal, the pharmaceutical giant and the Indian government must quickly resolve their long-standing dispute over the protection.

Pre-conditions to supply Vaccine to India:
- **Pfizer said that it will supply vaccine only to the central government, not to individual states.** The company also refused to send vaccines directly to local governments citing its **policy of dealing only with the Central** government of various countries.
- **The company has also asked for protection from the Government of India.** Such as, slots for testing of their vaccines in CDL (Central Drugs Laboratory).
- The company is also requesting that it **should not be liable for compensation** in case of an adverse event.

What needs to be done in order to increase procurement?
1. Timely vaccination is the need of the hour to protect people against the coronavirus, thus the **Centre needs to take charge of all procurement and negotiations** with all vaccine suppliers, including domestic and foreign.
2. The government has to **consider the global situation in decision-making**. Such as, around 14.7 crore doses of Pfizer vaccines have already been administered worldwide without any significant reports of adverse effects.

20. 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.

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- 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.
   o **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.
   o **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 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.

21. 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.

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- 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?

1. **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.
2. **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.
3. **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.

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General Studies

Paper - 3

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General Studies - 3

1. Significance of SC Ruling on Personal Guarantors for Corporate Loans
Source-The Hindu
Syllabus- GS 3 – Indian Economy
Synopsis – The Apex Court has dismissed all challenges to the liability of personal guarantors for corporate loans under the insolvency code.

Introduction

The Supreme Court upheld a government notification of 2019 issued under the Indian Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

- This allows banks to initiate insolvency proceedings against personal guarantors who are usually promoters and top officials of debt-laden companies.
- Also, approval of a resolution plan for the corporate debtor does not end the personal guarantor's liability.

Central Government's 2019 notification – It made personal guarantors a separate category of individuals. They can be approached for recovery for defaults under the IBC as part of the insolvency proceedings against defaulting corporate entities.

This gives additional powers to lenders [financial institutions or banks] under IBC, to recover their money.

- **In response to the 2019 notification**– There were more than 40 petitions filled, where petitioners had challenged the validity and operationalization of the central notification.
- However, the SC dismissed all the petitions stating that the government right.

Significance of Ruling

- The SC judgment will boost recovery efforts of banks involving piles of bad loans.
  - o This will enable banks to take simultaneous action against corporate debtors and personal guarantors.
  - o As a result, the promoters [as the provider of personal guarantees] have to deal with their own insolvencies and not become an impediment/roadblock to the insolvency proceedings of the corporate debtor.
- By roping in guarantors, there is a greater chance that they would "arrange" for the payment of the debt to the creditor bank to save themselves.
- As guarantors can be approached even if an insolvency proceeding is ongoing, Banks can enhance recovery. Because most banks agree to 'haircuts' when negotiating a resolution plan with a new promoter for the defaulting company.

Way forward-

The judgment provided the much-needed teeth to banks and financial institution far as recovery action with respect to personal guarantees was concerned.

2. Need for Eco Tax in India
Source: The Hindu
Gs3: Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment
Synopsis: Eco Tax in India can be useful for sustaining public Health financing as well as in mitigating effects of climate change.

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Background

- India's tax revenue decreased significantly during the Pandemic. It has resulted in widening the Fiscal deficit. **For instance**, the fiscal deficit for FY 2020-21 (revised estimates) is projected to be 9.5% of the GDP
- Also, according to **WHO**, 17.33% of the Indian household's expenditure on health was greater than 10% of their total expenditure or income. The percentage was higher in rural areas compared to urban areas.
- According to the **Economic Survey** (2019-20), Government should increase public spending from 1% to 2.5-3% of GDP on health. It is envisaged in **the National Health Policy** of 2017. This much spending can decrease **out-of-pocket expenditure** from 65% to 30% of overall healthcare expenses.
- However, sustained health financing in India remains a challenge. Along with this, India is shouldered with the responsibility of mitigating climate change and preservation of the environment.
- In this context, an **eco-tax** (Environment tax) will help India to (i) Mobilise resources (ii) Reduce out of Pocket Expenditure on health by increasing public spending (iii) Mitigate climate change.

Benefits of implementing Eco Tax in India

The implementation of an environmental tax in India will have three broad benefits: fiscal, environmental and poverty reduction.

- **First**, revenues mobilised from Eco tax can be used for the provision of environmental public goods and addressing environmental health issues. Such as
  - To, finance basic public services.
  - To, reduce other distorting taxes such as fiscal dividend
  - Lastly, to finance research and the development of new technologies
- **Second,** it will help in eliminating existing subsidies and taxes that have a harmful impact on the environment.
- **Third**, it will help in restructuring existing taxes in an environmentally supportive manner.
- **Fourth**, may help in initiating new environmental taxes in the future.

How Eco tax can be implemented?

In India, eco taxes can target three main areas:

1. One, **differential taxation on vehicles** in the transport sector for fuel efficiency and GPS-based congestion charges.
2. Two, in the **energy sector** by taxing fuels which require for energy generation.
3. Three, **waste generation** and use of natural resources.

What are the Challenges in implementing Eco tax?

- Environmental regulations may have significant costs on the private sector. Such as slow productivity growth, high cost of compliance, resulting in the possible increase in the prices of goods and services.
- However, the European experience shows that most of the taxes also generate substantial revenue.
- Further, most countries' experiences suggest only a negligible impact on the GDP that can be neglected.

What is the way forward?

1. One, the success of an eco-tax in India would depend on its planning and design. It should be credible, transparent and predictable.

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2. Two, the eco tax rate should be equal to the **marginal social cost.** This cost arises from the negative externalities associated with the production, consumption, or disposal of goods and services.
3. Three, **Green accounting**. Need to evaluate the damage to the environment based on scientific assessments. It includes, adverse impacts on the health of people, climate change, etc.

3. [Issues with New IT rules for Social Media](#)
Source: [The Hindu](#)
Syllabus: GS:3 Challenges to internal security through communication networks.
Synopsis: Instead of [non-compliance with the new IT rules for](#) social media, social media companies should engage with the government to address their concerns.
Introduction:
[New IT rules of intermediaries](#) will come into effect from today. But, it is expected that most of the global social media giants will not comply with the rules.

About the new IT rules on social media:
The government introduced few stringent rules for social media intermediaries in February. Further, the government provided 3 months' time for Social media platforms to adhere to the rules. That 3-month time period ended on 25th May. The important provisions of rules are,

- Social media companies are **prohibited from hosting or publishing any unlawful information**. This information is "in relation to the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, public order, friendly relations with foreign countries, etc.
- **If such information is hosted or published the government can take down such information within 24 hours**. The user will be **given a notice** before his/her content is taken down.
- New IT rules were introduced in February. Under the new rules, Social media platforms are classified into **two categories.**
    o **Social media intermediaries** – Platforms that have a limited user base.
    o **Significant social media intermediaries** – These are the platforms with a large user base.
1. The **significant social media intermediaries** have to follow few additional measures like:
    o These platforms should **have a physical contact address** in India.
    o **Appointing a Chief Compliance Officer**, **Nodal Contact Person, and a Resident Grievance Officer in India**. All of them should be Indian Residents.
2. **Problems with new IT rules on social media:**
3. **Lack of public consultation:** The rules were notified in a short time without much public consultation.
4. **Against some social media intermediary's policy**: The rules require tracing the information back to the source. This is against some social media's policy. For example, WhatsApp claiming their policy as end-to-end encrypted cannot accept new IT rules.
5. **Widen the gap**: This non-compliance will further widen the relationship gap between social media players and the Government. Further, it will also increase ongoing issues. For example,
    o [Twitter not complied to the Government](#) order to remove certain accounts
    o [WhatsApp's new privacy policy and the issues with government notice](#).

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6. **Genuine concerns of social media companies are not considered:** Social media companies like Facebook mentions that they are ready to comply with the rules. But prior to that, they need to engage with the Government on a few issues. They mention that the genuine concerns on new IT rules are not considered by the government.

Suggestions:

- **Providing more time:** Five industry bodies, including the CII, FICCI and the U.S.-India Business Council have sought an extension of 6-12 months for compliance. The government can provide time relaxation for compliance. In the meantime, the government can **bring together both the private and industry experts to address genuine concerns**.
- **Taking the issue to court:** Instead of complete non-compliance, social media companies can **fight the new rules in a court of law** if they find them problematic.

4. [Prioritise food and work for all](#)
Source: [Click Here](#)
Syllabus: GS 3 – Growth and Rural Employment
Synopsis:
The second wave of Pandemic has put immense stress on the Indian masses. They are facing job losses, food shortages, and hunger issues. In this scenario, the government should prioritise food and work for all.

Background:

- The second wave of Covid-19 -19 has made it imperative for many states to impose a lockdown.
- This is creating severe hardships for the marginalized and vulnerable masses. Migrant workers and the rural poor have been facing great distress over the past year and the crisis for food and work is only going to intensify further.

Dismal State of Affairs:

- The 'Hunger Watch' report of the Right to Food Campaign and the Centre for Equity Studies compares the pre-lockdown situation to the situation in October 2020. As per the report,
    - 27% of the respondents had no income;
    - 40% of the respondents witnessed worsening of their food's nutritional quality
    - 46% of the respondents had to skip one meal at least once a day in October 2020
- According to the estimates of the Stranded Workers Action Network, 81% of stranded workers are without any work since April 15, 2021.
    - Further, 76% of the workers are short of food and cash and require immediate support.

Inadequate Efforts:

- The government announced 5 kg free food grains for individuals enlisted under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), for May and June 2021.
    - However, about 100 million deserving people are excluded from the ration distribution system. This is due to an outdated database based on the 2011 Census.

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- The Centre had allocated 73,000 crore rupees for 2021-22 for MGNREGS (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) and notified an annual increment of about 4% in wages.
  - This is 38,500 crore rupees less than last year's revised estimate. Even if 1 crore fewer people enroll in the scheme than the previous year, then also this year's amount can't meet their demands.

Way Forward:
- The government should expand PDS coverage immediately and include all eligible households under the schemes. It should extend the free food grains program to a year instead of limiting it to two months.
- The government should give a wage hike of at least 10%. This would further call for an allocation of at least 1.4 lakh crore towards the MGNREGS for ensuring an uninterrupted implementation during the year.

5. Improving Resilience to Cyclones Disasters in India
Source- [The Hindu](#)
Syllabus- GS 3 – Disaster and disaster management
Synopsis – The Government needs to ensure fiscal rehabilitation for improving resilience to Cyclones disasters.
Introduction-
- The Indian subcontinent is among the worst affected regions of the world when it comes to tropical cyclones. It is due to its 4,670-mile coastline, where a large percentage of the country's population lives.
- Even after all the planning for reducing risk and forecasting cyclone paths still, cyclones have been incredibly destructive as seen in the case of Cyclone YAAS. Thousands have lost houses and property.
- There is still a lot of work to do in terms of preserving assets and developing fiscal tools to assist people to rebuild their lives.

What are the reasons behind frequent cyclones disasters in India?
Extreme tropical storm precipitation events and accompanying inland floods may become more common. Because the climate continues to warm due to increasing human activities.
- **Rising Ocean temperatures** – Warmer ocean temperature makes atmospheric and ocean conditions favorable for the intensification of cyclones.
  - It could intensify the speed of the winds by up to 10%. It will result in an increase of 10-15% in precipitation. Both of these factors could cause more flooding and widespread damage.
- **Rise in seas level** due to global warming.
- **Impact of recent cyclones**- According to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) report on the **State of Global Climate 2020**-
- The economic losses caused by cyclone Amphan amounts to about $14 billion.
- Around 2.4 million people were displaced in India, mainly in West Bengal and Odisha.

Ways to address the risk of cyclones and other extreme events
Following cyclone Amphan, the West Bengal government faces allegations of irregularities and corruption in the distribution of financial relief. Governments are in the best position to compensate people against the cost of disasters by spreading the cost across the population. Thus,

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- **Government should ensure proper distribution of funds without corruption and mismanagement.**
- It should make citizens, members in a **social insurance model.**
- **Rebuilding should be green and follow a build-back better approach. It is necessary,** considering the negative impact of climate change on tropical cyclones.

6. Dairy Sector in India Needs Urgent Attention
Source: India Express
Syllabus: GS 3 – Agriculture and allied activities
Synopsis:
The second wave of pandemic has brutally impacted the dairy sector. There is a reduction in milk demand coupled with a shortage of livestock feed. The situation is very grim and requires the adoption of robust measures to support the dairy sector.

Background:
- In the first wave, agriculture and allied sectors put up a spectacular performance. It showed an annual growth of **3.4 %** while the economy contracted by **(-)7.2 %** in 2020-21.
- However, this good performance was not replicated by the dairy sector in the second wave.

About the dairy and livestock sector:
- In India, around 70 million farm-dependent people are engaged in the dairy and livestock sector.
    - o Further, 7.7 million people are exclusively engaged in the sector. Amongst them, 69% are female which means the sector is a crucial source of women empowerment.
    - o The labour force of the sector mainly comprises unpaid female members.
- In the Gross Value Added (GVA) from agriculture, the livestock sector contributed 28 percent in 2019-20. Further, India witnesses a 6% growth rate in milk production every year.
- Farmers keep 2-5 milk animals for livelihood which provides great support to them, especially during drought and flood.

Challenges faced by the dairy Sector:
- **Price Sensitivity**: Milk producers are highly susceptible to even minor shocks. For instance, small changes in the employment and income of consumers can leave a significant impact on milk demand.
- **Unorganised Nature**: The majority of cattle raisers are unorganised unlike sugarcane, wheat, and rice-producing farmers. This nature further inhibits the creation of political clout to advocate for their rights.
- **Data Deficiency:** There is no official and periodical estimate of the cost of milk production. Even though the value of milk produced outweighs the combined value of the output of wheat and rice in India.
- **Poor returns**: There is no MSP (Minimum Support Price) for milk unlike 24 major agricultural commodities in the country including wheat and rice. Further dairy cooperatives are not a preferred choice for landless or small farmers.
    - o The cooperatives adopt a fat-based pricing policy which is 20 to 30 % less than the price in the open market.
    - o Further, more than 75 % of the milk bought by dairy cooperatives is at its lower price band.

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Adverse impact of Pandemic on the Dairy Sector:
1. **First,** the threat of disease has restrained the door-to-door sale of liquid milk to households. This has forced the farmers to sell the entire produce to dairy cooperatives at a much lower price.
2. **Second**, the lockdown had led to the closure of shops. This has reduced the demand for milk and milk products.
3. **Third**, the severe shortage of fodder and cattle feed has pushed up the input cost.
4. **Fourth**, private veterinary services have almost stopped due to Covid-19. This has led to the death of milch animals.

Steps taken by Government for the Dairy Sector:
- The government has launched a **Nationwide AI (artificial insemination) program**. It targets to augment annual milk productivity from 1,860 kg/per animal to 3,000 kg/per animal upon its completion.
- The **dairy farmers have been included in the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) program**. It provides adequate and timely credit support from the banking system to the farmers for their cultivation and other needs.
- Similarly, **dairying was brought under MGNREGA** to compensate farmers for the income loss due to Covid-19.

Concerns associated with the above steps:
1. **First,** there is a shortage of AI technicians in India. In August 2020, the department of animal husbandry reported a requirement of 2.02 lakh technicians while only 1.16 lakh were available.
2. **Second**, the dairy cooperatives have not applied for a sufficient number of loans under KCC. As of October 2020, not even one-fourth of the dairy farmers' loan applications had been forwarded to banks.
3. **Third**, the MGNREGA scheme may not be able to provide relief as its budgetary allocation has been curtailed. The budgetary allocation for 2021-22 was curtailed by **34.5 percent** in relation to the revised estimates for 2020-21.

Way Forward:
- The dairy farmers must be given **a stable market and remunerative price** for the milk. For the price, a greater weightage should be accorded to the quantity of milk than its fat content
- They must be ensured of an **uninterrupted supply of fodder and cattle feed** at a reasonable price.
- The government should also provide a **regular supply of veterinary services and medicines to them**.

7. Tussle between Government and Social Media companies
Source: Click Here
Syllabus: GS 3 – Challenges to internal security through communication networks
Synopsis:
The new IT rules have initiated a tussle between Government and Social Media companies. The government wants compliance while the companies are hesitant to adopt them on the grounds of privacy and freedom.

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Background:
- The fault lines are hardening between the government and social media companies over the adoption of the Information Technology (Guidelines for Intermediaries and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.
- WhatsApp has approached the Delhi High Court to challenge the traceability provisions under the new rules.
  - As per the platform, implementing such a provision would infringe on the users' "fundamental rights to privacy and freedom of speech".
- Experts believe that this petition was filed after witnessing inappropriate behavior on the part of the government.
  - The Delhi police had recently visited Twitter's offices in Delhi and Gurgaon to serve the platform a notice over its flawed way of identifying "manipulated media".

Issues in new IT rules:
- **First**, the government will be performing a dual role of an appellant and arbitrator. This is against the principle of natural justice as a person can't be made a judge in his own cause.
- **Second**, a blanket demand on traceability may allow the government to wield power in an arbitrary manner for purposes that remain opaque.
  - Further such a demand is unnecessary as the companies have on various occasions complied with the government's requests on issues pertaining to terror, child abuse, national security, etc.
  - The provisions of the Indian Penal code are sufficient to ensure companies' compliance with government requests.

Concerns associated with Social Media Companies:
- There is **not much clarity over the policy adopted by them** before taking down content. Despite their professions of faith in openness, the decision-making processes of these platforms are wrapped in secrecy.
- Further, they **evade their responsibility as per their convenience** by invoking the protection granted under Section 79 of the IT Act 2000.
  - It states that any intermediary shall not be held legally or otherwise liable for any third-party information, data, or communication link made available or hosted on its platform.

  Thus, the judiciary should decide the case in such a way that targeted access is given to the government, subject to due process cleared by a neutral arbiter.

8. The increasing prices of edible oil needs government intervention
Source: [The Indian Express](#)
Syllabus: GS-3: marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints
Synopsis:
In the past year, the prices of edible oil increased significantly. There are many internal and external reasons behind the price rise. So, the government has to pay attention to the edible oil prices.
Introduction:
In India, Edible oil prices have risen sharply in recent months. According to the data from the **Department of Consumer Affairs**, the prices of six edible oils — groundnut oil, mustard oil, vanaspati, soya oil, sunflower oil and palm oil — have risen between 20% and 56% at all-India levels in the last one year.

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India's Demand of Edible Oil:
- **India's production of oilseeds** is too little to fulfil the domestic demand. Therefore, India is dependent on imports.
- **India is one of the largest importers** of oilseed and edible oils in the world. About 56% of the domestic edible oil demand is met from imports.
- **The major sources of these imports** are
    - Argentina and Brazil for soybean oil;
    - Indonesia and Malaysia palm oil; and
    - Ukraine and Argentina for sunflower oil.
- **Therefore, any increase in global prices** of oilseeds and edible oil is bound to be transmitted into domestic prices.

Why are International Prices of Edible Oil rising?
- **Demand on making biofuel from Soybean oil:** There has been a demand on making renewable fuel from soybean oil in the US, Brazil and other countries. This increased the demand for edible oil in these countries and increased prices globally.
- **Aggressive Buying by China:** China uses soybean for extracting oil as also to prepare the animal feed. Hence, aggressive Chinese buying of soybean depleted inventories in the market. This in turn put upward pressure on prices.
- **Labour issues in Malaysia:** Malaysia's palm oil sector is dependent on migrant foreign workers. However, pandemic induced border closure meant the palm oil sector faced a severe labour shortage causing the output to fall.
- **Impact of La Niña** on palm and soya producing areas
- **Imposition of Export duties** on crude palm oil in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Suggestions to reduce prices of edible oil
- **Short Term Measures:**
    - **Lower Import Duties:** India can lower the import duties on the edible oil prices. This can lower the prices immediately.
    - **Subsidise Edible Oil**: Government can subsidise edible oils and make them available to the poor under the Public Distribution System.
- **Long Term Measure:** India needs to reduce its dependence on imports of edible oils. This can be feasible by incentivising farmers to diversify wheat and paddy crops to oilseeds.

9. 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.

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- **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.
  - o The period for availing of this exemption has also been extended to August 31.
  - o 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.

10. 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.

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- 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 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.

11. Need to revive the Cultural Mapping project
Source: Click Here
Syllabus: GS 1 – Art and Culture
Synopsis:
The situation of cultural ministry in the country is in bad shape. It is facing an acute shortage of funds and resources. A little relief can be given to the artists if the proposed Cultural Mapping project is completed in due time.

Background:
- The culture ministry has received a marginal budget in the last decade. Further, the budget has been declining for the last 5 years and currently stands at 0.07% of the total budget.
  - For 2021-22, it is just 2,688 crores that equal the amount of just 1.5 Rafael jets. The government slashed the budget by 21% since last year while other major countries like the UK, China, Singapore enhanced their cultural budgets.
- Further, the government's cultural institutions are plagued by vacancies (ranging from 30% to 70%) and a lack of trained manpower. This has enhanced the troubles for artists and cultural institutions.
- Experts believe that the timely completion of the 2017 cultural mapping project can provide significant relief to the artists.

About National Mission on Cultural Mapping:
- The mission was proposed in 2015 but was officially approved in 2017.
- It seeks to envision and address the necessity of **preserving the threads of rich Indian Art and Cultural Heritage.** It also aims to convert the vast and widespread cultural canvass of India into an objective cultural mapping.
- Under this Mission, there are three important objectives as follows:
  - To undertake the cultural mapping (i.e. database of cultural assets and resources) via running a nationwide cultural awareness programme called Hamari Sanskriti Hamari Pahchan Abhiyan (National Cultural Awareness Abhiyan).
  - To run a Nationwide Artist Talent Hunt/Scouting Programme called Sanskritik Pratibha Khoj Abhiyan
  - Lastly, to establish a National Cultural Working Place (NCWP) portal. It would be a Centralised Transactional Web Portal with a database and demography of cultural assets and resources including all art forms and artists.

Benefits of Cultural Mapping:
- Firstly, it would create an open database that could be used as a resource by the media, researchers, and funders.
- Secondly, it would help locate a derelict cinema and renovate it as an auditorium in a town where there are none.
- Lastly, it would help create transport and tourism infrastructure around a declining crafts village.
  - For instance, the European Capitals of Culture program picked **Glasgow** for a cultural revival. Earlier, the city was surrounded by poverty and crime, but the program converted it into a cultural marvel.

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Issues with Cultural Mapping Project:
- **First**, the mission hasn't received sufficient funds for implementation. Out of the promised 3,000 crore, it has received only 42.78 crores till 2019-20.
- **Second**, there exists a problem of under utilisation of funds. Out of 42.78 crores, only 1.17 crores have been utilised so far.
- **Third**, there is no IT infrastructure that can enable the proper identification of artists at the block level.
- **Fourth**, some of the mission's objectives deviate from the core theme of cultural mapping. For instance,
  o It calls for roping artists into the Swachh Bharat and Namami Gange schemes.
  o It creates a grading process for artists in which officials decide which artist is "good" or "not so good.
  o Also, It focuses on imparting digital literacy to artists and running talent hunt competitions.
- **Fifth**, the mission proposes a Unique Identification Code for every artist/ institution, apparently to facilitate schemes. However, this may enhance surveillance and control over the artists.

Way Forward:
- There should be a deeper survey and understanding of the diversity of the cultural base, without caste, communal and regional hierarchies.
- The government should allocate sufficient resources to the Ministry of Culture in order to realise the true potential of the mission.

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