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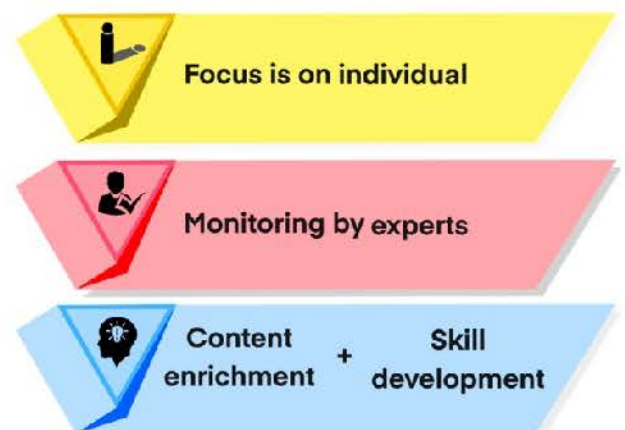
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How is it different?



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ABOUT CURRENT CONNECT

It gives us immense pleasure to present an innovative approach to master current affairs. Current is a passing wind and diverse issues happen at the same time. It is to an extent chaotic. Newspapers, magazines and various other sources report the chaos per se. With our experience of current affairs we have tried to give "the current" a medium to travel. It is the syllabus of the UPSC with their components that are the medium through which the "Current is Passed" to the readers. Ever since the new syllabus of the UPSC came into existence, current has been gaining significance both at prelims as well as mains examination. This book is meant to cover current affairs and related questions arising from those events. We have not only covered the current events for their factual contents but also presented it in such a way that any question asked from that topic gets covered. Moreover, topics are also "peppered" with the relevant facts/key concepts that are related to the theme. We have also given questions for practice both, subjective and objective, so that candidates are oriented to the examination mode. It is a collection covering myriad source yet in a manageable size. To use this book we recommend you to master the components of general studies (GS) syllabus as broken into rows and columns (provided in the beginning after preface). Each cell comprising of the portion of GS becomes the connect for the current and every news subsequently covered guides the reader to the address of the syllabus. It is logical to expect that same issue may be connected to more than one topic of the syllabus. Further, the news also has some additional vistas opened for the readers by adding a box with a title "PEPPER IT WITH" where we expect the students to build further around the theme.

We are also trying to reach the remotest part of the country with our spirit and zeal of "Mains Answer Writing", which has been admired by students, CSE rankholders and other scholars. Continuing in line with the effort, we have started with programs like 7 Question (7Q) Challenge, Shell Points, Stock Points, Content Enrichment Booklet etc.

When it comes to evaluation, we are altogether at a different level. We are also reaching every nook and corner with this expertise for the aspirants of CSE. Now you can write a Mains Answer and get it evaluated from our Expert Team and can get Feedback. [Drop a mail at evaluation@ksgindia.com](mailto:evaluation@ksgindia.com) for registering yourself in our race to perfection. Don't wait, it's your golden chance to crack this exam and fulfill your passionate dream.

Team KSG

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GS - I	Culture-Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.	Indian history significant events, person	Post independence issues, National boundary and disputes	Indian society features, globalization and diversity	Women - issues and developments	Urbanization – problems and remedies	Distribution of industries and resources – India and world	Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic			
GS - II	Indian constitution- Amendments, acts and bills.	Legislative, executive and judicial processes.	Constitutional, non-constitutional, judicial, quasi-judicial, administrative and other types of bodies.	Federal structure and local bodies. Their powers and functions.	Government policies and various governance issues like transparency, accountability and – governance	Committees and schemes.	Non-government issues, self-help groups and role of civil society	Vulnerability sections of our society and social sector issues and initiatives	International Relation -India and other countries, various Indian and international agreements, effects of other countries on		
GS - III	Various measures to boost Indian economy- planning, policies, management.	Government budgeting and issues related to budget.	Agriculture, animal husbandry and transport	Food security- measures to boost food security and food processing. Issues related to land- land reforms	Industries and infrastructure- their growth and investment model	Space and technology, IT space, robotics and computer	Disease, biotechnology and human welfare	Innovations, intellectual property, Awards , POI and other import ant aspects of S&T	Environment: government initiatives, various judgments, pollution, degradation and conservation efforts	Disaster & Management	Challenges to internal security, Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate. Cybersecurity: moneylaundering and its prevention.
GS - IV	Ethical issues related to family society, education, Corruption etc.	Ethics in public and private administrative	Issues	Related laws and rules	Governance/ Governance	Ethics in international issues	Personalities and their	Other important topics			
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POLITY

Personal Data Protection

News Excerpt

The Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on Personal Data Protection Bill met and questioned app-based cab hiring services – Ola and Uber - about their investment pattern in the companies and transfer of critical data.

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Pre-Connect

- In *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India* judgement, Supreme Court has declared Right to Privacy as a Fundamental Rights under Article 21.
- The Personal Data Protection Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha.
- The JPC formed to examine and provide recommendations to the Personal Data Protection Bill 2019.
- The JPC, which was formed in Lok Sabha last year, consists of 20 members from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha respectively.
- It is an ad-hoc committee.

Highlights

The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019: All you need to know

- The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 seeks to provide for protection of personal data of individuals, create a framework for processing such personal data, and **establishes a Data Protection Authority for the purpose.**

What is personal data and data protection?

- Data can be broadly classified into two types: personal and non-personal data.
- Personal data pertains to characteristics, traits or attributes of identity, which can be used to identify an individual.
- Non-personal data includes aggregated data through which individuals cannot be identified, e.g. while an individual's own location would constitute personal data; information derived from multiple drivers' location, which is often used to analyse traffic flow, is non-personal data.
- Data protection refers to policies and procedures seeking to minimise intrusion into the privacy of an individual caused by collection and usage of their personal data.

Key aspects of draft Bill

Jail term up to three years or fine up to Rs 2 lakh or both if any person obtains, discloses, transfers or sells personal data

- Jail term up to five years or fine up to Rs 3 lakh or both if any person discloses, transfers or sells sensitive personal data
- A company or every person who, at the time the offence was committed was in charge, shall be deemed to be guilty and is liable to be proceeded against and punished
- Offence committed by any department of Central or State govt or head of the department or authority shall be deemed to be guilty of the offence and is liable to be proceeded against and punished



Inspector rank officer will investigate cases

Why was a Bill brought for personal data protection?

- ✓ In August 2017, the Supreme Court held that privacy is a fundamental right, flowing from the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- ✓ The Court also observed that privacy of personal data and facts is an essential aspect of the right to privacy.
- ✓ In July 2017, a Committee of Experts, chaired by Justice B. N. Srikrishna, was set up to examine various issues related to data protection in India. The Committee submitted its report, along with a Draft Personal Data Protection Bill, 2018 to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in July 2018.
- ✓ The Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 states that the Bill is based on the recommendations of the report of the Expert Committee and the suggestions received from various stakeholders.

How is personal data regulated currently?

- ✓ Currently, the usage and transfer of personal data of citizens is regulated by the Information Technology (IT) Rules, 2011, under the IT Act, 2000.
- ✓ The rules hold the companies using the data liable for compensating the individual, in case of any negligence in maintaining security standards while dealing with the data.
- ✓ The Expert Committee in its report, held that while the IT rules were a novel attempt at data protection at the time they were introduced, the pace of development of digital economy has shown its shortcomings. For instance,
 - The definition of sensitive personal data under the rules is narrow, and
 - Some of the provisions can be overridden by a contract.
- ✓ Further, the IT Act applies only to companies, not to the government.

What does the Personal Data Protection Bill provide?

- The Bill regulates personal data related to individuals, and the processing, collection and storage of such data.
- Under the Bill, a **data principal** is an individual whose personal data is being processed.
- The entity or individual who decides the means and purposes of data processing is known as **data fiduciary**.
- The Bill governs the processing of personal data by both government and companies incorporated in India.
- It also **governs foreign companies**, if they deal with personal data of individuals in India.

PEPPER IT WITH
Public Accounts Committee,
Salient Features of the
Information Technology Act, 2000

Will individuals have rights over their data?

- The Bill provides the **data principal** with certain rights with respect to their personal data.
- These include seeking confirmation on whether their personal data has been processed, seeking correction, completion or erasure of their data, seeking transfer of data to other fiduciaries, and restricting continuing disclosure of their personal data, if it is no longer necessary or if consent is withdrawn.
- Any processing of personal data can be done only **on the basis of consent** given by data principal.

Are there any restrictions on processing of an individual's data?

- ✚ The Bill also provides for certain obligations of data fiduciaries with respect to processing of personal data. Such processing should be subject to certain purpose, collection and storage limitations, e.g. personal data can be processed only for specific, clear and lawful purpose.
- ✚ Additionally, all data fiduciaries must undertake certain transparency and accountability measures such as implementing security safeguards and instituting grievance redressal mechanisms to address complaints of individuals.
- ✚ Certain fiduciaries would be notified as **significant data fiduciaries** based on certain criteria such as volume of data processed and turnover of fiduciary. These fiduciaries must undertake **additional accountability measures** such as conducting a **data protection impact assessment** before conducting any processing of large scale sensitive personal data, includes financial data, biometric data, caste, religious or political beliefs.

What is the grievance redressal mechanism if the above restrictions are not followed?

- ✚ To ensure compliance with the provisions of the Bill, and provide for further regulations with respect to processing of personal data of individuals, the Bill sets up a **Data Protection Authority**.
- ✚ The Authority will be comprised of members with expertise in fields such as data protection and information technology.
- ✚ **Any individual, who is not satisfied with the grievance redressal by the data fiduciary can file a complaint to the Authority.**
- ✚ **Orders of the Authority can be appealed to an Appellate Tribunal. Appeals from the Tribunal will go to the Supreme Court.**

Are there any exemptions to these safeguards for processing of personal data?

- ◇ Processing of personal data is exempt from the provisions of the Bill in some cases.

- ◇ For example, the central government can exempt any of its agencies in the interest of security of state, public order, sovereignty and integrity of India, and friendly relations with foreign states.
- ◇ Processing of personal data is also exempted from provisions of the Bill for certain other purposes such as prevention, investigation, or prosecution of any offence, or research and journalistic purposes.

- ◇ **Personal data of individuals can be processed without their consent in certain circumstances such as: (i) if required by the State for providing benefits to the individual, (ii) legal proceedings, (iii) to respond to a medical emergency.**

Is the Bill different from the draft Bill suggested by the Expert Committee?

- ◇ The Bill has made several changes from the draft Bill, e.g. the Bill has added a new class of significant data fiduciaries, as social media intermediaries. These will include intermediaries, with users above a notified threshold, which enable online interaction between users.
- ◇ Further, the Bill has expanded the scope of exemptions for the government, and additionally provided that the government may direct data fiduciaries to provide it with any non-personal or anonymised data for better targeting of services.

Joint Parliamentary Committee

- ❖ A structured committee system was introduced in 1993 to provide for greater scrutiny of government functioning by Parliament.
- ❖ Most committees of Parliament include MPs from both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. A Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) is an ad-hoc body. It is set up for a specific object and duration.
- ❖ Joint committees are set up by a motion passed in one house of Parliament and agreed to by the other. The details regarding membership and subjects are also decided by Parliament.
- ❖ The mandate of a JPC depends on the motion constituting it. This need not be limited to the scrutiny of government finances.
- ❖ Although a number of joint committees have been formed since Independence, four major JPCs have been formed to investigate significant issues that have caused controversy. These are: (1) Joint Committee on Bofors Contracts; (2) Joint Committee to enquire into irregularities in securities and banking transactions; (3) Joint Committee on stock-market scam; and (4) Joint Committee on pesticide residues in and safety standards for soft drinks.
- ❖ JPC recommendations have persuasive value but the committee cannot force the government to take any action on the basis of its report.
- ❖ The government may decide to launch fresh investigations on the basis of a JPC report. However, the discretion to do so rests entirely with the government.
- ❖ The government is required to report on the follow-up action taken on the basis of the recommendations of the JPC and other committees.
- ❖ The committees then submit 'Action Taken Reports' in Parliament on the basis of the government's reply. These reports can be discussed in Parliament and the government can be questioned on the basis of the same.

Conclusion

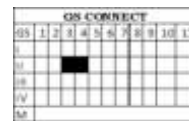
Pursuant to the PDPB being enacted into an Act, there are several compliances to be followed by organizations processing personal data in order to ensure protection of privacy of individuals relating to their Personal Data.

Consent of the individual would be required for processing of personal data. Based on the type of personal data being processed, organizations will have to review and update data protection policies, codes to ensure these are consistent with the revised principles such as update their internal breach notification procedures, implement appropriate technical and organisational measures to prevent misuse of data, Data Protection Officer to be appointed by the Significant Data Fiduciary, and instituting grievance redressal mechanisms to address complaints by individuals.

Maharashtra and CBI

News Excerpt

The Maharashtra government has withdrawn “general consent” given to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to probe cases in the state. The decision means the central agency will have to get consent from the state government for every new case it registers in Maharashtra.



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Pre-Connect

- The CBI is the main investigating agency of the Central Government. It plays an important role in the prevention of corruption and maintaining integrity in administration.
- It also provides assistance to the Central Vigilance Commission and Lokpal.

Background

- The CBI was set up in 1963 by a resolution of the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Later, it was transferred to the Ministry of Personnel and now it enjoys the status of an attached office.
- The Special Police Establishment, which looked into vigilance cases setup in 1941 was also merged with the CBI.
- The establishment of the CBI was recommended by the Santhanam Committee on Prevention of Corruption (1962–1964).
- The CBI is not a statutory body. It derives its powers from the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946.

Highlights

- ✓ The Punjab government has also revoked its general consent to the Central Bureau of Investigation for probing cases in the state, joining several other states that have carried out similar moves.
- ✓ West Bengal, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh are among the states that have already withdrawn their "general consent" to the CBI.

What is general consent?

- ✓ The CBI derives its powers to investigate from the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, 1946 which grants the CBI power to investigate a case in Delhi, without any permission, since it is part of the Centre. However, in all the other states, the CBI needs the consent of the state to investigate any case relating to that state or having jurisdiction of that state.
- ✓ The provision of the Central police not being able to investigate in the states without the consent of the states is part of the Constitution which lays down the law and order as a state subject. The Central police cannot investigate or enter the state without the consent of the case since law and order is a state subject and the Centre cannot intervene in law and order matters. The CBI can only investigate with the consent of the state.
- ✓ The CBI can begin a probe under certain circumstances — if a state government makes a request and the Union government agrees to it, if the Supreme Court or any High Court order the CBI to take up such investigations, or if the state government issues a notification of consent under section 6 of the DSPE Act and the Union government issues notification under section 5 of the DSPE Act for an investigation. The CBI can initiate Suo-moto investigations only in Union Territories, under section 2 of the DSPE Act.

What happens when a state withdraws general consent?

- Once a state withdraws general consent, the CBI has to seek permission before it can register a case against a person or an entity based in that state. So now, the CBI has to seek permission from the Maharashtra government if it has to probe anyone residing in Maharashtra.
- However, there will be no bar on investigation into cases that are already being probed by the CBI. The CBI cannot file any new FIRs in any new cases. For example, if an offence has been committed in Delhi and part of it is in Mumbai and if the state government does not allow the CBI to file a case in Maharashtra, the CBI has an option of registering a case in Delhi and then seeking assistance from the Maharashtra police to carry out the investigation in Maharashtra. However, the CBI will not have power or jurisdiction to probe the case in the state.

- CBI can still investigate in these states if Supreme Court or High Courts directs it.

What types of cases is the CBI involved in at a state level?

- The CBI is divided into three categories when it comes to investigation. The first is the Anti-Corruption Division that investigates cases against public servants under the control of the central government, public servants in public sector undertakings, also under the control of the central government, cases against public servants working under state governments, which have been entrusted to the CBI by the state, and serious departmental irregularities committed by the above mentioned.
- The Economic Offences Division investigates financial crimes, bank frauds, money laundering, illegal money market operations, graft in PSUs and banks.
- The Special Crimes Division handles cases of conventional nature such as offences relating to internal security, espionage, sabotage, narcotics and psychotropic substances, antiquities, murders, dacoities/robberies, and cheating among others.

Why CBI is not as effective as it should be?

- ✦ Officers of Indian Police Services (IPS) hold leadership positions in CBI on deputation. They have to return back to own cadre after completion of term. This puts question mark on their ability to remain politically neutral.
- ✦ Dependence on Home Ministry for fund and staff further compromises its ability to investigate independently.
- ✦ Dependence on state government's consent to investigate within that state.
- ✦ Because of Politicization and corruption, CBI has been called as "caged parrot" by none other than the Supreme Court of India.

Reforms Suggested

- ✦ Second Administrative Reform Commission has suggested that CBI should be made a statutory body under a separate law. This will improve its powers and independence.
- ✦ It should be given powers to investigate cases against All India Services officers and Central Government officers, irrespective of the state they are serving.
- ✦ CBI should have a separate cadre of officers even for leadership positions.
- ✦ Modern investigation tools and training
- ✦ Increased independence by making its expenses charged upon the Consolidated Fund of India.

PEPPER IT WITH

National Investigation Agency,
Central Vigilance Commission,
Whistle Blowers Protection Act
2014, Lokpal and the Lokayukt

Conclusion

The decision will increase work for both the CBI and the state government. Every time the CBI traps some central government employee taking a bribe, it will need to seek approval from the Maharashtra government before registering a case. Similarly, the Maharashtra government department too will be burdened with approval requests on a case-by-case basis.

The CBI has, however, recently started taking recourse in a Calcutta High Court judgment. The HC, in its order in the Ramesh Chandra Singh and another vs CBI, observed that "the court is of the view that the central government/CBI's power to investigate and prosecute its own officials cannot be in any way impeded or interfered by the state even if the offenses were committed within the territory of the state."

Central Vigilance Commission

News Excerpt

The Railway Board has directed its vigilance officials to follow due diligence while investigating cases by giving an opportunity to suspect employees to give their version.

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Pre-Connect

- The Central Vigilance Commissioner is appointed by the president on the recommendation of the selection committee consisting of the prime minister as its chairperson, and the Home Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha, as its members.

- The tenure of CVC chief is of four years or till the incumbent attains the age of 65 years.
- It is a statutory body empowered to inquire into **offences** alleged to have been committed under the **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988** by public servants.
- It was set up on the recommendation of the Santhanam Committee.
- **CVC has no investigation wing of its own** as it depends on the CBI and the Chief Vigilance Officers (CVO) of central organizations.
- The CVC observed the vigilance awareness week from October 27 to November 2 with the theme '**Satark Bharat, Samriddh Bharat**' (Vigilant India, Prosperous India).
- This is observed every year during the week in which the birthday of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, October 31 falls.

Analytica

Integrity Pact

- According to the Commission, an **"Integrity Pact"** is a vigilance tool that envisages an agreement between the prospective vendors/bidders and the buyer, committing both the parties not to exercise any corrupt influence on any aspect of the contract. The pact is also to ensure transparency, equity and competitiveness in public procurement.
- The Central Vigilance Commission has amended the **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** on adoption of **"Integrity Pact"** in government organisations for procurement activities, and restricted the maximum tenure of Integrity External Monitors (IEMs) to three years in an organisation.
- The order revises the SOP issued in January 2017. Amended provision states that the choice of IEM should be restricted to officials from the government and Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) who have retired from positions of the level of Secretary to the Central government or of equivalent pay scale.
- The IEMs independently and objectively review the documents to determine if the parties have complied with their obligations under the pact. They may submit a report to the chief executive of the organisation concerned or directly to the CVO and the CVC, if they find serious irregularities attracting the Prevention of Corruption Act provisions.

PEPPER IT WITH

Lokpal and the Lokayuktas, National Investigation Agency, National Disaster Management Authority, Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014, Central Bureau of Investigation, Railway Boards, Railway Zones

Limitations of CVC

- ✓ It has been accused to be a powerless agency, at best an advisory body, only with no power to register criminal case against government officials or direct CBI to initiate inquiries against any officer of the level of Joint Secretary and above.
- ✓ It lacks adequate manpower and financial resources and also the power to take action on complaints of corruption.

Conclusion

Systemic checks, effective audit, capacity building and training for a holistic approach should be the leading tools towards fighting corruption. Preventive vigilance is always better than punitive vigilance.

Public Places Cannot Be Occupied Indefinitely: Supreme Court

News Excerpt

The recent judgment of the Supreme Court on the Shaheen Bagh protest, held that *"public ways and public spaces cannot be occupied in such a manner and that too indefinitely."* While acknowledging the right to dissent, the Court stated that *"demonstrations expressing dissent have to be in designated places alone."*

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Pre-Connect

- Every citizen has the right to assemble peacefully and protest against the actions or inactions of the state under Article 19(1)(a).
- The same must be respected and encouraged by the state, for the strength of a democracy, which is the cornerstone of the Constitution.

- The fundamental right under Article 19(1)(a) subject to reasonable restrictions under Article 19(1)(b), pertains to the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, public order and to the regulation by the concerned police authorities.
- Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, prohibits activities like holding public meetings, processions, etc.

Highlights

The Supreme Court held that

- *India, as we know it today, traces its foundation back to when the seeds of protest during our freedom struggle were sown deep, to eventually flower into a democracy. What must be kept in mind, however, is that the erstwhile mode and manner of dissent against colonial rule cannot be equated with dissent in a democracy. Our Constitutional scheme comes with the right to protest and express dissent, but with an obligation towards certain duties.*
- In *Himmat Lal K Shah v Commissioner of Police, Ahmedabad and Anr*, 1973, Supreme Court held that while the state cannot impose any unreasonable restrictions, a right to hold meetings on public streets is subject to the control of the appropriate authority regarding the time and place of the meeting.
- In *Mazdoor Kisaan Shakti Sangathan v Union of India and Anr*, 2018, the Supreme Court was in favour of regulating the aspect of demonstrations in the earmarked space by the concerned authorities at Jantar Mantar. The judgment endeavoured to emphasise the principle of balancing the interests of the residents in the area vis-à-vis the interests of protestors to hold demonstrations at Jantar Mantar. The concerned police authority was directed to devise a proper mechanism for the limited use of the Jantar Mantar area for peaceful protests and demonstrations and to lay down parameters for the same.

Analytica

- ✓ The problem here is that the state invokes protection of public order as a reason to restrict a protest, and then it has to prove the *“precise nature of the threat and the specific risks posed.”* This was also something laid down by the Supreme Court in January this year in the *Anuradha Bhasin* judgment on the restrictions on press and freedom in Jammu and Kashmir.
- ✓ Legally speaking, future protests—as long as they are peaceful and do not create a threat to public order—should not be restricted only to designated areas, and should still be able to occupy public spaces. Completely blocking a road for an extended period of time may eventually become an unacceptable impediment to the freedom of movement, but this cannot be the grounds to prevent any such protest right at the start.
- ✓ It may also be argued that the Court’s observations in this judgment only apply in situations where the protest is as large as at Shaheen Bagh, occupies a full road completely, and is going on for a long period of time.

PEPPER IT WITH

Part III of the Constitution,
Preamble of the Constitution
in pith and substance, The
Right to strike

Way Forward

- The tenor and language of such orders indicated that the concerned authority is to examine every request and take a decision as to whether it should or should not allow the proposed demonstration, public meeting etc, keeping in view its likely effect, that is, whether it would cause any obstruction to traffic, danger to human safety or disturbance to public tranquillity, etc.
- Such orders were repeatedly being passed and also amounted to what would be equivalent to the **“banning”** of public meetings, demonstrations, etc. The police and other concerned authorities were accordingly directed to formulate proper and requisite guidelines for regulating protests.

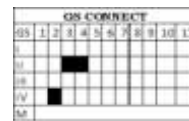
Conclusion

The authorities are required to set out proper and precise guidelines, so that in the future, the constitutional right to protest does not hinder public movement.

Parliamentary Privilege

News Excerpt

A Member of Parliament moved a Breach of Privilege Motion with the Lok Sabha Speaker against top police officials in Kolkata and Howrah for “manhandling, assaulting and obstructing him and two others from performing their duties as MPs”.



Pre-Connect

- Parliamentary privilege refers to rights and immunities enjoyed by Parliament as an institution and MPs in their individual capacity, without which they cannot discharge their functions as entrusted upon them by the Constitution.
- According to the Constitution, the powers, privileges and immunities of Parliament and MP's are to be defined by Parliament. No law has so far been enacted in this respect. In the absence of any such law, it continues to be governed by British Parliamentary conventions.
- A breach of privilege is a violation of any of the privileges of MPs, or the House. Among other things, any action '**casting reflections**' on MPs, parliament or its committees; could be considered breach of privilege. This may include publishing of news items, editorials or statements made in newspaper, magazine, TV interviews or in public speeches.
- There have been several such cases. In 1967, two people were held to be in contempt of Rajya Sabha, for having thrown leaflets from the visitors' gallery. In 1983, one person was held in breach for shouting slogans and throwing chappals from the visitors' gallery.

List of Parliamentary Privileges

Note that they are not yet codified.

Collective Privileges

The privileges belonging to each House of Parliament collectively are:

- It has the right to publish its reports, debates and proceedings and also the right to prohibit others from publishing the same.
- It can exclude strangers from its proceedings and hold secret sittings to discuss some important matters.
- It can make rules to regulate its own procedure and the conduct of its business and to adjudicate upon such matters.
- It can punish members as well as outsiders for breach of its privileges or its contempt by reprimand, admonition or imprisonment (also suspension or expulsion, in case of members).
- It has the right to receive immediate information of the arrest, detention, conviction, imprisonment and release of a member.
- It can institute inquiries and order the attendance of witnesses and send for relevant papers and records.
- The courts are prohibited to inquire into the proceedings of a House or its committees.
- No person (either a member or outsider) can be arrested, and no legal process (civil or criminal) can be served within the precincts of the House without the permission of the presiding officer.

Individual Privileges

The privileges belonging to the members individually are:

- ✓ They cannot be arrested during the session of Parliament and 40 days before the beginning and 40 days after the end of a session. This privilege is available only in civil cases and not in criminal cases or preventive detention cases.
- ✓ They have freedom of speech in Parliament. No member is liable to any proceedings in any court for anything said or any vote given by him in Parliament or its committees. This freedom is subject to the provisions of the Constitution and to the rules and standing orders regulating the procedure of Parliament.
- ✓ They are exempted from jury service. They can refuse to give evidence and appear as a witness in a case pending in a court when Parliament is in session.

What is the punishment in case of breach of privilege or contempt of the House?

- The house can ensure attendance of the offending person.

- The person can be given a warning and let go or be sent to prison as the case may be.
- In the case of throwing leaflets and chappal, the offending individuals were sentenced to simple imprisonment.
- In the 2007 case of breach of privilege against Ambassador Ronen Sen, the Lok Sabha Committee on privileges held that the phrase "**headless chicken**" was not used by Sen in respect of MPs or politicians. No action was taken against him.
- In 2008, an editor of an Urdu weekly referred to the deputy chairman of Rajya Sabha as a "**coward**" attributing motives to a decision taken by him. The privileges committee held the editor guilty of breach of privilege. The committee instead of recommending punishment stated that, **"it would be better if the House saves its own dignity by not giving undue importance to such irresponsible articles published with the sole intention of gaining cheap publicity."**

PEPPER IT WITH
Articles 79- 88 of the Indian Constitution, Schedule X of the Constitution, Contempt of the House

Conclusion

Legislators are quick at claiming legislative privileges but forget that their behaviour in the August House also bears strict scrutiny. The Assembly and Parliament are the sacred grounds of democracy where language and decorum matter. And, to be a member of such institutions require some ethics. Legislative privileges don't come as a matter of right. They are earned, above all by the use of sanitized language and behaviour.

Right to Information

News Excerpt

The Central Information Commission (CIC) has directed the CBI to provide a justification for denial of information on the ground that the disclosure might impede an ongoing investigation or the prosecution of an accused and not merely cite the relevant clause in its RTI response.

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Pre-Connect

- The Central Information Commission was established by the Central Government in 2005.
- It was constituted through an Official Gazette Notification under the provisions of the Right to Information Act (2005). Hence, it is not a constitutional body.
- The Central Information Commission is a high-powered independent body which inter alia looks into the complaints made to it and decide the appeals.
- It entertains complaints and appeals pertaining to offices, financial institutions, public sector undertakings, etc., under the Central Government and the Union Territories.

PEPPER IT WITH

Composition of the Central Information Commission, State Information Commission, Union Public Service Commission, Finance Commission, Staff Selection Commission

Highlights

- CIC was hearing the case of an RTI applicant, who had sought to know the status of a preliminary enquiry by the CBI in the MSME Development Institute in Chennai.
- CIC has directed the Central Bureau of Investigation to provide a cogent explanation while citing the exemption clause — section 8(1)(h) of the Right to Information (RTI) Act — on how a disclosure of information would adversely affect an investigation or prosecution.
- Section 8(1)(h) of the RTI Act allows a public authority to withhold information, the disclosure of which would impede the process of an investigation or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders.
- The Delhi High Court, in the Bhagat Singh case, had clearly held that merely citing the exemption clause is not enough and a public authority must justify how a disclosure of information would attract the section as disclosure was the rule while withholding information was an exception.

Conclusion

The RTI Act is being subverted and illegally converted into a Right to Denial of Information. Section 8 (1) (h) and Section 8 (1) (h) is being converted into an omnibus exemption which can be used to deny most information. This will be a very unfortunate regression for citizen's fundamental rights and would greatly curb its power to get accountability and curb corruption. There is a great need for lawyers, judges and RTI practitioners to discuss this denial of fundamental rights which appears to be a constriction of citizen's fundamental right under Article 19 (1)(a).

An advertisement for KSG's 'Essay Advance' program. It features a blue and yellow background. On the left, there is an image of a laptop and a person's hands writing in a notebook. On the right, the text 'KSG' is at the top with a red arrow pointing up. Below it, 'An Institute For IAS Exam.' is written. The main title 'ESSAY ADVANCE' is in large, bold, white letters. Below the title, it says 'Learn the Art of Essay Writing.' There is a green button with a white arrow and the text 'REGISTER NOW'. At the bottom, the website 'testseries.ksgindia.com' and two phone numbers '9667779058' and '9811598995' are listed.

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An advertisement for KSG's 'Mains Test Series'. It features a blue background. At the top, the 'KSG' logo is shown with a red arrow. Below it, the text 'An Institute For IAS Exam.' is written. The main title 'MAINS TEST SERIES' is in large, bold, white letters. Below the title, it says 'Practice creates Confidence' and 'Confidence empowers you.' There is an illustration of a person walking on a path made of wooden blocks, with a lightbulb icon above them. At the bottom, the website 'testseries.ksgindia.com' and two phone numbers '9667779058' and '9811598995' are listed.

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Practice creates Confidence
Confidence empowers you.

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SOCIAL ISSUES, SCHEMES, REPORTS & INDICES

Tree Transplantation Policy

News Excerpt

The Delhi Cabinet recently approved the "Tree Transplantation Policy" for the preservation of trees in the Capital and sanctioned funds to construct a smog tower at Connaught Place as part of its efforts to combat air pollution.

GS CONNECT											
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Pre-Connect

The tree transplantation policy had first figured in the Delhi government's annual budget for 2019-20, two smog towers, including the proposed structure at Connaught Place, are being constructed following a November 2019 order of the Supreme Court to the Delhi government and the Central Pollution Control Board.

About the Policy

- Under the tree transplantation policy, agencies or institutions behind any project will not only have to transplant at least 80 per cent of affected trees, they will have to ensure survival of at least 80 per cent of transplanted trees.
- The policy entailed planting 10 saplings as a compensatory effort if one tree was supposed to be cut.
- A dedicated Tree Transplantation Cell will also be formed by the Delhi government and local committees, which will include government officials, citizens, RWAs to monitor the transplanted trees and to certify that the task has been done with due diligence.
- Also a panel of the agencies that excel in the task of transplantation and whichever department wants trees to be transplanted can approach any agency out of the panel that is being formed.

What it takes to move a tree

- ❖ Tree transplantation is a complicated process with a success rate of around 50 per cent. It costs around Rs 1 lakh to transplant an average-sized tree.
- ❖ The survival rate of a transplanted tree depends on soil type as a tree growing on the Delhi ridge is unlikely to survive in the Yamuna floodplain. The key to success also lies in how efficiently the roots are isolated and the tree is kept hydrated.

What was the need of the policy?

The woodland of Delhi is very dense and the trees are old and strong because Delhi is quite an old city and the government constantly tries to save and preserve trees but often due to construction and development work trees are cut down.

Analytica

- The policy isn't about the question of saving trees, but the loss of several hundred trees from a neighbourhood.
- For sure, a hotter micro-climate and more dust would become the order of the day. The poorest in the city will experience unbearable heat.
- Birds, including those from exotic species, will lose their unsubstitutable homes.
- Not all open spaces are ecologically viable for planting non-native trees anyway. Unless the Delhi government stops work on all upcoming buildings and knocks down built infrastructure, where thousands of unwanted trees can be dumped in the what has been called transplantation.
- The Delhi government overturns these giants of modern science. Nor does it trust Indian culture, rich with odes to symbiotic affections. Delhi (and India) must nurture trees in situ. It must build with them intact.

PEPPER IT WITH

Smog Towers, Central Pollution Control Board, National Forest Policy, Social Forestry, etc

STARS Project

News Excerpt

The Union Cabinet approved Implementation of the Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States (STARS) project with a total project cost of Rs 5718 crore with the financial support of World Bank amounting to US \$ 500 million (approximately Rs. 3700 crore).

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Pre-Connect

- The STARS project seeks to support the states in developing, implementing, evaluating and improving interventions with direct linkages to improved education outcomes and school to work transition strategies for improved labour market outcomes. The overall focus and components of the STARS project are aligned with the objectives of National Education Policy 2020 of quality based learning outcomes.
- STARS project would be implemented as a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme under Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education. (MOE)
- The Project envisions improving the overall monitoring and measurement activities in the Indian School Education System through interventions in selected states like Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Odisha. The identified States will be supported for various interventions for improving the quality of education.
- The project shifts focus from the provision of inputs and maintaining of outputs to actual outcomes by linking the receipt and disbursement of funds to these outcomes.
- The STARS project also aims to focus on initiatives of PM e-Vidya, Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Mission and National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.

Analytica

The STARS Project has two major components

At the national level, the project envisages the following interventions which will benefit all states and UTs:

- To strengthen MOE's national data systems to capture robust and authentic data on retention, transition and completion rates of students.
- To support MOE in improving states PGI scores by incentivizing states governance reform agenda through SIG (State Incentive Grants).
- To support the strengthening of learning assessment systems.
- To support MOE's efforts to establish a National Assessment Center (PARAKH). Among the tasks of such a center would be to leverage the experiences of states selected for the operation by collecting, curating and sharing these experiences with other states through online portals (e.g. Shagun and DIKSHA), social and other media engagement, technical workshops, state visits and conferences.

Further, the STARS project includes a Contingency Emergency Response Component (CERC) under the National Component which would enable it to be more responsive to any natural, man-made and health disasters.

It will help the government respond to situations leading to loss of learning such as school closures/infrastructure damage, inadequate facilities and use technology for facilitating remote learning etc. The CERC component would facilitate the rapid re-categorization of financing and the utilization of streamlined financing request procedures.

At the State level, the project envisages

- ✓ Strengthening Early Childhood Education and Foundational Learning
- ✓ Improving Learning Assessment Systems
- ✓ Strengthening classroom instruction and remediation through teacher development and school leadership
- ✓ Governance and Decentralized Management for Improved Service Delivery.

PEPPER IT WITH
PM e-vidya, Foundational Literacy, Numerical Mission and National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education, PISA, Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan

- ✓ Strengthening Vocational education in schools through mainstreaming, career guidance and counselling, internships and coverage of out of school children.

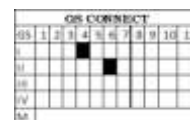
Benefits of the Project

- The measurable outcome of project are Increase in students achieving minimum proficiency in grade 3 language in selected states
- Improvement in secondary school completion rate, Improvement in governance index scores.
- Strengthened learning assessment systems, Partnerships developed to facilitate cross-learning between states, and improvement in the State level service delivery such as Strengthening planning and management capacities for decentralized management by training of BRCs and CRCs, Strengthened school management by training of Head Teachers and Principals for improved education service delivery.

SVAMITVA Scheme

News Excerpt

Recently Prime Minister launched the distribution of property cards under the SVAMITVA scheme through video conferencing.



Pre-Connect

The scheme was launched by the Prime Minister on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day. During the current financial year, the scheme is being implemented as a pilot project in about 1 lakh villages across 8 states – Maharashtra, Karnataka, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan. The aim is to cover all 6.62 lakh villages in the country by the end of financial year 2023-24.

Analytica

What is SVAMITVA card?

- The acronym SVAMITVA stands for Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas.
- It is a **Central Sector Scheme** aimed at “providing ‘record of rights’ to village household owners possessing houses in inhabited rural areas in villages and issuance of property cards to the property owners.” The plan is to survey all rural properties using drones and prepare GIS based maps for each village.
- The scheme aims to rectify that by enabling one lakh property holders to download their property cards through the SMS link delivered on their mobile phones. Beneficiaries of this scheme will receive the physical copies of the Property Cards within one day.

How is a SVAMITVA property card generated?

- The framework for implementation of SVAMITVA scheme, finalized by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
- A multi-stage process of generating a property card, which starts with signing of a memorandum of understanding between Survey of India (SoI) and respective state governments.
- The SoI is responsible for preparing the National Topographic database on all scales, using technology for topographical mapping at various scales including the use of airborne photography drones, satellite imageries, and Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAV) or drone platforms.
- Once the MOU is done, a Continuously Operating Reference System (CORS) is established.
- It is a network of reference stations that provide a virtual base station that allows access to long-range high-accuracy Network RTK (Real-Time Kinematic) corrections.
- The next step is the identification of villages to be surveyed during the pilot phase, and make people aware of the process of mapping properties.
- The abadi area (residential area) of the village is demarcated and each rural property is marked with limestone (chunna).
- Then, drones are used for large scale mapping of rural abadi areas. Based on these images, a GIS database on 1:500 scale, and village maps — Gram Manchitra — are drawn.
- After creation of maps, a ground verification process by drone survey teams follows, on the basis of that corrections, if any, are made.

- At this stage, inquiry/objection process – conflict/ dispute resolution is completed. After this, final Property Cards/Title deeds or “SampattiPatrak” are generated. These cards will be available on digital platforms or as hard copies to the village household owners.

How will the SVAMITVA property data and maps be updated in the future?

- ✓ The framework states, “Once the GIS database is prepared encompassing the 6.62 lakh villages, state governments will be responsible for conducting future surveys and updating the GIS database.” They will also decide the update frequency of the re-survey.

Who will own the SVAMITVA data?

- The orthorectified base maps shall be jointly owned by the Survey of India, Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the state government. The GIS data will also be jointly owned by Centre and State.
- However, the data related to property details will be owned by the State Revenue Department as it has the authority to mutate the Right of Records (RoRs) and update the maps. Hence, the State Revenue Department will be the owner/host of this data and others will have a right to view.
- Other updated GIS data layers will be shared by the “Talathi/Patwari” level officer once every year incorporating updates that have been done in the preceding 12 months.

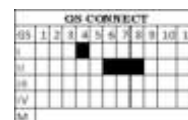
Benefits of SVAMITVA property card: the scheme will benefit rural residents in many ways

- First, it will enable rural households to use their property as a financial asset for taking loans and other financial benefits.
- Second, it will help in determination of property tax, which would accrue to the Gram Panchayats directly in states where they are empowered to collect such taxes.
- The cards will help increase liquidity of land parcels in the market and increase the financial credit availability to the village. The scheme will also pave the way for creation of accurate land records for rural planning.
- All the property records and maps will be available at Gram Panchayat, which will help in taxation of villages, construction permits, elimination of encroachments, etc.
- The property maps will be made using the GIS technique and the same can also be used for better-quality Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPD).

Annual State of education Report

News Excerpt

Recently the Annual State of Education Report (ASER) survey conducted in September.



Pre-Connect

ASER is a nationwide survey of rural education and learning outcomes in terms of reading and arithmetic skills that has been conducted by the NGO Pratham for the last 15 years. This year, the survey was conducted via phone calls, reaching 52,227 rural households with school age children in 30 States and Union Territories.

ASER Survey

- ❖ It is an annual survey that aims to provide reliable annual estimates of children's schooling

In 2018, ASER surveyors found that about 36% of rural households with school-going children had smartphones.

Key finding of the Survey

- About 20% of rural children have no textbooks at home. In Andhra Pradesh, less than 35% of children had textbooks, and only 60% had textbooks in Rajasthan. More than 98% had textbooks in West Bengal, Nagaland and Assam.
- About one in three rural children had done no learning activity at all. About two in three had no learning materials or activity given by their school that week, and only one in ten had access to live online classes.

ASER Survey

- ❖ It is an annual survey that aims to provide reliable annual estimates of children's schooling status and basic learning levels for each state and rural district in India.
- ❖ It is a household-based rather than school-based survey. This design enables all children to be included – those who have never been to school or have dropped out, as well as those who are in government schools, private schools, religious schools or anywhere else.

Impact of Pandemic

- It found that 5.3% of rural children aged 6-10 years had not yet enrolled in school this year, in comparison to just 1.8% in 2018.
- This seems to indicate that due to the disruptions caused by the pandemic, families are waiting for the physical opening of schools to enrol their youngest children, with about 10% of six-year-olds not in school.
- Among 15-16-year-olds, however, enrolment levels are actually slightly higher than in 2018. Enrolment patterns also show a slight shift toward government schools, with private schools seeing a drop in enrolment in all age groups.
- However, two thirds of rural children nationwide reported that they had not received any learning materials or activities at all.
- In Bihar, less than 8% got such materials from their schools, along with 20% in West Bengal, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- On the other hand, more than 80% of rural children in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Kerala and Gujarat received such input.
- Many children did learning activities on their own, with or without regular input. Of the 70% who did some activities, 11% had access to live online classes, and 21% had videos or recorded classes, with much higher levels in private schools.
- About 60% studied from their textbooks, and 20% watched classes broadcast on TV. In Andhra Pradesh, half of all children did no learning activity at all, while in Kerala, only 5% of children were left out.
- About 20% of children whose parents had less than five years of education got learning materials, compared to 46% among parents who had studied beyond Class IX themselves.
- Almost 40% in low education households got no materials and did no learning, compared to 17% of high education families.
- However, almost 40% of low education families persevered and did some learning activities even without receiving any learning materials at all.

Learning hit

Some highlights from the Annual Status of Education Report's September survey:

- 5.3% of rural children aged 6-10 years are not enrolled in school this year, in comparison to just 1.8% in 2018
- Around 20% of rural children did not have textbooks at home by September
- About 70% of rural children did some learning activity. Of these, only 11% had live online classes
- Less than 36% of rural children received some learning materials or activities from the school. Almost 75% of such school interaction was via Whatsapp

Dropout Rate

- ✓ West Bengal occupies the top position in the decline of dropout rate among school students during 2018-2020
- ✓ The school dropout rate in the state declined from 3.3 per cent to 1.5 per cent while it went up from four per cent to 5.5 per cent at the national level.
- ✓ The dropout rate in some bigger states like Karnataka, Telangana and Rajasthan was 11.3 per cent, 14 per cent and 14.9 per cent respectively.

Conclusion

- When schools re-open, it will be important to continue to monitor who goes back to school, and very importantly to understand whether there is learning loss as compared to previous years.
- Noting that 80% of families provided learning support to children, whether from parents or elder siblings. Schools need to find ways to build on that home support going forward.

Tech for Tribals Initiative

News Excerpt

Recently, Tech for Tribals" initiative was e-launched by TRIFED, Ministry of Tribal Affairs in association with Chhattisgarh MFP Federation and IIT Kanpur.

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Q5											

Pre-Connect

It was launched in March 2020 by TRIFED and IIT-Kanpur along with IIT-Roorkee, IIM Indore, Kalinga Institute of Social Science, Bhubaneswar and SRIJAN, Jaipur in the first phase of organising tribal entrepreneurship and skill development program.

Tech for Tribals, an initiative of TRIFED supported by Ministry of MSME, aims at capacity building and imparting entrepreneurship skills to tribal forest produce gatherers enrolled under the Pradhan Mantri VanDhan Yojana(PMVDY). The trainees will undergo a 30 days program over six weeks comprising 120 sessions.

More about the Initiative

- The program titled “Tech for Tribals” aims at the holistic development of tribals with a focus on entrepreneurship development, soft skills, IT, and business development through SHGs operating through Van Dhan Kendras (VDVKs).
- Tech for Tribals is a unique program to make tribals of India “Aatmanirbhar”, focussing to bridge the gap between tribal entrepreneurs and urban markets.
- The training under the programme comprises of exposure through onsite demos on best practices in manufacturing, Total Quality, Hygiene, and standards to be followed in the market.
- The relevant branding and implementation of best in class packaging solutions are expected to add value to the indigenous Minor Forest Produces and subsequently propagating entrepreneurship among the tribals.
- The expected outcome shall be successful, aspiring and confident tribal entrepreneurs ready to compete with the best products in the market with feasible business plans.

About TRIFED

- ❖ TRIFED was established in August 1987 under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 1984 by the Government of India as a National level Cooperative body under the administrative control of the then Ministry of Welfare of India, with the basic mandate of bringing about socio-economic development of tribals of the country by institutionalizing the trade of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) & Surplus Agricultural Produce (SAP) collected/ cultivated by them.
- ❖ As a market developer and service provider, the objective of TRIFED is socio-economic development of tribal people in the country by way of marketing development of the tribal products on which the lives of tribals depends heavily as they spend most of their time and derive major portion of their income. The philosophy behind this approach is to empower tribal people with knowledge, tools and pool of information so that they can undertake their operations in a more systematic and scientific manner.
- ❖ The approach involves capacity building of the tribal people through sensitization, formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and imparting training to them for undertaking a particular activity, exploring marketing possibilities in national as well as international markets, creating opportunities for marketing tribal products on a sustainable basis and creating a brand.

VanDhan Vikas Yojana

Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana or Van Dhan Scheme launched on 14th April, 2018 by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Ministry of Tribal Affairs as nodal department at central level and TRIFED as nodal agency at national level, is a well thought master plan for the socio-economic development of the tribal population of the country. It's crucial steps are enumerated below –

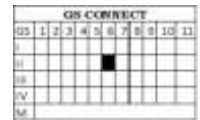
- ❖ Initiative targeting livelihood generation for tribal gatherers and transforming them into entrepreneurs.
- ❖ Idea is to set-up tribal community owned Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs) in predominantly forested tribal districts.
- ❖ A Kendra shall constitute of 15 tribal SHGs, each comprising of up to 20 tribal NTFP gatherers or artisans i.e. about 300 beneficiaries per Van Dhan Kendra.
- ❖ 100% Central Government Funded with TRIFED providing Rs. 15 lakhs for each 300 member Van Dhan Kendra.

- IIT, Kanpur will run the skill development program of tribal youth across Chhattisgarh and Kerala to help them build their enterprise by commercializing the products using MFPS.
- This program will mainly entail three aspects of development for sustainable entrepreneurship which can be considered as the three pillars - Engagement, Capacity Building, and Market linkages. This will lead to the path of commercialization of the tribal entrepreneurs.
- This will lead to the path of commercialization of the tribal entrepreneurs. The course content/ modules developed are specifically relevant to Entrepreneurship in Value Addition and Processing of Forest Produce. This capacity building program is expected to ensure higher success rate of the Tribal Entrepreneurs by enabling and empowering them to run their business with marketable products with quality certifications.

GharTak Fibre Scheme

News Except

The government has recently launched 'GharTak Fibre' scheme — which aims to connect all the villages with high-speed internet.



Pre-Connect

The main objective of this scheme which was launched in Sep 2020 is to make the broadband services available in rural and remote areas of the nation. It not only makes India Digital but also makes the rural population to avail of different government services online.

'GharTak Fibre' scheme aims all 45,945 Bihar villages would be connected through the high-speed optical fibre.

Scheme Objectives and Benefits

- The main objective of the scheme is to make the villages self-reliant
- The scheme aims at boosting the digital infrastructure through setting up optical fibre internet
- It will connect about 45,945 villages in Bihar via optical fibre
- It will improve online ticket booking, digital education, digital payment, digital health consultation, etc in villages
- This scheme is aiming at digital transformation of villages
- It is a crucial step towards Digital India movement

Scheme Details

- GharTak Fibre scheme is launched by the Central government for digital transformation of villages
- Under the scheme, optical fibre internet services will be provided to about 45,945 villages in the state of Bihar.
- 8900 Gram panchayats will also be connected through the optical fibre net service, FTTH broadband internet connectivity
- High speed internet in villages will be a benefit under this scheme
- One public Wi-Fi hotspot will be created in every village
- Households can buy FTTH (Fibre To The Home) connection for personal use
- This scheme aims at digital transformation and spread of high-speed internet connection across the villages.
- This project will be executed by combined efforts of Department of Telecom which has already connected 1.5 lakh Gram Panchayats across India with optical fibre internet service, along with Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology and Common Service Centres.

Analytica

What was the problem?

- ✓ There are three main problems. One is that the lossy, old cables that were laid under phase one has to be replaced.
- ✓ So far, that work has been done in about 4,500 gram panchayats connected under phase one.

- ✓ Then the problem of right-of-way in laying cables from panchayats or blocks to individual villages.
- ✓ The third is power equipment failure and its theft.
- ✓ Around 42 per cent of 3,660 Gram Panchayats reported to be non-operational in the state had been facing these problems.
- ✓ While optical fibre cable has been laid to connect nearly all the 8,745 GPs, lack of users in these areas has resulted in minimal or zero follow-ups on repair and maintenance work.

PEPPER IT WITH

Bharat Net Project, National optical fibre network, Digital India Programme, High speed optical fibre internet, Wi-Fi vs Li-Fi etc.

Solution

To connect all villages by March 31, the state would need to dig trenches, lay cables, and provide connectivity to an average of 257 villages daily, or a monthly average of over 7,500 villages. However, nearly a month after the scheme was inaugurated, optical fibre cable has been laid only in 4,347 villages as of October 14, or at the rate of 181 villages per day.

Conclusion

The learnings from the implementation of the 'GharTak Fibre' scheme in Bihar could also be a lesson for future, as the Centre plans to connect all 6.5 lakh villages to high speed optical fibre internet over the next 1,000 days.

Beaten or Broken Report

News Excerpt

Recently, the World Bank has released South Asia Economic Focus, fall 2020 report entitled as "Beaten or Broken."

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Pre-Connect

This report is a joint product of the Office of the Chief Economist for the South Asia Region (SARCE) and the Macroeconomics, Trade and Investment (MTI) Global Practice. The report includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

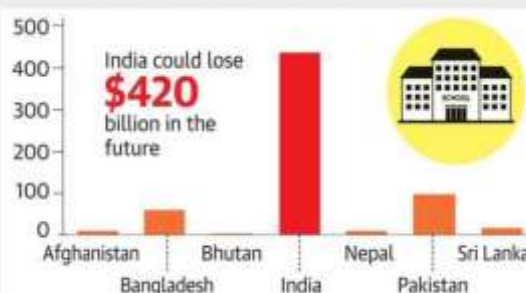
About the report

South Asian Region

- South Asia region stands to lose USD 622 billion from the school closures in the present scenario or up to USD 880 billion in a more pessimistic scenario
- Informality and COVID-19 in South Asia" claims that South Asia is set to plunge into its worst-ever recession in 2020 as the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on the region's economies linger.
- Temporary school closures in all South Asian countries have had major implications for students. They have kept 391 million students out of school in primary and secondary education, further complicating efforts to resolve the learning crisis.
- The report also noted that the pandemic may cause up to 5.5 million students to drop out from the education system and cause substantial learning losses, which will have a lifetime impact on the productivity of a generation of students.
- The report has projected that based on country data on household labor incomes, the average child in South Asia may lose USD 4,400 in lifetime earnings once having entered the labour market, equivalent to 5 percent of total earnings.

Closure effect

Among South Asian nations, India's future earnings are projected to be impacted the most due to school closures. The chart shows the amounts (in USD billion) some countries are projected to lose due to school closures



India

- The extended closure of schools amid the COVID-19 pandemic could dent India's future earnings by anywhere between \$420 billion and \$600 billion, as depleted learning levels of students will translate into poorer productivity going forward.

- Engaging children through remote learning programmes had been difficult, despite most governments' best efforts to mitigate the impact of school closures.
- The projected learning loss for the region is 0.5 years of learning-adjusted years of schooling at present, and this will already lead to substantial future earning losses, the report estimated.

The 'Learning Adjusted Year of Schooling' (LAYS) concept, introduced by the World Bank, seeks to combine access and learning outcomes into a single measure.

It combines quantity (years of schooling) and quality (how much kids know at a given grade level) into a single summary measure of human capital in a society.

Impact of COVID on productivity of the overall economy

- ✓ The increased integration of the global economy will amplify the adverse impact of COVID-19.
- ✓ Contagion prevention and physical distancing may render some activities, for example the hospitality sector, unviable unless they are radically transformed, which will take time.
- ✓ Even in less directly affected sectors such as manufacturing, banking and business, severe capacity underutilisation lowers total factor productivity while restrictions to stem the spread of the pandemic remain in place.
- ✓ Disruptions to training, schooling and other education in the event of severe income losses, even once restrictions are lifted, will also lower human capital and labour productivity over the long term.

Conclusion

India's economy had been slowing prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The spread of the virus and containment measures have severely disrupted supply and demand conditions. Monetary policy has been deployed aggressively and fiscal resources have been channelled to public health and social protection, but additional counter-cyclical measures will be needed, within a revised medium-term fiscal framework. Despite measures to shield vulnerable households and firms, the trajectory of poverty reduction has slowed, if not reversed.

Poverty and Shared Prosperity Report

News Excerpt

Recently, a report titled as "Poverty and Shared Prosperity Report" released that Sub-Saharan Africa, with 27-40 million new poor, and South Asia, with 49-57 million, will be badly hit. It is a biennial report released by the World Bank.

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Pre-Connect

- The Poverty and Shared Prosperity series provides a global audience with the latest and most accurate estimates on trends in global poverty and shared prosperity. For more than two decades, extreme poverty was steadily declining. Now, for the first time in a generation, the quest to end poverty has suffered its worst setback.
- The report presents new estimates of COVID-19's impacts on global poverty and inequality.
- Harnessing fresh data from frontline surveys and economic simulations, it shows that pandemic-related job losses and deprivation worldwide are hitting already-poor and vulnerable people hard, while also partly changing the profile of global poverty by creating millions of "new poor."

About the Report

Extreme Poverty

- The pandemic may push another 88 million to 115 million into extreme poverty or having to live on less than \$1.50 per day, resulting in a total of 150 million such individuals.
- Some 9.1% to 9.4% of the world will be affected by extreme poverty in 2020, the report said, compared to 7.9% in the counterfactual scenario where the pandemic had not raged across the world.
- The pandemic and global recession may cause over 1.4% of the world's population to fall into extreme poverty.

- Many of the newly poor individuals will be from countries that already have high poverty rates while many in middle income countries (MICs) will slip below the poverty line, as per the report. Some 82% of the total will be in MICs.
- New Poor: Many of the new poor will be in countries that already have high poverty rates. A number of middle-income countries will see significant numbers of people slip below the extreme poverty line. About 82% of the total will be in middle-income countries.
- Increasing numbers of urban dwellers are expected to fall into extreme poverty, which has traditionally affected people in rural areas.

Progress Made

- ✓ Progress was slowing even before the COVID-19 crisis. New global poverty data for 2017 show that 52 million people rose out of poverty between 2015 and 2017.
- ✓ Yet despite this progress, the rate of reduction slowed to less than half a percentage point per year between 2015 and 2017.
- ✓ Global poverty had dropped at the rate of around 1 percentage point per year between 1990 and 2015.

Shared Prosperity

- The COVID-19 crisis has also diminished shared prosperity – defined as the growth in the income of the poorest 40 percent of a country's population.
- Average global shared prosperity is estimated to stagnate or even contract over 2019-2021 due to the reduced growth in average incomes.
- The deceleration in economic activity intensified by the pandemic is likely to hit the poorest people especially hard, and this could lead to even lower shared prosperity indicators in coming years.

What need to be done?

The Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020 report provides recommendations for a complementary two-track approach: responding effectively to the urgent crisis in the short run while continuing to focus on foundational development problems, including conflict and climate change.

- Closing the gaps between policy aspiration and attainment
- Enhancing learning, improving data
- Investing in preparedness and prevention
- Expanding cooperation and coordination
- Finally, effective responses must begin by recognizing what makes these challenges not just different and difficult, but so consequential for the poor.

Conclusion

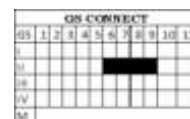
But reversing even a massive reversal of fortune, such as we are seeing with COVID-19, is necessary and possible. It has been done in the past, in the face of what were regarded at the time as insurmountable challenges – eradicating smallpox, ending World War II, closing the ozone hole – and it will be done again in the future.

The world must commit urgently to working together, and to working better – now especially, and for the long term.

World Food Programme

News Excerpt

Recently, The Norwegian Nobel Committee announced the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize to the UN agency World Food Programme (WFP), “for its efforts to combat hunger, for its contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and for acting as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict. The WFP is the 28th organisation awarded the Nobel Peace Prize since its inception in 1901.



Pre-Connect

- World Food Programme (WFP) was established in 1961. Then US President Dwight Eisenhower had suggested the idea of providing food aid through the UN system. Months after it was set up, the WFP faced a humanitarian crisis when more than 12,000 people died in an earthquake in Boein Zahra in northern Iran.

- The WFP sent tonnes of wheat, sugar and tea. Thereafter, it played an important role in providing food aid in Thailand and Algeria.
- The WFP is headquartered in Rome, Italy. It is governed by an Executive Board, which consists of 36 member states. It is headed by an Executive Director, who is appointed jointly by the UN Secretary-General and the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The Executive Director is appointed for fixed five-year terms.

Analytica

What is the scale of its work?

- The WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency combating hunger.
- In 2019, it assisted 97 million people – the largest number since 2012 – in 88 countries, says the WFP.
- The same year, it delivered about 4.4 million tonnes of food, purchased \$1.7 billion worth of food from 91 countries, and \$762 million worth of goods and services from 156 countries.
- Every year, they distribute more than 15 billion rations at an estimated average cost per ration of US\$ 0.61.
- These numbers lie at the roots of WFP's unparalleled reputation as an emergency responder, one that gets the job done quickly at scale in the most difficult environments.
- In 1989, Operation Lifeline Sudan is launched: leading a consortium of UN agencies and charities alongside UNICEF, WFP released 1.5 million tons of food into the skies above what has since become South Sudan.
- From the rebuilding of post-war South Korea in the late 1960s, through the emergency response after genocides in Cambodia and Rwanda, the long-running conflict in South Sudan and the more recent wars in Yemen and Syria, WFP has been a constant presence for the poor and the destitute, refugees and the dispossessed.

Why does the world need a food programme?

- ✓ Eradicating hunger is one of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030. The WFP is the UN's primary agency that works towards this goal.
- ✓ According to the WFP, there are 690 million hungry people around the world and around 60% of them live in countries affected by conflict.
- ✓ The number of hungry people is expected to increase further due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- ✓ The WFP estimates suggest that by 2030, nearly half of the global poor will be living in fragile and conflict-affected situations. It says people living in countries with long-running crises are more than twice as likely to be undernourished than people elsewhere (2.5 times as much).

The Norwegian Nobel Committee is responsible for selecting the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates.

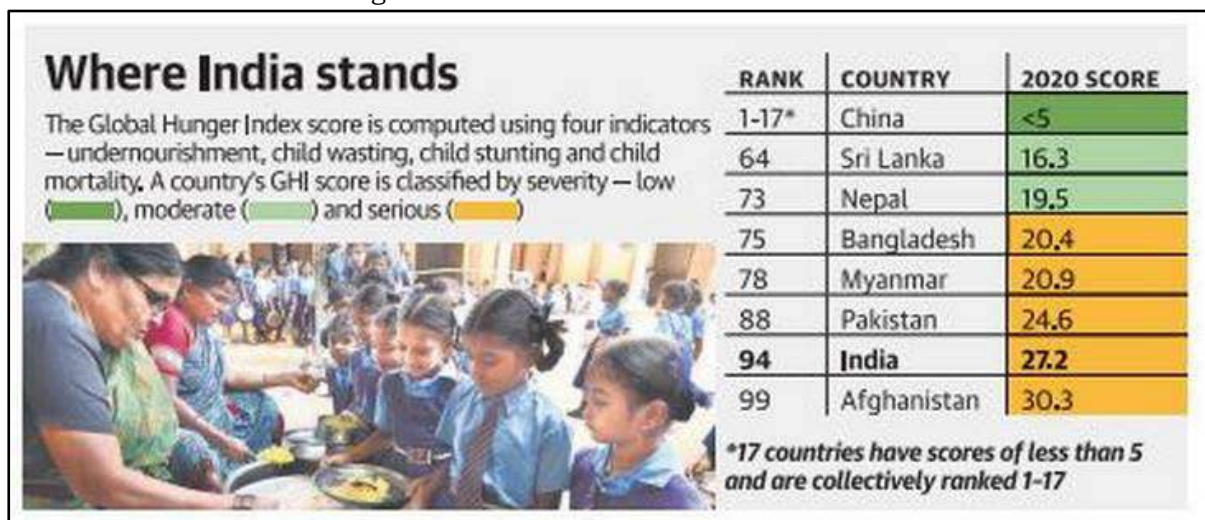
By the terms of Alfred Nobel's will the Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded by the Norwegian Nobel Committee since 1901. Alfred Nobel left no explanation as to why the prize for peace was to be awarded by a Norwegian committee while the other four prizes were to be handled by Swedish committees.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee is composed of five members appointed by the Storting (Norwegian Parliament). The Committee's composition reflects the relative strengths of the political parties in the Storting, and is assisted by specially appointed expert advisers.

Hunger in India

- In the 2020 Global Hunger Index, India ranks 94th out of the 107 countries with sufficient data to calculate 2020 GHI scores. With a score of 27.2, India has a level
- of hunger that is serious.
- The situation has worsened in the 2015-19 period, when the prevalence of child wasting was 17.3%, in comparison to 2010-14, when it was 15.1%.
- India fares worst in child wasting (low weight for height, reflecting acute undernutrition) and child stunting (low height for age, reflecting chronic undernutrition), which together make up a third of the total score.

- Although it is still in the poorest category, however, child stunting has actually improved significantly, from 54% in 2000 to less than 35% now.
- Child wasting, on the other hand, has not improved in the last two decades, and is rather worse than it was decade ago.



- India has improved in both child mortality rates, which are now at 3.7%, and in terms of undernourishment, with about 14% of the total population which gets an insufficient caloric intake.
- In the region of south, east and south-eastern Asia, the only countries which fare worse than India are Timor-Leste, Afghanistan and North Korea.
- Pandemic effect as per Global Hunger Index
- Globally, nearly 690 million people are undernourished, according to the report, which warns that the COVID-19 pandemic could have affected the progress made on reducing hunger and poverty.
- The world is not on track to achieve the second Sustainable Development Goal — known as Zero Hunger for short — by 2030. At the current pace, approximately 37 countries will fail even to reach low hunger, as defined by the Global Hunger Index Severity Scale, by 2030.
- These projections do not account for the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which may worsen hunger and undernutrition in the near term and affect countries' trajectories into the future.

What is WFP's role in India?

- The has been working in India since 1963, two years after its establishment. Apart WFP from focusing on reforms in the Targeted Public Distribution System, it provides policy inputs, advocacy and technical assistance for improving access to food.
- The WFP has proposed some unique initiatives like Automatic Grain Dispensing Machine (Annapurta) and Mobile Storage Units for the effective implementation of TPDS.
- Annapurta allows beneficiaries to withdraw their foodgrain quota accurately and at a time of their choice.
- It can dispense two commodities at a speed of 25 kg per 1.3 minutes. It has a storage capacity of 200 kg to 500 kg.
- It has completed a pilot on rice fortification used in the government's Mid-day Meals scheme in Varanasi. Since December 2018, 4,145 tonnes of fortified rice has been produced and fed to 300,000 schoolchildren.
- Even during the pandemic, WFP India has worked with the central and state governments. For instance, it signed a MoU with the Uttar Pradesh State Rural Livelihood Mission.
- Under the agreement, WFP will provide technical assistance for setting up supplementary nutrition production units in 18 districts for supply of quality food to about 33 lakh

PEPPER IT WITH

Sustainable Development Goals, Global Hunger Index, Poverty and Hunger, Targeted Public Distribution System, Rural Livelihood Mission, etc

beneficiaries of the Anganwadi scheme (Integrated Child Development Services). It has also prepared a guidance note for the re-opening of schools during the pandemic.

Way forward

- ◇ The coronavirus pandemic has contributed to a strong upsurge in the number of victims of hunger in the world. In countries such as Yemen, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, South Sudan and Burkina Faso, the combination of violent conflict and the pandemic has led to a dramatic rise in the number of people living on the brink of starvation.
- ◇ In the face of the pandemic, the World Food Programme has demonstrated an impressive ability to intensify its efforts. As the organisation itself has stated, 'Until the day we have a medical vaccine, food is the best vaccine against chaos.'

Saral Jeevan BimaYojna (LIC)

News Excerpt

Recently, The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) has announced guidelines on standard individual term life insurance product — Saral Jeevan Bima.

All life insurance companies will mandatorily have to offer the standard product with effect from January 1, 2021.

Pre-Connect

Similar to the standardised health insurance product Arogya Sanjeevani, Saral Jeevan Bima is a standard term insurance policy for individuals. It is a pure risk plan (non-linked non-participating) where the coverage and payout are the same across insurers. The name of the policy too is to be the same, but prefixed by the name of the insurer. As per the guidelines, the product is to be offered to individuals without restrictions on gender, place of residence, travel, occupation or educational qualifications.

Analytica

Significance of Saral Jeevan BimaYojna

- A term insurance is a must-have life cover for an individual. The main objective of launching a standard term product is to ensure that it is simple to select and easy to purchase.
- While the on-boarding and underwriting process could vary with insurers, any individual aged between 18 and 65 years can buy this policy.
- The policy term is for five to 40 years and he/she has the option to pay premium regularly, or for a limited period (5-10 years), or as a single payment (lumpsum).

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The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)

It is an autonomous, statutory body tasked with regulating and promoting the insurance and re-insurance industries in India.

Mission

- ❖ To protect the interest of and secure fair treatment to policyholders
- ❖ To bring about speedy and orderly growth of the insurance industry (including annuity and superannuation payments), for the benefit of the common man, and to provide long term funds for accelerating growth of the economy;
- ❖ To set, promote, monitor and enforce high standards of integrity, financial soundness, fair dealing and competence of those it regulates;
- ❖ To ensure speedy settlement of genuine claims, to prevent insurance frauds and other malpractices and put in place effective grievance redressal machinery;
- ❖ To promote fairness, transparency and orderly conduct in financial markets dealing with insurance and build a reliable management information system to enforce high standards of financial soundness amongst market players;
- ❖ To take action where such standards are inadequate or ineffectively enforced;
- ❖ To bring about optimum amount of self-regulation in day-to-day working of the industry consistent with the requirements of prudential regulation.

- The premium payment can be made either monthly, quarterly, half-yearly or yearly. The minimum sum assured (SA) is ₹5 lakh and the maximum cover can go up to ₹25 lakh.
- The riders are also limited, restricted to accident benefit and permanent disability. The standard term plan offers only level cover where the sum assured remains constant along with the premium amount throughout the life of the insured.

Benefits of the Saral Jeevan BimaYojna

- Saral Jeevan Bima could come in handy for those policyholders looking for plain vanilla term covers. The product offers lumpsum payout only, unlike other term plans in the market.
- The nominee will receive, in case of death of policyholder, the higher of: 10 times the annualised premium, 105 per cent of all premiums paid as on date of death, or absolute SA.
- In the case of single premium policies, higher of either 125 per cent of all premiums paid or absolute SA.

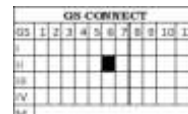
Disadvantage of Saral Jeevan BimaYojna

- ✓ Unlike other term plans, Saral Jeevan Bima comes with a waiting period of 45 days from the date of commencement of the policy.
- ✓ This policy will cover only death due to accident during the waiting period. In case of death of policyholder other than due to accident during the waiting period, then the insurer will pay only 100 per cent of all premiums received (excluding taxes) to the nominee.
- ✓ There is no maturity benefit or return of premium paid if the policyholder survives the policy term.
- ✓ Given that existing term insurance products are competitively priced with various riders and payout options, not many insurers will be keen to push this standard term product to their customers.
- ✓ Also, it is left to the insurers to increase the cover beyond the maximum limit of ₹25 lakh; it remains to be seen if this will be done.
- ✓ Also, while the features of this plan are uniform, the premiums are to be decided by each insurer.

PM SVANidhi

News Excerpt

Recently, Prime Minister distributed loans to nearly 300,000 street vendors under the Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's Atmanirbhar Nidhi Yojana or PM SVANidhi Scheme.



Pre-Connect

PM SVANidhi or Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's Atmanirbhar Nidhi scheme was launched on June 1, 2020, by the ministry of housing and urban affairs to help street vendors, who were impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, resume their livelihood activities.

More about the Scheme

- The scheme intends to facilitate collateral-free working capital loans of up to INR10,000/- of one-year tenure, to approximately 50 lakh street vendors, to help resume their businesses in the urban areas, including surrounding peri-urban/rural area.
- The scheme aims to provide working capital loans up to Rs 10,000 at a subsidized rate of interest. The interest subsidy on timely or early repayment of the loan is at 7 per cent and street vendors will be allowed to repay the loan in monthly instalments in one year.
- If someone can pay earlier than the tenure, an interest subsidy of 7% per annum will be credited to the bank accounts of beneficiaries every quarter. And, there will be no penalty on early repayment of the loan.
- Also, there is a monthly cash-back incentive on digital payments. The benefits can be availed by street vendors or hawkers in urban, pre-urban and rural areas.
- Scheduled commercial banks, regional rural banks, small finance banks, cooperative banks, Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), micro-finance institutions and Self-Help Group (SHG) Banks will be providing loans under the scheme.
- The PM SVANidhi scheme is available for beneficiaries belonging to only those states and Union territories which have notified rules and scheme under the Street Vendors

(Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014. However, beneficiaries from Meghalaya, which has its own state street vendors act, can also avail of the scheme's benefits.

National Crime Record Bureau "Crime in India report" 2019

News Excerpt

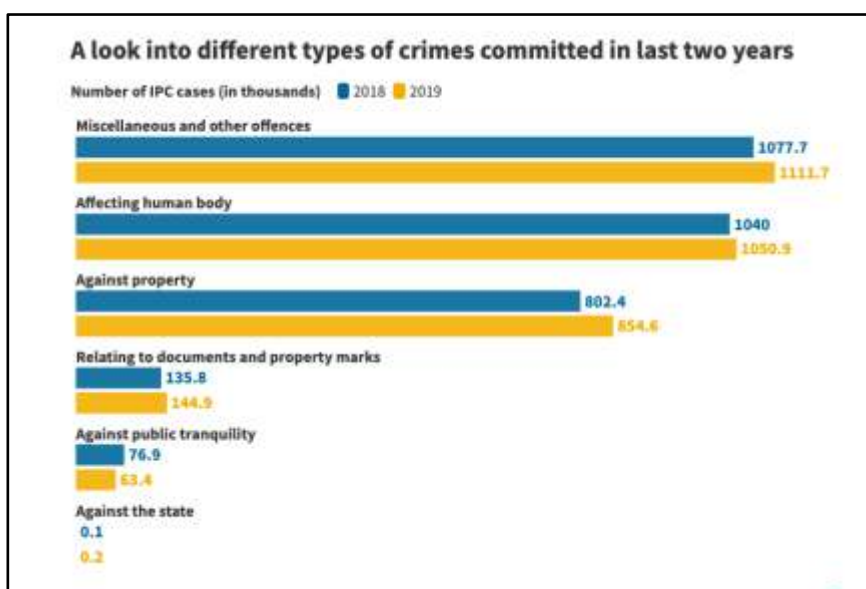
Recently, Crime of India 2019 report has released by Nation Crime Record Bureau.

Pre-Connect

- NCRB was set-up in 1986 to function as a repository of information on crime and criminals so as to assist the investigators in linking crime to the perpetrators based on the recommendations of the Tandon Committee, National Police Commission (1977-1981) and the MHA's Task force (1985).
- Subsequently, NCRB was entrusted with the responsibility for monitoring, coordinating and implementing the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS) project in the year 2009. The project has connected 15000+ police stations and 6000 higher offices of police in the country.

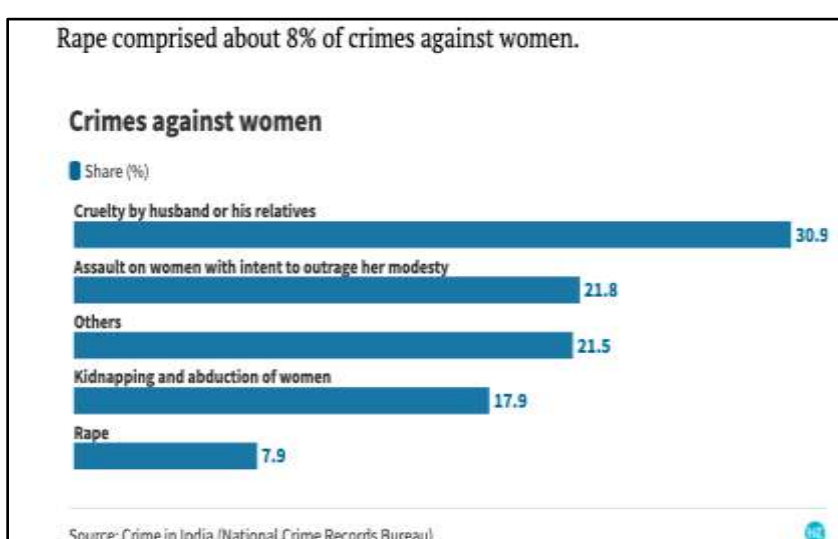
About the Report

- India recorded a 1.6% rise in the number of cognizable crimes between 2018 and 2019.
- Nearly 5.2 million cognizable crimes were reported across India in 2019. These cognizable crimes include those covered under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) as well as those covered under various Special and Local Laws (SLL). While the first category saw a rise of about 3%, the number of cases under the second decreased by 0.6%.



- Data from previous annual Crime in India reports compiled by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy shows that the number of cases registered under both these categories increased by nearly 13% in the last six years.

- Nearly every third case registered under the IPC in 2019, or about 1.1 million, was regarding offences affecting the human body such as murder, rape, causing death, kidnapping, etc. Offences against property, such as theft and criminal breach of trust, comprised about 26% or 0.9 million cases.



- Between 2018 and 2019, the number of IPC cases under each category of offences increased, with the sole exception of cases registered in offences against public tranquility, which includes crimes such as unlawful assembly and rioting. Offences against property increased by 6.5% -- it includes theft which increased by 8% and was the single most committed crime in India comprising 21% of all IPC crimes.
- The crimes against women, children, senior citizens, and people belonging to the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe communities increased between 2018 and 2019 at varying degrees. Crimes against women increased by 7.3%.
- Cruelty by husband or his relatives was the single most committed crime against women in 2019, comprising 31% of all crimes against women.
- Rape comprised about 8% of crimes against women.
- Among crimes against children, kidnapping and abduction, and sexual offences were the two most committed crimes.
- Simple hurt, theft, forgery, cheating and fraud comprised about half of all crimes among senior citizens.
- UP reported the highest number of crimes against women (59,853), accounting for 14.7 per cent of such cases across the country. It was followed by Rajasthan (41,550 cases; 10.2 per cent) and Maharashtra (37,144 cases; 9.2 per cent). Assam reported the highest rate of crime against women at 177.8 (per lakh population), followed by Rajasthan (110.4) and Haryana (108.5).
- Rajasthan reported the highest number of rapes with 5,997 cases, followed by UP (3,065) and Madhya Pradesh (2,485). In terms of rate of rape cases, Rajasthan was the highest at 15.9 (per lakh population), followed by Kerala (11.1) and Haryana (10.9).
- UP also had the highest number of crimes against girl children under the POCSO Act with 7,444 cases, followed by Maharashtra (6,402) and MP (6,053). The highest rate of these crimes were in Sikkim (27.1 per lakh population), MP (15.1), and Haryana (14.6).
- UP had the highest number of dowry cases (2,410), at a rate of 2.2 (per lakh population), followed by Bihar (1,120). According to the report, 150 acid attacks were reported in 2019, of which 42 took place in UP and 36 in West Bengal.
- UP reported the most cases against Scheduled Castes – 11,829 cases, accounting for 25.8 per cent of the cases across the country. It was followed by Rajasthan (6,794 cases; 14.8

Crimes against children

Share (%)



Source: Crime in India (National Crime Records Bureau)

Crimes against senior citizens

Share (%)



Source: Crime in India (National Crime Records Bureau)

Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS)

- CCTNS is a Mission Mode Project under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) of Govt. of India.
- CCTNS aims at creating a comprehensive and integrated system for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of policing through adopting of principle of e-Governance and creation of a nationwide networking infrastructure for evolution of IT-enabled-state-of-the-art tracking system around 'Investigation of crime and detection of criminals'.

per cent) and Bihar (6,544; 14.2 per cent). However, the rate of such cases was highest in Rajasthan at 55.6 (per lakh population), followed by MP (46.7) and Bihar (39.5).

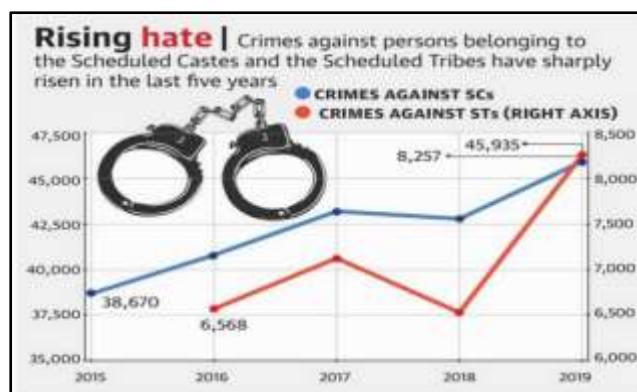
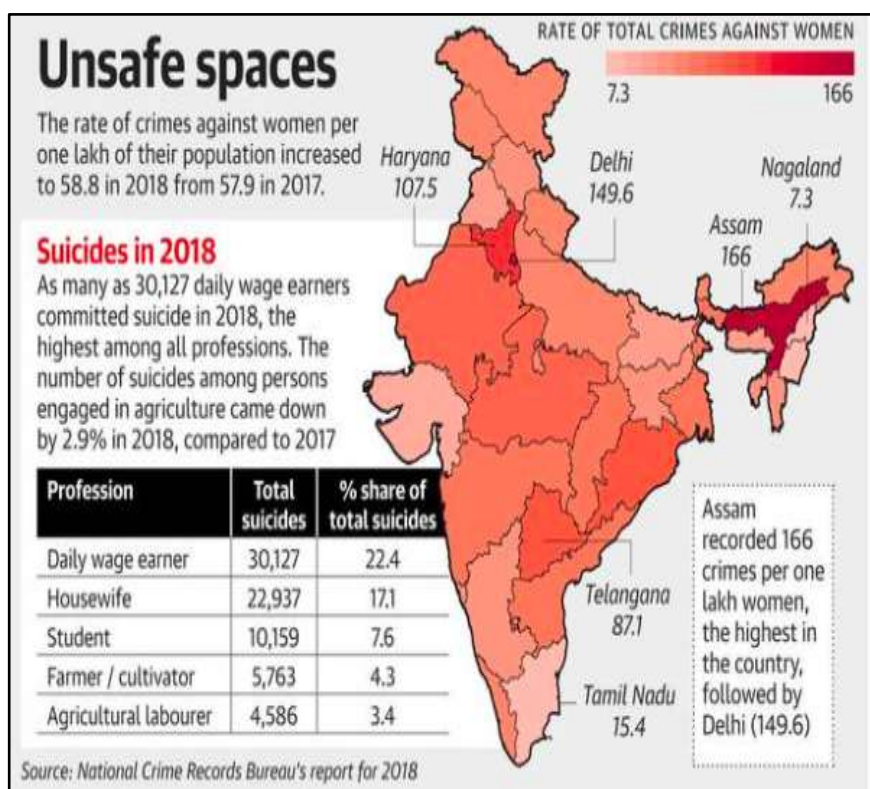
Suicides report

- The NCRB also released the Accidental Death and Suicides in India 2018 report, which said that 10,349 people working in the farm sector ended their lives in 2018, accounting for 7.7 % of the total number of suicides in the country.
- There were 5,763 farmers/cultivators and 4,586 agricultural labourers among those who ended their lives. The total number of people who committed suicide in 2018 was 1,34,516, an increase of 3.6% from 2017 when 1,29,887 cases were reported.
- The highest number of suicide victims were daily wagers — 26,589, comprising 22.4% of such deaths.
- The majority of the suicides were reported in Maharashtra (17,972) followed by Tamil Nadu (13,896), West Bengal (13,255), Madhya Pradesh (11,775) and
- Karnataka (11,561)

Many States and Union Territories have reported nil data on suicides by farmers, cultivators and farm laborers. “West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Uttarakhand, Meghalaya, Goa, Chandigarh, Daman & Diu, Delhi, Lakshadweep and Puducherry reported zero suicides by farmers/cultivators as well as agricultural laborers.

Crime Against SCs and STs

- Crime against Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) saw an increase of over 7% and 26% respectively in year 2019 compared to 2018.
- A total of 45,935 cases were registered for committing crime against SCs, showing an increase of 7.3% over 2018, when 42,793 such cases were recorded.
- In the number of cases of rape of women belonging to SCs, Rajasthan topped the list with 554 cases, followed by Uttar Pradesh at 537 and Madhya Pradesh at 510 cases.
- A total of 8,257 cases were registered for committing crime against STs, an increase of 26.5% over 2018, when 6,528 such cases were registered.
- Madhya Pradesh recorded the highest number of cases against STs as it recorded 1,922 cases, followed by Rajasthan, which recorded 1,797 cases and Odisha-576 cases.
- The highest number of incidents of rape of tribal women- 358 was registered in Madhya Pradesh, followed by 180 incidents in Chattisgarh and 114 in Maharashtra.



- Simple hurt -1,675 cases formed the highest number of cases of crimes and atrocities against STs, accounting for 20.3% of the total crimes committed in 2019.
- It was followed by 1,110 cases of rape of tribal women, which accounted for 13.4% and 880 cases of assault on women with the intent to outrage the modesty that accounted for 10.7% of the total cases.

CHRI statement

- ✓ According to the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), a police reforms advocacy group, few cases were being registered for specific discriminatory action against SCs and STs.
- ✓ Crimes against SCs and STs include the following categories- atrocities committed by non-SC/ST members under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities Act), 1989 (hereafter POA Act), the Indian Penal Code and the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955.
- ✓ The low percentage of cases registered just under the POA Act alone indicates that very few cases alleging specific discriminatory actions on the basis of caste and tribal identity that are defined as atrocities under Section 3 of the Act are being registered on their own. Such actions are registered mainly when accompanied by any of the IPC offences. There is no data on total complaints received on crimes against the Scheduled Castes.

PEPPER IT WITH

Tandon Committee, National Police Commission, Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS), Police Reforms, Prakash Singh Case and related guidelines by the Supreme Court, etc.

The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)

- ❖ The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) is an independent, non-profit, non-partisan, international non-governmental organisation working in the area of human rights. In 1987, several Commonwealth professional associations founded CHRI, since there was little focus on human rights within the association of 53 nations although the Commonwealth provided member countries the basis of shared common legal system.
- ❖ CHRI promotes adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Commonwealth Harare Principles and other internationally recognised human rights instruments, including domestic legislation supporting human rights in Commonwealth countries. It is headquartered in New Delhi, India, with offices in London, UK and Accra, Ghana.



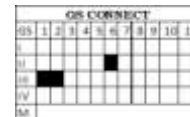
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ECONOMY

Government Borrowing

News Excerpt

The Centre announcing another round of stimulus measure has set off a heated debate on whether the government ought to worry about the fiscal deficit hitting double digits this year, or forget about this number and focus on reviving the economy instead.

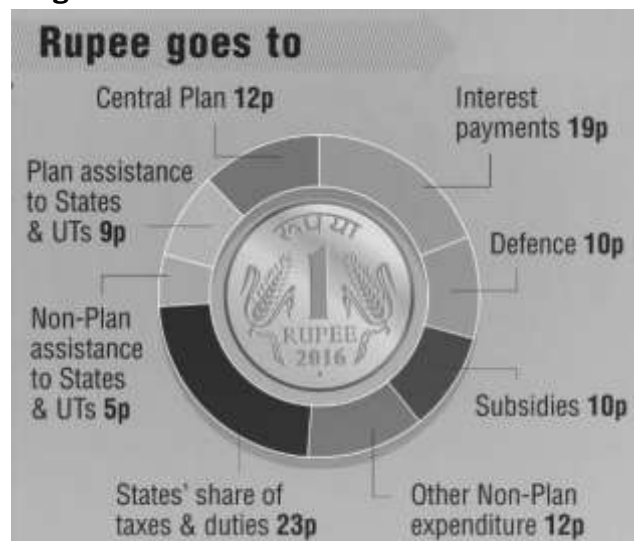
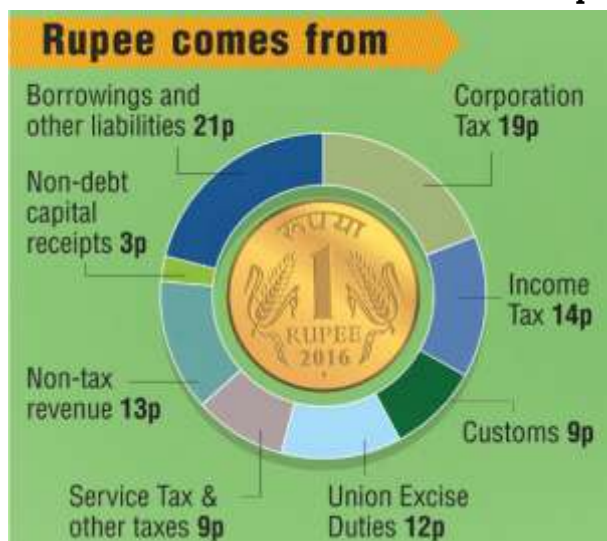


But what is the fiscal deficit and why does it matter so much?

Fiscal Policy

- Fiscal policy is the means by which a government adjusts its spending levels and tax rates to monitor and influence a nation's economy. It is the sister strategy to monetary policy through which a central bank influences a nation's money supply.
- Fiscal policy is an estimate of taxes that are to be levied and also the expenditure that the government will do to impact the economy of the country. Fiscal policy can be either expansionary or contractionary.
- Expansionary policy means government will decrease the tax rates, increase the expenditures or both. This will increase the consumption of the products and profit of businesses increasing their investment expenditures, thereby increasing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and fight the recession.
- Contractionary policy means government will increase the tax rates, decrease the expenditures or both. This will decrease the consumption of the products and profit of businesses, cutting down their investment expenditures. Thus, decreasing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and fight inflation.

Government Revenue and Government Spending



Government Expenditure – Government Revenue = Deficit

Deficit Finance

Deficit financing means generating funds to finance the deficit which results from excess of expenditure over revenue. The gap being covered by borrowing from the public by the sale of bonds or by printing new money.

Why we need deficit financing?

- ☐ For a developing country like India which is a welfare state there are certain social obligations. The social equity is promoted through various welfare schemes.

- ❑ To drive higher economic growth is also a priority. A higher economic growth requires finances. With the private sector being shy of making huge expenditure, the responsibility of drawing financial resources rests on the government.
- ❑ Often both the tax and non-tax revenues fail to mobilize enough resources to finance welfare and growth expenditures.

Deficit financing basically are the ways in which the government may utilize the amount of money created as the deficit to sustain its budget for developmental or political needs. The means of such financing are given below:

External Aids are the best money as a means to fulfil a government's deficit requirements even if it is coming with soft interest. Sometimes they also come without interest. When India went to borrow from the IMF in the wake of the financial crisis of 1990–91, the body advised India to keep its fiscal deficit to the tune of 4.5 per cent of its GDP and noted it to be sustainable for the economy.

External Grants are even better elements of deficit finance. It comes free—neither interest nor any repayments. But the grants to India have remained almost absent due to India's nuclear program or non-acceptance by India in the first place.

External Borrowings are the next best way to manage fiscal deficit with the condition that the external loans are comparatively cheaper and long-term. Though external loans are considered erosion in the nation's sovereign decision-making process, this has its own benefit and is considered better than the internal borrowings due to two reasons:

- ❑ External borrowing brings in foreign currency/hard currency which gives extra edge to the government spending as by this the government may fulfill its developmental requirements inside the country as well as from outside the country.
- ❑ It is preferred over the internal borrowings due to 'crowding out effect'. If the government itself goes on borrowing from the banks of the country, from where will others borrow for investment purposes?

Thus foreign borrowing leads to 'Currency risk'.

Internal Borrowings is another preferred route of fiscal deficit management. But going for it in a huge way hampers the investment prospects of the public and the corporate sector. Government borrows through issue of government securities called **G-secs** and **Treasury Bills**. Borrowing is a loan taken by the government and falls under capital receipts in the Budget document. It is essentially the total amount of money that the central government borrows to fund its spending on public services and benefits.

Government Securities and Treasury Bills

A government security (G-Sec) is a tradeable instrument issued by the central government or state governments. It acknowledges the government's debt obligations. Such securities are short term — called treasury bills — with original maturities of less than one year, or long term — called government bonds or dated securities — with original maturity of one year or more.

Crowding out Effects: This refers to a phenomenon where increased borrowing by the government to meet its spending needs causes a decrease in the quantity of funds that is available to meet the investment needs of the private sector. It is argued that the diversion of investment funds away from the private sector adversely affects economic growth.

Printing Currency is the last resort for the government in managing its deficit. But it has the biggest handicap that with it the government cannot go for the expenditures which are to be made in the foreign currency, which requires foreign reserves i.e. dollars. Even if the government is satisfied on this front, printing fresh currencies does have other damaging effects on the economy:

- ❑ It increases inflation proportionally. When currencies are printed money supply increases. This incentivizes expenditure thus generating demands. But when demands are not met due to supply side constraints it leads to inflation.
- ❑ The government also comes under pressure for upward revision in wages and salaries of government employees— ultimately increasing the government expenditures necessitating

PEPPER IT WITH

Fiscal Policy, Monetary Policy, Fiscal Deficit, Revenue Deficit, Primary Deficit, Current Account Deficit.

further printing of currency and further inflation—a vicious cycle into which economies entangle themselves.

Gig Economy and Gig Works

News Excerpt

The new Code on Social Security allows a platform worker to be defined by their vulnerability — not their labour, nor the vulnerabilities of platform work.

Pre-Connect

What are Gig Jobs?

Digital technologies fundamentally change how people work and one of the key transformations in the future of work is the rise of the so-called 'gig economy'. Central to the gig economy are so-called "gigs", i.e. temporary and often short-term jobs, which can be found through digital labour platforms that connect job providers and job seekers. The ride-hailing giants Uber and Ola are prominent examples of such platforms, with their on-demand taxi services having become widely popular. Other examples include Swiggy and Zomato.

Highlights

- In the gig economy, workers take up short-term contracts or freelance work and get paid for the gigs they do. There is no formal contract that is signed with the employee. This makes them vulnerable as there is no social security net.
- An estimated 56% of new employment in India is being generated by the gig economy companies across both the blue-collar and white-collar workforce.
- The three new labour codes passed by Parliament recently acknowledge platform and gig workers as new occupational categories in the making, in a bid to keep India's young workforce secure as it embraces 'new kinds of work', like delivery, in the digital economy.
- The Code on Social Security, 2020, platform workers are now eligible for benefits like maternity benefits, life and disability cover, old age protection, provident fund, employment injury benefits, and so on.

Present scenario:

- Conventional labour rights are absent and legal recourse in matters of payment, task assignment etc. limited.
- The government or courts cannot pull up platform companies for their pay, or working hours.
- The laws do not see them as future industrial workers.
- The language in the Code is open as it does not force the companies to contribute towards benefits or be responsible for workplace issues.



PEPPER IT WITH

Unicorn start up,
Platform Workers,
Creative destruction,
Four Labour Codes

Conclusion

As the digital technology will penetrate more and more in the Indian market system more and more gig jobs and free-lancing job will be created at several levels. Given the fact that the share of such jobs will only keep on increasing it is high time that the government should come up with a framework for them and they should be reflected in government policies.

As they are more vulnerable to market forces and lack social security net the government needs to assure a robust social security so that the sector could attract more job seekers and can become an engine of job creation.

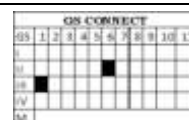
Natural Gas Marketing Reforms

News Excerpt

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister has approved '**Natural Gas Marketing Reforms**', taking another significant step to move towards gas-based economy.

Highlights

The objective of the policy is to prescribe standard procedure to discover market price of gas to be sold in the market by gas producers, through a transparent and competitive process, permit



Affiliates to participate in bidding process for sale of gas and allow marketing freedom to certain Field Development Plans (FDPs) where Production Sharing Contracts already provide pricing freedom.

- The policy aims to provide standard procedure for sale of natural gas in a transparent and competitive manner to discover market price by issuing guidelines for sale by contractor through e-bidding bringing uniformity in the bidding process.
- The policy has also permitted Affiliate companies to participate in the bidding process in view of the open, transparent and electronic bidding. This will facilitate and promote more competition in marketing of gas. However, rebidding will have to be done in case only affiliates participate, and there are no other bidders.
- The policy will also grant marketing freedom to the Field Development Plans (FDPs) of those Blocks in which Production Sharing Contracts already provide pricing freedom.

These reforms in gas sector will further deepen and spur the economic activities in the following areas:

- The whole eco-system of policies relating to production, infrastructure and marketing of natural gas has been made more transparent with a focus on ease of doing business.
- These reforms will prove very significant for Atmanirbhar Bharat by encouraging investments in the domestic production of natural gas and reducing import dependence.
- These reforms will prove to be another milestone in moving towards a gas-based economy by encouraging investments.
- The increased gas production consumption will help in improvement of environment.
- These reforms will also help in creating employment opportunities in the gas consuming sectors including MSMEs.
- The domestic production will further help in increasing investment in the downstream industries such as City Gas Distribution and related industries.

Analytica

The Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) which is investor driven acreage auction process, has increased substantial acreages in the country. No blocks were allocated between 2010 and 2017 which has impacted the long-term viability of the domestic production. Since 2017 more than 1.6 lakh sq km area under 105 exploration blocks have been allocated. This will ensure sustainability of the domestic production in long run.

Government brought a series of reforms in Gas sector and as a result investment of more than Rs. 70,000 crores is being made in the East coast. Gas production from East coast will contribute to Atmanirbhar Bharat by meeting increasing energy needs of the country.

In February 2019, Government implemented major reforms in upstream sector and brought paradigm shift by focusing on production maximization. Acreages under OALP rounds are being allocated based on work programme only in Cat II and Cat III basins.

The domestic gas production has complete marketing and pricing freedom. All discoveries and field development plans approved after 28 Feb, 2019 have complete market and pricing freedom.

PEPPER IT WITH HELP, Open Acreage Licensing Policy, Syngsas, CCEA, Strategic Petroleum Reserves.

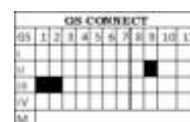
IFSCA and Regulatory Sandbox

News Excerpt

The International Financial Services Centers Authority (IFSCA), with an objective to develop a world class FinTech hub at the IFSC located at GIFT City in Gandhinagar endeavors to encourage the promotion of financial technologies initiatives in financial products and financial services across the spectrum of banking, insurance, securities and fund management.

Highlights

As a step towards attaining this vision, IFSCA has introduced a framework for "Regulatory Sandbox". Under this Sandbox framework, entities operating in the capital market, banking, insurance and financial services space shall be granted certain facilities and flexibilities to experiment with innovative FinTech solutions in a live environment with a limited set of real customers for a limited time frame.



- These features shall be fortified with necessary safeguards for investor protection and risk mitigation. The Regulatory Sandbox shall operate within the IFSC located at GIFT City.
- All entities (regulated as well as unregulated) operating in the capital market, banking, insurance and pension sectors as well as individuals and startups from India and FATF compliant jurisdictions, shall be eligible for participation in the Regulatory Sandbox.
- Entities desirous of participating in the sandbox to showcase their innovative FinTech solutions, concepts and business models shall apply to IFSCA.

IFSCA shall assess the applications and extend suitable regulatory relaxations to commence limited purpose testing in the Sandbox. The details on the eligibility criteria, the application and approval process and other operational aspects of the Sandbox have been provided in the circular.

As an additional step towards creating an innovation-centric ecosystem in the IFSC, IFSCA has proposed the creation of an "Innovation Sandbox", which will be a testing environment where FinTech firms can test their solutions in isolation from the live market, based on market related data made available by the Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs) operating in the IFSC. The Innovation Sandbox will be managed and facilitated by the MIIs operating within the IFSC.

PEPPER IT WITH

FinTech, SEZ, Sagarmala, Ro-Pax Hazira-Ghogha Ferry Service

Targeted Long-Term Repo Operation

News Excerpt

The RBI has said it will conduct on-tap Targeted Long-Term Repo Operations (TLTRO) for an amount of Rs 1 lakh crore at the policy repo rate.

Highlight

- Under LTRO, RBI will conduct term repos of one-year and three-year tenors of appropriate sizes for up to a total amount of Rs 1 lakh crore at the policy repo rate.
- RBI introduced LTRO with a view to assuring banks about the availability of durable liquidity at reasonable cost relative to prevailing market conditions, and to further encourage banks to undertake maturity transformation smoothly and seamlessly so as to augment credit flows to productive sectors.

It is a measure that market participants expect will bring down short-term rates and also boost investment in corporate bonds. These new measures coupled with RBI's earlier introduced 'Operation Twist' are an attempt by the central bank to manage bond yields and push transmission of earlier rate cuts.

Significance

As banks get long-term funds at lower rates, their cost of funds falls. In turn, they reduce interest rates for borrowers.

- ☐ LTRO helped RBI ensure that banks reduce their marginal cost of funds-based lending rate, without reducing policy rates.
- ☐ LTRO also showed the market that RBI will not only rely on revising repo rates and conducting open market operations for its monetary policy, but also use new tools to achieve its intended objectives.

Analysts have termed it as a masterstroke by RBI. Besides lowering rates in the short end of the sovereign curve, LTRO is also likely to lower corporate bond yields, deposit rates and lending rates. It is considered a step towards credit transmission, and demonstrates RBI's intent towards supporting growth.

Purchasing Manager's Index

News Excerpt

India has noticed a slump in PMI amidst Covid19 crisis. PMI is one of the indicators of expansion or contraction of Industrial activities similar to Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

What is PMI and how it is derived?

- PMI or a Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) is an indicator of business activity -- both in the manufacturing and services sectors.

OS CONNECT											
OS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
SI											
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PEPPER IT WITH
Repo Rate, Reverse Repo Rate, CRR, SLR, MSF, LSF, OMOs, Operation Twist.

OS CONNECT											
OS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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- It is a survey-based measures that asks the respondents about changes in their perception of some key business variables from the month before. It is calculated separately for the manufacturing and services sectors and then a composite index is constructed.
- The PMI is derived from a series of qualitative questions. Executives from a reasonably big sample, running into hundreds of firms, are asked whether key indicators such as output, new orders, business expectations and employment were stronger than the month before and are asked to rate them.

Analytica

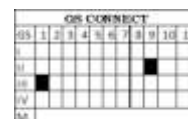
- A PMI value of above 50 denotes expansion in business activity. Anything below 50 denotes contraction. Higher the difference from this mid-point greater the expansion or contraction.
- The rate of expansion can also be judged by comparing the PMI with that of the previous month data. If the figure is higher than the previous month's then the economy is expanding at a faster rate. If it is lower than the previous month then it is growing at a lower rate.
- The PMI is usually released at the start of the month, much before most of the official data on industrial output, manufacturing and GDP growth becomes available. It is, therefore, considered a good leading indicator of economic activity.
- Economists consider the manufacturing growth measured by the PMI as a good indicator of industrial output, for which official statistics are released later. Central banks of many countries also use the index to help make decisions on interest rates.
- The PMI also gives an indication of corporate earnings and is closely watched by investors as well as the bond markets. A good reading enhances the attractiveness of an economy vis-a-vis another competing economy.

PEPPER IT WITH
Index of Industrial
Promotion, 8 Core
Industries, Labour
Force Participation Rate

Nobel Prize in Economics

News Excerpt

The 2020 SverigesRiksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel has been awarded to Paul R. Milgrom and Robert B. Wilson “for improvements to auction theory and inventions of new auction formats.”



Highlights

The 2020 SverigesRiksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel is again opting to laud the real-world application of the discipline, after recent years of honoring groundbreaking research ranging from inequality to climate change to behavioral economics.

- Two Stanford University academics who helped design the U.S. auction that allocates mobile-phone frequencies will share the 2020 Nobel Prize in economics. Paul Milgrom and Robert B. Wilson, who won't be traveling to Stockholm to receive the award due to the Covid-19 crisis, have had their ideas applied to sales of everything from aircraft landing slots to fishing quotas. Their theories are even evolving to encompass renewable energy markets.
- They have used their insights to design new auction formats for goods and services that are difficult to sell in a traditional way, such as radio frequencies.
- Last year's economics prize went to Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Michael Kremer of Harvard University “for their experimental approach to alleviating global poverty.”

PEPPER IT WITH
Nudge Theory,
Coal Auction,
HELP, Randomized
Controlled Trials.

KV Kamath Committee

News Excerpt

The KV Kamath Committee on loan restructuring submitted its report and recommendations to the RBI. It recommends graded approach to restructuring of stressed accounts affected by the pandemic.

Highlights

- RBI had formed a five-member committee under the chairmanship of former ICICI Bank CEO KV Kamath to make recommendations on the financial parameters to be considered for the one-time restructuring of loans impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic.
- In line with the mandate given by the RBI, Kamath committee has identified four financial parameters to adjusted tangible network:

- Total outside liabilities
- Total Debt to EBITDA, (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization)
- Debt Service Coverage Ratio (DSCR),
- Average Debt Service Coverage Ratio (ADSCR).



- The committee will scrutinise restructuring of loans above ₹1500 crore. The resolution under this framework is applicable only to those borrowers who have been impacted on account of Covid. Only those borrowers which were classified as standard and with arrears less than 30 days as at March 1, 2020 are eligible under the Framework
- The sector-specific thresholds (ceilings or floors, as the case may be) for each of the above key ratios that should be considered by the lending institutions in the resolution assumptions with respect to an eligible borrower.
- The committee has therefore identified 26 sectors and also recommended sector specific thresholds for these sectors.
- In its report the five-member committee said power, construction, iron and steel, roads, real estate, wholesale trading, textiles, consumer durables, aviation, logistics, hotels, restaurants and tourism, mining are among the sectors that will need restructuring.
- According to RBI, the resolution framework may be invoked not later than December 31, 2020 and the plan needs to be implemented within 180 days from the date of invocation.

PEPPER IT WITH
New Developmental Bank, Asian Infrastructure Bank, Atmanirbhar Package, Debt Restructuring.

Consumer Price Index-Industrial Workers

News Excerpt

The Labour and Employment Ministry revised the base year of the Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW) from 2001 to 2016.

Highlight

- It was done to reflect the changing consumption pattern, giving more weightage to spending on health, education, recreation and other miscellaneous expenses, while reducing the weight of food and beverages.
- The sample size was increased from 41,040 families to 48,384, and the number of selected markets for collecting retail price data from 289 to 317.
- The number of items directly retained in the index basket has increased to 463 items as against 392 items in the 2001 series.

- The weight of food and beverages has declined over time whereas the weight of miscellaneous group (health; education and recreation; transport and communication; personal care and effects; household goods and services etc.) has increased substantially under 2016 series vis-à-vis earlier series. The weight of housing group has reported an increasing share over period of time.
- The weight to food and beverage was reduced from 46.2% to 39%, while spending on housing increased from 15.2% to 17%.
- The new series would not have an impact on the dearness allowance (DA) given to government employees for now.

Conclusion

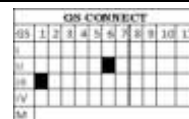
- The new series, representing the latest consumption pattern, would be in the interest of workers. The number of centres, markets and the sample size for working class family income and expenditure survey were all increased.
- Labour and Employment Secretary said that in the future, the Bureau would work towards revising the index every five years. The reduction in weight to spending on food and beverages indicated an increase in disposable income.
- The Bureau was expected to bring out the new series of the CPI for agriculture workers, which currently has the base year of 1986-87) by August.

PEPPER IT WITH
WPI, Index of
Industrial Production,
Headline Inflation.

National Program and Project Management Policy Framework

News Excerpt

NITI Aayog and Quality Council of India launched the 'National Program and Project Management Policy Framework' (NPMPPF), envisaged to bring radical reforms in the way infrastructure projects are executed in India.



Highlight

- NPMPPF will help in realizing the vision of an Aatmanirbhar Bharat by building a stronger India with quality infrastructure; where the focus will be reducing costs and waste material keeping in mind the environment and ecology.
- It will recognize the program and project management tools and techniques for mega projects like Bharatmala and Sagarmala.
- The use and adoption of such techniques and practices to incorporate innovative financing with **hybrid annuity models** are already underway.

Analytica

- India will require an investment of around \$4.5 trillion by 2040 to develop the infrastructure for sustaining its economic growth. However, the challenges in infrastructure development that often obstruct the smooth execution of projects can be a detriment. Therefore, along with numerous initiatives by the Government and guidelines advocated by NITI Aayog towards improving performance of infrastructure projects, a task force was also constituted to lay down a national program and project management policy framework.
- This framework aims to formulate radical reforms in the way large and mega infrastructure projects are managed in India, with an action plan to:
 1. Adopt a program and project management approach to infra development.
 2. Institutionalize and promote the profession of program and project management and build a workforce of such professionals.
 3. Enhance institutional capacity and capability of professionals.
- A self-paced learning system, rigorous and comprehensive exam at each level with continued professional development will serve as pillars of the framework.
- To ensure this, initiative maintains its momentum and makes an impact on projects being planned and implemented. Currently, a capability development program to create awareness around program and project management, as well as to

PEPPER IT WITH
Bharat Mala, Parivesh portal,
Hybrid Annuity Model,
Chakravyuh Challenge of
Indian Economy.

provide capsule training for mission-critical projects, is imperative to increase the uptake and adoption of the practice.

Government Securities and OMO

News Excerpt

On a review of the current liquidity and financial conditions, the Reserve Bank of India has decided to conduct purchase of Government securities under Open Market Operations (OMOs) for an aggregate amount of Rs 20,000 crores on October 29, 2020.

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Government Securities

Details

- A Government Security (G-Sec) is a tradeable instrument issued by the Central Government or the State Governments. It acknowledges the Government's debt obligation.
- Such securities are short term (usually called treasury bills, with original maturities of less than one year) or long term (usually called Government bonds or dated securities with original maturity of one year or more).
- In India, the Central Government issues both, treasury bills and bonds or dated securities while the State Governments issue only bonds or dated securities, which are called the State Development Loans (SDLs). G-Secs carry practically no risk of default and, hence, are called risk-free gilt-edged instruments.

Open Market Operation

OMOs are the market operations conducted by the RBI by way of sale/ purchase of G-Secs to/ from the market with an objective to adjust the rupee liquidity conditions in the market on a durable basis. When the RBI feels that there is excess liquidity in the market, it resorts to sale of securities thereby sucking out the rupee liquidity. Similarly, when the liquidity conditions are tight, RBI may buy securities from the market, thereby releasing liquidity into the market.

National Authority for Recycling of Ships

News Excerpt

Central Government has notified the Directorate General of Shipping as National Authority for Recycling of Ships under section 3 of the Recycling of Ships Act, 2019.

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Details

- As an apex body, DG Shipping is authorized to administer, supervise and monitor all activities relating to Ship Recycling.
- DG Shipping will look after the sustainable development of the Ship Recycling industry, monitoring the compliance to environment-friendly norms and safety and health measures for the stakeholders working in the ship recycling industry. DG Shipping will be the final authority for the various approvals required by the Ship-Recycling yard owners and State Governments.
- Under Ship Recycling Act, 2019, India has acceded to Hong Kong Convention for Ship Recycling under International Maritime Organization (IMO). DG Shipping is a representative of India in IMO and all the conventions of IMO are being enforced by DG Shipping.

PEPPER IT WITH

Hong Kong Convention, IMO, Alang, MarpolConvention, Ballast Water

National Authority of Ship Recycling will be set up in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The location of the office will benefit the Ship Recycling yard owners situated in Alang, Gujarat which is home of Asia's largest ship breaking and ship recycling industry in the world.

India's First Sea Plane Project

News Excerpt

The first of the five seaplane services in Gujarat, connecting Sabarmati River in Ahmedabad to the Statue of Unity in Kevadia in Narmada district, was inaugurated on October 31, the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

Analytica

What is a Seaplane?

A seaplane is a fixed-winged aeroplane designed for taking off and landing on water. It offers the public the speed of an aeroplane with the utility of a boat. There are two main types of seaplane: flying boats (often called hull seaplanes) and floatplanes. The bottom of a flying boat's fuselage is its main landing gear. This is usually supplemented with smaller floats near the wingtips, called wing or tip floats. The hull of a flying boat holds the crew, passengers, and cargo; it has many features in common with the hull of a ship or a boat.

What is India's seaplane project?

The seaplane project of the country is aimed at providing tourists site viewing experience on an amphibian plane. It is an initiative of the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation. The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has requested state governments of Gujarat, Assam, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and the administration of Andaman & Nicobar to propose potential locations for setting up water aerodromes to boost the tourism sector.

Environmental Impact:

- In its proposal seeking environmental clearance, the Director of Aviation, Government of Gujarat, has allayed fears of environmental impact.
- In Narmada, the Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary is located at an approximate aerial distance of 2.1 km from the proposed project site in south-west direction while the nearest reserve forest is situated at a distance of 4.7 meters in east direction, which serves local sensitive species of fauna.
- The bathymetric and hydrographic survey was conducted by Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) before finalising Dyke 3, which is a rock-filled pond and popularly called the 'Magar Talav' as it is infested with crocodiles. Work on evacuating crocodiles from the lake has been on since January 2019.

PEPPER IT WITH

Jalmahotsav, Baloon Festival,
ArakuValley, Shoolpaneshwar
Wildlife Sanctuary

Rural Development Fund

News Excerpt

Amid the row over farm laws, the Centre has told Punjab it won't pay the Rural Development Fund (RDF) fee in paddy season. It has also asked for a letter asking the Punjab Government to explain its utilisation of the Rural Development Fund (RDF) that it gets largely from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) has enraged the state government.

Rural Development Fund

- Rural Development Fund is the 3% cess levied on the purchase or sale of agricultural produce under the Rural Development Fund Act, 1987 which is executed by Punjab Rural Development Board (PRDB) with the Chief Minister as its chairman.
- It comes mainly from central government's purchase agency, Food Corporation of India, which buys around 13 million tonnes of wheat and 16 million tonnes of paddy every year.
- Usually Punjab gets Rs 1,750 crore every year — Rs 1,000 crore as 3% RDF for procuring paddy and the rest for wheat. This year, some estimates had put the total at Rs 1,850 crore.
- This fund is supposed to be used for the creation and maintenance of rural infrastructure in and outside mandis. But there have been charges in the past that it was diverted by the state for other purposes.

Rural Development Board

- The Rural Development Board was incorporated in April 1987 under Rural Development Act, 1987 and is mandated with the promotion of better agriculture, and granting relief for

the loss and damage to agricultural produce. It also provides the facility of streets lights, dharamshalas, panchayat ghars, canals and drains, government health infrastructure, drinking water, sanitation, and government educational institutions in rural areas.

- ❑ The central government has alleged that the fund is being diverted, and has asked the state government to explain how it is utilising this money. It has also not made any provision for this fund in the cost sheet that it has sent to the state.
- ❑ On the other hand, the state government is now claiming that it is being penalised for the protests against the farm laws that are raging in the state.

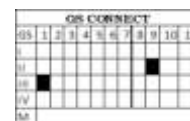
Conclusion

While any discrepancies in the utilization of the fund must be checked it is also important not to aggravate the centre-state relation especially with Punjab. Such disputes go against the spirit of co-operative federalism. A better way would have been to settle the dispute over the Farm Bill with various stakeholders through deliberations. To accommodate the differences in coherent way is the most pragmatic way out.

International Arbitration Centre

News Excerpt

Making India as the hub of International Arbitration has been the aim of Indian Government. Setting up of an independent an autonomous regime for institutionalized domestic and international arbitration is a step in this direction.



Highlights

- The benefits of institutionalized arbitration will be manifold for the Government and its agency and to the parties to a dispute.
- This will result in quality experts being available in India and also an advantage in terms of cost incurred. It will facilitate India becoming a hub for institutional arbitration.
- The Bill provides for setting up of an independent an autonomous body for institutional arbitration and to acquire and transfer the undertakings of International Centre For Alternative Dispute Resolution (ICADR) to New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (NDIAC) w.e.f a specified date 2nd March, 2019.
- The New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Bill, 2019 creates an independent and autonomous regime for institutionalized domestic and international arbitration and establishing India as an International Hub of Arbitration.
- The Bill provides for the repeal of the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Ordinance, 2019 and saves all the actions done or taken under the Ordinance which will be deemed to have been done or taken under the provisions of this Bill.

Background

- The government of India constituted a High-Level Committee (HLC), headed by Mr. Justice B.N. Srikrishna, former Judge of the Supreme Court of India in the year 2017. The HLC recommended that the Government may take over the International Centre for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ICADR), an existing institution which has been established in the year 1995 using the public funds and develop it as an Institution of National Importance.
- The President promulgated an Ordinance namely "The New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Ordinance, 2019" on 2nd March, 2019. In view of the provisions of the Article 107 (5) and 123 (2) of the Constitution, the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Bill, 2019 was proposed in the Parliament which replaced the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre Ordinance, 2019.

NDIAC – the future International Hub of Arbitration.

- ✓ The New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (NDIAC) will be headed by a Chairperson, who has been a Judge of the Supreme Court or a Judge of a High Court or an eminent person, having special knowledge and experience in the conduct or administration of arbitration, law or management, to be appointed by the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India.
- ✓ Besides, it will also have two Full-time or Part-time Members from amongst eminent persons having substantial knowledge and experience in institutional arbitration in both domestic and international.

- ✓ In addition, one representative of a recognized body of commerce and industry shall be nominated on rotational basis as a Part-time Member. The Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law & Justice, Financial Adviser nominated by Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance and Chief Executive Officer, NDIAC will be ex-officio Members.

Aims and objectives of NDIAC:-

- bring targeted reforms to develop itself as a flagship institution for conducting international and domestic arbitration
- provide facilities and administrative assistance for conciliation, mediation and arbitral proceedings;
- maintain panels of accredited arbitrators, conciliators and mediators both at national and international level or specialists such as surveyors and investigators;
- facilitate conducting of international and domestic arbitrations and conciliation in the most professional manner;
- provide cost effective and timely services for the conduct of arbitrations and conciliations at Domestic and International level;
- promote studies in the field of alternative dispute resolution and related matters, and to promote reforms in the system of settlement of disputes; and
- co-operate with other societies, institutions and organisations, national or international for promoting alternative dispute resolution.

PEPPER IT WITH
GIFT City, Ease of
Doing Business Index,
Arbitration,
Conciliation, Mediation.



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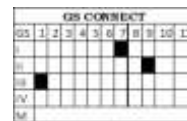
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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

News Excerpt

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has agreed to provide a \$132.8 million loan to the Indian state of Meghalaya for upgrading the power distribution network and improving the power quality.



Pre-Connect

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is a regional development bank established on 19 December 1966, headquartered in Manila, Philippines.
- ADB was conceived in the early 1960s as a financial institution that would be Asian in character and foster economic growth and cooperation in one of the poorest regions in the world.
- The bank admits the members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and non-regional developed countries.
- From 31 members at its establishment, ADB now has 68 members. 49 members from the Asian and Pacific Region, 19 members from Other Regions.
- The ADB was modelled closely on the World Bank, and has a similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed in proportion with members' capital subscriptions. Japan and the United States each hold the largest proportion of shares at 15.571%. China holds 6.429%, India holds 6.317%, and Australia holds 5.773%.

Analytica

- The ADB defines itself as a social development organization that is dedicated to reducing poverty in Asia and Pacific through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.
- This is carried out through investments – in the form of loans, grants and information sharing – in infrastructure, health care services, and financial and public administration systems, helping nations prepare for the impact of climate change or better manage their natural resources.
- Critics have charged that the two major donors, Japan and the United States, have had extensive influence over lending, policy and staffing decisions.
- It has been criticized for insensitivity towards local communities. It can undermine people's human rights through projects that have detrimental outcomes for poor and marginalized communities.
- ADB's large scale projects cause social and environmental damage due to lack of oversight.
- It has also received severe competition from China led AIIB for geopolitical clout.

PEPPER IT WITH

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, New Development Bank, BROB, World Bank, International Development Association, International Monetary Fund

India and ADB

- ✓ ADB's support to India aims to accelerate economic transformation by building industrial competitiveness, creating jobs, accelerating growth of low-income states, and addressing environmental and climate change challenges.
- ✓ Since 1986, ADB has committed 239 sovereign loans totaling \$42.26 billion for India. Cumulative loan and grant disbursements to India amount to \$31.79 billion. These were financed by regular ordinary capital resources and other special funds.
- ✓ In 2019, the bank committed a record \$3.18 billion for 10 sovereign projects aimed to develop infrastructure and services in transport, energy, urban services, and agriculture and natural resources.
- ✓ Improving connectivity and accessibility to services and markets at the state, district, and rural levels remains a key area of ADB's support in India.

- ✓ Recent grant of loan to Meghalaya will help in modernizing and improving the distribution network; the project will improve the operational efficiency of distribution system and the financial sustainability of distribution business in the state.

Significance

- ADB maximizes the development impact of its assistance by facilitating policy dialogues, providing advisory services, and mobilizing financial resources through co financing operations that tap official, commercial, and export credit sources.
- It provides an alternative to Chinese financial institutions, which is known for its **chequebook diplomacy** that is leveraging the investment made to serve its geopolitical purposes.

Israel-Sudan and Israel-UAE deal

News Excerpt

United States of America has announced that Sudan will start to normalize ties with Israel, making it the third Arab state after UAE and Bahrain to do so as part of U.S.-brokered deals in the run-up to Election Day.

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Pre-Connect

- After Egypt's peace treaty with Israel in 1979, followed by Jordan's in 1994, it makes the UAE only the third Arab country to normalise relations. It is the first of the six Arab Gulf states to do so.
- According to these deals, the two Gulf States became the first in the Middle East to recognise Israel in 26 years. They have agreed to establish diplomatic ties with Israel.
- The agreement that will be called the 'Abraham Accord' was brokered by US President Donald Trump.
- The UAE will establish diplomatic relations with Israel in return for President Binyamin Netanyahu committing to give up a stated plan to annex the West Bank, the main territory of a state that the Palestinians want. The joint statement mentioned that Israel and the UAE would also be **"forging closer people-to-people relations"**.
- Similarly, Sudan will recognize Israel in return for its removal from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism.



Analytica

- The situation in the Middle East is complex and some observers believe that domestic politics in Israel and the US may also have a lot to do with this agreement, e.g. Netanyahu, who has been facing mass protests for weeks against his mishandling of the coronavirus outbreak, a drop in popularity in his country, and is on trial for corruption, may be banking on this agreement to revive his image.
- Several nations in the Middle East also have contentious relations with Iran and this improvement in relations between Israel and the UAE may be an attempt by the US and Israel to use the leverage to force other Gulf Arab states to alienate Iran.
- Iran, Qatar, and Turkey have all criticized the accord.

- Civil society organizations throughout the region remain steadfast in their opposition to normalizing relations with Israel.
- Despite the apparent Israeli promise of halting annexation, the Palestinian leadership rejected the accord and recalled its ambassador from Abu Dhabi. For Palestinians, who long have relied on Arab backing in their struggle for independence, the announcement marked a setback for the Israel-Palestine relations.

Significance

- ✓ This move is significant because with the exception of Jordan and Egypt, Israel does not have diplomatic relations with Gulf Arab states owing to its long-standing conflict with Palestinians.
- ✓ They also up end the traditional Arab strategy of refusing to normalize relations with Israel before an independent Palestinian state is created.
- ✓ This deal is not going to affect the UAE regime's stability. It reflects the changing geopolitics of the region and it buys the UAE a lot of goodwill in the US, where its image has been tarnished by its involvement in the Yemen war. It puts the UAE out first in a regional recognition race among neighbouring Gulf Arab states.

Conclusion

Opening direct ties between two of the Middle East's most dynamic societies and advanced economics has the potential to transform the region by spurring economic growth, enhancing technological innovation and forging closer people-to-people relations.

New START Treaty

News Excerpt

United States of America has rejected Russian proposal for an unconditional one-year extension of the nuclear arms reduction accord known as New START Treaty.

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Pre-Connect

- New START continues the bipartisan process of verifiably reducing U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals begun by former Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush.
- New START is the first verifiable U.S.-Russian nuclear arms control treaty to take effect since START I in 1994.
- The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) was signed on April 8, 2010, in Prague by the United States and Russia and entered into force on Feb. 5, 2011. New START replaced the 1991 START I treaty, which expired December 2009.
- New START does not prohibit either side from deploying conventional warheads on long-range ballistic missiles.

Treaty Obligations

- The aggregate limits of the Treaty restrict the United States and Russia to 1,550 deployed strategic warheads each, well below the cold war caps.
- The United States and Russia must implement the necessary reductions to reach these limits no later than seven years after the Treaty's entry into force.
- Within the aggregate limits, each State has the flexibility to determine the structure of its strategic forces.
- Verification measures include national technical means e.g. satellites, on-site inspections and exhibitions, data exchanges and notifications related to strategic offensive arms and facilities covered by the Treaty, and provisions to facilitate the use of national technical means for treaty monitoring.
- To increase transparency and confidence, the Treaty also provides for the annual exchange of telemetry data on a parity basis.

PEPPER IT WITH
INF Treaty, ICAN
Nuclear Treaty, CTBT,
NPT, FMCT, JCPOA

Analytica

- ✓ New START is one of the key controls on superpower deployment of nuclear weapons.
- ✓ In the past years, the treaty worked properly, fulfilled its fundamental role of limiting, curbing the arms race. The two countries declared they have met the limits for strategic nuclear forces in time limit prescribed by the treaty.
- ✓ However, recent developments have raised doubts about the future of the treaty. USA has rejected the proposal of Russia to extend the treaty for 1 year which is set to expire in 2021 as Russia did not agree to additional conditions by USA.
- ✓ The deployed strategic warhead numbers counted under New START represent only a portion of the total number of warheads the two countries have in the arsenals.
- ✓ The US is also concerned about the rising stockpile of nuclear weapons with china and hence intends to establish a new arms control regime which includes china.

Why is it important to save New START treaty?

- Neither of the two powers can afford to abandon the only strategic limitations treaty and its verification regime. Failing this most basic responsibility would, especially in the current political climate, remove any caps on strategic nuclear forces and potentially open the door to a new nuclear arms race.
- The warning signs are all there: East and West are in an official adversarial relationship, increasing military posturing, modernizing and adding nuclear weapons to their arsenals, and adjusting their nuclear policies for a return to Great Power competition.
- The world expects both these powers to play the leading role in ensuring global security and safety of nuclear materials and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons.
- Increasing the transparency of global nuclear stockpiles has great significance for effective work on non-proliferation and for further arms reductions. The new Treaty lays the ground for involving other nuclear powers in fulfilling the goals of the NPT and gives us new opportunities for strengthening strategic stability.

Conclusion

New START is the most significant arms control agreement in nearly two decades. The Treaty will ensure predictability and mutual confidence between the countries with the world's two largest nuclear arsenals. Therefore, the symbolic and practical importance of a comprehensive and verifiable arms control regime cannot be emphasized enough.

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

News Excerpt

China and Russia were elected to the United Nations Human Rights Council, but support for Beijing dropped by more than 20% compared with a 2016 vote and Saudi Arabia failed in its bid to win a seat on the Geneva-based body.

GS CONNECT											
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Pre-Connect

- The Human Rights Council replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights.
- It is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them.
- The Council is made up of 47 United Nations Member States which are elected by the UN General Assembly.
- It contains the **Universal Periodic Review mechanism** which serves to assess the human rights situations in all United Nations Member States, the **Advisory Committee** which serves as the Council's "think tank" providing it with expertise and advice on thematic human rights issues and the **Complaint Procedure** which allows individuals and organizations to bring human rights violations to the attention of the Council.

PEPPER IT WITH
UDHR, Refugee
Convention and
UNHRC, UPR

- The UNHRC, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, has two key functions — the council passes non-binding resolutions on human rights issues through a periodic review of all 193 UN member states called the **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**, besides overseeing expert investigation of violations in specific countries.
- UNHRC's structure — drawing a group of nations from the General Assembly through rotation and election via a **"one state, one vote"** principle — has allowed the organisation to be fairly representative.

Analytica

- Saudi Arabia's failure to win a seat on the Human Rights Council is a welcome reminder of the need for more competition in U.N. elections.
- Both the elected countries have been criticized internationally for their human rights records. Most recently China has been condemned by Western countries for its treatment of Uighur Muslims in the country's Xinjiang region and handling of pro-democracy protests in Chinese-ruled Hong Kong.
- What makes the Council's composition problematic is that several of its members run afoul of its proclaimed aims e.g. the one-party systems of China and Cuba that have a controversial record on freedom of expression or the anti-gay policies of Russia.
- U.S. President Donald Trump's administration quit the Human Rights Council in 2018 – half way through its term –over what it called chronic bias against Israel and a lack of reform.

Challenges

- ✓ The council ignores the worst cases of human rights abuses in favour of **"softer"** topics like the elderly, children and the disabled. The detention of political opposition in Cuba, destruction of civil society in Venezuela has not been questioned in UNHRC. The stand taken by HRC on Libya and Syria is also insufficient.
- ✓ It occasionally prioritises pet projects over common concerns and fails to follow through on the implementation of its own decisions and recommendations.
- ✓ It has been a challenge for UNHCR to advocate for human rights and not interfere with the sovereignty of the states. Many recommendations of the Special rapporteur of UNHCR are discarded on this basis, solely.
- ✓ There has always been an inherent tension between countries from the West that espouse an individualist notion of human rights that lays emphasis on political and civic rights and those from the developing world who have laid greater emphasis on socio-economic and cultural rights, such as Cuba.

Conclusion

The UNHRC is leading the global fight for human rights amid external challenges and internal contradictions. The unique arrangement of representation, review and collaboration, with civil society groups over and above nation-states has certainly improved the functioning of the UNHRC in comparison with its predecessor Commission. But the challenges remain grave. The UNHCR is still a work in progress.

G20 and Anti-Corruption Working Group

News Excerpt

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will chair the first ministerial meeting of its kind for the anti-corruption working group in the G20 countries.

G20 CONNECT											
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Pre-Connect

- In June 2010 at the Toronto Summit, the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group's (ACWG) was set up.
- Its primary goal is to prepare "comprehensive recommendations for consideration by leaders on how the G20 could continue to make practical and valuable contributions to international efforts to combat corruption".
- The ACWG has led the G20 anti-corruption efforts coordinating the collective and national actions taken by its members.
- The ACWG actively works with the World Bank Group, the OECD, the UNODC, the IMF, the FATF, as well as with the Business 20 (B20) and the Civil Society 20 (C20).

- The World Bank and the UNODC are also involved in the ACWG through the active participation and contribution of Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative (StAR) to its work.
- StAR plays an advisory role on asset recovery, anti-money laundering/counter-terrorism financing (AML/CTF), transparency & beneficial ownership, and income & asset disclosures.

Analytica

- It has failed to provide leadership in the face of most serious public health and economic crisis. This is surprising because corruption thrives during times of crisis when institutions and oversight are weak and public trust is low.
- There is a serious lack of coordination among ACWG and other Working Groups of G-20.
- Implementation of Anti-corruption commitments taken by countries has remained inconsistent.
- As corruption will worsen gender disparities, ACWG should adopt and implement specific measures to reduce the disproportionate impact that corruption has on women.

G-20

- ✓ The G20 (or Group of Twenty) is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from 19 countries and the European Union (EU).
- ✓ Founded in 1999 with the aim to discuss policy pertaining to the promotion of international financial stability. Since inception, the recurring themes covered by G20 summit participants have related in priority to global economic growth, international trade and financial market regulation
- ✓ G20 has expanded its agenda since 2008 and heads of government or heads of state, as well as finance ministers, foreign ministers and think tanks, have periodically conferred at summits ever since. After the adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015, more "issues of global significance" were added to the G20 agenda: migration, digitisation, employment, healthcare, the economic empowerment of women and development aid.
- ✓ Collectively, the G20 economies account for around 90% of the gross world product (GWP), 80% of world trade or, if excluding EU intra-trade, 75%, two-thirds of the world population, and approximately half of the world land area.
- ✓ Since the November 2011 Cannes summit, G20 summits have been held annually.

ILO and India

News Excerpt

India assumed the role of chair of the International Labour Organisation's governing body for the period of October 2020 till June 2021. It is taking up the role after a gap of 35 years.

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Pre-Connect

- India is a founder member of the International Labour Organization, which came into existence in 1919.
- At present the ILO has 186 Members. A unique feature of the ILO is its tripartite character.
- At every level in the Organization, Governments are associated with the two other social partners, namely the workers and employers.
- The three organs of the ILO are:
 - **International Labour Conferences:** - General Assembly of the ILO – Meets every year in the month of June. It adopts biennial programme and budget, adopts International Labour Standards in the form of Conventions and Recommendations and provides a forum for discussing social, economic and labour related issues.
 - **Governing Body:** - Executive Council of the ILO. Meets three times in a year in the months of March, June and November. It is the executive wing of the Organization.
 - **International Labour Office:** - A permanent secretariat.
- The principal means of action in the ILO is the setting up the International Labour Standards in the form of Conventions and Recommendations. Conventions are international treaties and are instruments, which create legally binding obligations on the

countries that ratify them. Recommendations are non-binding and set out guidelines orienting national policies and actions.

India's engagement with ILO

- India is the founding member.
- India has regularly and actively participated in the Conference through its tripartite delegations.
- The Conference has so far had 4 Indian Presidents and 8 Indian Vice Presidents. Four Indians have so far been elected Chairmen of the Governing Body.
- Indians have chaired the important Committees of the Conferences like Committee on Application of Standards, Selection Committee and Resolutions Committee.
- The approach of India with regard to International Labour Standards has always been positive.
- The influence of ILO Conventions as a standard of reference for labour legislation and practices in India, rather than as a legally binding norm, has been significant.
- Ratification of a Convention imposes legally binding obligations on the country concerned and, therefore, India has been careful in ratifying Conventions.
- It has always been the practice in India that we ratify a Convention when we are fully satisfied that our laws and practices are in conformity with the relevant ILO Convention.
- India has so far ratified 41 Conventions of the ILO, which is much better than the position existing in many other countries.
- There are only two conventions which are not ratified by India, namely, Freedom of Association and Protection of Right to Organised Convention and Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention.

Conclusion

India argues that a better course of action is to proceed with progressive implementation of the standards, leave the formal ratification for consideration at a later stage when it becomes practicable.

India and the United Nations

News Excerpt

Permanent Representative to the United Nations T.S. Tirumurti announced that India's annual resolution on the issue of counter-terrorism was adopted by consensus in the First Committee of the UN General Assembly.

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Pre-Connect

- First Committee of UN General Assembly, which deals with disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community, adopted two resolutions which were sponsored by India - 'Convention on the Prohibition of the use of Nuclear Weapons' and 'Reducing Nuclear Danger' - under the 'Nuclear weapons' cluster.
- The 'Convention on the Prohibition of the use of Nuclear Weapons', tabled by India since 1982 in the General Assembly requests the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to commence negotiations on an international convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances.
- It was co-sponsored by more than 75 countries, and was adopted by consensus without a vote.
- The resolution on '**Reducing Nuclear Danger**', tabled since 1998, draws global attention to the risks of unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons and underscores the need for a review of nuclear doctrines. It calls for concrete steps to reduce such risks, including through de-alerting and de-targeting of nuclear weapons.

Analytica

- India is a founding member of the UN, and it signed the "**Declaration by United Nations**" in Washington, D.C. on 1 January 1942 before its independence from the British Empire.
- India has served as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for seven terms – a total of 14 years – and is an active participant in all the UN's specialised agencies and organisations.

- India is one of the few countries whose candidates have won every election at the UN in New York. The election of an Indian Judge to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) was a landmark event for India in terms of its unprecedented success in unseating a sitting judge from UK, a P5 member.

- India's status as a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 cemented its position within the UN system as a leading advocate of the concerns and aspirations of developing countries.

- India has a long and distinguished history of service in UN peacekeeping, having contributed more personnel than any other country.

- Rise of India has impacted its participation at the international level and its impact on global governance. In particular, the evolution of India's active role in multilateral

negotiations on trade, climate change, and development policy has been the subject of much attention.

- India's engagement at the UN can be divided into two broad themes: International Development and International Security. It has been more successful in the former than latter.

- While India also engages with the UN on issues like human rights, health and diseases, and the UN's administrative and budgetary issues.

- India's advocacy for immediate reforms on counterterrorism and Security Council reform are the most contentious issues because of the different objectives' members seek to achieve, specially the P-5.

Resolution on Counter Terrorism

- ❖ India, a victim of state-sponsored cross-border terrorism, has been at the forefront in highlighting the serious threat to international peace and security emanating from acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist groups.
- ❖ Through its annual resolution "Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction", India has urged greater international co-operation to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction.
- ❖ This resolution, co-sponsored by more than 75 countries, was adopted by consensus without a vote.
- ❖ India's call for strengthening national measures to address this issue at the General Assembly also predates the adoption of resolution 1540 by the Security Council, which obliges all states to refrain from supporting by any means non-state actors from developing, acquiring, manufacturing, possessing, transporting, transferring or using nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery.

PEPPER IT WITH

Six committees of UN and their function, UNSC Reforms, 1267 resolution

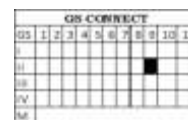
Conclusion

With India being a rising power in the international community, one of the hallmarks of its soft power is its steadfast engagement with multilateral international institutions, particularly the United Nations (UN). India has underlined that the agenda for revitalization of UN needs to be broad and inclusive, as well as transformative and imbued, with the objective of breathing new life.

India and OECD

News Excerpt

India has emerged as the second largest source country both in terms of the **"total"** inflow of new migrants to OECD countries during 2018 and also as regards the number of Indian acquiring citizenship of these countries.



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Pre-Connect

- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an intergovernmental economic organisation with 37 member countries, founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade.

- It is a forum of countries describing themselves as committed to democracy and the market economy, providing a platform to compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practices and coordinate domestic and international policies of its members.
- Generally, OECD members are high-income economies with a very high Human Development Index (HDI) and are regarded as developed countries.
- The OECD's headquarter is in Paris, France. The OECD is funded by contributions from member countries at varying rates.

Analytica

- The OECD Council at Ministerial level adopted a resolution on 16 May 2007 to strengthen co-operation with India, as well as with Brazil, China, Indonesia and South Africa, through a programme of enhanced engagement, defining these countries as Key Partners of the OECD.
- As a Key Partner, India is included in OECD analysis and statistical databases. Its participation in OECD bodies and forum is encouraged as a means of allowing Indian policy makers to benefit from the OECD's technical expertise and analytical capacity.
- OECD statistics, sector-specific country reviews and targeted joint activities are key to advancing India's domestic reform agenda while increasing the OECD's relevance in global governance.
- OECD-India collaboration continues to build, in areas such as anti-corruption, corporate governance, economic policy, environment, fiscal relations, as well as, responsible business conduct, steel, taxation, trade and investment.
- OECD had been trying to bring large companies under the ambit of its Base Erosion and Profit-Sharing Framework (BEPS) OECD was expected to come out with common tax framework for taxing Global internet giants such as Google, Facebook, Amazon, LinkedIn and Netflix.

PEPPER IT WITH

Equalisation levy, Significant economic presence (SEP) framework, the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes

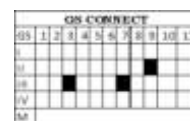
Conclusion

This interaction also benefits OECD members and other Key Partners' engagement with India as a major player in the global economy. At fora like the G20, this dialogue supports a coordinated approach to addressing pressing policy challenges through leveraging the Organisation's policy advice.

India-Pakistan and GI tag

News Excerpt

Pakistan has decided to file its opposition in the European Union in response to India's application for an exclusive Geographical Indications (GI) tag to Basmati rice in the 27-member bloc.



Pre-Connect

- Indian Basmati Rice enjoys a premium in the export market as it is known for its fragrance, long grain and genuineness.
- A geographical indication or GI is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
- It is a kind of trademark in the international market.
- Geographical Indications are part of the intellectual property rights that comes under the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property.
- GI tag belong to the region and people making the product. These people are provided special protection under EU's GI law.
- In May 2010, APEDA got GI certification for Basmati. The GI tag applies for the region located in Indo-Gangetic Plains (IGP) below the foothills of the Himalayas, spread across 7 states (Himachal Pradesh, J&K, Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Western UP (26 districts) and Delhi).

Analytica

- The move comes in the backdrop of heightened fears of losing the European market for export of its basmati rice, after India applied for a GI tag in the EU. Because if, tag is awarded to India, Pakistan can no longer export it as basmati.
- Pakistan is also eyeing to capture the Iranian market, which accounts for 34 percent of India's total basmati export.
- US sanctions have created pressure on India-Iran dollar trade and thus there are fears that Iran might shift to Chinese renminbi for its financial requirements leading to loss of market for India.
- Pakistan is of the view that it is a major grower and producer of Basmati rice and India's application for exclusive GI tag of Basmati rice is unjustified.

Why odds favour India?

- ✓ Pakistan has passed the law on GI in March 2020. While, India has had it in place since 1999.
- ✓ India has a domestic GI tag for Basmati, Pakistan doesn't. This is a necessary condition needed for successfully applying for a GI tag in Europe.
- ✓ However, diplomatic efforts will be needed to ensure that US sanctions' impact on India-Iran trade is minimized.

Titbits

- For cultivation of basmati paddy, alluvial soil having high water retention capacity is more suitable.
- In India, Geographical Indications registration is administered by the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act of 1999.
- More than 50% of India's Basmati production of 7.5 mntonnes is exported.

Conclusion

While this might be another strategy of Pakistan to compete with India or open a new economic front against it. It will be much more prudent for Pakistan to focus on internal development.

Indo- Sri Lankan Accord

News Excerpt

A joint statement by both countries after a virtual summit, on September 26, not only reiterated India's stated policy of seeking to ensure **"equality, justice, peace and respect within a united Sri Lanka"** for Tamils, but explicitly mentioned the need to carry forward the reconciliation process through the implementation of the 13th Amendment to Sri Lanka's Constitution, envisaged in the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord of 1987.

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Pre-Connect

- The agreement is popularly referred to as the Rajiv-Jayewardene Accord.
- It sought to collectively address all the three contentious issues between India and Sri Lanka: strategic interests, people of Indian origin in Sri Lanka and Tamil minority rights in Sri Lanka.
- The accord was expected to resolve the Sri Lankan Civil War by enabling the thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka and the Provincial Councils Act of 1987.
- Under the terms of the agreement, Colombo agreed to devolution of power to the provinces (northern and eastern with significant Tamil populations), the Sri Lankan troops were to be withdrawn from the north and the Tamil rebels were to surrender their arms.
- This accord saw the induction of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka to oversee the LTTE's surrender.

Analytica

- India had consistently affirmed its support for a unified Sri Lanka and opposition to the creation of an independent Tamil Eelam. At the same time, India was sympathetic to the Tamil quest for equitable rights in Sri Lanka. The Rajiv-Jayewardene Accord had its roots in India's effort to give form and substance to it.

- The Accord was unique as it marked a new beginning with respect to India's articulation of power, never exercised after India's war with Pakistan in 1971 that helped the birth of Bangladesh.
- India's military intervention also demonstrated the country's readiness to fulfil its commitments to its neighbours. Significantly, it delineated India's strategic zone of influence in the Indian Ocean region.
- However, there is a fear that far from implementing the 13th Amendment, Sri Lanka may heed calls to roll back the provincial council system itself. Brutal majority of the incumbent prime minister, enabling him to amend the constitution, adds to this fear.

PEPPER IT WITH
LITTE, Tamil civil war, 13th Amendment of the Sri Lankan Constitution, Bilateral Fishermen Issue

Indo-Sri Lanka Bilateral relations since then

- ✓ Both countries have adopted a win-win strategy to build upon the positives of their relationship.
- ✓ These efforts culminated in the signing of India's first-ever free trade agreement with Sri Lanka in 2000. As a result, India-Sri Lanka relations now have a unique status in South Asia.
- ✓ India is the largest trade partner of Sri Lanka.
- ✓ India and Sri Lanka signed a civilian nuclear energy deal in 2015. The agreement aims at cooperation to explore nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.
- ✓ Colombo and New Delhi have a long history of security cooperation. They conduct joint Military '**Mitra Shakti**' and Naval exercise, **SLINEX**. India also provides defence training to Sri Lankan forces.

What is the best way forward for India?

- India should continue to build on its strong ties with Sri Lanka in the strategic areas like economic and maritime security.
- Understanding the strategic geopolitical significance of Sri Lanka, India should address the issue on its own merit, decoupling it from the question of countering Chinese influence in the region.
- India should actively take part to rebuild the war-torn country.
- Primacy must be given to quickly resolve contentious political (Tamil Nadu), security (intelligence sharing and ISIS), social (refugees), religious (pilgrims), international (UNHRC or China and Indian Ocean Region (IOR) security) and geographic (Palk Bay/Kachchativu) issues.
- India should strengthen its cultural and civilizational links by reenergizing people to people connect and leveraging its Buddhist ties.

Conclusion

It is people, not treaties, which make relations between nations meaningful. Unless India makes a difference in the lives of the people of both countries, its relations with Sri Lanka will not address the broader aspects of strategic security.

QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue)

News Excerpt

The second ministerial meeting of the four-nation Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) in Tokyo has been followed by a decision to include Australia in the Malabar 2020 naval exercise after a gap of 13 years.

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Pre-Connect

- The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD, also known as the QUAD) is an informal strategic forum between the United States, Japan, Australia and India.
- The idea was first mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007 at the ASEAN summit.
- In November 2017, India, the US, Australia and Japan gave shape to the long-pending "Quad" Coalition on the sidelines of 31st ASEAN and 12th East Asia Summits.
- The second ministerial meeting of the four-nation Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) was held in Tokyo on October 6, 2020.

- Malabar naval exercise features the Quad partners.

Analytica

- Emergence of Indo-Pacific as the most important arena of geo-politics has brought QUAD into limelight.
- QUAD reemphasizes common commitment of its members, based on shared values of democracy and principles, to promote a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.
- Deeper engagement between these powers is imminent to maintain respect for international law, freedom of navigation and over flight; increase connectivity and maritime security in indo-Pacific.
- The biggest challenge for QUAD is that the nations in the grouping have different aspirations, aimed at balancing their own interest. Therefore, coherence in the vision of Quad nation as a grouping is still lacking.
- Another challenge is the economic might of China and the dependence of Quad nations like Japan, India and Australia on China for its supply chain efficiency, the Quad nations cannot afford to have strained relations with it. Therefore, a delicate balancing will be needed.
- There is a general understanding that the Quad would not take on a military dimension against any country. The strategic community in China, nevertheless, had branded it an emerging "Asian NATO".

PEPPER IT WITH

Malabar Exercise, Japan-India Maritime Exercise, RCEP, Resilient Supply Chain Initiative, Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative

Way Forward for QUAD

- ✓ The Quad should focus on building a robust regional consultation mechanism and coordinate with ASEAN nations on issues of regional importance.
- ✓ The Quad Plus format should cater to the region's economic needs, including infrastructure, connectivity and capacity-building.
- ✓ There is scope to convene a future Quad meeting in the 2+2 format, with diplomats and civilian defense officials to enhance the frequency of dialogue.
- ✓ More active engagement on 'security', which includes economic capacity and the rule of law, the ability to protect intellectual property, trade agreements must be the focus.
- ✓ Gradual expansion of QUAD. For example, Vietnam, together with New Zealand and South Korea, was also part of an online 'Quad plus' meeting earlier.

Conclusion

The vision of QUAD now needs a definitive blueprint in order to have a meaningful impact. It should have a tough security-oriented core with a softer and inclusive exoskeleton that prioritizes the developmental agenda. India must play a decisive role in this institutionalization process to emerge as the regional and global power it truly deserves to be.

Multilateralism

News Excerpt

Even as the corona virus pandemic unleashes its devastation across the globe, it's important to remind ourselves of the value of multilateralism and the necessity to preserve it.

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What is Multilateralism?

In simple words, multilateralism refers to an alliance of multiple countries pursuing a common goal. It can be defined as the practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states, through ad hoc arrangements or by means of institutions.

Other important characteristics include:

- Multilateral institutions are based on a persistent and connected set of rules, formal and informal, that prescribe behavioral roles, constrain activity and shape expectations of states.
- A system of dispute settlement intended to enforce a particular mode of behavior.

Tracing the origin

- The end of the Napoleonic wars in the 19th century saw the establishment of the Concert of Europe, with the great powers redrawing European borders peacefully at the Congress of Vienna.
- The First World War destroyed the European Concert and replaced it with the League of Nations, which was finally replaced with the United Nations in 1945, post-W W II.
- Therefore, multilateralism has a long history, but it is principally associated with the era after World War II, during which there was a burgeoning of multilateral agreements led primarily by the United States.
- The institutions and arrangements most strongly embodying the principle of multilateralism, emerged in the areas of:
 - trade (the World Trade Organization [WTO]),
 - Finance (IMF and World Bank),
 - Security (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO])
 - environmental protection (UNFCCC, UNDP, UNCCD)
 - Informal organizations (G-8, G-4, G-20)
 - India led (NAM, ISA, CDRI)

What is the current state of Multilateralism?

- The postcolonial backlash against the predominance of the West and the rising tide of populism have been profoundly eroding the liberal values underpinning the multilateral system.
- The current context is characterized by weakening of multilateralism, by deglobalization and the return of protectionism, unilateral sanctions, treaty withdrawals, and even military and economic coercion.
- None of our multilateral institutions was built for a world where the ties of interdependence — which were supposed to enhance the well-being of all — could themselves be “weaponized” for nationalistic gain, at the expense of other players.
- Multilateral institutions have become prone to conflict instead of consensus. Multilateral efforts to address climate change and terrorism have made symbolic progress at best.
- Pursuing an aggressive “America first” policy, USA has relinquished its traditional role as a herald of the international liberal order and withdrawn from the Paris climate convention, the Iran nuclear deal, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The executive order to be signed by the US government will also impact the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFP), which mainly works with women and children.
- This “Our country first” approach is being pushed by many populist movements on a global level and it seems that governments are starting to reject their responsibilities towards the international community by undermining global cooperation.
- China, aiming to bend the multilateral system in its favour, is setting up parallel governance structures such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation or the China Development Bank. The EU, a traditional champion of multilateralism, is internally divided and losing influence on the international scene.
- The complex architecture of arms control set up at the end of the Cold War is threatened by the dismantling of the Iran nuclear deal.
- The governance of the internet is forfeiting its initial aspiration of a borderless knowledge society as a few private companies are hoarding data exponentially.

What are the biggest challenges for multilateral institutions?

- UN, the most important multilateral Institution and its manifold agencies have been losing their lustre, criticised for their lack of efficiency, institutional sclerosis and ideological infighting.
- USA’s policies like stopping the funding to the UNESCO, after it recognized a Palestinian state and withdrawal from WHO, have negatively impacted their efficient functioning.
- Multilateralism is threatened by both the U.S. and China’s exceptionalism. Members of UNSC have not respected the mandate of the UN and indulged in unilateral actions. For example, Russia’s absorption of Crimea, U.S.A’s military mobilization against Bashar Al Assad’s Syrian regime without the approval of the UN and China’s rejection of the

Permanent Court of Arbitration's decision in the South China Sea case, despite signing the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

- United Nations Security Council failed to reach to any concurrent policy in global issues of terrorism and climate change. Use of the veto by UNSC members is responsible for this. For example, Russia and China voted against a draft resolution that would have condemned a crackdown on anti-government protests in Syria, similarly China blocked the proposal of designating Masood Azar as a Global terrorist.
- The WTO has failed to conclude the negotiations of the Doha Agenda started in 2001, as bilateralism and protectionism are resurging worldwide, and its dispute settlement system has stalled.
- WTO seems to be biased towards the developed and rich nations, which limits the involvement of the poor countries in the decision-making process and their bargaining power.
- Structural adjustment policy and conditional policy of providing financial assistance of the IMF have been criticized for ignoring the requirements and conditions of developing countries.

Why is Multilateralism relevant? What role can India play?

- ✓ Pressing global issues such as major conflicts, climate change, migration flows, global economic shocks, arms control, and cybersecurity can only be solved collectively.
- ✓ With the United States facing multiple internal challenges including the prospects of a deeply divisive Presidential election, New Delhi could assume leadership in strengthening constructive transnational cooperation. There are huge possibilities for enhancing India's multilateral standing.
- ✓ To make use of the opportunities, India's cooperation with like-minded actors will be key. Here, India could work closely with the Alliance for Multilateralism (an initiative launched by Germany and France) to shape both the alliance itself and the reform agenda at large.
- ✓ India should actively participate in setting the global agenda on issues like terrorism, cyber security and free trade, as it assumes leadership of important multilateral forums like, UN Security Council, non-permanent seat, chairs the BRICS Summit in 2021 and hosts the G-20 Summit in 2022.
- ✓ India can leverage its huge subscriber base and market to set rules for 21st century technological and environmental developments like internet governance, regulation of e-commerce and Big-tech companies.
- ✓ The primary objective of India's present multilateralism must be to ensure fulfillment of its national objectives like national security, economic growth.
- ✓ India could lead a coalition to bridge the deficit of trust emerging against China in a post covid world, through a regime of incentives and sanctions that seek to embed Beijing into the rules of the international system.
- ✓ India can lead the efforts in the arena of sustainable development through its initiatives like International Solar Alliance and CDRI.

What is the future of Multilateralism?

- An alternative multilateral order may well be in the making, which would see the West and its commitment to liberal democracy increasingly marginalised.
- The lasting impact of the private sector on global governance remains equally questionable given multinational firms' ingrained regulation-averseness, short-term outlook and profit orientation.
- There is, however, a different, more optimistic story than the bleak picture of multilateralism in crisis based on the premise that the multilateral system is merely undergoing a profound mutation – one that might even end up making it more effective and better adapted to the realities of the 21st century.
- It now consists of a multilayered system of – often competing, overlapping or conflicting – regimes, agreements, networks, and initiatives. No longer the sole prerogative of states, it is driven by a multitude of actors, IOs, corporations, civil society organisations, advocacy groups, etc.

- Membership of such renewed multilateral institutions would not be universal; rather, one would limit deep integration to countries with which one shares first-order values — such as pluralism, democracy, liberalism, animal welfare rights, and more.
- Since stakeholders perceive that their stakes have risen, they will call for enhanced engagement. Convening such stakeholders in pursuit of global goals will be the essence of future multilateralism.

Conclusion

At the online summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, which also commemorated the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, PM Modi unveiled Indian vision of '**New Multilateralism**'. The global order is going through serious churn, and it provides India with an opportunity to shape the new multilateralism which will have humanity, inclusivity, peaceful co-existence and equality as its core principles.



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ENVIRONMENT

Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project

News Excerpt

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP) Phase II & Phase III with the financial assistance of the World Bank (WB), and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

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Pre-Connect

- Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project was started in 2012 and was scheduled to be completed in six years i.e.-2018.
- Initially, seven states of India, namely Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand was selected for the dam repair and rehabilitation.
- Phase II & Phase III will be implemented over a period of 10 years in two phases -- each of six years duration with two years overlapping from April 2021 to March 2031.
- DRIP is intended to improve the safety and operational performance of selected 736 dams across India.

Key Objectives

DRIP envisages the following objectives:

- To improve the safety and performance of selected existing dams and associated in a sustainable manner.
- To strengthen the dam safety institutional set-up in participating states as well as at central level.
- To explore the alternative incidental means at few of selected dams to generate the incidental revenue for sustainable operation and maintenance of dams.
- Apart from its general objectives, it also aims at ensuring the safety of downstream population and property that are affected in the case of a dam failure or operational failure.
- DRIP has been successful in bringing together dam owners, engineers, scientists, academicians, industries, World Bank as well as renowned dam safety professionals.

Dam Health and Rehabilitation Monitoring Application (DHARMA): It is a web-based asset management software to support the effective collection and management of asset and health data for all large dams in India.

Analytica

- Dams are vital for ensuring the water security of the Country, and these also constitute a major responsibility in terms of asset management and safety. Water is a scarce resource its management and effective delivery is vital for country's economy.
- Dams play a vital role in water security and foster rapid and sustained growth in agricultural, rural, urban and industrial development. India is investing substantially in this critical infrastructure which is essentially required to store and manage limited surface water resources in reservoirs to ensure food, energy, and water security as well as to mitigate droughts and floods.
- Preventive mechanism like DRIP are way better than dam failure, because in such instances no amount of punishment can compensate for the loss of lives. Hence DRIP is a welcome step.

PEPPER IT WITH

Dam safety bill, Central water commission, Ministry of JAL Shakti, River water dispute tribunal

Way Forward

- ✓ There is dire need to pass the dam safety bill in order to give statutory recognition to projects like DRIP.
- ✓ Phase wise up-gradation of critical dams is a necessary step, Government should carry forward these initiatives on regular basis. There is also need to strengthen the institutional capacity.
- ✓ Inter-state measures need to be augmented in order to facilitate the dam safety cooperation. There is also a need to give emphasis on small dams as well.

Zombie Fires

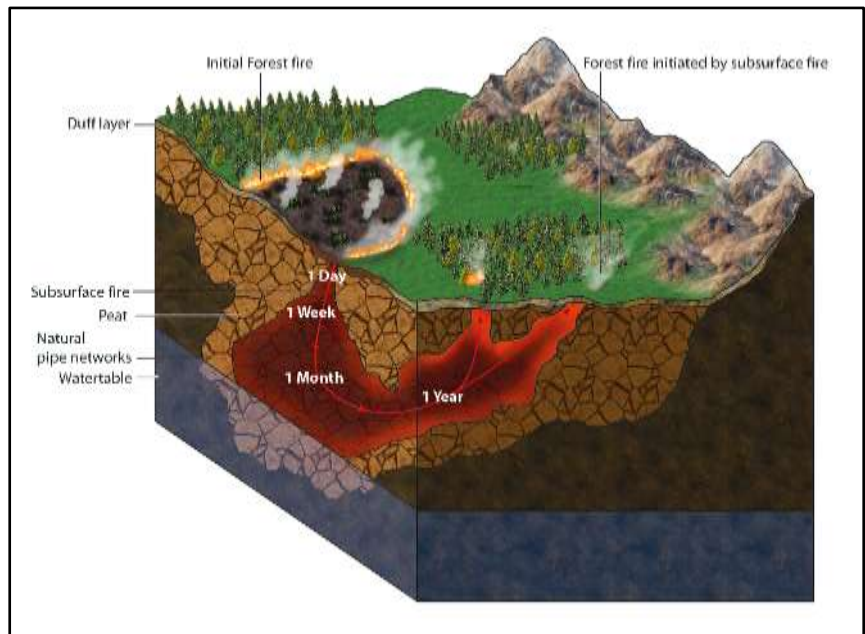
News Excerpt

Recently, a study revealed about occurrences of 'Zombie fires' in cold Arctic region. Zombie fire would release huge amount of CO₂ in atmosphere.

Pre-Connect

What is Zombie Fire?

- Zombie fires can burn all the way through the cold and wet Arctic winters. After flaming wildfires are extinguished on the surface, they can continue to smolder below ground, burning through peat and other organic matter.
- These fire are fuelled by underground methane deposits and insulated by a layer of snow.
- A 'zombie fire' is a fire from a previous growing season that can smoulder under the ground which is made up of carbon-rich peat. When the weather warms, the fire can reignite.
- Adding to the problem is that the peat bog is surrounded by hundreds of thousands of hectares of pine forests where conditions are now drier due to more frequent droughts.
- Nearly all of this year's fires inside the Arctic Circle occurred on continuous permafrost, with over half of these burning on ancient carbon-rich peat soils.



Siberia ravaged by fire

The soot and ash accelerate the melting of Arctic ice and permafrost



Key concerns

- The fires and record temperatures had the potential of turning the carbon sink into a carbon source and increasing the level of global warming.
- The heat is causing snow cover to melt and is accelerating the drying of soils, including peat lands that would be more resistant to burning under wetter conditions.

- These “zombie fires” can burn underground for years. Hence thawing permafrost and releasing huge amounts of carbon into the atmosphere. It may attribute to accelerate the Global warming and more thawing permafrost.
- These fires in the Arctic spreading to areas which were formerly fire-resistant. The tundra — north of the Arctic Circle — is drying up and vegetation there like moss, grass, dwarf shrubs, etc. are starting to catch fire. Hence catastrophic damages on Eco-system are likely to be noticed in upcoming times. Which could have begun the vicious cycle of climate change beyond human control.
- These fires will release large amounts of carbon dioxide, black carbon, brown carbon, and ozone precursors into the atmosphere. These emissions affect radiation, clouds, and climate on regional and even global scales.
- Peat lands in the northern hemisphere store more carbon than all the world’s rainforests combined. If they were to burn, the massive amounts of CO₂ released into the atmosphere would immediately render all efforts to control emissions futile.

Way Forward

- ✓ There is dire need to put global level measures to control the fire and need to understand the nature of fires in order to control it in more effective way. Researchers and academicians have to come out with sustainable and effective approach.
- ✓ Ecosystem restoration measures should be strengthened by participation of global science community, best modern as well as traditional practices are needed to be inculcate, in order to fight with the prolonged battle of climate change.
- ✓ Global finance mechanism to combat ‘Major fire’ instances should enacted by United Nations.

Arctic permafrost

- ❖ Permafrost is any ground that remains completely frozen—32°F (0°C) or colder. Permafrost covers large regions of the Earth.
- ❖ Almost a quarter of the land area in the Northern Hemisphere has permafrost underneath. Although the ground is frozen, permafrost regions are not always covered in snow.
- ❖ Permafrost is made of a combination of soil, rocks and sand that are held together by ice. The soil and ice in permafrost stay frozen all year long.
- ❖ Near the surface, permafrost soils also contain large quantities of organic carbon—a material leftover from dead plants that couldn’t decompose, or rot away, due to the cold. Lower permafrost layers contain soils made mostly of minerals.

Stubble Burning

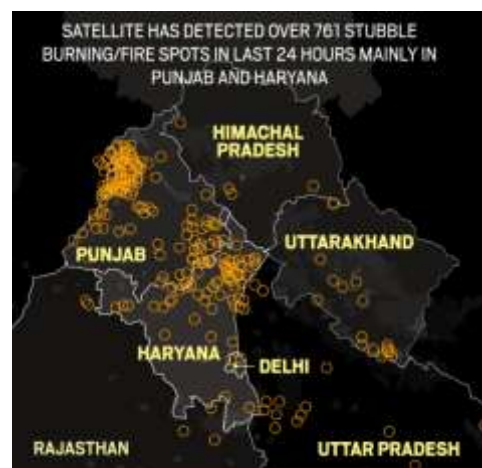
News Excerpt

Recently, thousands of stubble burning instances were noticed. This year amidst COVID-19 pandemic some studies have linked the intensity of outbreaks with higher level of pollution. Delhi would have to deal with the ‘duo challenges’ — ‘Air pollution’ related with ‘stubble burning’ and linked outbreak of ‘COVID-19’ with pollutants.

What is Stubble Burning?

- Stubble burning is an act of removing paddy crop residue from the field to sow next crop.
- It is being cited as traditional, cost effective and quickest way to prepare field to sow next crop.
- Stubble burning is attributed to worsening the air quality of Delhi. Other anthropogenic emission like-vehicular emission and industrial emissions coupled with stubble burning emission further deteriorate the air quality of Delhi to an alarming level.
- Other than temporary impacts i.e. – bad Air Quality, the stubble burning is also attributed to the GHG emissions, which have prolonged

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‘irreversible effect’ on climate change.

Reasons for Stubble Burning

- In India, there is intense pressure on cultivable lands (northern India) to achieve maximum output. The main reason for paddy (rice crop) stubble burning is the short time available between rice harvesting and sowing of wheat; a delay in sowing wheat adversely affects the wheat crop. The short timeframe available between rice and wheat crops is also a reason that farmer have to burn crop residual quickly for next sowing.
- Additionally, the market for crop residue is shrinking, due to lack of technological support and monetary incentives by Government. Thus, farmers find it cheaper and easier to burn the post-harvest stubble.
- Even mechanization is unable to cope with management of stubble. The machine doesn't cut close enough to the ground, leaving stubble behind that the farmer has no use for. There is pressure on the farmer to sow the next crop in time and for it to achieve a full yield.
- Traditionally, wheat and rice fields were burned after harvest to dispose of the left over straw and to control disease and pest problems that can carry over between crops.
- Lack of awareness and failure of policy implementation are additional structural reason for menace of Stubble burning. Policy measures had not been percolated towards marginal and small farmers.

- Punjab alone produces 19-20 million tonnes of paddy straw and about 20 million tonnes of wheat straw. About 85-90 per cent of this paddy straw is burnt in the field.
- Nearly 80 % of the entire crop residue burning takes place in the months of October-December.

Impacts of Stubble Burning

1. Climate change

- Stubble burning releases harmful GHGs emission and particulate matters (PM). GHGs are cited as a reason for global warming and climate change.
- For Instance— A crop residue burning released 149.24 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂), over 9 million tonnes of carbon monoxide (CO), 0.25 million tonnes of oxides of sulphur (SOX), 1.28 million tonnes of particulate matter and 0.07 million tonnes of black carbon.

2. Impacts on air quality

- Burning of stubble poses a serious threat to the air quality of the exposed environment. The amount of PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ is increased in the atmosphere. Climatic conditions further deteriorate the level of pollution.
- Stubble burning releases VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds) and NO_x which combine to form ground-level ozone. Ozone is formed in the immediate atmosphere by the reaction of nitrogen oxide and volatile organic compounds in the presence of solar radiation.

3. Impacts on soil fertility

- Stubble burning negatively affects the soil productivity. Due to burning the composition of essential nutrients inside the soil get disturbed. It also raises the soil temperature to about 42 °C, thus displacing or killing the important microorganisms in the soil at a depth of about 2.5 cm.
- This generates an additional expense of regaining back the soil fertility through the application of fertilizer or compost.
- Stubble burning strips the soil of the essential nutrients, i.e. Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium (NPK) as well as other micro-nutrients.

4. Impacts on agricultural productivity

- The effects of burning crop stubble extend to the agricultural sector. Air pollution affects food production. The pollutants may affect agricultural productivity directly or indirectly.
- Direct effects entail injury to leaves, grains, or assimilation of heavy metals. For instance- Nitrogen oxide can damage the tissue of plants and cause discoloration. SO₂ may lead to the formation of acid rain.
- Prolonged exposure of plants to particulates pollution may lead to Chlorosis.

- Ground-level ozone affects plant's metabolism, penetrates, and destroys leaves causing serious effects on crops in the northern parts of India. Hence, stubble burning negatively impacts agricultural productivity.

Stubble Burning — Air Quality — and COVID

- ✓ Pollution produced by agricultural practice may facilitate Covid-19 transmission and increase susceptibility. The increase amount of PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ may attribute to the respiratory disease.
- ✓ Stubble burning releases VOCs and NO_x which combine to form ground-level ozone. Pollution plus coronavirus has become lethal for people. It can cause severe health issues.
- ✓ Covid-19 atmospheric particulate matter (PM) could create a suitable environment for transporting the virus at greater distances.
- ✓ PM induces inflammation in lung cells and exposure to PM could increase the susceptibility and severity of the Covid-19 patient symptoms. Increase in cases of co-infection with Covid-19 is likely to be increase.

Measures taken by Government

- The Centre will bring in a law, via ordinance, to address air pollution as well as check stubble burning in Delhi as well as the surrounding National Capital Region. The Commission for Air Quality Management in the National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Ordinance of 2020 was promulgated by the Centre.
- The Delhi NCR already has a Graded Response Action Plan, which is overseen by the Environment Pollution Authority.
- In another significant development, the Punjab government directed manufacturers to install a straw management system in combined harvester machines. The straw management system cuts and mulches the leftover crop into the same field. The Punjab government has appointed 8,000 nodal officers in villages that grow paddy. Over 23,000 crop residue management machines are being given to farmers for on-site management of straw.
- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) had banned crop residue burning in the states of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab.
- Burning crop residue is a crime under Section 188 of the IPC and under the Air and Pollution Control Act of 1981. However, government's implementation lacks strength.
- In 2014, the Union government released the National Policy for Management of Crop Residue, under which each state needs to have an action plan to stop residue burning by involving people at different levels—from communities to panchayats to state governments.

COVID-19

Presently India is facing the COVID-19 outbreak, there is growing concern that if pollution level rises due to stubble burning, it will create adverse conditions for respiratory or lungs related problems and end up aggravating the COVID problem in the affected persons.

India is witnessing a steady decline in its average daily positivity rate, but the new emerging issue of 'co-infection' can affects respiratory system. Bad air quality and COVID-19 infection both attacks the lungs first. Hence the threat to health of elderly people and children is key concern for public health.

Possible Alternatives

Due to lack of effective policies, we are wasting precious bio-mass which could be used either as cattle feed or as fuel. And on the other hand, we are creating environmental hazard of smog and turning the country into a gas chamber. Following are the possible alternatives of stubble burning.

1. Waste Decomposer

- Scientists at the National Centre for Organic Farming have developed a 'Waste Decomposer' solution concocted with effective microorganisms that propel in-situ composting of the crop residue.
- The solution can decompose over 10,000 metric tons of bio waste in 30 days. The same can also be used in foliar spray and via drip irrigation.

- The 'Pusa Decomposer' developed by the Indian Agriculture Research Institute (IARI) in New Delhi as a solution to the problem of crop burning. It is capable of dealing with all kinds of bio-mass and it is completely organic and chemical free.

2. Converting Crop Stubble into Animal Feed and Manure

- In South India, stubble is not burnt as there's economic value as animal feed. There is need to adopt a do-ecology approach with farmers to convert rice stubble into income rather than making them agents of eco-disaster.
- Crop residuals can be used to feed cattle and can be utilized for making organic manures.

3. Happy Seeder

- Instead of burning the stubble, a tractor-mounted machine called the Happy Seeder "cuts and lifts rice straw, sows wheat into the bare soil, and deposits the straw over the sown area as mulch.
- Thus, it will "eliminate air pollution by crop burning and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from on-farm activities by more than 78% relative to all burning options.

4. 'Raw' material for Industries

The alternative management practices include the incorporation of the stubble into the soil, use of stubble as fuel in power plants, use as raw material for pulp and paper industries, or as biomass for biofuel production. It can also be used to generate compost and biochar, or as blend for the production of cement and bricks.

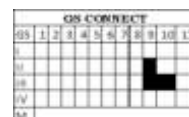
Way Forward

- ✚ A holistic approach is required to address crop residue burning. This includes a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency setting involving technical agencies, market-based economic tools, supporting agricultural and environmental policies, and awareness and capacity building for farmers.
- ✚ There is a dire need to incentivise the farmers for not burning the stubble, by providing economic value for this crop residue or stubble, which may be converted into either cattle feed or fuel (in the form of briquettes).
- ✚ The government should pave way for setting up "Agri- waste Collection Centres" alongside the "Paddy Purchase Centres", where the farmers may sell their agri-waste at a reasonable price and earn some additional income and are not tempted to burn it.
- ✚ Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) or Farmers' Co-operatives may be supported for purchasing of this agri-waste/ crop residue from the farmers and later selling it to industries that convert it into cattle feed or fuel briquettes.
- ✚ The industries which are converting this agri-waste/crop residue into wealth in the form of cattle feed or fuel briquettes, may also be suitably incentivised and subsidised.
- ✚ Encourage and incentivise the farmers to go for early paddy, so as to give them enough time to harvest and thereafter prepare their fields for the next Rabi crop.
- ✚ In order to pace up R & D regarding stubble, Government should encourages companies, investors and startups in this realm. Innovation will surely drive the way for sustainable agriculture.

South Asia Flash Flood Guidance System

News Excerpt

India has launched first of its kind Flash Flood Guidance services for India and other South Asian countries -- Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka -- to issue impact-based forecasting at the watershed and also city level, of floods which are very sudden and of short duration.



Highlights

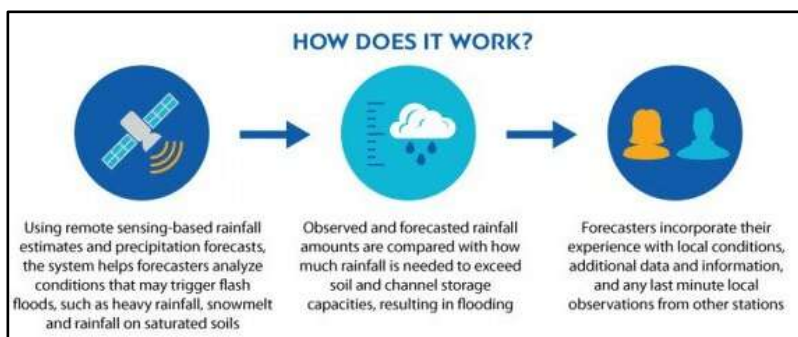
- The South Asia FFGS is implemented by the World Meteorological Organization while National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is a satellite data provider into the System.
- It is part of a global FFGS which currently provides early warnings to three billion people – 40% of the world's population – across more than 60 countries
- The Flash Flood Guidance is a robust system designed by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) to provide the necessary products in real-time to support the

development of warnings for flash floods about 6-12 hours in advance at the watershed level with a resolution of 4kmx4km for the Flash Flood prone South Asian countries -- India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

- Operated by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the South Asia FFGS is now providing the nation's nearly 1.6 billion people with effective flash flood guidance and forecasts.
- IMD acts as the regional centre covering Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka, providing forecast products, data and training.
- Since September 2020, the IMD has started issuing regional flash flood advisories to the Member countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka) alerting NMHSs and stakeholders on possible flash flood risks and associated heavy rainfall and/or snowmelt daily.

Flash Floods

- Flash Floods are highly localized events of short duration with a very high peak and usually have less than six hours between the occurrence of the rainfall and peak flood.
- Flash Floods can be caused by a number of things, but is most often due to extremely heavy rainfall from thunderstorms. Flash Floods can occur due to Dam or Levee Breaks, and/or Mudslides (Debris Flow)
- Flash Flooding occurs so quickly that people are caught off-guard. Their situation may become dangerous if they encounter high, fast-moving water while traveling. If people are at their homes or businesses, the water may rise quickly and trap them, or cause damage to the property without them having a chance to protect the property.
- There is a general lack of flash flood warning capabilities and capacities of the nations across the world.
- Flash floods and riverine floods cause major loss of life and property in South Asia during the monsoon season. Due to the frequency of extreme precipitation, urbanization, land-use changes, the need for early warning systems becomes more important.



What needs to be done?

Structural measures- The construction of dams and river dikes, flood-control reservoirs, storm water detention basin, flood ways, channelization including deepening, widening and improving conveyance capacity, bank protection etc.

Non-structural measures- Flood forecasting and warning, floodplain management, flood insurance.

Commercial Coal Mining

News Excerpt

Five coal mines were bid out on the first day of the Centre's commercial coal mining auctions.

Pre-Connect

- In 1973, the resource was nationalised, with all coal mines handed over to the government-owned Coal India Limited.
- As India liberalised its economy in the 1990s, the government amended the law and allowed private companies in the power, steel, cement, aluminium sectors to mine coal for captive use – that is, as raw material for their own industrial units. Since the mined coal was not meant to be sold commercially, the companies did not have to pay any royalty. This deprived the government of mining revenue, while allowing some companies to make windfall gains by accessing coal cheaply. Worse, a discretionary allocation process spawned

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corruption in the sector, as companies paid bribes to government functionaries to get mining rights.

- In 2014, the Supreme Court held the process to be arbitrary and illegal, cancelling 214 coal block allocations.
- In 2015, the government passed a new law, paving the way for coal mine auctions which would allow companies to compete for a scarce natural resource through open bidding. But participation in these auctions was restricted to companies in the power, steel, cement, aluminium sectors, since coal could still be mined only for captive use.
- Further in 2018, private sector firms were allowed to sell upto 25 per cent of the output in the market, but this saw a lukewarm response from the private sector.
- In March 2020, citing the need to raise domestic coal production, bring down imports and save foreign exchange, the government amended coal mining laws. It ended the captive coal regime and cleared the path for commercial coal mining.
- In June 2020, government launched the auction process for 41 coal blocks for commercial mining, a move that opens India's coal sector to private players, and termed it a major step in the direction of India achieving self-reliance.
- The auction of coal blocks for commercial mining is expected to garner Rs 33,000 crore of capital investment over the next five to seven years.

Highlights

- Commercial mining allows the private sector to mine coal commercially without placing any end-use restrictions. The private firms have the option of either gasification of the coal or exporting it..
- Companies are competing on the basis of the share of revenue they would part with to the respective State governments. There is no end-use restriction on the coal that is mined.
- With 100 per cent foreign direct investment allowed in the coal sector, global companies can also participate in the auction.
- The complete freedom to decide on sale, pricing, and captive utilisation is expected to attract many private sector firms to participate in the auction process.
- The government has done away with all eligibility criteria, allowing even firms with no prior coal mining experience to participate in the auction.
- The revenue sharing will be on ad valorem (the value of the transaction) basis and not on the basis of a fixed amount.

Arguments in favour

- ✓ Move will ensure greater competition, will assist various coal bearing states to earn higher revenues and invest in the much-needed development and growth, emerging from the Covid-19 crisis.
- ✓ The intended liberalisation will go a long way in addressing India's current needs to generate employment, increase investment in research and development, attract foreign direct investment, and ensure inclusive growth.
- ✓ The opening up of the coal sector will also help in fulfilling the government's Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan, and will help several economic sectors, especially power, steel, aluminium and unregulated sectors.
- ✓ With the quantum of coal resources available in the country, it is also noted that the subject reforms will open up export opportunities in the coal sector and will result in foreign exchange earnings.
- ✓ Further, with the removal of end-use restrictions, the coal mined can be used for various purposes including coal gasification and liquefaction.
- ✓ The government has highlighted that as coal in India has low sulphur content, it is cleaner than other types of coal.

Arguments against

- Jharkhand has raised concern over the timing of the move. Nine of the 40 coal mines being auctioned are located in the state. The state has argued that it stands to lose vital forest cover, its tribal communities will be displaced, and yet it hasn't been consulted.
- The decision to introduce commercial mining has come at a time when there is an increasing shift to renewable resources both in terms of investment in technologies and

creating physical assets and capacity. It is no different in India, given the government's aim to increase renewable energy capacity to 175 gigawatt (GW) by 2022.

- Change in ownership of a coal mine plays very little role when it comes to increasing coal production. Factors such as delays in land acquisition, multiple approvals at the state and the Central government levels, as well as issues with coal transportation account for stagnant or decreasing coal production and consumption.
- The coronavirus pandemic may dampen global participation in the auctions and keep bid prices low.
- Commercial coal mining may encourage and bring in undeserving, collusive, cartelized, restrictive trade practices.
- Critics allege that regardless of the number of participants, the design of the auctions itself leaves open the possibility of low revenues for coal-mining states. This is because the floor benchmark for bidding has been set considerably lower than previous auction rounds.
- It does not take into account the pressures faced by coal mining states like Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, which have to deal with the social and environmental fallouts of coal mining.

Conclusion

- ✚ Despite being the world's fourth-largest producer, India is the second-largest importer of coal.
- ✚ The launch of the auction process not only marks the beginning of unlocking of the country's coal sector from the lockdown of decades but aims at making India the largest exporter of coal. However, concerns raised by the experts need to be addressed with sincerity. States should be made a part of consultation process. And, while ensuring optimum use of resource, it should also be ensured that it is sustainable and causes least damage to local communities.

Jute packaging

News Excerpt

With an aim to reach out to the farmers and workers in the eastern and north eastern regions, Govt. has approved that 100 per cent of the food grains and 20 per cent of the sugar shall be mandatorily packed in diversified jute bags.

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Pre-Connect

- Nearly 3.7 lakh workers and several lakh farm families are dependent for their livelihood on the jute sectors.
- Under the Jute Packaging Materials (Compulsory use in Packing Commodities) Act, 1987, the government is required to consider and provide for the compulsory use of jute packaging material in the supply and distribution of certain commodities in the interest of production of raw jute and jute packaging material.

Highlights

- The decision is important considering that the jute industry is predominantly dependent on government sector which purchases jute bags of value of more than Rs 7,500 crore every year for packing food grains. This is done in order to sustain the core demand for the jute sector and to support the livelihood of the workers and farmers dependent on the sector.
- The decision to pack sugar in diversified jute bags will give an impetus to the diversification of the jute industry
- The reservation norms in present proposal would further the interest of domestic production of raw jute and jute packaging material in India, thereby, making India self-reliant in consonance with AatmaNirbhar Bharat.

Other schemes promoting Jute Textile Industry in India

- ✓ **Jute Industry Modernization Scheme:** The Incentive Scheme for Acquisition of Plant & Machinery (ISAPM) for modernization in Jute mills & JDP units is implemented to increase the productivity of the jute machinery and making them efficient by replacing the old machines by new and technologically advanced machines.
- ✓ **Jute Farmers' Welfare Scheme: JUTE -ICARE:** It is being implemented since the last four years with an objective to introduce package of scientific technique of Jute cultivation

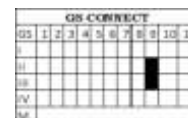
and retting exercises for improving fibre quality and productivity and reducing the cost of jute production and to increase income of jute farmers.

- ✓ **Jute Integrated Development Scheme (JIDS):** It aims at setting up local units and agencies at distant locations around the country through collaboration with bonafide bodies to carry out various activities. JID agencies act as a facilitator for providing Basic, Advance and Design Development training programmes and rendering the backward and forward linkages to the existing and potential entrepreneurs at grass-root levels mainly on technology application and design /product development and disseminations.
- ✓ **Jute Raw Material Bank (JRMB) Scheme:** The scheme aims at accelerating the pace of JDP activities in the country by catering to need of MSME-JDP units for production of JDPs so that jute raw materials are supplied to them regularly at mill gate price and to help them manufacture high value products, both for domestic and international markets.

Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants

News excerpt

The Union Cabinet ratified the ban on seven chemicals that are hazardous to health and environment listed under the Stockholm Convention.



Pre-Connect

- The Stockholm Convention is a global treaty to protect human health and environment from POPs, which are identified chemical substances that persist in the environment, bio-accumulate in living organisms, adversely affect human health/ environment and have the property of long-range environmental transport (LRET).
- Exposure to POPs can lead to cancer, damage to central & peripheral nervous systems, diseases of immune system, reproductive disorders and interference with normal infant and child development.
- POPs are listed in various Annexes to the Stockholm Convention after thorough scientific research, deliberations and negotiations among member countries.
- Over 152 countries ratified the Convention and it entered into force, on 17 May 2004.

Highlights

- Considering its commitment towards providing safe environment and addressing human health risks, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) had notified the 'Regulation of Persistent Organic Pollutants Rules, on March 5, 2018 under the provisions of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- The regulation inter alia prohibited the manufacture, trade, use, import and export seven chemicals namely (i) Chlordecone, (ii) Hexabromobiphenyl, (iii) Hexabromodiphenyl ether and Heptabromodiphenylether (Commercial octa-BDE), (iv) Tetrabromodiphenyl ether and Pentabromodiphenyl ether (Commercial penta-BDE), (v) Pentachlorobenzene, (vi) Hexabromocyclododecane, and (vii) Hexachlorobutadiene, which were already listed as POPs under Stockholm Convention.
- The Cabinet's approval for ratification of POPs demonstrates India's commitment to meet its international obligations with regard to protection of environment and human health.
- It also indicates the resolve of the Government to take action on POPs by implementing control measures, develop and implement action plans for unintentionally produced chemicals, develop inventories of the chemicals' stockpiles and review as well as update its National Implementation Plan (NIP).
- The ratification process would enable India to access Global Environment Facility (GEF) financial resources in updating the NIP.
- The Cabinet further delegated its powers to ratify chemicals under the Stockholm Convention to Union Ministers of External Affairs (MEA) and Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MEFCC) in respect of POPs already regulated under the domestic regulations thereby streamlining the procedure.

Commission for NCR Air Quality

News Excerpt

Recently, the President of India has signed a new ordinance to form a commission for air-quality management in the National Capital Region (NCR) and adjoining areas.

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Pre-Connect

- Delhi has had a very serious air pollution problem for some years, often at its worst in the winter months.
- In November 2018, levels reached 20 times the recommended World Health Organisation's safe limits for air pollution.
- It's been caused by growing volumes of traffic, construction and industrial activity, the burning of rubbish and crops, the use of fireworks during religious festivals and weather patterns which can trap polluted air in the lower atmosphere for long periods of time.
- The monitoring and management of air quality in the Delhi NCR region have been done inefficiently by multiple bodies till now.

State of Global Air (SOGA)

- ❖ India recorded the highest annual average PM 2.5 concentration exposure in the world last year, according to the State of Global Air 2020 (SOGA 2020) report.
- ❖ India has been recording an increase in PM 2.5 pollution since 2010 contrary to Govt's claims that annual air pollution levels in the country are coming down.
- ❖ SOGA, released by US-based Health Effects Institute and Global Burden of Disease (GBD), uses both data from ground monitors and satellite to make their assessment.
- ❖ India is also among the top ten countries with highest ozone (O3) exposure in 2019
- ❖ The only silver lining for India though is that it has managed to reduce the number of people exposed to household air pollution.

Highlights

- New law through ordinance aims to set up a commission to tackle the problem of air pollution in Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR), amid Supreme Court hearings on the matter, with provisions of punishing violations of parameters laid down by it with a fine of up to ₹1 crore or a jail term of up to five years or both.
- The body, Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas, will have jurisdiction over Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan — states which impact the Delhi-NCR air quality.
- The 18-member commission, whose members have yet to be selected, will coordinate inter-state and inter-ministerial actions to check air pollution. It will have the power to prohibit activities that are likely to cause or increase air pollution in the NCR and adjoining areas.
- It will also have the power to lay down parameters of air quality and emissions, discharge of pollutants, inspect premises violating the law on the basis of complaints and also to take suo motu cognisance of violations, and order closure of non-abiding industries or plants.
- Appeals in cases of non-compliance will lie only with the National Green Tribunal and not any civil court. Provisions of both stringent punishments and appeals are new and stronger measures, aimed at deterrence against violation of pollution norms.
- The body is proposed to replace multiple ad hoc committees and task forces set up under the Union environment ministry, Prime Minister's Office and Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), besides the EPCA set up in 1998 by the Supreme Court. The Centre has dissolved the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority for the NCR (EPCA) to make way for the functioning of the Commission.
- It will have three sub-committees — on monitoring and identification, safeguarding and enforcement, and research and development — to help address the problem of air pollution.
- The commission will be headed by a full-time chairperson who has been a secretary to the government of India or chief secretary of a state. It will have senior officials from the Union government and stakeholder states, besides experts from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and Indian Space Research Organisation. Experts and stakeholders from civil society are also likely to be co-opted in the body, which will look at strong public engagement to fight air pollution.

- The chairperson of the commission will be selected by a committee headed by the Union minister for environment, forest and climate change. It will also have on board the cabinet secretary and ministers for road transport and highways, commerce and industry, and science and tech.

Graded Response Action Programme

News Excerpt

Delhi Govt has banned the operation of electricity generator sets of all capacities, run on diesel, petrol or kerosene in Delhi with effect from October 15 till further orders, excluding those used for essential or emergency services.

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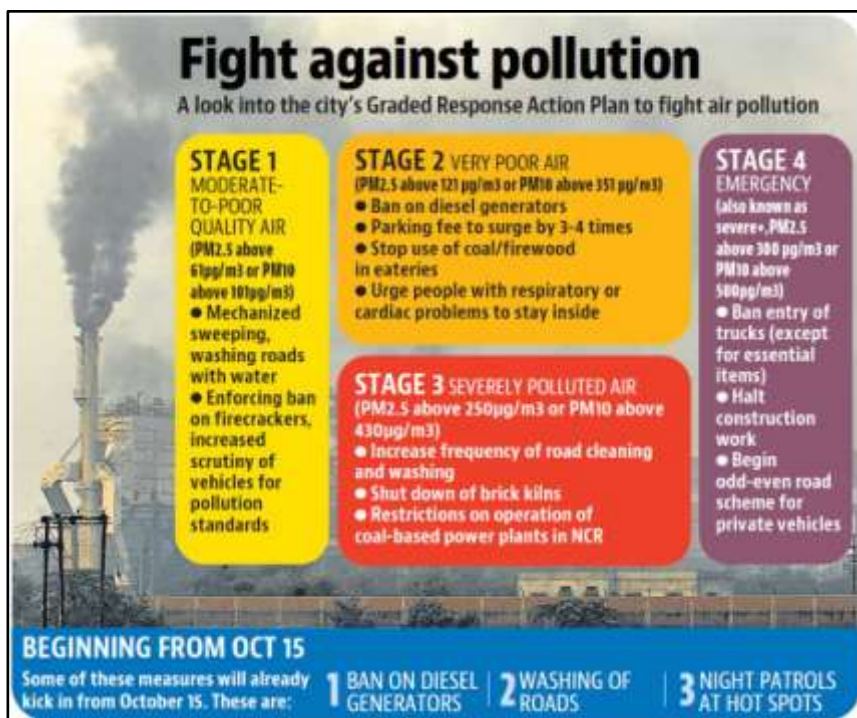
- The Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), is a set of curbs triggered in phases as the air quality deteriorates, which is typical of the October-November period.
- Farm fires in neighbouring states and cooling weather typically combine at this time of the year to blanket the region in smoke.
- Graded Response Action Plan or GRAP was first notified by the Ministry of Environment and Forests in 2017 for implementation through the Supreme Court-mandated Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority.

Categorization of industries

- ❖ Authorities categorize industries according to pollution index scores worked out based on the emissions, effluents, hazardous wastes generated and consumption of resources.
- ❖ Based on the relative scores, the industries are categorized as the Red category if their score is more than or equal to 60 and Orange category if the score is between 41 to 59.
- ❖ Those having a score between 21 to 40 and less than 20 come under Green and White categories respectively.

Highlights

- Graded Response Action Plan includes strict measures such as a ban on the entry of heavy vehicles, the odd-even road rationing restrictions, and a halt of construction work, increasing bus and metro services, hiking parking fees and stopping the use of diesel generator sets when the air quality turns poor.
- When the situation turns "severe", GRAP recommends closure of brick kilns, stone crushers and hot mix plants, sprinkling of water, frequent mechanised cleaning of roads and maximising power generation from natural gas.
- The essential services include health care facilities, elevators, railway services, Delhi Metro, airports and interstate bus terminals and the data centre run by the National Informatics Centre.
- Industries, particularly in the Red and Orange category, need to provide an undertaking that they will use only authorised fuel and will not operate without adequate pollution control measures.



Fight against pollution
A look into the city's Graded Response Action Plan to fight air pollution

STAGE 1 MODERATE-TO-POOR QUALITY AIR (PM_{2.5} above 61µg/m³ or PM₁₀ above 101µg/m³)

- Mechanized sweeping, washing roads with water
- Enforcing ban on firecrackers, increased scrutiny of vehicles for pollution standards

STAGE 2 VERY POOR AIR (PM_{2.5} above 121 µg/m³ or PM₁₀ above 351 µg/m³)

- Ban on diesel generators
- Parking fee to surge by 3-4 times
- Stop use of coal/firewood in eateries
- Urge people with respiratory or cardiac problems to stay inside

STAGE 3 SEVERELY POLLUTED AIR (PM_{2.5} above 250µg/m³ or PM₁₀ above 430µg/m³)

- Increase frequency of road cleaning and washing
- Shut down of brick kilns
- Restrictions on operation of coal-based power plants in NCR

STAGE 4 EMERGENCY (also known as severe, PM_{2.5} above 300 µg/m³ or PM₁₀ above 500µg/m³)

- Ban entry of trucks (except for essential items)
- Halt construction work
- Begin odd-even road scheme for private vehicles

BEGINNING FROM OCT 15
Some of these measures will already kick in from October 15. These are:

- 1 BAN ON DIESEL GENERATORS
- 2 WASHING OF ROADS
- 3 NIGHT PATROLS AT HOT SPOTS

Yellow dust

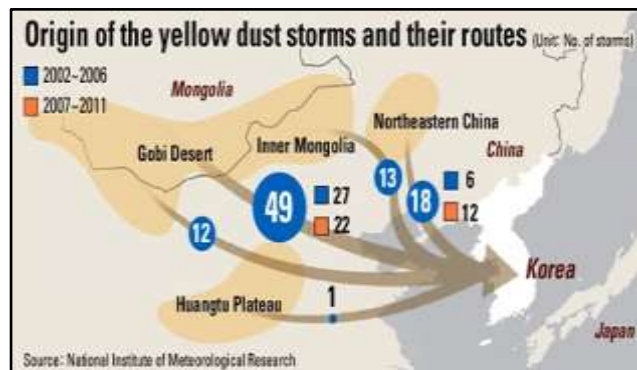
News Excerpt

North Korea has urged citizens to remain indoors to avoid contact with a mysterious cloud of 'yellow dust' blowing in from China, which they have warned could bring Covid-19 with it.

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Highlights

- Yellow dust is actually sand from deserts in China and Mongolia that high speed surface winds carry into both North and South Korea during specific periods every year.
- The sand particles tend to mix with other toxic substances such as industrial pollutants, as a result of which the 'yellow dust' is known to cause a number of respiratory ailments.
- Since research from around the world has shown Covid-19 can be "transmitted through air", the yellow dust cloud can transmit the virus.



India Energy Modelling Forum

News Excerpt

NITI Aayog has announced the governing structure of India Energy Modelling Forum (IEMF).

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Pre-Connect

- India and the US have a long-standing collaboration on energy. The Sustainable Growth pillar is one of the four of the US-India Strategic Energy Partnership.
- This pillar brings together Indian and US researchers and decision-makers to collaborate in three focal areas: energy data management; energy modelling, and promotion of low carbon technologies. IEMF was launched under the area of energy modelling.
- India Energy Modelling Forum (IEMF) was jointly launched by NITI Aayog and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the US-India Strategic Energy Partnership.
- As a part of the Sustainable Growth pillar of the US-India Strategic Energy Partnership (SEP), IEMF aims to engage Indian researchers, knowledge partners, think tanks and national and international government agencies and departments for modelling and long-term energy planning.

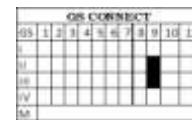
Highlights

- The governing structure of IEMF will consist of an inter-ministerial and a steering committee.
- The inter-ministerial committee will be convened by NITI Aayog and headed by its CEO, and comprise senior officials from the ministries of petroleum and natural gas; power; new and renewable energy; coal; environment, forest and climate change; and department of science and technology.
- This committee will review the studies/modelling activities and provide directions and new areas of research.
- This committee will shortlist policy issues to be taken up for study and might form various taskforces depending on the specific studies/modelling exercises to be carried out.
- The convener of this committee will be selected on a rotational basis for two years and will act as the interface between the inter-ministerial and steering committees and the working groups/taskforces.
- Prayas Group, Pune, will be the first convener of the steering committee.

Blue Flag certification

News Excerpt

Eight beaches in India have been awarded the coveted 'Blue Flag' certification by an eminent international jury, which comprises members of the UNEP, UNWTO, and IUCN.



Pre-Connect

- The 'Blue Flag' is a certification that can be obtained by a beach, marina, or sustainable boating tourism operator, and serves as an eco-label.
- The certification is awarded by the Denmark-based non-profit Foundation for Environmental Education, which sets stringent environmental, educational, safety-related and access-related criteria that applicants must meet and maintain.
- It is awarded annually.
- The Blue Flag programme was started in France in 1985 and in areas out of Europe in 2001.
- The programme promotes sustainable development in freshwater and marine areas through four main criteria: water quality, environmental management, environmental education and safety.
- Forty-seven countries currently participate in the program, and 4,573 beaches, marinas, and boats have this certification.

Highlights

- The beaches selected for the certification are: Kappad (Kerala), Shivrajpur (Gujarat), Ghoghla (Diu), Kasarkod and Padubidri (Karnataka), Rushikonda (Andhra Pradesh), Golden (Odisha) and Radhanagar (Andaman & Nicobar Islands).
- It is an outstanding feat considering that no 'Blue Flag' nation has ever been awarded for 8 beaches in a single attempt. This is also a global recognition of India's conservation and sustainable development effort.

Activities permitted in blue flag beaches

- ❖ Earlier this year, the Centre issued an Extraordinary Gazette Notification declaring a list of activities and facilities that would be permissible in the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) areas of certain beaches, which have been identified for obtaining the 'Blue Flag' certification.
- ❖ According to the notification issued in January, the following activities and facilities would be permitted in the CRZ of the beaches, including islands, subject to maintaining a minimum distance of 10 meters from the High Tide Line (HTL):
 - Portable toilet blocks, change rooms and shower panels;
 - Grey water treatment plant;
 - Solid waste management plant;
 - Solar power plant;
 - Purified drinking water facility;
 - Beach access pathways;
 - Landscaping lighting;
 - Seating benches and sit-out umbrellas;
 - Outdoor play / fitness equipment;
 - CCTV surveillance and control room;
 - First aid station;
 - Cloak room facility;
 - Safety watch towers and beach safety equipment;
 - Beach layout, environment information boards and other signages;
 - Fencing, preferably vegetative;
 - Parking facilities;
 - Entry gate, tourist facilitation centre

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

National Supercomputing Mission

News Excerpt

The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) has launched the second phase of the ambitious National Supercomputing Mission (NSM).

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Pre-Connect

- Launched in 2015 and jointly funded by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), the seven-year mission aims at establishing supercomputer facilities across 70 national research and academic institutions and connecting them onto a National Knowledge Network (NKN).
- The aim is to create a cluster of geographically-distributed high-performance computing centres linked over a high-speed network, connecting various academic and research institutions across India.

Highlights

- The first phase involved deployment of supercomputers which have 60% Indian components. At the end of the first phase of this mission, supercomputers have been deployed at IIT-BHU (Varanasi), Indian Institute of Science, Education and Research (Pune), IIT-Kharagpur and Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (Bengaluru). The maiden phase also saw efforts to create an ecosystem for assembly of system components within the country.
- The second phase machines are intended to have an Indian designed processor, with a completion date of April 2021. All system deployments that were part of phase one have been completed and deployments planned in the second phase will be taken up soon.
- The third and final phase intends to deploy fully indigenous supercomputers, with an aimed speed of 45 petaFLOPS within the NKN. C-DAC has already initiated activities of design and manufacture planned in the third phase.

Major Feats so far

- National Supercomputing Mission's first indigenously build supercomputer 'Param Shivay' was installed at Indian Institute of Technology, BHU, Varanasi.
- It was followed by installation of supercomputers Param Shakti and Param Brahma at IIT-Kharagpur and IISER, Pune, respectively.
- Also for the first time, India has developed an indigenous server (Rudra), which can meet the HPC requirements of all governments and PSUs, along with the full software stack developed by C-DAC.

Benefits of NSM

- Many of the institutions across India like IITs in Kharagpur, Madras, Goa and Palakkad will soon house the National Centre for Human Resource Development. At these centres, skilling and training facilities will be provided to the user communities aimed at familiarising themselves with next-generation technology, high-performance computing and artificial intelligence.
- Apart from academia and research institutions, open access of supercomputing facilities will be extended even to industries and start-ups.
- Sectors like health, climate modelling, oil explorations, etc. will enjoy benefits of supercomputers, which will in turn contribute towards the socio-economic upliftment of the nation.
- Employment generation for skilled work force: Under NSM, the long-term plan is to build a strong base of 20,000 skilled persons over the next five years who will be equipped to handle the complexities of supercomputers.

PEPPER IT WITH

Digital India, Make in India, Param Shivay, Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Summit supercomputer.

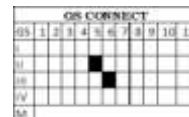
Conclusion

Given the current pace at which things are moving forward, experts suggest that we may soon have motherboards and sub-systems manufactured in India, making supercomputers indigenously designed and manufactured. The National Super Computing Mission (NSM) is rapidly boosting high power computing in the country through its various phases to meet the increasing computational demands of academia, researchers, MSMEs and startups in areas like oil exploration, flood prediction, genomics and drug discovery.

TRP and Issues Related With it

News Excerpt

Mumbai Police are looking into a scam about manipulation of TRPs (Television Rating Points) by rigging the devices used by the Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) India, which has the mandate to measure television audience in India.



Pre-Connect

- Recently Mumbai Police said that it busted a TRP scam (Television Rating Point) alleging TV news channels of paying viewers to manipulate viewership ratings.
- Parliament's panel on information technology also took up media ethics and flagged that Television Rating Points (TRPs) are "easily manipulated" amid allegations of a scam involving certain news channels.

What is TRP?

TRPs represent how many people, from which socio-economic categories, watched which channels for how much time during a particular period. This could be for an hour, a day, or even a week; India follows the international standard of one minute. The data is usually made public every week.

The TRP or Target Rating Point is the metric used by the marketing and advertising agencies to evaluate this viewership.

FICCI-EY report on India's media and entertainment industry 2019

- ❖ Size of the TV industry was Rs 78,700 crore in 2019.
- ❖ TRPs are the main currency for advertisers to decide which channel to advertise on by calculating the cost-per-rating-point (CPRP).

How is TRP calculated?

- In India, the TRP is recorded by the Broadcast Audience Research Council using Bar-O-Meters that are installed in televisions in selected households. BARC has installed "BAR-O-meters" in over 45,000 empaneled households.
- While watching a show, members of the household register their presence by pressing their viewer ID button, thus capturing the duration for which the channel was watched and by whom, and providing data on viewership habits across age and socio-economic groups.
- The panel chosen to capture TRPs must be representative of the country's population, and the methodology must be economically viable for the industry.

How are the households selected?

- ✓ Selection of households where Bar-O-Meters are installed is a two-stage process. The first step is the Establishment Survey, a large-scale face-to-face survey of a sample of approximately 3 lakh households from the target population. This is done annually. Out of these, the households which will have Bar-O-Meters or what the BARC calls the Recruitment Sample are randomly selected.
- ✓ The fieldwork to recruit households is not done directly by BARC. The viewing behavior of panel homes is reported to BARC India daily.

How can TRP data be rigged?

- If broadcasters can find the households where devices are installed, they can either bribe them to watch their channels, or ask cable operators or multi-system operators to ensure their channel is available as the "landing page" when the TV is switched on.
- For TRPs, it does not matter what the entire country is watching, but essentially what the 45,000-odd households supposed to represent TV viewership of the country have watched. Broadcasters can target these households to fudge actual viewership data.

What BARC does to avoid TRP rigging?

- ✚ Coincidental checks either physically or telephonically are done regularly. Certain suspicious outliers are also checked directly by BARC India. BARC India also involves a separate vigilance agency to check on outliers that it considers highly suspicious.
- ✚ BARC hires multiple agencies for certain field jobs like going to panel households so that no single agency has the entire map of panel households across the country.
- ✚ As per the guidelines of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, these households rotate every year. This rotation is in such a manner that older panel homes are removed first while maintaining the representativeness of the panel. The rotation is conducted in a staggered manner by rotating panel homes every month.
- ✚ The Ministry guidelines further say that the secrecy and privacy of the panel homes must be maintained, and asked the BARC to follow a voluntary code of conduct.

Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC)

- ❖ It is an industry body jointly owned by advertisers, ad agencies, and broadcasting companies, represented by The Indian Society of Advertisers, the Indian Broadcasting Foundation and the Advertising Agencies Association of India.
- ❖ Though it was created in 2010, the I&B Ministry notified the Policy Guidelines for Television Rating Agencies in India on January 10, 2014 and registered BARC in July 2015 under these guidelines, to carry out television ratings in India.

How does panel tampering affect TRPs?

- ◇ Panel infiltration has a significant impact when the panel size is smaller and with the increase in panel size, infiltration of panel homes becomes challenging.
- ◇ For instance, take the example of English TV news, which has a small share of the national viewership pie at around 1.5%, which means that for around 45,000 panel households, around 700 households will contribute to the viewership. If the sample is around 700, not all of them are watching English TV news every day. Actual watching will be around 350 homes. In such a scenario, if one manages to rig 10 among the heavy viewing homes, then that person can swing the needle big time.
- ◇ When the sample is smaller, “manipulation becomes easier”. In a genre like English news, because fewer homes will have larger weightage, change in behaviour of one home gets amplified at a much larger scale nationwide.
- ◇ Additionally, as each channel tries to project itself as a market leader in a particular segment, it slices the data into socio-economic brackets on the basis of NCCS, age, gender, time slots (primetime) etc. to find the perfect data slice. This too increases relative error in the data, because of the small sample size.

What more needs to be done?

- ▽ Media should work out a way to ensure how its freedom is ensured.
- ▽ As per several reports, about 70% of the revenue for television channels comes from advertising and only 30% from subscription. Many channels have argued that the subscription rates, which are controlled by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), should be raised so that TV channels are not forced to serve the lowest common denominator.
- ▽ The government should begin with two small but extremely urgent pieces of legislation. One could declare ‘rigging’ of TRPs a criminal offence, thus filling in a critical gap, and the other could control venomous hate programs on television.

PEPPER IT WITH

Policy Guidelines for Television Rating Agencies in India, I&B Ministry, The Indian Society of Advertisers, Parliamentary committee on Information Technology (IT), TRAI

Way forward

Once the police cases in Mumbai and the due process of law establish the truth about ‘bribed ratings’, BARC would need to amend its processes and also expand its sampling base to re-instill public confidence. An improved rating system is surely better than no ratings at all or any subjective assessment. In fact, if the present public disgust and industry’s apprehensions lead to these options, the well-organized manipulators of public opinion would simply slaughter the more vulnerable liberal media.

Water on Moon

News Excerpt

NASA's Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA) has confirmed, for the first time, water on the sunlit surface of the Moon. This discovery indicates that water may be distributed across the lunar surface, and not limited to cold, shadowed places.

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Pre-Connect

- The Moon has water at places where none had been detected before, and has potentially more water than previously believed in regions where it was already understood to exist.
- Previous Moon studies, including by the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) Chandrayaan-1 mission, have provided evidence for the existence of water.
- However, what was not established in such studies — based on observations by the Chandrayaan-1 mission, NASA's Cassini and Deep Impact comet mission, and NASA's ground-based Infrared Telescope Facility — was whether the detected molecules were water as we know it (H₂O) or in the form of hydroxyl (OH).
- In two separate studies in Nature Astronomy, scientists have reported findings with potentially huge implications for sustaining humans on the Moon in the future. One study reports the detection of water on the Moon's sunlit surface for the first time. The other estimates that the Moon's dark, shadowy regions, which potentially contain ice, are more widespread than thought.

SOFIA - The Flying Observatory

- ❖ SOFIA, the Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy, is a Boeing 747SP aircraft modified to carry a 2.7-meter (106-inch) reflecting telescope.
- ❖ Flying into the stratosphere at 38,000-45,000 feet puts SOFIA above 99 percent of Earth's infrared-blocking atmosphere, allowing astronomers to study the solar system and beyond in ways that are not possible with ground-based telescopes.
- ❖ SOFIA is made possible through a partnership between NASA and the German Aerospace Center (DLR).

Analytica

Significance of discovery of water

- It acts as the most significant marker of potential life on the moon.
- For astronauts landing on the Moon, water is necessary not only to sustain life but also for purposes such as generating rocket fuel. If space explorers can use the Moon's resources, it means they need to carry less water from Earth.

How is the new discovery different?

- ✓ This time, it is confirmed H₂O molecules, discovered in Clavius Crater in the Moon's southern hemisphere. And it is the first-time water has been detected on the sunlit side, showing it is not restricted to the shadowy regions.
- ✓ The data from SOFIA showed water in concentrations of 100-412 parts per million trapped in 1 cubic metre of soil.

Possible explanations for formation of water on moon

- One possibility can be that space rocks carrying small amounts of water could have bombarded the Moon.
- Alternatively, the Sun's solar wind could have carried hydrogen, which then reacted with minerals in the lunar soil to create hydroxyl, which later transformed into water.
- The sunlit surface retaining the water presents a puzzle, since the Moon does not have a thick atmosphere. One possibility is that the water gets trapped into tiny bead-like structures that were created in the soil by impacts from space rocks. Alternatively, the water could be hidden between grains of lunar soil and sheltered from the sunlight.

PEPPER IT WITH

ISRO, Chandrayaan-1 mission, NASA's Artemis programme, NASA's Cassini, Deep Impact comet mission, Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter, Volatiles Investigating Polar Exploration Rover (VIPER)

Way Forward

SOFIA will look for water in additional sunlit locations to learn more about how the water is produced, stored, and moved across the Moon. Meanwhile, NASA's Volatiles Investigating Polar Exploration Rover (VIPER) will carry out a mission to create the first water resource maps of the Moon.

OSIRIS Rex

News Excerpt

NASA in October reported that its robotic spacecraft OSIRIS-REx had succeeded in collecting a large amount of sample of particles from the Bennu asteroid, but so much that it was leaking.

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Highlights

What led to the leak?

- The spacecraft's robotic arm, also called the Touch-And-Go Sample Acquisition Mechanism or Tagsam, penetrated deeply into the surface of the asteroid with such force that several large rocks were wedged around the rim of the spacecraft's collector container's lid.
- As a result, particles started spilling over and escaping into space.
- The mission was required to collect a minimum of 2 ounces, or 60 grams, of rocks and dust from the asteroid's surface. But researchers believe that the arm captured at least 400 grams of material.

How was the mission saved?

- To minimize the amount lost, the OSIRIS-REx team decided to expedite the precise and complex stowing procedure.
- Over the course of 36 hours, engineers directed OSIRIS-REx to deposit the sampling head, which sat at the end of the probe's robotic arm, into the return capsule; tug on the head to make sure it was secured properly; sever connections with the robotic arm; and lock up the return capsule via the locking of two latches.
- This was all done while OSIRIS-REx was about 205 million miles Earth, meaning it took 18.5 minutes for each command to reach OSIRIS-REx, and another 18.5 minutes for each update from the probe to come back down to Earth.

Significance of the sample collection

- ✓ Since large amount of material has been captured, it would allow lots of research groups to study the Bennu dirt and rock, and to perform a **wide variety of experiments** with the pristine cosmic sample. For example, experiments in organic chemistry specifically, analyses involving sugars.
- ✓ Such experiments will reveal a great deal about the **solar system's early days**.
- ✓ With the help of the data collected from orbit, the NASA team has determined two key discoveries: first, that **between 5 and 10 percent of Bennu's mass is water**, and second, that **its surface is littered with carbon-rich molecules**. Atomic-level analysis of samples from Bennu could help scientists better understand what **role asteroids played in bringing water to the Earth** and seeding it with the prebiotic material that provided the building blocks for life.

OSIRIS-Rex

- ❖ In 2016, NASA launched the OSIRIS-REx — Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security, Regolith Explorer — mission to collect samples of pebbles and dust from the surface of the ancient asteroid for the first time in history.
- ❖ The spacecraft contains five instruments meant to explore Bennu including cameras, a spectrometer and a laser altimeter.

Asteroid Bennu

- ❖ Asteroid Bennu was first discovered by a team from the NASA in 1999.
- ❖ Located around 200 million miles away from Earth, asteroid Bennu is around the size of the Empire State Building in New York.
- ❖ Significantly, Bennu hasn't undergone drastic changes since its formation over billions of years ago and, therefore, it contains chemicals and rocks dating back to the birth of the solar system. It is also relatively close to the Earth.

- ✓ Studying that material could also help scientists discover whether life exists elsewhere in the solar system, as well.

Way Forward

Asteroids are like time capsules floating in space that can provide a fossil record of the birth of our solar system. They can provide valuable information about how planets, like our own, came to be.

International Barcode of life

News Excerpt

Recently, Cabinet approved Memorandum of Understanding between Zoological Survey of India and International Barcode of Life.

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Highlights

- ZSI and iBOL have come together for further efforts in DNA barcoding, a methodology for rapidly and accurately identifying species by sequencing a short segment of standardized gene regions and comparing individual sequences to a reference database.
- The MoU will enable ZSI to participate at the Global level programmes like Bioscan and Planetary Biodiversity Mission.

Analytica

Bioscan-The Bioscan is a new testing procedure scanning the body's organs and functions for imbalances giving an objective and accurate report (ie: Wheat, mould, pollens, chemicals, toxins etc) which ensures optimum wellness.

Planetary Biodiversity Mission: The Planetary Biodiversity Mission (PBM) seeks to establish DNA barcoding as a global mega-science project with the goal of sequencing all species on Earth before they are lost. This initiative requires strong international collaboration as it is estimated that there are from 10-20M multicellular species.

International Barcode of life

Established in 2008, the International Barcode of Life Consortium (iBOL) is a research alliance of nations with the desire to transform biodiversity science by building the DNA barcode reference libraries, the sequencing facilities, the informatics platforms, the analytical protocols, and the international collaboration required to inventory and assess biodiversity.

Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network

News Excerpt

A national expert group on COVID-19 vaccine has been constituted to guide the government on prioritisation of population groups for vaccination, selection of vaccine candidates, delivery mechanism of the vaccine, cold chain and associated infrastructure for roll-out of COVID-19 vaccination. The expert group is looking at the enhancement of digital e-VIN platform; the enhancement is adding the module on beneficiary tracking.

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Pre-Connect

- Currently, under the Universal Immunisation Program (UIP), vaccine distribution is based on Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN) system.
- The Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN) system, which provides real-time information on vaccine stocks and storage temperatures across all cold chain points in the country, is being enhanced to address the needs for distribution and tracking of COVID-19 vaccine.
- The vaccine is distributed to health facilities and outreach station sites, so as to reach all areas. The eVIN system is regularly monitored by health authorities at State and district level.

Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (e-VIN)

- ❖ It is an innovative technological solution aimed at strengthening immunization supply chain systems across the country.
- ❖ This is being implemented under National Health Mission (NHM) by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Analytica

How can an enhanced e-VIN help in an efficient vaccine delivery system?

- A decision by the national expert group, has been taken to add a key feature to the eVIN (Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network) — an indigenously developed technology that tracks vaccine stocks digitally — that will track the beneficiary, the person who will be vaccinated.
- The expert group is looking at the enhancement of digital e-VIN platform; the enhancement is adding the module on beneficiary tracking. This feature is presently not there in the existing platform; at present, the platform has procurement, storage in 28,000 odd cold chain storage facilities, tracking their temperature, and going ahead, tracking their movement from storage point to the health facility or sub facility.
- Since the vaccination drive will be conducted in different phases and will also include multiple doses, the electronic platform is being developed where vaccination sessions can be scheduled.
- Accordingly, the platform will inform the beneficiaries, in advance, about the date, time, and location of the vaccination centre.
- This electronic platform enables one to schedule vaccination sessions; once a session is scheduled, then the system generates an SMS that is delivered to the beneficiary. It will have details of date, time and venue when he or she will be vaccinated.
- Once the person is vaccinated, and if there is no adverse event following the vaccination, a QR-based digital certificate will be generated, again automatically by the system.
- The government will also be integrating the flagship initiative of the Ministry of Electronics & IT – DigiLocker, whereby beneficiaries will have an option to store digital certificates.
- There will be an option with the individual to store the QR-based digital certificate of vaccination in a DigiLocker. This platform will provide access to authentic documents and enable the government to verify the data directly from beneficiaries after obtaining user consent.

PEPPER IT WITH

National Health Mission (NHM), Universal Immunization Programme, COVID-19 vaccine, VALUE (Vaccine and Logistics Utilisation Evaluator)

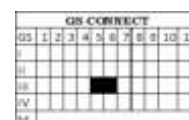
Way Forward

The Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN) system can prove to be a powerful tool to strengthen the health systems along with ensuring equity through easy and timely availability of vaccines particularly to the vulnerable sections of the society. This strong platform has the potential to be leveraged for any new vaccine including COVID-19 vaccine, as and when available.

Gyan Circle Ventures

News Excerpt

Union Minister for Education virtually inaugurated the Gyan Circle Ventures, a MeitY funded Technology Business Incubator (TBI) of Indian Institute of Information Technology, Sri City (Chittoor), Andhra Pradesh.



Highlights

- Its primary aim is to promote deep-tech entrepreneurship through financial and technical support to incubators engaged in using emerging technologies such as IoT, AI, Block-chain, Robotics etc. in areas including manufacturing, education, Smart Cities, etc.
- The Business Incubator is one of the strategic priorities of the institute to promote innovation and entrepreneurship in the region, in several areas including but not limited to, Infrastructure Development and Smart Manufacturing.
- The primary purpose of the incubator, associated with the esteemed IIIT Sri City, is to encourage building the institutions' entrepreneurial spirit via utilizing its intellectual capital.
- Gyan Circle Ventures invites participation from potential entrepreneurs and startups that are building cutting edge technology solutions to real world problems.

- Gyan Circle Ventures will serve as a hub for innovation and startups leading to development of new technologies and business opportunities as well as enable economic and social development in the region.

Room-Temperature Superconductor

News Excerpt

Scientists have reported the discovery of the first room-temperature superconductor, after more than a century of waiting.

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Pre-Connect

- Superconductors transmit electricity without resistance, allowing current to flow without any energy loss. But all superconductors previously discovered must be cooled, many of them to very low temperatures, making them impractical for most uses.
- Now, scientists have found the first superconductor that operates at room temperature — at least given a fairly chilly room.

Analytica

How was the room temperature superconductivity achieved?

- Scientists formed the superconductor by squeezing carbon, hydrogen and sulfur between the tips of two diamonds and hitting the material with laser light to induce chemical reactions. At a pressure about 2.6 million times that of Earth's atmosphere, and temperatures below about 15° C, the electrical resistance vanished.
- To confirm the achievement, they studied additional samples of the material and investigated its magnetic properties. Superconductors and magnetic fields are known to clash — strong magnetic fields inhibit superconductivity. When the material was placed in a magnetic field, lower temperatures were needed to make it superconducting. The team also applied an oscillating magnetic field to the material, and showed that, when the material became a superconductor, it expelled that magnetic field from its interior, another sign of superconductivity.



Significance of the discovery

- ✓ This is the first time we can really claim that room-temperature superconductivity has been found.
- ✓ Futuristic technologies that could reshape electronics and transportation are now a step closer to achieve with this discovery.

Limitations

- The new material's superconducting superpowers appear only at extremely high pressures, limiting its practical usefulness.
- The scientists were not able to determine the exact composition of the material or how its atoms are arranged, making it difficult to explain how it can be superconducting at such relatively high temperatures.

Superconductor

- ❖ A superconductor is a substance that conducts electricity without resistance when it becomes colder than a "critical temperature." At this temperature, electrons can move freely through the material.
- ❖ Superconductors are different from ordinary conductors, even very good ones. Ordinary conductors lose their resistance slowly as they get colder.
- ❖ Superconductivity was first discovered in 1911 by Dutch physicist Heike Kamerlingh Onnes in a mercury wire chilled to 4.2° above absolute zero, or 4.2 K.

Way Forward

- ✚ If a room-temperature superconductor could be used at atmospheric pressure, it could save vast amounts of energy lost to resistance in the electrical grid. And it could improve current technologies, from MRI machines to quantum computers to magnetically levitated trains.
- ✚ But so far scientists have created only tiny specks of the material at high pressure, so practical applications are still a long way off.
- ✚ Physicists now have a new aim: to create a room-temperature superconductor that works without putting on the squeeze. That's the next big step we have to do.

Holographic Imaging

News Excerpt

Recently, scientists have developed a method using holographic imaging to detect both viruses and antibodies.

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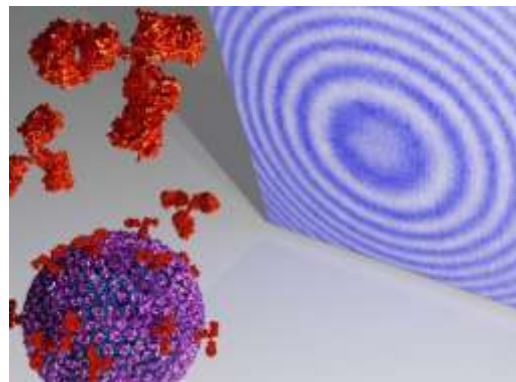
Pre-Connect

- In simple terms, a hologram technology is a three-dimensional projection which can be seen without using any special equipment such as cameras or glasses. The image can be viewed from any angle, so as the user walks around the display the object will appear to move and shift realistically.
- Holographic images can be static, such as a picture of a product, or they may be animated sequences which can be watched by multiple people from any viewpoint.
- Recently in the journal *Soft Matter*, Scientists have described how they can use holographic imaging to detect both viruses and antibodies.

Analytica

How does holographic imaging detect viruses and antibodies?

- The method uses laser beams to record holograms of their test beads.
- The surfaces of the beads are activated with biochemical binding sites that attract either antibodies or virus particles, depending on the intended test.
- Binding antibodies or viruses causes the beads to grow by a few billionth parts of a metre.
- Researchers can detect this growth through changes in the beads' holograms.
- This instrument can count virus particles dispersed in patients' saliva and also detect and differentiate antibodies dissolved in their blood.



Significance of this method

- ✓ If fully realised, this proposed test could be done in under 30 minutes, hence its time saving. The test can analyse a dozen beads per second. This can mean cutting the time for a reliable thousand-bead diagnostic test to 20 minutes.
- ✓ It is highly accurate, and can be performed by minimally trained personnel.
- ✓ The breakthrough has the potential to aid in medical diagnoses and, specifically, those related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ✓ This capability can be used to develop libraries of test beads that may be combined into test kits for mixing with patient samples. This will support doctors in distinguishing among possible diagnoses, speeding patients' treatment, reducing the risk of misdiagnosis, and cutting the cost of healthcare.

Limitations of holography in general

- The current limitations of holography are fairly significant. Holography requires relatively complicated methods to record holographic images, making them costly and less accessible.
- Further, displaying holographic images requires elaborate machinery. Currently, holographic display technology lies far behind commercially available 2D and 3D displays.
- The most advanced volumetric displays currently have very poor spatial resolution, and can display images at only about two frames per second.

CSIR Study on Indian Genetic Sequence

News Excerpt

Recently, a study by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has found that thirty-two percent genetic variants are unique in Indian sequences as compared to global genomes.

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Pre-Connect

- A genome is an organism's complete set of DNA, including all its genes. It contains all the information needed to build and maintain that organism. By sequencing the genome, researchers can discover the functions of genes and identify which of them are critical for life.
- The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) plans to scan nearly 20,000 Indian genomes over the next five years, in a two-phase exercise. Investigators in hospitals will lead the data collection through a simple blood test from participants and the information will be added to bio banks.

Analytica

What is it all about?

- An extensive computation analysis of the 1,029 sequenced genomes from India was carried out. The analysis led to the identification of 55,898,122 single nucleotide (an organic molecule that is the building block of DNA and RNA) variants in the India genome data set.
- Comparisons with the global genome data sets revealed that 32.23 per cent variants were unique and found only in the samples sequenced from India.

Significance of the CSIR analysis

- ✓ It emphasises the need for an India-centric population genomic initiative.
- ✓ India is the second largest country in terms of population density with more than 1.3 billion individuals encompassing 17 per cent of the world population. Despite having this rich genetic diversity, India has been under-represented in global genome studies.
- ✓ Further, the population architecture of India has resulted in high prevalence of recessive alleles.

Genome India Project

- ✓ It is being spearheaded by the Centre for Brain Research at Bengaluru-based Indian Institute of Science as the nodal point of about 20 institutions.
- ✓ Its aim is to ultimately build a grid of the Indian "reference genome", to understand fully the type and nature of diseases and traits that comprise the diverse Indian population.
- ✓ The mega project hopes to form a grid after collecting 10,000 samples in the first phase from across India, to arrive at a representative Indian genome.
- ✓ This has been found necessary as over 95% of the genome samples available, which are the basis of new, cutting-edge research in medicine and pharmacology, use the white, Caucasian genome as the base.
- ✓ Most genomes have been sourced from urban middle-class persons and are not really seen as representative.
- ✓ The Indian project will aim to vastly add to the available information on the human species and advance the cause, both because of the scale of the Indian population and the diversity here.

IndiGen Programme

- ❖ IndiGen programme aims to undertake whole genome sequencing of a thousand Indian individuals representing diverse ethnic groups from India.
- ❖ The objective is to create a pilot dataset to enable genetic epidemiology of carrier genetic diseases towards enabling affordable carrier screening approaches in India.
- ❖ It also aims to mine allele frequencies for genetic variants for estimating population scale prevalence for diverse clinical applications.
- ❖ The human genome data sets would also be utilized for prioritizing Pharmacogenomics variants specific for Indian population for optimizing therapy and minimizing adverse events.
- ❖ IndiGen is funded by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) India

- ✓ In the absence of large-scale whole genome studies from India, these population-specific genetic variants are not adequately captured and catalogued in global medical literature.
- ✓ In order to fill the gap of whole genome sequences from different populations in India, the CSIR initiated the IndiGen Program in April 2019.
- ✓ Under this programme, the whole genome sequencing of 1,029 self-declared healthy Indians drawn from across the country has been completed. This has enabled benchmarking the scalability of genome sequencing at population scale in a defined timeline.
- ✓ The current IndiGenomes data resource provides a compendium of genetic variants representing the contemporary Indian population with an objective to classify variants involved in mendelian disorders and improve precision medicine outcomes.
- ✓ The resource can also enable the identification of markers for carrier screening, variations causing genetic diseases, prevention of adverse events and provide better diagnosis and optimal therapy through mining data of clinically actionable pharmacogenetic variants.
- ✓ This resource can provide useful insights for clinicians and researchers in comprehending genetics not only at the population level but also at the individual level.

Way Forward

- Across the world, predictive diagnosis and precision medicine based on the genetic makeup of patients are emerging fields in the treatment of diseases such as cancer and other genetic disorders.
- Initiatives such as Genome India Project, IndiGenProgram reflect India's progress in gene therapies and precision medicine, and its movement towards emerging next-generation medicine which yields the possibilities for greater customization, safety, and earlier detection. These initiatives would help lay the foundation of personalized healthcare for a very large group of persons on the planet.

PEPPER IT WITH

Earth BioGenome Project, Draft Biological Data Storage, Access and Sharing Policy of India, Genome Editing, Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), Genomic Medicine

Biofortification

Issue

Over two billion people worldwide suffer from micronutrient deficiencies due to insufficient intake of vitamins and minerals. Poor sections of the population in developing countries are particularly hard hit because they often eat staple foods that are high in calories but low in micronutrients. Many researchers have concluded that Biofortified crops may be a long-term solution to global micronutrient deficiencies.

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Pre-Connect

- Modern plant breeding has been historically oriented towards achieving high agronomic yields rather than nutritional quality, and other efforts related to alleviating the problem have been primarily through industrial fortification or pharmaceutical supplementation.
- Micronutrient malnutrition or the hidden hunger is very common among women and preschool children caused mainly by low dietary intake of micronutrients, especially Zn and Fe.
- Biofortification, the process of increasing the bioavailable concentrations of essential elements in edible portions of crop plants through agronomic intervention or genetic selection, may be the solution to malnutrition or hidden hunger mitigation.

Analytica

What is Biofortification

- Biofortification is the process by which the nutritional quality of food crops is improved through agronomic practices, conventional plant breeding, or modern biotechnology.
- Biofortification differs from conventional fortification in that biofortification aims to increase nutrient levels in crops during plant growth rather than through manual means during processing of the crops.
- Biofortification may therefore present a way to reach populations where supplementation and conventional fortification activities may be difficult to implement and/or limited.

- Examples of biofortification projects include:
 - iron-biofortification of rice, beans, sweet potato, cassava and legumes;
 - zinc-biofortification of wheat, rice, beans, sweet potato and maize;
 - provitamin A carotenoid-biofortification of sweet potato, maize and cassava; and
 - amino acid and protein-biofortification of sorghum and cassava.
- As staple foods are comparatively cheap and accessible to the majority of people, the biofortification of staple crops is a primary target.

Fortification

It is the practice of deliberately increasing the content of an essential micronutrient, i.e. vitamins and minerals (including trace elements) in a food, so as to improve the nutritional quality of the food supply and provide a public health benefit with minimal risk to health.

Significance of Biofortification

- ✓ As biofortification is very cost-effective and easy to disseminate to the masses, its importance is greater for developing countries.
- ✓ Biofortification could provide a range of certain micronutrients for people who don't have access to other interventions.
- ✓ It can help reduce the micronutrient intake gap and increase the daily intake of vitamins and minerals throughout a person's life, and this may have significant impact on human health by reducing malnutrition.
- ✓ For instance, biofortification of orange sweet potato for vitamin A has significantly improved vitamin A intake of mothers and young children.
- ✓ A study conducted on 246 children of 12-16 yr of age in Maharashtra, by feeding them with 'bhakri' (round flat unleavened bread) made from iron-rich and conventional pearl millet grains, demonstrated that feeding iron-rich pearl millet was an efficient approach to improve iron status in school-age children.
- ✓ The development and promotion of biofortified varieties thus would be helpful in addressing malnutrition and achieving the SDGs.

PEPPER IT WITH

National Food Security Mission, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna, 'Mid-day meal scheme, Integrated Child Development Services scheme, National Nutrition Strategy by NITI Aayog, SDGs, agronomics.

Challenges for Biofortification in India

- The impact, scalability and sustainability of biofortification depends on whether or not (i) conventional crop breeding can increase nutrient levels without compromising yield; (ii) extra nutrients in crops can measurably improve micronutrient status; (iii) farmers are willing to grow biofortified crops and consumers are willing to eat them, and also on its (iv) cost-effectiveness.
- Lack of awareness on the health benefits of biofortified crops is one of the major factors for slow adoption of biofortified varieties.

Measures taken by the Government in India

- ✚ National Nutrition Strategy by NITI Aayog, Government of India envisages alleviation of malnutrition in the country through food-based solution.
- ✚ Inclusion of these biofortified cereals in different government sponsored programmes such as National Food Security Mission, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna as well as nutrition intervention programme such as Integrated Child Development Services scheme, 'Mid-day meal' and Nutrition Education and Training through Community Food and Nutrition Extension Units would help in providing the much needed balanced food to poor people.
- ✚ The central government has recently declared millets (sorghum, pearl millet, foxtail millet, finger millet, kodo millet, proso millet, little millet and barnyard millet) besides two pseudo millets (buckwheat and amaranthus) which have high nutritive value as 'Nutri Cereals'.
- ✚ The inclusion of biofortified products in these government-sponsored schemes would especially benefit the children, pregnant women and elderly people, and would help in their quick dissemination.

Way Forward

- ◇ Strengthening the seed chain to produce and supply good quality seeds is an important step for the popularization of biofortified varieties of different crops. Providing subsidized seeds and other inputs would further contribute to the rapid dissemination of nutritionally improved cultivars among the farmers.
- ◇ Assurance of remunerative price through minimum support price and/or premium price for biofortified grains in the market will also encourage the farmers to grow more biofortified crops.
- ◇ The government should facilitate public-private partnerships in the sector. Private sector engagement can leverage technological solutions for scaling up food fortification initiatives, and complement the government's outreach efforts through mass awareness and education campaigns in communities.



SECURITY

INS Kavaratti

News Excerpt

INS Kavaratti was formally inducted into the Indian Navy at the Naval Dockyard in Eastern Naval Command.

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Pre-Connect

- The ship is the reincarnation of the erstwhile Arnala Class missile corvette of the same name: INS Kavaratti – P 80.
- INS Kavaratti – P 80 ship that outlived her life span and played a stellar role in the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971.

Highlights

- INS Kavaratti is the last of the four indigenously built Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) stealth corvettes built under Project 28, Kamorta class, by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata,
- The ship named after the capital of the Lakshadweep group of islands, has been constructed using high-grade DMR 249A steel produced in India
- The ship spans 109 meters in length, 14 meters in breadth with a displacement of 3300 tonnes and is regarded as one of the most potent Anti-Submarine Warships to have been constructed in India.
- With the superstructure built using composite material, the ship is propelled by four diesel engines.

Analytica

- ✓ The ship has up to 90% indigenous content and the use of carbon composites for the superstructure is a commendable feat achieved in Indian shipbuilding.
- ✓ The ship has enhanced stealth features resulting in reduced Radar Cross Section RCS achieved by X form of superstructure along with optimally sloped surfaces.
- ✓ The ship's advanced stealth features make her less susceptible to detection by the enemy.
- ✓ Experts say that the induction of the ASW corvettes will be a game changer in the eastern seaboard, especially with the Chinese submarines trying to make sorties in the Indian Ocean.

Human Cost of Disaster Report

News Excerpt

Climate change is largely to blame for a near doubling of natural disasters in the last 20 years, the United Nations said in its report entitled ***"The Human Cost of Disasters 2000-2019"***.

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Pre-Connect

- The Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, which compiled and analyzed this data for the UNDRR, classifies natural disasters into four broad categories:
 - "geophysical" events, such as earthquakes and volcanic activity;
 - "hydrological" hazards, like floods, landslides and tsunamis;
 - "meteorological" disasters, notably storms and extreme temperatures; and
 - "climatological" events, such as droughts and wildfires
- The report does not consider disasters that are biological in origin, such as epidemics or insect infestations, or that have an extraterrestrial source, such as extreme solar flares or a collision with a near-earth object.
- The report defines disasters as natural events that kill at least 10 people, affect at least 100, lead to a declared state of emergency or involve pleas for international assistance.

Highlights

- According to the U.N.'s Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, known as UNDRR, the number of natural disasters was 75 percent higher between 2000 and 2019 than in the previous 20 years.
- 7,348 major disaster events had occurred between 2000 and 2019, claiming 1.23 lives, affecting 4.2 billion people and costing the global economy some \$2.97 trillion.
- This figure far outstrips the 4,212 major natural disasters recorded between 1980 and 1999.
- The sharp increase was largely attributable to a rise in climate-related disasters, including extreme weather events like floods, drought and storm.
- The main culprit is global warming, as climate-related disasters have surged by 82 percent in the past two decades.
- Not all parts of the world are equally vulnerable. Geographically, the most disaster-prone countries over the past two decades have been China, with 577 natural disasters, the United States (467), India (321), the Philippines (304) and Indonesia (278).
- Asia is the most affected region when it comes to storms and flooding, whereas Africa, especially East Africa, has suffered 40 percent of all droughts worldwide.
- High-income countries bear the greatest economic brunt from natural disasters—67 percent of all losses—whereas low-income countries bear the greatest relative human toll—23 percent of all deaths, far exceeding their 10 percent share of the world's population.
- When it comes to wildfires, the United States is in a class by itself, accounting for more than a quarter of the world's total since 2000 and more than two-thirds of global economic damages.
- If there is a bright spot in recent trends, it is the absence of any global “mega-disaster” since 2010. During the century's first decade, the world suffered three extraordinary events: the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, Cyclone Nargis in 2008, and the earthquake in Haiti in 2010.

UNDRR and Sendai Framework

- ❖ In the absence of effective climate action, humanity must prepare for the worst, which is where the UNDRR comes in.
- ❖ Among the most obscure international agencies, it was established in 1999 and today supports implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- ❖ This voluntary, nonbinding agreement, adopted by U.N. member states in 2015, seeks to reduce human and economic losses from natural and man-made hazards by building resilience and managing risks, rather than just responding to individual disasters.
- ❖ While recognizing that sovereign states have the primary responsibility for disaster risk management, the Sendai Framework acknowledges the importance of international cooperation, including for technical assistance and early warning.
- ❖ It also points to the critical roles of local governments, civil society, the private sector and the scientific community in building resilient societies, including protecting critical infrastructure and ensuring continuity in basic services.

Way forward

The most obvious step the world can take to reduce the risk and toll of future natural disasters is to slash greenhouse gas emissions. In 2015, the parties to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change signed the Paris Agreement, committing themselves to hold the rise in average global temperatures from the preindustrial era to 1.5 degrees Celsius. To accomplish that goal, the world must collectively reduce its emissions by 7.2% per year through 2030. Yet we are nowhere near this objective

Conclusion

Disaster preparedness is hard, expensive, time-consuming and often thankless work. Failure to invest in it can be catastrophic, however, as the COVID-19 pandemic vividly attests. As the

DISASTER IMPACT 1980-1999 VS 2000-2019		
	1980-1999	2000-2019
Reported disasters	4,212	7,348
Total deaths	1.19 million	1.23 million
Total affected	3.25 billion	4.03 billion
Economic losses	\$1.6 trillion	\$3 trillion

world continues to warm at a dangerous rate, governments and societies confront the choice of mitigating and managing the growing risk of disasters before they strike, or cleaning up the wreckage afterwards.

Operation Meri Saheli

News Excerpt

Indian Railways has launched “Meri Saheli” initiative for focused action on security of women across all zones.

Pre-Connect

The “Meri Saheli” initiative was started as a pilot project in South Eastern Railway in September 2020 and after getting encouraging response from female passengers, it was extended to all zones and KRCL from 17 October.

Highlights

- It is launched with an objective to provide safety and security to lady passengers travelling by trains for their entire journey from starting station to destination station.
- An initiative of RPF, the Strategy of the entails interaction with lady passengers especially those travelling alone by a team of young lady RPF personnel at the originating station.
- These lady passengers are briefed about all precautions to be taken during the journey. They are told to dial 182 if they face or see any problem in the coach.
- The RPF team collects only the seat numbers of the ladies and conveys them to stoppages en-route.
- The platform duty RPF personnel at the stopping stations en-route keep unobtrusive watch over the concerned coaches and berths and if need arises, interact with the lady passengers.
- RPF teams at the destination collect the feedback from the identified women passengers. The feedback is then analysed and corrective action, if any, is taken.

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Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)

News Excerpt

India and U.S. have signed BECA, the last of four foundational agreements for strategic ties. BECA stands for Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation.

Pre-Connect

- The previous three agreements are:
 - The General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) signed in 2002.
 - The Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) signed in 2016.
 - The Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) in 2018.
- BECA will allow for expanded geospatial information sharing between the armed forces. It was not signed till now due to differences over the issue of reciprocity in the exchange of information.

Highlights

- BECA will help India get real-time access to American geospatial intelligence that will enhance the accuracy of automated systems and weapons like missiles and armed drones.
- Through the sharing of information on maps and satellite images, it will help India access topographical and aeronautical data, and advanced products that will aid in navigation and targeting.
- This could be key to Air Force-to-Air Force cooperation between India and the US.
- Just as our radio cab (or the GPS in our smartphone) helps us zero in on the path to your destination and helps us reach it quickly and efficiently, BECA will provide Indian military systems with a high-quality GPS to navigate missiles with real-time intelligence to precisely target the adversary.
- Besides the sailing of ships, flying of aircraft, fighting of wars, and location of targets, geospatial intelligence is also critical to the response to natural disasters.

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Analytica

- ✓ The strengthening of the mechanisms of cooperation between the two militaries must be seen in the context of an increasingly aggressive China, which threatens a large number of countries in its neighbourhood and beyond, and which has been challenging several established norms and aspects of international relations.
- ✓ Amid the ongoing standoff on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh — the longest and most serious in three decades — India and the US intensified under-the-radar intelligence and military cooperation at an unprecedented level, especially since June.
- ✓ It marks, above all, the enhancement of mutual trust and a commitment to the long-term strategic relationship. With these key defence pacts in place, cooperation between the US and India can take place in a more structured and efficient way, rather than in episodic burst.
- ✓ While LEMOA means one partner trusts the other enough to expose its valuable assets, COMCASA means one is confident that it can rely on encrypted systems to connect the two militaries. And the latest pact, BECA, means the countries can share highly classified information in real time without fear of being compromised.

LEMOA and COMCASA

- ❖ LEMOA, signed in 2016, allows the militaries of the US and India to replenish from each other's bases, and access supplies, spare parts and services from each other's land facilities, air bases, and ports, which can then be reimbursed.
- ❖ While India had indeed provided ad hoc logistics support to the US in the past — such as allowing the refuelling of American aircraft in Bombay during the first Gulf War in 1991, and letting US warships visit Indian ports during the war on terror after 9/11— the signing of LEMOA has institutionalised this process and made it smoother.
- ❖ COMCASA, signed in 2018, allows the US to provide India with its encrypted communications equipment and systems so that Indian and US military commanders, and the aircraft and ships of the two countries, can communicate through secure networks during times of both peace and war.
- ❖ The signing of COMCASA paved the way for the transfer of communication security equipment from the US to India to facilitate “interoperability” between their forces — and potentially with other militaries that use US-origin systems for secure data links.

FOUNDATIONAL AGREEMENTS		
Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide logistic support, refuelling & berthing facilities for each other's warships & aircraft on barter/equal-value exchange basis ➤ Will not involve stationing of US troops on Indian soil. Nor will India extend support if US goes to war with “a friendly country” ➤ Good for US forces re-balancing to Asia Pacific. Indian forces rarely operate far away from their shores but access to Djibouti & Diego Garcia could be useful 	Communication Interoperability & Security Memorandum Agreement (CISMOA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Technology enabler to help transfer high-tech avionics, encrypted communication & electronic systems to India ➤ US says CISMOA will boost 'interoperability' as well as ensure secrecy of its C4ISR (command, control, communications, computer, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) systems ➤ But fears that US will be able to track & snoop on Indian warships/aircraft equipped with such systems 	
Basic Exchange & Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation (BECA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ US says BECA will help India with advanced satellite & topographical data for long-range navigation & missile-targeting ➤ But India, which has its own satellite imaging capabilities, unwilling for American digital sensors to be positioned on its soil 		

Art & Culture

Indus Valley Civilization (Dairy Production)

News Excerpt

The year 2020 marks 100 years of discovery of Indus Valley Civilisation, and a new study has shown that dairy products were being produced by the Harappans as far back as 2500 BCE.

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Highlights

- This is the first time it's been proved scientifically that dairy production was in place in the Indus Valley Civilization in 2500 BCE, and the earliest known evidence of dairy production.
- The studies were carried out on 59 shards of pottery from KotadaBhadli, a small archeological site in present-day Indian state of Gujarat.
- The study used molecular analysis techniques to study the residues from ancient pottery.
- Pots are porous. So as, Harappans put any liquid form of food, it will be absorbed. Hence, the pot preserves the molecules of food such as fats and proteins. Using techniques like C16 and C18, we can trace the source of lipid.
- Through a process called stable isotope analysis, the researchers were also able to identify the type of ruminant used for dairy, and concluded that these were cattle, like cows and buffalo, rather than goats and sheep.

Analytica

- Most of the cattle died at an older age, suggesting they could have been raised for milk, whereas the majority of goat, sheep died when they were young, indicating they could have been used for meat.
- The Harappans did not use dairy for their household. The large herd indicates that milk was produced in surplus so that it could be exchanged and there could have been some kind of trade between settlements. This could have given rise to an industrial level of dairy exploitation.

Parampara Series

News Excerpt

The Vice President of India, M. Venkaiah Naidu launched the virtual festival of "Parampara Series 2020-National Festival of Music and Dance".

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Highlights

- Parampara' means 'tradition', the transmission of cultural treasure house from one generation to the next.
- The 24th national festival of music and dance has gone online.
- For the last 23 years, this festival – held by Delhi-based NatyaTarangini of Kuchipudi dancers Raja, Radha and Kaushalya Reddy, in collaboration with United Nations, India – has been featuring top dancers and musicians.



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MISCELLANEOUS

MISCELLANEOUS

KisanSuryoday Yojana (GUJARAT)

- The KisanSuryoday Yojana aims to provide 16 hours of power supply to farmers in the state every day.
- Under this scheme, farmers will be able to avail power supply from 5 AM to 9 PM
- Under this scheme, about 3,500 circuit km of new transmission lines will be laid in the next 2-3 years, including setting up of nine 220 KV substations and 234 new transmission lines of 66 KV and will be implemented in more than a thousand villages in the coming days and most of these villages are in tribal dominated areas.
- The state has allocated Rs. 3500 crore budget for installing the transmission infrastructure.
- After the Sujalam-Suflam and Sauni scheme, Gujarat through the KisanSuryoday Yojana has set a milestone in meeting the needs of the Gujarat Farmers.

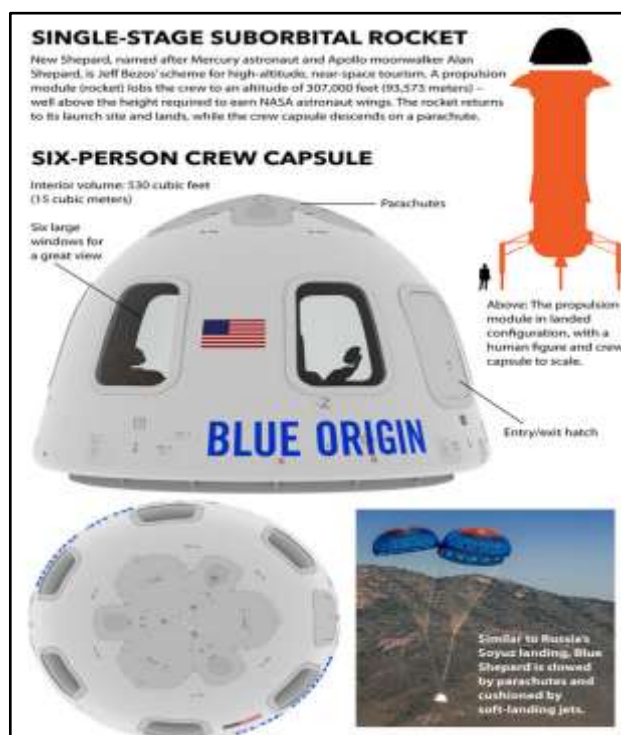
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Skal International Asia Area

- UT of Jammu and Kashmir has won the bid to host the 50th annual Skal International Asia Area (SIAA) Congress in 2021.
- Skal is a professional organisation of tourism leaders around the world, promoting global tourism and friendship.
- It is the only international group uniting all branches of the travel and tourism industry.
- Its members, the industry's managers and executives, meet at local, national, regional and international levels to discuss and pursue topics of common interest.
- Skal International is an UNWTO Affiliate Member since 1984. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.

New Shepherd Rocket System

- A rocket system, called New Shepard, meant to take tourists to space successfully completed its seventh test launch.
- New Shepard has been named after astronaut Alan Shepard, the first American to go to space.
- The rocket system is built by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos's space company called Blue Origin.
- It will eventually allow space tourists to experience microgravity by taking them over 100 km above the Earth.
- It has been designed to take astronauts and research payloads past the Karman line – the internationally recognised boundary of space.
- The idea is to provide easier and more cost-effective access to space meant for purposes such as academic research, corporate technology development and entrepreneurial ventures among other.



Star Campaigner

- Supreme Court stayed the EC order revoking “Star Campaigner” status of Kamal Nath. Taking a serious note of the breach of **“ethical and dignified behaviour”**, the election watchdog had revoked the “star campaigner” status of the former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath for repeated violations of the model code during campaign for the by polls in 28 assembly constituencies in the state.
- A star campaigner is a leader who seeks vote for his party during the election. He or she can be a politician or even a film star. There is no strict law governing who can or cannot be made a star campaigner. It depends on the party whom to choose as the star campaigner for the election.
- It is a status that the political parties contesting an election give to certain big names who the parties feel can fetch more votes from people with special campaigning style.
- When the EC announces, poll dates for certain elections, it also issues guidelines for the Model Code of Conduct regulating poll campaign by them. As per the guidelines of the EC, a ‘recognised’ party can nominate a maximum of 40 star campaigners for a particular election. An unrecognised political party can nominate a maximum of 20 star campaigners.
- The list of star campaigners has to be communicated to the Chief Electoral Officer and Election Commission within a week from the date of notification of an election.
- The expenditure incurred on campaigning by such notified star campaigners is exempt from being added to the election expenditure of a candidate. However, this only applies when a star campaigner limits herself to a general campaign for the political party she represents.
- If a candidate or her election agent shares the stage with a star campaigner at a rally, then the entire expenditure on that rally other than the travel expenses of the star campaigner is added to the candidate’s expenses.
- Political parties believe that voters will get attracted by the star campaigners and will vote to that particular party. Some other parties believe that star campaigners can fetch more votes than ordinary campaigner.

Nandankanan Zoological Park

- The Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) in Bhubaneswar, which suffered a huge loss following its closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has revived its innovative ‘Adopt-An-Animal’ programme to mobilise resources for animals.
- The NZP is one of the leading zoos in the country in terms of its fauna population and species diversity.
- With resources drying up due to the closure for more than six months, the NZP authorities revived the ‘Adopt-An-Animal’ programme.
- When one adopts an animal or a bird, the contribution goes to its care, feeding, enclosure enrichment and renovation
- Elephant at Rs 2.5 lakh is the costliest species for adoption for a year.
- Individuals and organisations are now allowed to adopt inmates even for a period of one month.

Gupkar Declaration

- Seven mainstream political parties of Jammu and Kashmir gave a formal shape to their cobbled alliance - People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD)- for the restoration of Article 370.
- On August 4, 2019, a day before the Union government announced the abrogation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, political parties in Kashmir, issued a joint statement on defending Article 370 that gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir. Since then, the joint statement is known as the 'Gupkar Declaration'
- However, a day after this, the Central government revoked the special status of the erstwhile state and bifurcated it into two Union territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

- A year after the abrogation of Article 370, leaders from the six political parties once again met and signed the Gupkar Declaration and resolved to adhere to the 2019 declaration.
- The motive behind the alliance is to work towards restoring the special status of J&K after it was revoked in 2019.

10 Hafte-10 Baje-10 Minute

- Delhi Government launched a mass campaign, under the name "10 Hafte-10 Baje-10 Minute" (10 weeks-10o'clock-10 minutes).
- Government appealed to Delhi residents to give 10 minutes every Sunday — from September 1 till November 15 — to ensure there's no stagnant water in their houses or surroundings to prevent the breeding of dengue-carrier mosquitoes.
- Stagnant water is suitable for breeding of Aedis, the mosquito breed also responsible for the spread of chikunguya.

Chapter Proceedings

- Mumbai police began "chapter proceedings" against Republic Editor-in-Chief.
- Chapter proceedings are preventive actions taken by the police if they fear that a particular person is likely to create trouble and disrupt the peace in society.
- These proceedings are unlike punitive action taken in case of an FIR with an intention to punish.
- Here, the police can issue notices under sections of the Code of Criminal Procedure to ensure that the person is aware that creating nuisance could result in action against him, which includes paying a fine, in the absence of which, he could be put behind bars.
- A notice is issued to a person under section 111 of the Cr. P. C. The section states that any person who disseminates information that could lead to ill will among communities and castes should be served this notice. However, this is used in the rarest of the circumstances
- On receiving the notice under section 111, a person can appeal the notice before the court
- There is no need for even an FIR against a person for issuing a notice under section 107 of the Cr.P.C. (security of keeping peace in other cases).
- In this case the bond is signed for one year. Under section 110, a notice is served to a habitual offender who has a record of FIRs registered against him. In his case, he is asked to sign a bond for three years.

Mount Girnar

- India's biggest and one of the largest passenger ropeway projects in Asia has been constructed on Mount Girnar, the tallest mountain of the Gujarat.
- Mount Girnar is a major pilgrim site because of the presence of the Amba temple, the Dattatreya shrine, and many other Hindu temples as well as several Jain temples.
- Girnar ropeway is a ropeway on Mount Girnar in Junagadh district.
- Mount Girnar is a cluster of hills and peaks in Jungadh district. Its summit. at 1118m , is the highest in Gujrat.
- With initiation of the ropeway project, 10-fold increase in footfalls in the next couple of years are is expected.
- As Junagadh falls in SasanGir (only abode in the world of the Asiatic lions), Somnath and Diu tourism circuit, there would be multifold impact on tourism activities in the region due to the ropeway proje
- The 2,320-metre-long project is also the world's longest temple ropeway in the world and India's biggest passenger ropeway project.

Oaxaca Khadi

- In Mann kiBaat, Prime Minister asked people to go vocal for local while shopping during the festival season, and particularly extolled the virtues of khadi.

- Prime Minister made a reference to the region of Oaxaca in Mexico, where he said khadi was being manufactured, and narrated an anecdote about how khadi reached the Latin American country after a local resident became influenced by a film on Mahatma Gandhi.
- Khadi Oaxaca is a farm-to-garment collective which comprises around 400 families, which live and work on traditional farms and homesteads in the Oaxaca region of southern Mexico.
- The project uses cotton produced and cultivated on the Oaxaca coast, and produces chemical-free clothing, relying on locally harvested plant-based dyes.



'Red Light on, Gaadi Off' Initiative

- Delhi Government launched a new anti-pollution campaign under which motorists will be encouraged to switch off vehicles while waiting for the lights to turn green at traffic signals.
- Delhi government's transport department, environment marshals and traffic police officials will urge drivers to switch off their ignition while waiting for the light to turn green. This is part of the government and the police's 'Red Light On, Gaadi Off' (red light on, ignition off) campaign started to reduce vehicular emission.
- The campaign started from October 21 and will continue till November 15. Volunteers at traffic signals, where the waiting time is over 15 seconds, will urge drivers to turn off their ignition to reduce vehicular emissions.
- This will be an awareness campaign and drivers will not be penalised for not turning off their engines.
- Environment marshals will hand roses to drivers and will stand carrying placards to create awareness.
- The government estimates that nearly 15-20% vehicular pollution can be controlled, if people cooperate and participate in this mass campaign.
- Around 10 million vehicles are registered in Delhi. Even if one million of them actively follow the campaign, experts suggest that it can reduce PM10 emissions by 1.5 tonnes a year and PM2.5 emissions by 0.4 tonnes a year.

National Productivity Council (NPC)

- National Productivity Council under Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce & Industry has been granted accreditation conforming to ISO 17020:2012 for undertaking inspection and audit work in the area of Food Safety Audit and Scientific Storage of Agricultural Products.
- NPC is a national level organization to promote productivity culture in India.
- Established by the Ministry of Industry, Government of India in 1958, it is an autonomous, multipartite, non-profit organization and has been registered as a Society under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860.
- NPC is a constituent of the Tokyo-based Asian Productivity Organisation (APO), an Inter-Governmental Body, of which the Government of India is a founder member.

Asafoetida (Heeng)

- Scientists at CSIR-Institute of Himalayan Bioresource, Palampur (IHBT), are on a mission to grow heeng in the Indian Himalayas. The first sapling has been planted in Himachal Pradesh's Kwarling village in Lahaul valley.
- Asafoetida, or heeng, is a common ingredient in most Indian kitchens.

- Asafoetida is a herbaceous plant of the umbelliferae family. It is a perennial plant whose oleo gum resin is extracted from its thick roots and rhizome. The plant stores most of its nutrients inside its deep fleshy roots.
- Asafoetida is endemic to Iran and Afghanistan, the main global suppliers. It thrives in dry and cold desert conditions. While it is very popular in India, some European countries too use it for its medicinal properties.
- Heeng is not cultivated in India. India imports about 1,200 tonnes of raw heeng worth Rs 600 crore from Iran, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan.

First Har Ghar Jal State

- Goa has become the first state in the country to provide 100% piped tap water connections to rural households.
- Goa achieved this feat after it prioritised piped drinking water using local sources under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).
- In accordance with the central government's Jal Jeevan Mission, the project aims to supply piped water in all rural households by 2024. Under the scheme, Goa has successfully covered 2.30 lakh rural households.
- The relatively small size of the state, availability of water, and awareness among residents are the advantages Goa enjoys.

Jal Jeevan Mission

- Jal Jeevan Mission, a central government initiative under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, aims to ensure access of piped water for every household in India.
- In his Independence Day speech in 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that half of the country's households did not have access to piped water. Earmarking Rs 3.5 trillion for Jal Jeevan Mission, he said the Centre and states would work towards it in coming years.
- The mission's goal is to provide to all households in rural India safe and adequate water through individual household tap connections by 2024.
- The Har Ghar Nal Se Jal programme was announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget 2019-20 speech. This programme forms a crucial part of the Jal Jeevan Mission.



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Concept Clearing Assignment

1. What do you mean by Gig Economy? Discuss the potentials and challenges of Gig jobs in India.
2. The dispute over recently passed Farm bills can be solved through cooperative federalism and not conflicting federalism. Discuss.
3. Discuss the steps taken by the RBI to boost liquidity in market post Covid19 lockdown.
4. Discuss the significance of SVAMITVA Scheme in empowering the grass root people. How the scheme will benefit rural residents. Suggest way forward for its effective delivery.
5. In the light of Annual State of education Report, Highlight the impacts of pandemic on School dropouts. What measures should be adopted by institutions and Government to compensate the 'learning losses'?
6. The crimes against women, children and people belonging to the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe communities has steadily increased. What are the challenges faced by law implementation agencies in this context? Suggest measures.
7. The World Food Programme (WFP) is cited as largest humanitarian agency to combat hunger. Despite that there is a prevalence of hunger across the globe. Comment. Also Discuss the role of WFP in mitigating the instances of hunger in India.
8. Both USA and India is showing eagerness to develop the strategic logistics military alliance to counter Chinese aggression. Comment. What are the mutual benefits likely to be received by USA and India by signing the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement?
9. Define personal data and assess right to privacy in this context? Discuss the contemporary regulation regime dealing with user's personal data. Do you think there is need to bring the bill for personal data protection? Substantiate your views.
10. What are the powers and responsibilities of India's apex investigating agency? Also analyse the concern raised by respective State government in context of provision related with 'General Consent'?
11. Do you agree that the RTI Act is being subverted and illegally converted into a Right to Denial of Information? Comment. Substantiate your views with suitable illustrations.
12. NASA's Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA) has confirmed presence of water on lunar surface. Discuss is the significance of such observations?
13. What are the impacts of stubble burning? Highlight the measures taken by Government to deal with the menace of stubble burning. Suggest Way forward.
14. What is Graded Response Action Programme? Discuss how it can help to curb the Air pollution of Delhi?
15. Dams play a vital role in Country's water security, foster rapid and sustained growth. Highlight the relevance of Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project in Indian Context?



P.T Oriented Questions

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. *With reference to Tree Transplantation Policy of the Government of Delhi, which of the following statements is/are correct?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Entities have to transplant and ensure survival of 80% transplanted trees. 2. Tree Transplantation Cell will be formed by the government and committees. <p>Select the correct answer using the code given below:</p> <p>(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2</p> <p>2. Which one of the following best describes the term "STARS Project" sometimes seen in news?</p> <p>(a) A mission of ISRO
(b) A project of DoPT to strengthen Civil Services
(c) Teaching-Learning and Results Programme
(d) None of the Above</p> <p>3. Consider the following statements regarding Personal data and data protection</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It includes aggregated data through which individuals can be identified. 2. It pertains to characteristics, traits or attributes to identify an individual. 3. It refers to policies and procedures seeking to minimise intrusion into the privacy. <p>Which of the statements given above is/are correct?</p> <p>(a) 1 and 3 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3</p> <p>4. Which one of the following best describes the term "Svavitva" sometimes seen in news?</p> <p>(a) A Central Sector Scheme for 'record of rights'
(b) A national mission of the Ministry of Water Resources</p> | <p>(c) A computer programme developed by DRDO
(d) None of the Above</p> <p>5. With reference to the Central Bureau of Investigation, consider the following statements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CBI derives its powers to investigate from the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act. 2. CBI needs the consent of the centre to investigate any case in any state and state's consent doesn't matter in any case. 3. CBI can initiate Suo-moto investigations only in Union Territories. <p>Which of the Statements given above is/are correct?</p> <p>(a) 1 and 3 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3</p> <p>6. Consider the following statements regarding Integrity Pact:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is a vigilance tool that envisages an agreement between the service providers. 2. It is for committing both the parties not to exercise any corrupt influence. 3. It is to ensure transparency, equity and competitiveness in private procurement. <p>Which of the Statements given above is/are correct?</p> <p>(a) 1 and 3 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 2 only
(d) None of the Above</p> <p>7. With reference to Parliamentary Privilege, consider the following statements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It refers to rights and immunities enjoyed by Parliament as an institution. 2. Powers, privileges and immunities are to be defined by the Parliament. 3. It governs by the British Parliamentary conventions. |
|--|---|

Which of the Statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

8. With reference to Targeted Long-Term Repo Operation, consider the following statements:

- 1. Under it, central bank conduct term repos of one-year and three-year tenure.
- 2. It helps central bank to ensure that banks reduce their marginal cost of funds-based lending rate.
- 3. It showed the market that RBI will not only rely on revising repo rates.

Which of the Statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

9. Consider the following statements regarding fiscal policy:

- 1. Fiscal policy is by which the government adjusts its spending levels and tax rates.
- 2. Fiscal policy is the sister strategy to monetary policy.
- 3. Fiscal policy is through which a central bank influences a nation's money supply.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

10. Which of the following is/are the objectives of Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project?

- 1. Explore the alternative incidental means at selected dams
- 2. It aims at ensuring the safety of downstream population and property.
- 3. It has been successful in bringing together dam owners, engineers, and scientists.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

11. With reference to Zombie Fires, which of the following statements is/are correct?

- 1. It cannot burn through the cold and wet Arctic winters.
- 2. It can continue to smoulder below ground, burning through peat.
- 3. They are fuelled by underground methane deposits and insulated by a layer of snow.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

12. Consider the following statements regarding Arctic permafrost:

- 1. Half of the land area in the Southern Hemisphere has permafrost underneath.
- 2. Near the surface, permafrost soils contain large quantities of organic carbon.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

13. With reference to Stubble Burning, consider the following statements:

- 1. It is an act of removing paddy crop residue from the field to sow next crop.
- 2. It is a costly but the quickest way to prepare field to sow next crop.
- 3. It is attributed to the GHG emissions, which have 'irreversible effect' on climate.

Which of the Statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only

- (c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3
14. With reference to INS Kavaratti, consider the following statements:
1. It is the first of the four indigenously built Anti-Submarine Warfare.
 2. The ship named after the capital of the Lakshadweep group of islands.
- Which of the Statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
15. With reference to New START Treaty, consider the following statements:
1. It continues the bipartisan process of reducing U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals.
 2. It is the first verifiable U.S.-Russian nuclear arms control treaty.
 3. It was the first to take effect since START I in 1994.
- Which of the Statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 3 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3
16. Consider the following statements regarding Superconductor:
1. A superconductor is a substance that conducts electricity without resistance when it becomes colder than a critical temperature.
 2. Superconductors lose their resistance slowly as they get colder.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
17. With reference to the Gyan Circle Ventures, consider the following statements:
1. Its primary aim is to promote deep-tech entrepreneurship through financial and technical support.
 2. This initiative is focused on innovation of new technologies and economic development.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
18. Consider the following statements regarding the Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN):
1. It is being implemented under National Health Mission (NHM) by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
 2. It provides real-time information on vaccine stocks and storage temperatures across all cold chain points in the country.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
19. 'Gupkar Declaration' is related with-
- (a) Religious groups of North-East India to restore Assam Accord.
(b) Group of political parties to restore article 370.
(c) Group of NGOs in left wing extremist areas.
(d) Group of political parties to restore farm bills.
20. Consider the following statements regarding chapter proceedings:
1. Chapter proceedings are preventive actions taken by the police.
 2. A department owned FIR should be presented in order to initiate the chapter proceeding.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
21. Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in which of the following state?
(a) Maharashtra
(b) Gujarat
(c) Madhya Pradesh
(d) Goa
22. Recently constituted KV Kamath Committee is related with-
(a) FinTech Sector
(b) Regulating UPI and Mobile wallet
(c) Loan Restructuring
(d) Reforms for Gig Economy
23. Consider the following statements regarding the Purchasing Manager's Index:
1. A PMI value of above 50 denotes expansion in business activity while anything below 50 denotes contraction.
2. PMI is released by Central Statistical Organisation.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
24. Consider the following statements:
1. Hong Kong International Convention is related to safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships.
2. The world's largest graveyard with respect to ship breaking is Alang in Gujarat.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
25. Nobel Prize in Economics 2020 has been awarded for:
(a) For behavioral economics
(b) For improvements to auction theory and inventions of new auction formats
(c) For contribution to contract theories
(d) For analysis of consumption, poverty, and welfare.
26. A parliamentary system of government is one in which (UPSC 2020)
(a) All political parties in the parliament are represented in the government
(b) The government is responsible to the parliament and can be removed by it
(c) The government is elected by the people and can be removed by them
(d) The government is chosen by the parliament but cannot be removed by it before completion of a fixed term
27. Consider the following pairs:(UPSC 2020)
- | International agreement/
set-up | Subject |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Alma-Ata Declaration | Healthcare of the people |
| 2. Hague Convention | Biological and chemical weapons |
| 3. Talanoa Dialogue | Global climate change |
| 4. Under2 Coalition | Child rights |
- Which of the pairs given above is/ are correctly matched?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 4 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 2, 3 and 4 only
28. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact included which of the following?(UPSC 2020)
1. Invitation to Congress to participate in the Round Table Conference
2. Withdrawal of Ordinances promulgated in connection with the Civil Disobedience Movement
3. Acceptance of Gandhi's suggestion for enquiry into police excesses

4. Release of only those prisoners who were not charged with violence
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
(a) 1 only
(b) 1, 2 and 4 only
(c) 3 only
(d) 2, 3 and 4 only
29. Consider the following statements:
(UPSC 2020)
1. The weightage of food in Consumer Price Index (CPI) is higher than that in Wholesale Price Index (WPI).
 2. The WPI does not capture changes in the prices of services, which CPI does.
 3. Reserve Bank of India has now adopted WPI as its key measure of inflation and to decide on changing the key policy rates.
- Which of the statements given- above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 3 only 4,
(d) 1, 2 and 3
30. Which of the following Protected Areas are located in Cauvery basin?(UPSC 2020)
1. Nagarhole National park
 2. Papikonda National park
 3. Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve
 4. Wayanad Wildlife sanctuary
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 3 and 4 only
(c) 1, 3 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer Key

- | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. B | 11. C | 21. B |
| 2. C | 12. B | 22. C |
| 3. B | 13. B | 23. A |
| 4. A | 14. B | 24. C |
| 5. A | 15. D | 25. B |
| 6. C | 16. A | 26. B |
| 7. A | 17. C | 27. C |
| 8. D | 18. C | 28. B |
| 9. A | 19. B | 29. A |
| 10. D | 20. A | 30. C |

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OUR TOPPERS


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KANISHAK KATARIA
(AIR - 1)



TESTIMONIAL

I am highly indebted to Khan Sir and KSG for their guidance and feedback, especially for the interviews. Khan Sir was very motivating and available for me at all times. His critical analysis and pinpoint identification of my strengths and weaknesses helped me a lot. I also followed his videos on Youtube which were quite beneficial. Thank you Sir for your support & guidance.

Signature: 

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AKSHAT JAIN
(AIR - 2)



TESTIMONIAL

I would like to thank KSG and Khan Sir for their guidance and motivation. The mock interviews at KSG were particularly helpful in understanding the intricacies of the interview/personality test. It helped me identify my strengths and weaknesses in a timely manner, and work upon them accordingly.

Signature: 

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SRUSHTI JAYANT DESHMUKH
(AIR - 5)



TESTIMONIAL

Thank you so much to the entire team of Khan Study Group! KSG's foundation course has been my starting point. It has helped me a lot. The focus on answer writing from Day-1 really contributed a lot. A special thanks to Khan Sir for his motivating aura and good words.

Signature: 

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Khan Study Group

SHUBHAM GUPTA
(AIR - 6)



TESTIMONIAL

Khan Sir,

Thank you so much for always being encouraging and keeping a positive mindset. Your guidance for the personality test has helped me significantly in attaining the success that I have been able to. Your personal interactions with me has always motivated me to keep an inquisitive mindset and optimistic attitude.

Thanks again to you Sir and the entire KSG team.

Signature: 

KSG
Khan Study Group

VAISHALI SINGH
(AIR - 8)



TESTIMONIAL

I cannot thank KSG & Khan Sir enough for their guidance throughout the interview process. It was much needed and, it were his words which inspired me to perform well. Thank you so much!

Signature: 

KSG
Khan Study Group

GUNJAN DWIVEDI
(AIR - 9)



TESTIMONIAL

KSG played a very important role in my preparation. The excellent guidance I received from Khan Sir helped me achieve my childhood dream. Thank you for all the support.

Signature: 

DELHI NORTH

2521, 1st Floor
Hudson Lane,
Vijay Nagar Chowk,
Near GTB Nagar
Metro Station
Delhi- 110009

9717 380 832

DELHI CENTRAL

56/4, Bada Bazar
Marg, Old Rajender
Nagar Market, Near
Salwan Public
School Gate No-2,
Delhi- 110060

9811 293 743

JAIPUR TONK ROAD

403-404, 4th floor
Apex Tower,
Lal Kothi,
Tonk Road
Jaipur- 302015

8290 800 441

BHOPAL M.P NAGAR, ZONE II

Plot No. 48, 1st & 2nd
Floor, Behind
Sargam Talkies,
Zone II, M.P Nagar
Bhopal- 462011

7509 975 361

PATNA EXHIBITION ROAD

Above Toyota
Showroom,
CEAT Compound,
Exhibition Road,
Near Gandhi Maidan,
Patna- 800001

7463 950 774

INDORE BHAWAR KUAN

232-233, 2nd Floor,
Veda Building, Near
Apple Hospital,
Bhawar Kuan Square
Indore- 452001

9893 772 941

BENGALURU KORAMANGALA CHANDRA LAYOUT

116/C-1, 3rd Floor,
behind Airtel office
2nd Cross Road,
KHB Colony,
5th Block,
Koramangala
Bengaluru- 560095

94, 2nd floor,
Kasabha Hobli,
Above Domino's
Pizza, 4th Main Rd.,
Maruthi Nagar,
Chandra Layout,
Bengaluru,
Karnataka-560040

7619 166 663

7619 136 662

RANCHI SIRAM TOLI CHOWK

3rd floor
strawberry Hill
New garden
Siram Toli Chowk
Ranchi - 834001

7463 950 774