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FROM THE HINDU

- What to Read?
- Why? Prelims or Mains
- How? Key Facts & Takeaways

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Success fills everybody’s heart with a pleasant feeling. It denotes an exercise which one undertakes to carry out with all intellectual and physical resources at one’s command. If you want to emerge successful, you will have to develop a lot of self-confidence and perseverance, because success is not possible without painstaking efforts and doggedness to bear with all the failures that often precede a significant achievement.

All successful people irrespective of their areas of success worked day in, day out to turn their thoughts into reality. It was their spirit to accept challenges which helped them make a mark. The sky was the only limit so far as their will to excel was concerned. They did not allow any impediment to bog them down. They stood firm in every adverse situation. They believed in success and it came to them as a matter of course.

You should, therefore, treat success as your only goal. Start your work with resolve and do not yield to odds that accompany every important assignment. If you need, think that success is not your purpose. Make it a passion. Getting passionate about success will keep you energised; you will never feel like giving up your efforts. Initial setbacks will come to you as lessons and you will get prepared to avoid those mistakes which did not produce any fruits. Actually, mistakes teach us the right way. That is why it has been said, “We learn little from victory, we learn a lot from defeat.” History is replete with the account of great men who defied all odds to reach their destination. They did attach importance to their failures and
continued their efforts with renewed zeal with honest **SWOT ANALYSIS**. In the end, all the obstructions disappeared, making way for their sure success.

If you strive for success, your personal interests should not meddle with your thoughts. Your interests will act as a roadblock to the plan you have laid out to focus all your attention to. Success in every task is very simple, if everything is allowed to go according to the plan i.e. **timely completion of the syllabus, proper revisions, regular practice tests** for getting increased familiarity with nature of questions asked in the examinations. In other words, success is not as difficult as it appears to everyone on the surface. If you do the right thing at the right time, success is definitely yours.

All that you need to be successful, to attain your goal is to face the challenge with **courage and determination**. If you are brave enough to defy every obstruction, you can certainly emerge successful.
Dear Students,

FOCUS is the Study Circle's monthly publication of contemporary issues and current affairs analysis. It is in fact a collective effort, by experienced educators in varied themes, of identifying current affairs in light of the UPSC syllabus, supplementing them with background information, explaining their related dimensions, lending them a generalist viewpoint and thus producing critical notes for the preparation of General Studies' syllabus.

The publication, as the name suggests, focuses solely on issues which are relevant to the factual as well as applied aspects of the General Studies' syllabus. That is how Focus covers all anticipated issues and themes for the upcoming Civil Services Examination (CSE).

Features

PART ONE | CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYSIS
- This month edition covers analysis of news from the immediately preceding month.
- All news/issues are categorized and clubbed syllabus-wise (International Relations, Polity & Governance, Science & Technology, Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude and so on) for efficient study.
- Background information has been added to provide context.
- Related and Additional information-dimensions have been explained to add depth to your understanding.
- Maps and figures have been provided for associative and retentive learning.

PART TWO | CONTRIBUTORS ZONE
- Articles by Rau's professors and Research team
- Essays by Rau's students

PART THREE | PRACTICE ZONE
- MCQ's from the current affairs analysis covered in this edition with emphasis on Preliminary General Studies - Paper I
- Descriptive/Essay type questions from important editorials in this edition and Case Studies with emphasis on Main General Studies Papers.

For further understanding or discussion in any topic, please consult your respective professors.

Good Luck!
RAU'S IAS STUDY CIRCLE
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PART ONE

CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYSIS

logical . simple . targeted
analysis & explanation
of all relevant news of the month
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
# GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER II (MAIN)

## BELT AND ROAD FORUM (BRF)

### INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

*(Lead coverage)*

Chinese President Xi Jinping hosted delegates from across the globe at the Second Belt and Road forum in Beijing to discuss infrastructure project Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which began in 2013.

BRI is a development strategy adopted by the Chinese government involving infrastructure development and investments in across Europe, Asia, Middle East, Latin America and Africa. "Belt" refers to the overland routes for road and rail transportation, called "the Silk Road Economic Belt"; whereas "road" refers to the sea routes, or the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

It was known as the One Belt One Road (OBOR) until 2016.

The trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been promoted as global public good as it would focus on common development of all the participating countries and their people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overland route of Belt and Road Initiative</th>
<th>Maritime route of Belt and Road Initiative</th>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Map of Belt and Road Initiative" /></td>
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</table>
**THINGS TO UNDERSTAND**

**What is BRF?**

- The first meeting of **Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation**, or **BRFIC** was held in 2017.
- Its **purpose** is to build a more open and efficient international cooperation platform for working out action plans for implementation of the initiative in the areas of infrastructure, energy and resources, production capacity, trade and investment and identification of major projects.
- It is also intended to be an **opportunity for the signing of cooperation agreements** with countries and international organizations in the areas of financial cooperation mechanism; a cooperation platform for science, technology and environmental protection; and enhanced exchanges and training of talent and financing agreements for backing projects.

**Achievements**

- **Influencing G7 countries**
  - Inclusion of **Italy**, a member of G7 as part of BRI showcases the capability to China to **penetrate into Europe** and break the West's united resistance towards BRI.
  - Another G7 country, **Japan** which has territorial disputes on some islands in East China Sea, was earlier opposed to entry into BRI, but has shed its reluctance and may cooperate with China on BRI.
  - Further in Eastern Europe, **Greece, which joined in 2018**, here China has moved ahead with plans to make the Greek port of **Piraeus the** “dragon head” of its infrastructure push, and it has stepped up investment in Greece, which is still coping from the austerity measures imposed by its European partners.

**INDIA’S OPPOSITION**

- India's hesitation in embracing the China-led BRI is the projection of the **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** as a flagship project.
- The CPEC is expected to connect **Kashgar** in China’s restive province of Xinjiang with the **Gwadar port** in the volatile Baluchistan province of Pakistan.
- It will pass through **Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)** and **Gilgit-Baltistan**—both Indian territories occupied by Pakistan. This is at the core of India’s doubts about China’s sincerity in seeking its collaboration.
- This prevents India from providing full backing to BRI. A formal nod to the project will serve as a de-facto legitimisation to Pakistan’s rights on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).
- Further, there are **conflicting views in India** on whether China’s BRI strategy represents a threat or an opportunity. Some view it as a strategy which China will use to encircle India. Some consider it as a great opportunity to attract the much-needed infrastructure finance into India to fill its infrastructure growth and boost growth and employment.
- Apart from this, financing for BRI has also led other smaller countries to fell into a **Chinese Debt trap** as showcased in Hambantota port in Sri Lanka whereby Sri Lanka had to hand over the port to a Chinese company since it could not repay Chinese debt for the port.

**Is there a need to resolve BRI issue for**

- The 21st century is going to be an Asian century and both India and China are going to be at the centre of the world. BRI led by China will be important aspect of this **new world order** that replaces earlier models of Western countries and therefore both BRI and India need to embrace each other for it to be a successful...
### India?

- India has opposed BRI due to its debt trap policies, however, two-thirds of the countries funded by BRI do not have economic capabilities for large economic investments. Therefore their participation in BRI allows them opportunity for economic growth.
- In context, debt trap of BRI is exaggerated. Only 10% of projects at risk of debt default which is mainly due to corruption and weak govt. of recipient country. Therefore, BRI still remains popular with countries.
- BRI faced criticism over lack of transparency and insensitivity to national concerns. To rectify this, China has evolved standards through linkages with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and coordinating with other global institutions.
- BRI is within its right to have rules for recipient countries for Chinese investment. India through participation can shape the new standards of BRI.
- The main problem for India lies with CPEC. India should respond to the CPEC problem, by ensuring China recognizes Indian sovereignty over PoK, link South Asian BRI projects with India and ASEAN region and engaging with China to form rules for BRI.

### Does India have an alternative?

- In this regard, a cue can be taken from Japan. China and Japan have various territorial disputes on islands in East China Sea Islands, which prevented Japan from endorsing BRI.
- Recently, a non-official engagement is promoted by Japan comprising of ruling party members and head of Japan's Business Federation.
- This a pointer that despite current misgivings, Japan could be open to business within the ambit of the BRI.
- The same non-official path can also be explored by India.

### BRI SNIPPET: Another addition to BRI

**Recent Context:** Malaysia will resume work on the multi-billion dollar East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) after long negotiations with the China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) and the Chinese government brought the cost down by a third.

- The railway will connect towns from Malaysia's northeast near the Thai border and along the South China Sea with Port Klang on the Strait of Malacca, providing a crucial land route for freight between Port Klang and Kuantan where China is developing a major port. The distance is approximately 640 kms.
- It will be part of Chinese BRI.

---

#### MALAYSIA RAIL PROJECT

- **East Coast Rail Link**
  - **Existing KTM railway lines**
  - **Planned East Coast Rail Link**
  - **Kuala Lumpur**
  - **Kuantan**
  - **Kota Baru**
  - **Padang Besar**
  - **Pendang**
  - **South China Sea**
  - **Andaman Sea**
  - **Butterworth**
  - **Johor Baru**
  - **Singapore**
  - **Indonesia**
  - **Sumatra**

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**FOCUS | MAY 2019 | RAU'S IAS**

4
India launched an interceptor missile to hit a live satellite in Low Earth Orbit and thereby disintegrating the satellite. It was named Mission Shakti. India is now capable of destroying enemy satellites and thereby serving its military and communication capabilities. India is now the fourth country after US, Russia and China to develop an ASAT capability. It provides credible deterrence against attacks on the country’s growing number of space assets.

India has not violated any international treaty including the Outer Space treaty, 1967 by ASAT, as it does not prohibit the usage of ordinary weapons in Outer Space. The international community including major powers such as US, UK, France and Russia have not been critical of India’s test. In this regard, let us understand Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) inputs on way ahead.

MISSION SHAKTI: WHAT NEXT?

**ASAT and BMD Programme**

- The **Indian Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD)** Programme consists of a multi-layered ballistic missile defence system. It is a two-tiered system consisting of two interceptor missiles, namely **Prithvi Air Defence (PAD)** missile for high altitude interception, and the **Advanced Air Defence (AAD)** missile for lower altitude interception.

- It is important to note that the missile used for the ASAT test was not part of the BMD programme’s existing interceptor missile inventory. A brand **new three-stage missile** with two solid rocket boosters, was independently developed for the ASAT test, however it did benefit from the available R&D from BMD programme.

**Significance of ASAT for BMD**

- Under Phase-I of the BMD programme, it envisages the **interception of up to 2000 km** range ballistic missiles in both the endo-atmosphere and exo-atmosphere in the altitude range of 15-25 km and up to 140 km respectively. Phase-I is now ready for operational deployment.

- The greater significance of the ASAT lies for **Phase-II of the BMD** under which the DRDO aims to intercept longer range missiles of 5000 km range at a higher altitude of up to 400 km. It is important to note that though the target for ASAT test was hit at a range of 283 km, the missile is actually capable of shooting down hostile objects moving at 10 km per second at a far higher altitude of nearly 1200 km.

- The technological capability for intercepting such a high velocity moving target at a higher altitude has a direct bearing on Phase-II of the BMD programme which envisages intercepting missiles travelling with a similar or lesser speed at a greater distance.

NEED FOR DEDICATED (DEFENCE SPACE COMMAND)

Though India has always advocated the peaceful use of outer space, the fact remains that space is increasingly being used by countries, particularly the US and China, for military purposes. China already established a Strategic Support Force (SSF) in 2015, integrating space, cyberspace and electronic warfare (EW) aspects into a joint command under the Central Military Commission. US is also forming a ‘Space Force’ as an independent military command structure.

Given this reality of the military utility of outer space, it is only logical that India takes advantage of the scenario. Thus, India made a modest beginning in this regard in 2001 by implementing a **space based surveillance programme**. Further, an **Integrated Space Cell (ISC)** was constituted in 2009 under **Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS)** to coordinate the space-related aspects of the three defence forces.
Now, this Cell **needs to be upgraded to a dedicated defence Space Command** to cater to all user services and should include DRDO, National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO), the three military commands and ISRO. The Command would also be responsible for the operational aspects of all space based platforms and associated assets, besides laying out the strategy and doctrine for space warfare.

A military Space Command would protect ISRO's civilian character. This would ensure ISRO is able to access key technologies from other countries, maintain its commitment to various international treaties that promote the peaceful, or non-military, uses of outer space.

In addition to establishing a Space Command, India also needs to create a dedicated **Defence Space Research Agency (DESRA)** to harness the entire spectrum of space technologies with defence applications. Some of the technologies and areas that DESRA should exclusively focus upon include:

| **Space Situational Awareness** | • SSA would play a critical role in mapping and cataloguing space-borne objects, including those of potential adversaries, for the purpose of devising suitable counter strategies.  
| • This would require development and deployment of a vast network of telescopes, long-range radars, and space-based sensors and a dedicated pool of experts.  
| • It would be similar to Maritime Domain Awareness being undertaken by Indian Navy. |
| **Launch on Demand** | To meet the urgent requirement of launching satellites in a matter of a few hours, if not days. This capability should include rapidly deployable launch vehicles, launch facilities (both mobile and stationary) and reconfigurable / retrievable launch vehicles, among others. |
| **Directed Energy Weapons** | • DEWs is fast emerging as an alternative to direct ascent ASAT missiles and are difficult to attribute to a source.  
| • DEWs include systems such as high power microwaves, precision high power lasers and light-directed energy capabilities. These technologies are essential since they provide an effective mechanism for contactless, non-kinetic means to achieve superiority in space. |
| **Electronic Warfare** | • It involves jamming and spoofing technologies to disturb the electromagnetic spectrum and other mission critical systems which are essential for conducting wars in a network centric environment.  
| • Some of the examples include global positioning system (GPS) / navigation system / communication system. |
| **Rogue satellites** | Used to cause damage to adversary assets, these satellites use a combination of kinetic kill vehicles, high-power microwaves, lasers, jammers, robotic instruments and chemical sprayers. |
| **Greater Sophistication of ASAT** | The technology demonstrated in Mission Shakti require continuous upgradation, in terms of miniaturisation of the missile, a more capable thruster and seeker, as well as multiple launch options (ground-, air- and sea-based), to make it more effective. |

Finally, on the basis of the successful conduct of Mission Shakti, India has demonstrated its capacity in space weapons. It has also demonstrated the increasing maturity of its Ballistic Missile Defence programme.

**But what is the impact on international space treaties?** Let us see, stand of India in the ‘UN and Outer Space’ analysis given below.
India stated that it supports the drafting of international law on prevention of an arms race in outer space including the prevention of the placement of weapons, in accordance to UN Outer Space treaties.

India supports the consideration of the UN resolution on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) agenda (1982) in the Conference on Disarmament (CD).

**THINGS TO UNDERSTAND**

**Conference on Disarmament**
- The Conference on Disarmament was recognized by the first Special Session on Disarmament of the UN General Assembly (1978) as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community.
- The terms of reference of the CD include practically all multilateral arms control and disarmament problems such as nuclear disarmament, prevention of an arms race in outer space, radiological weapons, among others.
- The CD and its predecessors have for all such as NPT treaty, CTBT, the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, among other.

**UN and Outer Space**
- The UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) is responsible for promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.
- UNOOSA serves as the secretariat for the General Assembly’s only committee dealing exclusively with international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space: the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS).
- COPUOS was set up by the UNGA in 1959 to govern the exploration and use of space for peace, security and development.
- It was instrumental in the creation of the five treaties and five principles of outer space.

**TREATIES**

**Outer Space treaty, 1967**
There are five UN treaties relating to activities in Outer Space, the primary is Outer Space treaty, 1967. It is an international treaty binding the parties to use outer space only for peaceful purposes. It states that:

- Nations are prohibited from placing nuclear arms or other weapons of mass destruction in orbit, on the Moon, or on other bodies in space.
- Nations cannot claim sovereignty over the Moon or other celestial bodies.
- Nations are responsible for their activities in space, are liable for any damage caused by objects launched into space from their territory, and are bound to assist astronauts in distress.
- Their space installations and vehicles shall be open, on a reciprocal basis, to representatives of other countries.
- Nations cannot establish military bases or installations, test "any type of weapons," or conduct military exercises on the moon and other celestial bodies. However, Outer space is still used for transit of weapons and military satellites.

**Rescue Agreement of 1968**
It requires States to assist an astronaut in case of accident, distress, emergency or unintended landing.
International Relations

Liability Convention of 1972
It establishes the standards of liability for damage caused by space objects.

Registration Convention of 1975
It requires States to register all objects launched into outer space with the United Nations.

Moon Agreement of 1979
It elaborates on the provisions of the Outer Space Treaty as they apply to the Moon and other celestial bodies.

**Note:** India has signed all the five treaties but only ratified four whereby Moon Agreement is still pending to be ratified.

**PRINCIPLES**

| Declaration of Legal Principles | • Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Uses of Outer Space.  
|                              | • General Assembly resolution of 1963.  |
| Broadcasting Principles | • Governing the Use by States of Artificial Earth Satellites for International Direct Television Broadcasting.  
|                              | • General Assembly resolution of 1982  |
|                              | • General Assembly resolution of 1986.  |
| Nuclear Power Sources Principles | • Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space.  
|                              | • General Assembly resolution of 1992.  |
| Benefits Declaration | • The Declaration on International Cooperation in the Exploration and use of Outer Space for the Benefit and in the Interest of All States, taking into Particular Account the Needs of Developing Countries.  
|                              | • General Assembly resolution of 1996.  |

**NEWS IN TRANSITION**

**U.S. & THE ICC**

#GLOBAL BODY

International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor intends to proceed with opening an investigation into alleged war crimes committed by U.S. service members and intelligence professionals during the war in Afghanistan.

The ICC prosecutor has requested the ICC to initiate an investigation into what is considered as American War crimes in Afghanistan such as alleged detainee abuse.

US, which is not a member of the ICC, has threatened tough action against the International Criminal Court should it try to prosecute Americans for alleged war crimes during the war in Afghanistan, such as sanctions against ICC judges, prosecutor, etc. In this context, the US has revoked the visa of ICC’s chief prosecutor.

However, the news is currently in transition and we will have to wait and see how it moves forward.
## ABOUT ICC

### Background
- The ICC at **The Hague, Netherlands** is a permanent international court established to investigate, prosecute and try individuals accused of crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.
- The ICC was established by the treaty known as the **Rome Statute** of the International Criminal Court. The ICC **prosecutes individuals, not groups or States**.
- The court has **no retrospective jurisdiction** – only crimes committed after the Rome Statute came into force i.e., 1st July, 2002 will be under its purview.

### ICC & UN
- The **Rome Statute** was **negotiated within the UN**, but it created an independent judicial body distinct from the UN.
- The **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** is the principal judicial organ of the UN, and is different from the International Criminal Court.
- Although ICC is not an office or agency of the United Nations yet the **Rome Statute allows the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to refer specific situations** to the Court that are outside the jurisdiction of ICC.

### Jurisdiction of ICC
- A State that is member to the Rome Statute is placed within the jurisdiction of the ICC.
- ICC may exercise its jurisdiction in situations where the alleged perpetrator is a national of a member State or when the crime was committed in the territory of a member State.
- A State not party to the Statute may decide to accept the jurisdiction of the ICC. Moreover, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) can also refer a situation to the ICC.
- There is no eligibility clause as to who can send a complaint to the ICC, and is therefore open to individuals, groups, and States. But, referrals can be made either by a State Party to the Rome Statute or by the UNSC. The selection of cases for investigation is for the Prosecutor at ICC to decide based on the rules laid within the Rome Statute.

### ICC and National Judicial System
- The ICC **does not replace national criminal justice systems** and primary priority is given to national judicial system for criminal prosecution of the perpetrators.
- The ICC can investigate and prosecute individuals if it considers that the State concerned does not, cannot or is unwilling to do so.

## OTHER VIEWPOINTS ON ICC

### Countries and perception of bias
- Burundi became the first country to leave in 2017 after the court began investigating political violence committed by its President Pierre Nkurunziza, whereby it accused ICC of a witch-hunt against the President and of harbouring Anti-African bias.
- ICC has been accused of Anti-African bias by several African countries whereby the entire matters investigated by ICC till 2016 involved African nations and all the individuals indicted by the court have been Africans.
- South Africa, Gambia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and several other African nations have threatened to leave the ICC for anti-Africa bias of the ICC.
- African leaders have argued that the ICC has overlooked the war crimes committed by western nations in Iraq, Libya, and Afghanistan and is targeting weaker nations of Africa.
India and ICC

- India has **neither signed nor ratified** the Rome Statute on the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- India considers the inherent jurisdiction of the ICC as a violation of a nation's sovereignty. Therefore, India has insisted for having an ‘opt-in’ provision whereby a country could accept the jurisdiction of the ICC by declaration, specified to an issue and time period.
- India is resistant to accepting the inherent jurisdiction of the ICC as it would be seen as being superior to Indian judicial system.
- India remains hesitant towards the ICC as it can be used with political motives against India with regard to Kashmir and in other matters of India’s internal affairs.

**CROSS LoC TRADE**

India suspended cross-LoC trade due to concerns over illegal inflows of weapons, narcotics and hawala currency into India. In addition, non-Kashmiri goods including from other countries were being traded at zero tariff which negatively impacted traders on Wagah cross-border trading point. Moreover, terrorists were also functioning as traders from PoK.

It is expected a stricter regulatory regime might be formed after elections for re-initiation of trade.

**THINGS TO KNOW**

- **FEATURES**
  - Cross-LoC trade is basically **intra-Jammu and Kashmir trade**, in the form of **barter of goods** on a reciprocal basis. It began in **2008**.
  - It enlists **21 categories** of items to be **traded on zero tariffs**.
  - LoC trade takes place **four days a week**, wherein traders are allowed to exchange 70 trucks per day.
  - Also Cross-LoC trade is not referred to import or exports, it is known as **trade-in (import)** and **trade-out (export) goods**.
  - Both trade-in & trade-out have to be balanced to zero for each trading firm within a period of three months.
  - There are two trading points: **Salamabad Trade Facilitation Centre (TFC)** in Uri & **Chakan-da-Bagh TFC in Poonch**.
  - Since 2008, trade has shown an average year-on-year growth of about **19%**, reaching a cumulative value of over **₹6,500 crore** to date. Furthermore, it has generated more than **1.6 lakh job days**. This has immensely helped local J&K economy.

- **PROBLEMS**
  - There was a **lack of clarity towards rules of origin**, which has caused non-J&K goods to be traded.
  - Implementation of goods and services tax (GST) & local taxation need to be simplified.
  - A practice of ‘trade number selling’ was prevalent at the TFCs wherein few trading firms sell their registration/token numbers to other trading firms to send the latter's goods across the LoC out of turn in the roster system.
  - There is a presence of ‘seasonal traders’, that is, traders who are active only for few months, who leave a negative balance overall in the barter trade.
  - These are lack of infrastructure such as a non-functional weigh bridge, lack of CCTV cameras and truck scanners.
  - After the removal of MFN status of Pakistan, it was expected that Pakistani goods would attempt to infiltrate Indian markets through zero tariff LoC route.

**IMPROVEMENTS REQUIRED FOR RE-INITIATION**

1. Clarity on the **rules of origin** of goods with tradable commodities identified that will benefit the local economy of Jammu and Kashmir.
2. Eight-digit HS (harmonised system) codes must be assigned to ensure clarity on the items listed for trade.
3. Simplification of taxation system with synchronization between GST and local taxes.
4. Roster system needs to be changed to a first-come-first-serve basis.
5. Digitisation of the TFCs must take place to make the process of record keeping easy, transparent and accessible to various regulatory agencies.
6. In case of non-compliance, a strict ‘trader de-listing policy’ needs to be put in place wherein any trader with a negative balance in barter for more than the designated time period can be suspended from conducting trade.
7. Infrastructure upgradation such as installation of truck scanners, functional CCTV cameras for security, and calibration of weighbridges, are essential to check the inflow of banned items, narcotics and weapon.

WHAT IS THE STRATEGIC IMPACT OF CHINA-MYANMAR ECONOMIC CORRIDOR ON INDIA?

- China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) has been touted as a flagship project of Beijing’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Myanmar which was agreed upon in 2018.
- CMEC holds great significance for China whose landlocked Yunnan Province needs access to the Indian Ocean and thereby also resolve China’s ‘Malacca dilemma’.
- A dual pipeline between Kyaukphyu and Kunming is already functional and China is also forming a SEZ in Kyaukphyu, Myanmar.
- China wants CMEC to be fast tracked sensing possible delay in the implementation of the BCIM-Economic Corridor (running through Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar).

- BCIM corridor was formally given shape first in the Kunming Meet in China (2013) and then in Cox’s Bazar Meet in Bangladesh (2014).
- BCIM included connectivity projects linking Kunming in China’s Yunnan province with Mandalay in Myanmar, then India’s North East and then to Dhaka in Bangladesh before heading to Kolkata, India.
- However, post-2014, due to India’s stand on CPEC and non-
participation in BRF, BCIM has not been undertaken as means of Sub-regionalism and the focus now has shifted to Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN).

- Hence, now China has excluded BCIM economic corridor from the list of projects covered by BRI.

**POSSIBLE IMPACT OF CMEC ON INDIA**

1. There are prospects of increased dumping of Chinese goods in the Indian markets that may route through Myanmar into India.
2. There is an inadequate environmental as well as social impact assessment before undertaking projects such as the Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone (SEZ), which may affect India in Bay of Bengal region.
3. There are concerns of Myanmar falling into the Chinese debt trap, as similar to Sri Lanka.
4. There are strategic concerns such as possible use of Myanmar's deep sea port by China for exercising direct military influence in the Indian Ocean.
5. Increase in non-traditional security threats emanating from the Golden Triangle, basically threat of increased proliferation of drugs and small arms in the region including India's northeast. Golden Triangle is the area where the borders of Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar meet. Along with Afghanistan in the Golden Crescent, it has been one of the most extensive opium-producing areas of Asia.
6. China has been quick in the implementation of its infrastructure projects in Myanmar as compared to India's connectivity projects of Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project. India needs to showcase itself as a reliable economic partner to Myanmar and balance China in our neighbourhood.
7. Chinese presence in Myanmar has pushed for other countries to partner India in infrastructure projects in Myanmar such as Japan in Asia-Africa Growth Corridor.

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**BALAKOT STRATEGIC SHIFT**

Owing to nuclear capabilities of Pakistan, India had preferred doctrine of strategic restraint because nuclear weapons served as deterrence against conventional retaliation from India due to fear of Indian retaliation leading to nuclear war. This fear led to the Indian strategic restraint even in the aftermath of 26/11 Mumbai terror attack. and proved ineffective as policy measure, had the limitations of lack of positive results and being status quoist.

In 2014, The National Security Adviser Ajit Doval characterised strategic doctrine into three modes: defensive, defensive offence and offence. Elaborating on these three modes of engaging an adversary – Pakistan – he made a case for shifting from strategic restraint to defensive offence deterrence.

The offence component of defensive offence is to carry the fight to the enemy through means such as exploiting internal contradictions, international isolation, etc. An illustration of its operation is in the recent India-Pakistan crisis in which India responded to the Pulwama terror attack with an aerial surgical strike.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHANGE NOTICED AFTER BALAKOT</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>POSITIVES</strong></td>
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<td>- It showed the willingness of India to strike Pakistani heartland and thereby move beyond the earlier policy of strategic restraint.</td>
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<td>- It served its intention of demonstrating to Pakistan that India has “capacity and will” to target terrorist camps in a</td>
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controlled skirmish in Pak. heartland without escalating to war.

- The idea that India has a right to non-military pre-emptive self-defence action against Pakistan has been legitimised by the support of the major great powers.
- India’s policy has shifted from **passive defence to active defence**. Indian security forces used to wait to confront Pakistani proxies on Indian soil, however now by striking specifically those targets in Pakistani soil, India has moved to active defence.
- It has increased the cost for Pakistan whereby earlier Pak. only paid for promoting the proxy war in India, however now Pak. would also have to pay for India’s retaliation against such proxy war.
- It showcases that stability exists in the strategic nuclear realm between India and Pakistan under the stability-instability paradox and that the chances of nuclear use between India and Pakistan are remote.

**MANNER** than every previously conducted offensive deterrence operation against Pakistan. An example is that after the surgical strikes in PoK after Uri attack, India conducted surgical strikes in Pakistani mainland after Pulwama attack.

- It increases the **pressure of international community upon India** to showcase strategic restraint and it also allows Pakistan & its allies like China to showcase Pakistan as a victim of Indian aggression.
- Offensive missions increase the **likelihood of capture or loss of Indian military personnel** to enemy country.
- It largely relies on India’s own capability and any offensive actions would not include the participation of countries like Iran, Afghanistan, Bangladesh & others that also suffer from Pakistani terrorism.
- Limited offensive missions **do not solve the primary cause of dispute** between India & Pakistan.

**NEWS SNIPPETS**

**IN NEWS:** The process of Britain leaving the EU formally began through **Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty**. This is for the first time this Article 50 was invoked.

Britain was originally going to leave EU on 29th March 2019 but before Britain leaving EU, Britain and EU are supposed to sign the Brexit deal.

However, they have not been able to agree upon a Brexit deal and therefore EU and Britain have decided to move the date of Britain leaving EU to **31st October 2019**. The concerns with regards to Brexit deal include:

- Britain intends to leave the Customs Union of EU, however it has created a concern with regards to formation of **custom checks on the only land border of Britain that is with Ireland**. An “Irish backstop” agreement is meant to ensure a ‘Soft border’ between Ireland & Northern Ireland region of Britain. Hence custom check will go against Irish agreement.
- The **Belfast Agreement also known as Good Friday agreement** 1998 among several measures allowed free flow of people between Northern Ireland region of Britain & Ireland to end the politico-religious conflict known as Troubles. Now Britain intends to leave the Common Market of the EU which provides for the free flow of capital, citizens, goods & services among member-States & this has raised concerns over allowing free flow of citizens of Ireland who are also EU citizens to Northern Ireland.
- The current Dispute Settlement Mechanism for trade between EU & Britain is **European Court of**
Justice. However, a no deal Brexit would lead to World trade Organisation as the de-facto Dispute Settlement Mechanism for trade.

**IN NEWS:** The Ministry of External Affairs has established an Indo-Pacific division within the ministry, in light of India’s growing interests within that particular region. The exact purview of the division is yet to be confirmed, but is expected to include ASEAN & its member-countries and Indian Ocean Rim Association.

MEA already has an Indian Ocean Region Division which deals with all matters relating to Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Indian Ocean Region.

India's vision for Indo-Pacific was highlighted by the Prime Minister of India during Shangri-La Dialogue in 2018, which includes:

- India has asserted to **become a Net Security Provider** in Indian Ocean region and has embraced ASEAN Centrality in Indo-Pacific architecture.
- India is **evolving its regional role** to encompass the Indo-Pacific and Eurasian region to ensure a balanced multipolar world
- India would continue **to maintain its strategic autonomy** irrespective of the prevailing geopolitics so as to ensure stability in power relations in Asian region among the great powers
- India will not be a part of closed group of nations or aggregate Indian power in any particular bloc and India's friendship with any nation should not be mis-construed as an alliance
- India's growing engagement in the Indo-Pacific region should not be considered anti-China.
- India continues to maintain **multilateralism** as form of foreign policy engagement with parallel interactions (E.g. SCO & Quad) based on respective common mutual interests
- India will ensure freedom of flight and navigation, commitment to international UNCLOS law and disaster management in region.

**ASIAN TEA ALLIANCE**

**IN NEWS:** The Asian Tea Alliance (ATA), a union of five tea-growing and consuming countries, was launched in Guizhou in China.

The members of the alliance are the Indian Tea Association, China Tea Marketing Association, Indonesian Tea Marketing Association, Sri Lanka Tea Board and Japan Tea Association.

- ATA plans to work towards **enhancing** tea trade, cultural exchanges, technology exchanges as well as globally promoting tea.
- It will also work towards **enhancing** global consumption of tea, while creating a sustainability agenda for the future of Asian tea.
- The forging of this alliance comes close on the heels of the signing of a **memorandum of understanding in December 2018** between the Indian Tea Association and China Tea Marketing Association.
- The two associations signed the pact to **promote green and black tea consumption** in major tea markets of Europe, the U.S., Russia and West Asia, besides India and China.
IN NEWS: The U.S. will not renew exemptions from its sanctions for importing oil from Iran. The Significant Reduction Exceptions [SREs] were granted in November 2018 for a 180-day period for India and seven other countries, and are expiring on May 2, 2019.

- India, China and U.S. allies Japan, South Korea and Turkey will be the most impacted by the non-renewal of waivers. The other three currently exempted countries — Italy, Greece and Taiwan have already reduced their imports to zero.

- **India is Iran’s top oil buyer after China.** In 2018-19, it imported 23.5 million tonnes from Iran; in the previous year, almost 10% of its total 220.4 million tonnes of crude imports was from Iran.

- Iran was the fourth largest supplier of oil to India in 2018-19, and other suppliers may not provide the same benefits in the form of price and credit facilities such as Rupee-Rial payment mechanism.

- In 2018-19 (first 11 months), of India's total $128.7 billion import of Petroleum, Oil & Lubricants (POL), Iran accounted for 9%, according to Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).

- Now Indian refiners are increasing their planned purchases from the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Mexico, and even the US to make up for the loss of Iranian oil.

▶ **Potential impact**

1. **Current account deficit:** Higher crude oil prices will widen the trade deficit and current account deficit, given that the value of imports goes up with crude oil.

2. **Rupee:** The currency could be impacted if the trade and current account deficits were to widen. An increase in the import bill will tend to put pressure on the Rupee.

3. **Inflation:** There could be significant impact on inflation, given how crude oil prices move and the extent to which the government allows the pass-through to the consumer.

4. **Fiscal impact:** There could be a two pronged impact on government finances — both on the revenue side and on the expenditure side. On the revenue side, higher oil prices mean more revenue for the states as tax is ad valorem; for the Centre, though, it may not materially impact the fiscal calculation as the duty rates are fixed.

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**ZAYED MEDAL & ORDER OF ST. ANDREW**

- UAE bestowed its highest decoration Zayed Medal to PM Modi in April, 2019 for strengthening India-UAE ties

- Order of St. Andrew the Apostle is the highest civilian award of Russia. The award was given to the PM Modi in April, 2019 for his distinguished achievement in developing the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership between Russia and India.
**NEW ARAB SPRING / ARAB SPRING 2.0**

The Arab Spring: varying outcomes

- **Dictator Omar Al Bashir** was ousted from power in Sudan after months of protests. He was responsible for the Darfur humanitarian crisis and a warrant for his arrest was issued by the International Criminal Court in 2009 for War crimes and crimes against humanity.

- The protests in Sudan began from the city of Atbara and spread to all major cities over the country and then further to Algeria and Libya.

- These protests have now been labelled as **Arab Spring 2.0**, whereby the original Arab Spring which began in North African country of **Tunisia** and had spread to major arts of the Arab World in both North Africa and to West Asia.

- The expectation was that in countries where people rose, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain and Syria, the old autocracies would be replaced with new democracies. But except Tunisia, the country-specific stories of the Arab uprising remained tragic.

- These tragedies, however, did not kill the revolutionary spirit of the Arab youth, as the protests in Sudan and Algeria show.
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- The driving force behind the protests was a pan-Arabist anger against the old system. They may have failed to reshape the Arab political order, but the embers of the uprisings appear to have survived the tragedy of ‘Arab Spring’.

⇒ VENEZUELA CRISIS

- A defiant Nicolás Maduro, who is clinging to the President-ship of Venezuela despite increasing protests against him is now being forced by US and European sanctions leading to humanitarian crisis and evening surpassing Zimbabwe in the incidence of hyperinflation in the world.
- It has led to mass migration from Venezuela to neighbouring countries due to mass economic distress caused by hyper-inflation and lack of essential resources.
- Lima Group is multilateral body formed by North American and South American countries to establish a peaceful resolution to Venezuela Crisis.
- It includes Canada, Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, among others, but does not include U.S.

⇒ INDIA IN SOUTH SUDAN

- South Sudan officially known as the Republic of South Sudan, is a landlocked country in East-Central Africa.
- The country gained its independence from the Republic of the Sudan in 2011, making it the newest country. Its capital and largest city is Juba.
- South Sudan has suffered from ethnic violence and has been in a civil war since 2013. Civil War is an ongoing conflict in South Sudan between forces of the government and opposition forces.
- The UN Security Council determined that the situation faced by South Sudan continued to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region and hence established UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to consolidate peace and security.
- Recently, a total of 150 Indian peacekeepers serving with the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) have received medals of honour for their dedicated service and sacrifice.
- India has the second largest UN troop strength in South Sudan after Rwanda. Garhwal Rifles was recently inducted in UNMISS under the operational domain of peace enforcement.
25 years ago in 1994, Rwanda witnessed genocide of Tutsis by the Majority Hutu Tribe. This led to the killing of more than 8 lakhs.

Now on the 25th anniversary of the genocide, Paul Kagme, the President of Rwanda declared that the country had become "a family once again".

The genocide has cast a long shadow over regeneration but the country has recovered economically, with President Kagame's policies encouraging rapid growth and technological advancement.

He won a third term in office in the most recent election in 2017.

Growth remains good - 7.2% in 2018 according to the African Development Bank.
E.C. ON ELECTRONIC MEDIA REGULATION DURING M.C.C.

The issue of violation of Model Code of Conduct has been in news in the present general election of 2019. We have seen the Election Commission taking stern actions against complaints filed on violation of MCC by political parties or candidates. The Commission even condemned and prohibited some of the senior political leaders from holding any public meetings, public processions, public rallies, road shows, interviews and public utterances in print, electronic or social media for 48 to 72 hours for violating the Code. There were even complaints filed on hate speech made by some leaders at political rallies. So, it becomes imperative for the Election Commission to take action against complaints filed on violation of MCC so as to provide a level playing field to all political parties without any bias. On this note, let us go through some of the important cases which were in news and become important for us to know as an aware citizen of India.

ABOUT MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT (MCC)

- Free and fair elections form the bed rock of democracy. This envisages a level playing field for the contestants and an equal opportunity for all parties for presenting their policies and programmes to voters. In this context MCC gains relevance as it intends to provide a level playing field for all political parties, keep the campaign fair and healthy, avoid clashes and conflicts between parties, and ensure peace and order.

- It aims to ensure that the ruling party, either at the Centre or in the States, does not misuse its official position to gain an unfair advantage in an election.

- MCC for guidance of political parties and candidates is a set of norms which has been evolved with the consensus of political parties who have consented to abide by the principles embodied in the said code and also binds them to respect and observe it in its letter and spirit.

- The salient features of the MCC lay down how political parties, contesting candidates and party(s) in power should conduct themselves during the process of elections i.e. on their general conduct during electioneering, holding meetings and processions, poll day activities and functioning of the party in power etc.

- In the case of Union of India v Harbans Singh Jalal and Others, the Supreme Court ruled that Code of Conduct would come into force the moment the Election Commission issues the press release, which precedes the notification by a good two weeks. Thus, the MCC remains in force from the date of announcement of elections till the completion of elections. It is applicable during Lok Sabha Elections, elections to State Legislative Assembly and also during by-elections.

- However, the MCC does not have statutory backing and it remains only guidelines to be followed during elections and to be executed by the Election Commission of India.

On the basis of above, let us understand it more on the basis of PM’s address on ASAT, Biopic & Web Series on PM, NAMO TV, and Political coverage on DD News.
Constitution, Polity and Governance

ASAT TEST (27TH MARCH, 2019)

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted an Anti-Satellite (A-SAT) missile test ‘Mission Shakti’ from the Dr AP J Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha. A DRDO-developed Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) Interceptor Missile successfully engaged an Indian orbiting target satellite in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) in a ‘Hit to Kill’ mode.
- This achievement was addressed to the nation by the Prime Minister. However, the address raised concerns especially by opposition parties regarding violation of Model Code of Conduct which has already had come into effect. On this Election Commission constituted a committee of officers who looked into this very issue.

EC’S OBSERVATION

- Election Commission has ruled that Prime Minister did not violate paragraph 4 of Part VII of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) by announcing through a nationally televised address about ‘Mission Shakti’.
- Para 4 of Part VII deals with
  - Issue of advertisement at the cost of public exchequer in the newspapers and other media;
  - the misuse of official mass media during the election period for partisan coverage of political news and publicity regarding achievements with a view to furthering the prospects of the party in power shall be scrupulously avoided.

RELATED INFORMATION

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BIOPIC & WEB SERIES

- The issue of Biopic made on the life of Prime Minister created controversies on the same issue of violation of Model Code of Conduct as it amounted to advertisement of personal life and achievements of Prime Minister’s life and also his ruling Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) thereby putting BJP in an advantageous position.
- A web series titled “Modi-Journey of a common man” streaming on Eros Now was brought to the notice of Election Commission as it showcased different phases of life of PM from childhood to becoming a national leader.

SUPREME COURT’S DIRECTION | EC’S VIEW
--- | ---
The Supreme Court asked the Election Commission to decide:- | The Commission gave the following orders:
- whether the content of the movie which relates to the | • Any biopic material in the nature of biography/hagiography having political purpose and also having the potential to disturb level playing field during elections, should not be displayed in electronic media including films during the operation of MCC.
**Constitution, Polity and Governance**

Prime Minister and his political party and their achievements during office are displayed for the purpose of electoral gains during the period of Model Code of Conduct.

- Displaying such political contents on electronic media which discredit or diminish the electoral prospect of candidate or political party(ies).
- That any poster or publicity material concerning any certified content which either depicts a candidate for the furtherance of electoral prospect, directly or indirectly shall not be put to display in electronic/print media in area where MCC is in operation.
- If in any certified cinematograph material, there exist a violation or on receipt of complaints in this regard, a Committee shall be constituted by the Commission which shall examine the issue and suggest appropriate action. This Committee shall be headed by a retired Justice of Supreme Court or retired Chief Justice of any High Court.
- In the case of web series on PM, EC observed that since the PM was himself a prospective candidate in the general election of 2019, hence ordered to stop further streaming of the web series as it violated the MCC.

### NAMO TV

**EC’s Observation**

Election Commission gave the following orders with respect to airing of content on NAMO TV:

- All political advertisement and all recorded programmes with political contents are mandatorily required to be pre-certified by the Media Certification and Monitoring Committee (MCMC) before its telecast for the common public.
- Any political publicity materials/contents being displayed on electronic media without pre-certification by MCMC shall be removed immediately.
- Political content, if aired must be in conformity of permission granted by the Election Commission.
- Cannot be aired i.e. has to follow 48 hours campaign prohibition in the areas scheduled to vote in phase wise manner.

### Political Coverage on DD News

#### The Complaint

- The “Main Bhi Chowkidar” programme of the pm was broadcast live on DD News and its YouTube channel, and was even promoted on the social media handles of DD News.
- The complaint to EC alleged that DD News was used as a tool to promote and advertise Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s “Main Bhi Chowkidar” event.
- After the complaint, EC sought specific details on time allocated on the channel to different political parties.

#### EC’s Ruling

- The Commission asked DD News to observe Model Code of Conduct and avoid misuse of official mass media during the election period for partisan coverage of political news and publicity news and publicity regarding achievement with a view of furthering the prospects of the party.
- The Election Commission observed that air time given to various political parties is disproportionate and not balanced which is not in accordance with the principles of maintaining neutrality and a level playing field.
- The Election Commission directed Doordarshan to "desist" from extending any preferential or disproportionate airtime coverage in favour of any party and extend commensurate and balanced coverage of the activities of all recognised political parties.
- The Commission also directed officials/anchors/moderators of the channels present on TV shows/debates not to exhibit any bias, prejudice or slant in their reporting towards any political party.
Fake contents on social media have a lasting impact and this idea is also used to influence thinking pattern of individuals so as to have an impact during election season. So, to regulate these instances of fake news and messages, Facebook has taken various steps to regulate fake news on its website especially in the backdrop of present Lok Sabha elections.

Facebook spent more than 18 months assessing “risk” across its platforms to ensure that the Lok Sabha election is free from both foreign and domestic interference. Facebook said it had removed more than 1.5 billion fake accounts globally in April-September 2018, which is a jump from the 1.3 billion such accounts it had removed in the previous six months. Besides churning out massive volumes of fake content, it is now evident that individual operators on social media are trying to influence minds and voting patterns.

### GUIDELINES BY EC

- EC in a circular dated **3rd January, 2017** has issued guidelines for dealing with candidate’s advertisements on TV/Cable channels/newspapers owned by political parties or their functionaries/office bearers during elections.
- The Commission has directed that if the candidates or their sponsoring parties utilize TV/Cable Channel/Newspaper owned by them for promoting the electoral prospects of the candidate, the **expenses for the same must be disclosed** in their Election Expenditure Statement made to the Election Commission.
- The **Media Certification and Monitoring Committees** shall keep a close watch on the contents telecast on channels.
- The Election Commission (EC) has also amended the **Model Code of Conduct (MCC)** and has prohibited political parties from releasing their manifestos in the last 48 hours leading up to voting in each phase of the coming Lok Sabha elections.
- The above change has been made in **Part 8 of the MCC**, which deals with poll manifestos. The EC’s decision stems from the recommendation of a 14-member committee set up to revisit the MCC, Section 126 of the Representation of the People (RP) Act, 1951 which prohibits any form of poll campaign in the last 48 hours leading up to voting, and other related provisions in the wake of rapid media expansion.

### IAMAI

**What?**

- The Internet & Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) is **not-for-profit industry body** registered under the Societies Act, 1896. Its mandate is to expand and enhance the online and mobile value added services sectors.
- It presents a unified voice of the businesses it represents to the government, investors, consumers and other stakeholders.

**Voluntary Code of Ethics by IAMAI**

- IAMAI has presented a “Voluntary Code of Ethics for the General Election 2019”. The Code of Ethics has been developed in Election Commission’s meeting with IAMAI and representatives of Social Media Platforms including Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Google, ShareChat and TikTok etc.
- The ‘**Code of Ethics**’ has been developed to ensure **free, fair & ethical usage of Social Media Platforms to maintain the integrity of the electoral process for the General Elections 2019**. The Code voluntarily agreed upon by the Participants and has come into effect for general election of 2019.
- The **purpose of this code** is to identify measures that social media platforms can put in place to increase confidence in the electoral process. This will also help safeguard the products and services offered by social media platforms against misuse to vitiate the free and fair conduct of general elections 2019.
- The Social Media Platforms have committed to process any violations reported under **Section 126 of RP Act**, etc.
1951 within three hours as per recommendations of Umesh Sinha Committee.

- The Platforms have also agreed to create a high priority dedicated reporting mechanism for the Election Commission of India and appoint dedicated teams during the period of General Elections for taking expeditious action on any reported violations.
- Platforms have also agreed to provide a mechanism for political advertisers to submit pre-certified advertisements issued by Media Certification and Monitoring Committee. The Code of Ethics also promises to facilitate transparency in paid political advertisements.
- IAMAI has agreed to coordinate with participants’ various steps mentioned in this code. Participants have also committed to voluntarily undertake voter awareness campaigns.

SECTION 126 OF RP ACT, 1951

- Social Media Platform and Election Commission of India have developed a notification mechanism by which the ECI can notify the relevant platforms of potential violations of section 126 of Representation of People Act, 1951 and other applicable electoral laws in India.
- These valid legal orders will be acknowledged and processed within 3 hours of violation reported under section 126 of RPA, 1951.
- Section 126 - Prohibition of public meetings during period of forty-eight hours ending with hour fixed for conclusion of poll. —

(1) No person shall—

(a) convene, hold or attend, join or address any public meeting or procession in connection with an election; or
(b) display to the public any election matter by means of cinematograph, television or other similar apparatus; or
(c) propagate any election matter to the public by holding, or by arranging the holding of, any musical concert or any theatrical performance or any other entertainment or amusement with a view to attracting the members of the public thereto, in any polling area during the period of forty-eight hours ending with the fixed for the conclusion of the poll for any election in the polling area.

(2) Any person who contravenes the above provisions shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

VOTING RIGHTS FOR UNDER TRIALS?

A petition has been filed in Supreme Court which has questioned the electoral laws which denies undertrials and convicts their right to vote. The petitioner argued that the provisions of law violates the rights to equality under Article 14, right to vote (Article 326) and is arbitrary in nature.

THINGS TO UNDERSTAND

- Article 326 of the Indian Constitution provides that every person who is a citizen of India and who is not less than 18 years of age shall be entitled to be registered as a voter at any such election.
- The article further provides that if any citizen is otherwise disqualified under this Constitution or any law made by the appropriate Legislature on the ground of non-residence, unsoundness of
mind, crime or corrupt or illegal practice, shall not be entitled to be registered as a voter at any such election.

Section 16 – Representation of People Act, 1950

It provides for Disqualifications for registration in an electoral roll. A person shall be disqualified for registration in an electoral roll if he -

a) is not a citizen of India; or
b) is of unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent court; or
c) is for the time being disqualified from voting under the provisions of any law relating to corrupt practices and other offences in connection with elections.

The name of any person who becomes so disqualified after registration shall forthwith be struck off the electoral roll in which it is included.

Section 62 of Representation of People Act, 1951

It provides for Right to Vote.

• No person shall vote at an election in any constituency if he is subject to any of the disqualifications referred to in section 16 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950.
• No person shall vote at a general election in more than one constituency of the same class, and if a person votes in more than one such constituency, his votes in all such constituencies shall be void.
• No person shall vote at any election if he is confined in a prison, whether under a sentence of imprisonment or transportation or otherwise, or is in the lawful custody of the police.
• The provisions however exempt a person held under preventive detention from this rigour.

Thus, it denies undertrials the right to vote.

However, if a person is out on bail, then he/she is allowed to caste vote.

CASSATION BENCH OF SC

The Supreme Court is not a court of everyday appeals and thus it requires deburdening so as to focus more on constitutional cases and assigning appeals against High Court orders in non-constitutional cases to Court of Appeals. In this regard, the manifesto of Indian National Congress has a section on Judiciary which promises to “make the Supreme Court a Constitutional Court that will hear and decide cases involving the interpretation of the Constitution”, “establish a new Court of Appeal”, and enhance representation in the judiciary at all levels of sections of society that are underrepresented currently.

Let us go through the different reports of Law Commission on the working of Supreme Court of India.

THINGS TO UNDERSTAND

• Many countries have constitutional courts as well as final courts of appeal called Courts of Cassation (Cour de Cassation in French) for adjudication of non-constitutional matters.
• A court of cassation is the judicial court of last resort and has power to quash or reverse decisions of the inferior courts.
• A court of cassation is a high-instance court that exists in some judicial systems. Courts of cassation do not re-examine the facts of a case, they only interpret the relevant law. In this, they are appellate courts of the highest instance.
Example of France

- The Court of Cassation is the highest court in the French judiciary. Civil, commercial, social or criminal cases are first ruled upon by courts of first instance or lower courts, commercial courts and industrial or labour courts.
- Depending on the importance of the dispute concerned, decisions by these courts are made at last instance in small cases or at first instance in the majority of cases.
- Decisions rendered at last instance may be challenged in a court of appeal, where all aspects of them are re-examined, as to both facts and law.
- Decisions at last instance by courts of first instance or decisions by courts of appeal may themselves form the object of an appeal before the Court of Cassation.
- The purpose of Cassation Bench is essentially not to rule on the merits, but to interpret the law.

OBSERVATION BY LAW COMMISSION REPORTS IN INDIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>95TH REPORT</th>
<th>125TH REPORT</th>
<th>229TH REPORT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• In 1984, the 10th Law Commission of India, 95th Report titled “Constitutional Division within the Supreme Court – A proposal for”, under Justice K. K. Mathew recommended that the Supreme Court of India should consist of two Divisions, namely (a) Constitutional Division and (b) Legal Division and Only matters of Constitutional law may be assigned to the proposed Constitutional Division.</td>
<td>• Eleventh Law Commission titled “The Supreme Court – A Fresh Look” under the chairmanship of Justice D.A.Desai (125th Report, 1988) recommended for splitting the Supreme Court into two i.e. Constitutional and Legal divisions.</td>
<td>• 18th Law Commission under Justice A R Lakshmanan (229th Report, 2009) recommended that “a Constitution Bench be set up at Delhi to deal with constitutional and other allied issues”, and “Four Cassation Benches be set up in the 1. Northern region/zone at Delhi, 2. Southern region/zone at Chennai/Hyderabad, 3. Eastern region/zone at Kolkata and 4. Western region/zone at Mumbai to deal with all appellate work arising out of the orders/judgments of the High Courts of the particular region”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The report also highlighted the high cost of litigation with respect to travelling to Delhi specially from far away areas of the country such as South India. (#Cost Effective Justice)</td>
<td>• Considering the cost analysis, 11th Law Commission suggested to split Supreme Court into Constitutional Court and Court of Appeal or a Federal Court of Appeal which will sit in Benches in places North, South, East, West and Central India. (# Equity of Justice to all geographical regions)</td>
<td>• The Commission also referred Second, Sixth, Fifteenth, Twentieth and Twenty-sixth Reports of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice which has repeatedly suggested that in order to promote speedy justice available to the common man, benches of the Supreme Court have to be established in the Southern, Western and North-Eastern parts of the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To effect the recommendation, a constitutional amendment must be necessary to create Constitutional Division and Legal Division of Supreme Court.</td>
<td>• Bringing one’s own lawyer who has handled the matter in the High Court adds to the cost of litigation. Thus, there is wastage of time, effort and money just to hear a case in Supreme Court which is located in Delhi.</td>
<td>The Commission in its report favoured the above reports of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice.</td>
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JURISDICTION OF CASSATION BENCH AS RECOMMENDED

• The 229th Report has also suggested territorial jurisdiction of each of these Cassation Benches of Supreme Court to be constituted under Article 130 of the Indian Constitution.
**Constitution, Polity and Governance**

- **Article 130 - Seat of Supreme Court** - *The Supreme Court shall sit in Delhi or in such other place or places, as the Chief Justice of India may, with the approval of the President, from time to time, appoint*

- The below mentioned Benches shall act as Cassation Benches to deal with appeals from a High Court in the particular region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>States/Union Territories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Zone</td>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, the National Capital Territory of Delhi and the Union territory of Chandigarh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Zone</td>
<td>Chennai/Hyderabad</td>
<td>Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and the Union territories of Puducherry and Lakshadweep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Zone</td>
<td>Kolkata</td>
<td>West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Jharkhand, Assam and the Northeastern States including Sikkim and the Union territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Zone</td>
<td>Mumbai</td>
<td>Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa and the Union territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu.</td>
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</table>

**Benefits of Cassation Benches**

1. Supreme Court will be relieved of the *backlog of accumulated cases* which are causing a burden and continuous strain on the resources of the apex court.
2. Supreme Court would be *free to deal with only constitutional cases* such as interpretation of the Constitution, matters of national importance and other references made by the zonal benches to larger benches due to conflict of authority or any other reason.
3. Benches can be set up under the Supreme Court Rules 1966 without much delay as it is under the preview of Supreme Court of India.
4. Cassation Benches will *reduce cost of litigation and reduce time* taken to dispose of cases. (*Cost effective and speedy Justice*).
5. Cassation bench will also lead to increase in strength of number of Judges in the higher judiciary. This will lead to more recruitment of judges in the higher judiciary.
6. All India Judicial Service as prescribed under Article 312 of the Indian Constitution will have greater chance of coming into effect.

**JUDICIARY UNDER RTI?**

A Judiciary confident of its place in a democratic republic must not worry about public scrutiny of judicial appointments. Hence, Indian Judiciary including the office of Judges must subject itself to Right to Information (RTI). Having said that, independence of judiciary shall also not be compromised by any manner as it is one of the basic feature of the Indian Constitution. So, there is a need for fine balance between judicial independence and judicial accountability within the four walls of Indian Constitution.

**Things to understand**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORDER OF CIC</th>
<th>JUDGMENT OF DELHI HIGH COURT</th>
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<tr>
<td>• The Central Information Commission (CIC) in 2009,</td>
<td>• Delhi High Court held that Supreme Court and the Chief</td>
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</table>
directed the Supreme Court’s Registry to furnish information to Subhash Chandra Agarwal, who had sought information as to whether judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts had given declaration of their income and assets to the Chief Justice of India.

- This order of CIC was challenged in a Single Judge Bench of Delhi High Court by the Supreme Court Administration. SC argued that information of judges’ assets was exempted under Section 8(1)(e) of RTI Act as it was received by CJI under “fiduciary capacity”.

Justice of India were “public authorities” under the RTI Act, having statutory duty to furnish information sought by citizens regarding the functioning and administration of the SC.

- While upholding the CIC order, the Court rejected the argument that information of judges’ assets was exempt under Section 8(1)(e) of the Act as it was received by CJI under “fiduciary capacity”.

- The judgment also held that the information of judges’ assets does not qualify as “personal information” exempt from public disclosure under Section 8(1)(j).

WHO IS A PUBLIC AUTHORITY?

As per Right to Information Act, 2005, “public authority” means any authority or body or institution of self-government established or constituted

(a) By or under the Constitution
(b) By any other law made by Parliament
(c) By any other law made by State Legislature
(d) by notification issued or order made by the appropriate Government,

and includes any (i) body owned, controlled or substantially financed or (ii) non-Government organisation substantially financed, directly or indirectly by funds provided by the appropriate Government.

So, the question is whether Judges of Supreme Court and the Supreme Court comes within the provision of “public authority” as defined above.

EXEMPTIONS CLAIMED BY SC UNDER RTI

- Section 8 of RTI Act provides for exemption from disclosure of information.
- Section 8(1)(e) - information available to a person in his fiduciary relationship is exempted from disclosure, unless the competent authority is satisfied that the larger public interest warrants the disclosure of such information.
- Section 8(1)(j) - information which relates to personal information the disclosure of which has no relationship to any public activity or interest, or which would cause unwarranted invasion of the privacy of the individual unless the Central Public Information Officer or the State Public Information Officer or the appellate authority is satisfied that the larger public interest justifies the disclosure of such information. It further states that information which cannot be denied to the Parliament or a State Legislature shall not be denied to any person under RTI.

WHY JUDICIARY SHOULD BE BROUGHT UNDER RTI?

- All powerful institutions including legislature, executive and the judiciary must be held accountable to the Constitution of India. The judges of the Supreme Court interpret the law but are not law unto themselves hence no constitution office holder, however supreme is beyond the realms of the boundaries set by the Constitution. So, considering this constitutional parameter, even the judiciary must be held accountable and must be brought within the preview of Right to Information Act, 2005.
- A blanket judicial exemption from the RTI Act would defeat the basic idea of “open justice”.
- The claim that bringing judiciary under RTI will affect private lives of judges does not hold much ground as RTI seeks to make the judicial administration and working more transparent.
CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

- RTI does not interfere with the private lives of judges and their families as the RTI Act itself has an inbuilt privacy-oriented protection (under section 8) which authorises withholding the disclosure of personal information unless there is an overriding public interest.

- Every norms of disclosure of assets followed by any public authority should be adhered to even by the Judges of India in the right spirit. It is the best way forward to bring transparency in the entire working of judiciary as it will help in not only upholding the integrity of the institution but also strengthens public faith in one of the most important institution of Indian democracy which guards fundamental and other rights of India.

DEBATE: RTI VS. JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

Disclosure of highly sensitive communication under RTI will risk the very existence of the judicial way of functioning. So, the information should be kept confidential.

Although right to know was part of the right to free speech, but the right to free speech is, however, subject to reasonable restrictions.

ACTIONS BY SC FOR BETTER TRANSPARENCY

- Former Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra in a rare move resolved to bring more transparency in the working of Collegium which comprise of five senior-most Judges of Supreme Court including the Chief Justice of India by making the decision of collegium open for public viewing.

- Now, all the recommendations of the Collegium are available on the website of Supreme Court including the reasons for recommendations or rejection of names for appointment, transfers or elevation to either High Court or Supreme Court.

WAY FORWARD

Should collegium be under RTI?

- Supreme Court is hearing the petition, if collegium should come under the Right to information Act and consequential effect it would have over judicial independence.

- The Supreme Court, after losing legal battles before the Central Information Commission (CIC) and the Delhi High Court, finally had to appeal to itself to protect the collegium's workings.

- After nine years, the appeal is now being heard by the Constitution Bench on the questions that if it would be destructive to judicial independence is collegium is brought under RTI.

Global examples for consideration

- In the United States, for example, candidates for judicial appointments in the federal judiciary are subjected to public confirmation hearings by the Senate.

- In Kenya and South Africa, the interviews of candidates taken by judicial appointments commissions are broadcast live. The public, thus, is in a position to judge for itself the selection process. This is crucial to maintaining public faith in the impartiality of the institution.

The Supreme Court has directed the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to withdraw its “Disclosure Policy” that made certain information exempt from disclosure under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. While doing so, the Court said that the RBI will have to divulge the information of banks and financial institutions that was sought by the petitioners under RTI. The RBI had not furnished information regarding a list of banks that had violated certain banking rules and norms under the RTI Act.
**WHAT HAPPENED?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLAIM BY PETITIONER</th>
<th>ARGUMENTS BY RBI</th>
<th>JUDGEMENT OF SC</th>
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<tr>
<td>• In 2015, in <strong>RBI v Jayanti Lal</strong>, it was held that RBI was duty bound to disclose information under RTI.</td>
<td>• The grounds taken by the RBI for withholding this information was the nation's economic interest, as well as the fiduciary relationship of the RBI with the banks.</td>
<td>• The Court said that even though it could have taken RBI's violation of its 2015 order seriously, it will give one last opportunity to RBI but also cautioned that any future violation of the Court's order by RBI will be treated as contempt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The Court had further held that information regarding defaulters cannot be exempted from being disclosed under the garb of confidence and trust between the RBI and defaulters.</td>
<td>• In 2016-17, RBI came up with a Disclosure Policy which prevented disclosure of sensitive information.</td>
<td>• The Court said that disclosure of information under section 8 of RTI is prevented only if withholding such information serves larger public interest and in this case withholding information about defaulters did not serve any public interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A contempt petition was filed by the petitioner against Reserve Bank for not following 2015 judgment of Supreme Court.</td>
<td>• RBI in its arguments said that disclosure of sensitive information was prevented to be made public under section 8 of RTI Act (discussed above) and RBI is not obligated to provide sensitive information which impacts national interest.</td>
<td>• The Court also said that RBI does not obtain information from banks under fiduciary relationship rather obtains information as a monetary regulator provided through Banking Regulation Act and RBI Act. Thus, as per law, RBI is duty bound to disclose information of defaulters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The RBI had issued a “<strong>Disclosure Policy</strong>” under which certain information was claimed to be exempted from being disclosed under the RTI Act. This policy was brought out despite the Supreme Court’s judgment in relation to such disclosure.</td>
<td>• Even under <strong>Banking Regulation Act, 1949</strong> annual inspection of reports can only be disclosed if approved by Central government for publishing.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• As per <strong>RBI Act, 1934</strong>, sensitive information of banks is confidential and cannot be disclosed. Banks provide such sensitive information to RBI on the basis of fiduciary relationship enjoyed by banks and RBI.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Constitution, Polity and Governance

- The Central government as well as the Administrator should be true to the concept of democratic principles. Otherwise, the constitutional scheme of the country of being democratic and republic would be defeated.
- The Court said that Article 239AA imposes several restrictions on the legislature of Delhi as they cannot legislate on some of the entries in State List - Public Order (Entry 1), Police (Entry 2), and Land (Entry 18). However, no such restrictions have been imposed explicitly in the case of Puducherry under Article 239A.
- So, on the basis of difference in law making power of legislatures of Delhi and Puducherry, the Court held that Legislature of Puducherry is supreme and above the Administrator of Puducherry.
- Thus, on this basis, the Court held that Government Secretaries of the Puducherry administration were required to report to the Council of Ministers headed by the Chief Minister on all official matters. The secretaries are thereby not empowered to issue orders on their own or upon the instructions of the Administrator of Puducherry.
- The Court disapproved of the present practice where officials being part of social media groups were taking administrative instruction from Administrator for redressing public grievances. As per the rules, officials are bound to use only authorised medium of communication when it came to issues related to administration.
- The Court while mentioning about Section 44 (Council of Minister) of Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 said that it is the bounden duty of the Administrator and the Council of Ministers to avoid logjam and facilitate the smooth functioning of the government in public interest, leaving the political differences apart.

Possible Impact

The decision of High Court has given clarity about functions of Administrator and Council of Ministers. This will improve administrative efficiency in public service delivery which is important for functioning of a vibrant democracy as per the constitution and other laws enacted by the Parliament.

IN NEWS: A judgment of Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court has extended enjoyment of civil rights, especially those pertaining to marriage to trans-persons.

THINGS TO KNOW

- The judgment allowing marriage of a man with trans-person in a way has also opened doors to the larger Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) community for availing civil rights including marriage, succession and inheritance.
- In the judgment delivered in Arunkumar and Sreeja v. Inspector General of Registration and Others (2019), the Madras High Court has held that a properly solemnized marriage between a male and trans-woman is valid under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.
- The judgment specifically highlights that The Registrar of Marriages is bound to register such a marriage under the law.
- The judgment quotes NALSA v. Union of India (2014), which held that transgender persons have the right to decide their “self-identified gender”.
- The judgment states that the expression “bride” occurring in Section 5 of the Hindu Marriage Act
Constitution, Polity and Governance

cannot have a static or immutable meaning and the court is free to apply the current meaning of the law with present-day conditions.

- The Court also made a reference to the nine-judge Bench in Justice (Retd.) K.S. Puttaswamy (Right to Privacy judgment) while delivering the judgment on right to privacy, referred to the landmark judgment of Obergefell v. Hodges (2015) of Supreme Court of United States.
- In Obergefell v. Hodges, U.S. Supreme Court held that the “fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples by both Due Process Clause and Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.”

IMPACT OF JUDGEMENT

- The Madurai Bench judgment has revised the legal construction of gender and the conventional interpretation of terms such as “bride” and “bridegroom”.
- After Supreme Court Judgment in Navtej Singh Johar v Union of India and the judgment of US Supreme Court on rights of homosexuals, there cannot be any legal bar to extend civil rights such as marriage, succession or inheritance to
  - LGBTQ couples who have decided to get married consensually or
  - have married in accordance with the existing laws and are not in violation of any other laws

IN NEWS: Drug Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) has recommended that Health Ministry should bring all medical devices under the drug laws giving users more protection while using medical devices.

THINGS TO KNOW

- According to Centre’s notification medical devices such as all implantable devices, CT Scan, PET and MRI equipment, defibrillators, dialysis machines, bone marrow separators etc. will be treated as drugs for human beings with effect from April 1, 2020.
- This move of Drug Technical Advisory Board (DTAB), India’s top drug advisory body, when enforced will translate into medical devices being treated as drugs.
- It will provide for more stringent tracking systems, mandatory reporting of all adverse reactions and registration of medical device before it is allowed into the market.

ABOUT DTAB

- DTAB is highest statutory decision-making body on technical matters related to drugs in the country. It is constituted as per the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.
- It is part of Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

CURRENT SCENARIO

- Of the 5,000-6,000 medical devices in the Indian market, there are only 23 notified medical devices under government control.
- When enforced, such devices will be recognised as drugs under Section 3 (b) (iv) of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.
- The responsibility for implementation of this decision lies with the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), which will be implemented in a phased manner.
CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

→ CRITICISM OF THE DECISION

- Association of Indian Medical Device Industry (AIMED) has sought a separate medical devices specific law.
- According to them it’s imperative to have a separate law as devices are engineering items and not medicines.
  - For example: An X-Ray machine by no stretch of imagination can be called a drug.
- Further, the penal provisions for medical devices needs to be risk proportional as there cannot be the same penalty for the manufacturing failure of a spectacle and a contact lens or an intraocular lens.

IN NEWS: In response to PIL, Delhi High Court has asked Reserve Bank of India about the authenticity of Google's mobile payment app, Google Pay with respect to it not being listed in the ‘Payment System Operators’ authorised by the RBI.

THINGS TO KNOW

- The petition mentioned that although Google Pay was using NPCI's (National Payments Corporation of India) BHIM unified payments Interface (BHIM UPI) for money transfers, but it's unauthorised to do so.
  - In response to PIL, High Court issued notice to the RBI and Google India on a petition seeking direction to the tech giant to immediately stop Google Pay services in India.
  - It pointed out that the RBI's Master Circular (April 2018), on Storage of Payment System Data, mandated that - all system providers shall ensure that the entire data relating to payment systems operated by them are stored in a system only in India.
  - According to it Google Pay, being an unregistered entity to the Payment and Settlement Systems Act 2007, is not in compliance with the requirements and the RBI's Master Circular.
  - Responding to the High Court notice, Google claimed that its payment service operates as a technology service provider to its partner banks, to allow for payments through the UPI infrastructure, and is not part of payment processing or settlement.
  - According to it there is no requirement for licensing of these services under the prevailing statutory and regulatory provisions.

→ REGULATOR NORMS FOR PAYMENTS APPS

- The RBI lists 82 payment providers on its website that offer different services ranging from ATM networks to bill payment classified as BBPS (Bharat Bill Payment Systems), clearing houses like NSDL, wallet operators like Oxigen, Mobikwik as well as international remittance players like Western Union and others.
- UPI-based payment services are not mentioned in this list.
- Unlike Amazon Pay, which is a Prepaid Payment Instrument (PPI) licence holder in India, players like Google and WhatsApp are only offering UPI payment service.
  - Google Pay is not offering a PPI or a mobile wallet service in the country, therefore it is not directly
CONSTITUTION, POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

registered with the banking regulator.

→ UNIFIED PAYMENT INTERFACE (UPI)

• UPI enables technology platforms to partner with banks and offer payment service to consumers without any need for a formal licence.
• It also caters to the “Peer to Peer” collect request which can be scheduled and paid as per requirement and convenience.
• They are mandated to follow the operational guidelines as prescribed by the NPCI and enter into service as technology providers for their partner banks.

IN NEWS: In cases of close contests, service voters play crucial and decisive role. Service voter are those who have service qualification.

→ Who is a service voter?

1. People serving in the Armed Forces of the Union
2. Those serving in a Force to which Army Act 1950 applies - members of Indian Army, Navy and Air Force and personnel of General Reserve Engineer Force (Border Road Organization), Border Security Force, Indo Tibetan Border Police, Assam Rifles, National Security Guards, Central Reserve Police Force, Central Industrial Security Force and Sashastra Seema Bal are eligible to be registered as service voters.
3. Those employed under the Government of India, in a post outside India.
4. Member of an Armed Police Force of a State, serving outside that state.

→ About Service Voters

• Wife of a Service Voter, if she is ordinarily residing with him, shall also be eligible to be enrolled in the part meant for Service Voters in the constituency concerned.
• While wife can be enrolled in the part for Service Voter, husband/ son/ daughter cannot be enrolled as service voter.
• Service Voters also have a choice to get themselves registered as a General Voter. But in doing so, they need to delete their name from the list of service voters.

→ Classified Service Voter

• The Service Voter can either vote through: 1. Postal Ballot or 2. Through a proxy. It means that they are entitled to appoint any person as their proxy to cast vote on their behalf and in their name at the polling station.
• A service voter who opts for voting through a proxy is called Classified Service Voter (CSV).

→ About Proxy

• The proxy selected must be an ordinary resident of the same constituency as that of the service voter.
• The proxy need not be a registered voter but must not be disqualified to be a registered voter. The proxy appointed by the service voter must fill Form 13F and must send the form to the
Returning Officer after getting it signed by Notary or First Class Magistrate.

- Once appointed, the proxy will continue until his/her appointment is revoked.

**IN NEWS:** The Returning Officer has a pivotal role in election management. He/she is so called because he/she conducts the election in a constituency and returns elected candidate. A Returning Officer is responsible for overseeing the election in one constituency or sometimes in two, as directed by the Election Commission of India.

- Provision for Returning Officer has been provided under section 21 and 24 of the Representation of People (RP) Act, 1951. Under Section 22 of the RP Act, 1951, the Election Commission of India appoints the Assistant Returning Officer for a constituency, in consultation with the State Governments and the Union Territories.

- The Election Commission of India nominates or designates an Officer of the Government or a local authority as the Returning Officer for each of the assembly and parliamentary constituencies in consultation with the State Government/Union Territory Administration.

- Election Commission can designate same person to be the returning officer for more than one constituency.

- Under section 26 of the Representation of the People Act 1951, the District Election Officer appoints the Presiding Officers and the Polling Officers. In the case of Union Territories, such appointments are made by the Returning Officers.

→ **Responsibilities of a Returning Officer**

- Overseeing the election in his/her constituency.
- Accepting and scrutinizing nomination forms
- Rejecting nomination form of candidate after raising important concern or lacunae in filling up of such forms.
- Publishing the affidavits of the candidate
- Allotting approved election symbols to contesting candidates sponsored by National or State Party.
- As per Paragraph 12 of The Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968, Returning Officer shall allot a free symbol chosen by an "Independent Candidate" for election purpose. As per the above Order, the Returning Officer shall also allot free symbol to the candidate set up by the unrecognized political party.
- Monitoring election expenses and accounts of the candidates
- Preparing list of contesting candidates
- Preparing EVMs and VVPATS, training poll personnel, designating counting centres
- Counting of the votes
- Declaration and Publication of results in Election
**TYPES OF MAJORITY**

**Simple Majority:** Simple majority or working majority refers to majority of more than 50% of the members present and voting.

**Absolute Majority:** Absolute majority refers to the majority of more than 50% of the total strength of the house.

**Effective Majority:** Effective Majority of house means more than 50% of the effective strength of the house. This implies that out of the total strength, we deduct the absent and vacant seats.

**Special Majority:** Any Majority other than simple, absolute and effective majority is called special majority. These include: Majority by two-third strength of the house (*Impeachment of President*); Majority by two-third of present and voting members (*Constitutional Amendment Bills*)

**Special Majority and Consent of States:** Those provisions of the Constitution which are related to federal structure of the polity can be amended by a special majority of Parliament and also with the consent of half of the state legislature by a simple majority.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

# GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER III (MAIN)

TOWARDS INDIA’S NEW FISCAL FEDERALISM

#FISCAL RELATIONS

(Lead coverage)

Recently, leading Indian Economist, Vijay Kelkar has highlighted certain problems in the fiscal federalism architecture in India. In his paper, "Towards India’s New Fiscal Federalism", he has argued for strengthening Fiscal Federalism in India wherein he has highlighted the need to empower NITI Aayog to transfer funds to the states so as to promote balanced regional development.

On the other hand, the RBI Governor has recently pitched for granting permanent status to the Finance Commission under Art 280.

Overall, proposals have been put forward to revisit the present architecture of Fiscal Federalism in India. In this regard, let us understand about the proposals which are put forward and how they would strengthen fiscal federalism in India.

WHAT IS FISCAL FEDERALISM?

The Fiscal federalism is economic counterpart of Political Federalism. The Fiscal Federalism essentially consists of 2 aspects:

- **Aspect 1: Assignment of functions** to different levels of Governments. It is provided under the VII Schedule of the Indian Constitution by allocating the subjects - Union List, State List and Concurrent List.
  
  This allocation of subjects is based on the Principle of Subsidiarity i.e. the subjects are allocated to that level of government where it can be performed in the most efficient manner. (For Example- Defence has been allocated to Union whereas agriculture has been allocated to State Government)

- **Aspect 2: Assignment of financial powers** to different levels of Governments in order to enable them to perform their functions.
  
  It is done through the allocation of taxes to Union and States based on the principle of subsidiary. (For example- Income tax has been allocated to Union whereas property tax has been allocated to States)

  Thus, Fiscal Federalism provides an economic framework for the working of the federalism in the country.

WHAT IS THE NEED FOR FINANCE COMMISSION UNDER ART. 280?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vertical Imbalances</th>
<th>It can be seen that the financial powers allocated to the states is not commensurate with the functions allocated to them. This leads to vertical imbalances in the finances of the Union and States.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal Imbalances</td>
<td>Similarly, there are differences in the financial capacity of the individual state governments which arises due to different levels of development. This can be considered to be horizontal imbalances among the different states in India.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Accordingly, Article 280 mandates setting up of a Finance Commission every 5 years or at such earlier time as the President of India considers necessary.
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- The Finance Commission has been envisaged in order to address the vertical and horizontal imbalances in the finances. The Finance Commission provides for a transfer of finances from the centre to the states (Vertical Devolution of taxes). It also provides for allocation of the states' share of taxes among the states in India (Horizontal Devolution of taxes).

- For example, the 14th FC has provided that 42% of the taxes should be devolved to the states. For the horizontal devolution of taxes, it has adopted various parameters such as Population (1971 Census), Demographic Change (Population 2011 Census), Area of the State, Forest Cover, Income Distance.

► **NOTE:** The highest weight is assigned to income distance, which is defined as the distance of actual per capita income of a state from the state with the highest per capita income. The farther a state is from the highest per capita state, the more transfers it will get from tax devolutions.

**WHAT ARE THE OTHER MODES OF TRANSFER OF FINANCES FROM THE CENTRE TO THE STATES?**

- Transfer of the finances from Planning Commission to the States. *(Prior to setting up of NITI Aayog)*
- Centrally Sponsored Schemes.
- It is to be noted that these grants received by the states are referred to as "Tied Grants" i.e. the finances would have to be used by the states for the specified purpose only (mentioned by the Centre). Hence, the tied grants do not provide the operational freedom and financial autonomy to the states.
- On the other hand, the grants received by the states from the finance commission are referred to as "Untied Grants" i.e. the state government can use the finances for the purpose it deems fit. Hence, these grants provide operational freedom and financial autonomy to the states. More importantly, it helps the different state governments in addressing their local problems.

**IS THERE A NEED TO HAVE PERMANENT FINANCE COMMISSION?**

- Over a period of time, Finance Commissions have adopted different approaches with regard to principles of tax devolution, grants to be given to states and fiscal consolidation issues.

- Even though, there has to be a framework for fresh and innovative thinking by every Finance Commission; at another level, there is a need to ensure broad consistency between Finance Commissions so that there is some degree of certainty in the flow of funds to the states.

*(For example, 14th Finance Commission has provided for tax devolution of 42% as compared to 32% provided by 13th Finance Commission. Further, the 14th Finance Commission has added the parameters of Area under Forests and Demographic Change (2011 census) for the horizontal tax devolution. The fiscal discipline parameter used by 13th Finance Commission has been done away with by 14th Finance commission.)*

- This has become even more critical in the post GST scenario. In other words, there has to be continuity and change between Finance Commissions. Thus, there is a need to give permanent status to the Finance Commission. The Commission can function as a leaner entity in the intervening period till the next Finance Commission is set up in a full-fledged manner. During the intervening period, it can also address issues arising from implementation of the recommendations of the Finance Commission.

**OR**

**IS THERE A NEED TO STRENGTHEN NITI AAYOG?**

Vijay Kelkar is of opinion that the present mechanism of setting up of Finance Commission every 5 years is working perfectly fine. However, there is a need to strengthen fiscal Federalism by empowering the NITI Aayog with transfer of finances.

► **Rationale for it:**

- The Planning Commission was involved with transfer of finances to the states which to a certain extent were able to reduce the regional imbalances existing among the different states in India.
However, the Planning Commission was replaced by NITI Aayog, which acts more like a think tank without the power of transferring finances.

Two problems have arisen with respect to this. Firstly, India’s Fiscal Federalism stands only on one pillar, viz., Union Finance Commission. This is a serious weakness of our present Fiscal Federalism and needs to be quickly corrected.

Secondly, India has been experiencing the process of “Conditional Convergence” amongst the different States wherein the poorer states have been growing more rapidly than richer states leading to reduction in income inequality. Such conditional convergence has been possible on account of transfer of finances by the Planning Commission.

Thus, there is a strong analytical case for strengthening the role of NITI Aayog with powers of allocating finances to states.

In order to make the new NITI Aayog more effective, it is essential to ensure that the institution is at the “High Table” of decision making of the Government. This means the Vice Chairman of the new NITI Aayog will need to be a permanent invitee of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs.

Thus, the new NITI Aayog will make available to the highest level of policy making the knowledge-based advice and provide the national and long term perspective on the policy proposals.

Prelims: Concept of Fiscal Federalism; Role of Finance Commission and NITI Aayog; Tied and Untied Grants

Mains:

Q. There is a need to grant permanent status to Finance Commission under Article 280 in order to strengthen fiscal federalism in India. Discuss

Q. The replacement of Planning Commission with NITI Aayog has led to institutional gap in the architecture of Fiscal Federalism in India. In this regard, do you think there is a need to empower NITI Aayog to transfer finances to the states? Substantiate.

There is a major institutional gap in India’s Fiscal System. This gap has been recognized and identified by number of committees such as recent Finance Commissions and the FRBM Review Committee. International experience also points to the importance of such an institution. In order to overcome this gap, in many countries, a ‘Fiscal Council’ has been set up.

Accordingly, the Chairperson of the 15th Finance Commission, NK Singh has recently recommended setting up of institutional mechanism like a ‘Fiscal Council’ to keep a check on Centre’s fiscal consolidation.

In this regard, let us understand as to what Fiscal Council is and how the setting up of Fiscal Council can improve the credibility of fiscal policy in India.

THINGS TO KNOW

- A fiscal council is an independent and non-partisan agency which is set up to publicly assesses the government’s fiscal performance against its stated objectives.
- Fiscal Councils can serve both ex ante and ex post functions. Some of the functions that can be performed by Fiscal Council include:
  - Producing independent forecasts related to GDP growth, tax buoyancy, inflation rate (an ex ante function)
  - Review the government’s forecasts and assumptions related to tax collections, Fiscal Deficit, GDP Growth etc. (an ex ante function)
  - Monitoring governments’ fiscal performance including adherence to fiscal rules (an ex post function).
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

International Experience with Fiscal Council

- In recent years, an increasing number of advanced and some emerging economies are using independent fiscal council in order to enhance the credibility of their fiscal rules.
- International experience suggests that fiscal councils can improve fiscal outcomes and accuracy related to government’s forecasts related to fiscal parameters.
- For example, the United Kingdom created an Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) in 2010, and granted it statutory status in 2011 to provide independent analysis of the country’s public finances.
- On similar lines, Congressional Budget Office (CBO) in USA supports the budget making process by providing independent analyses of budgetary and economic issues.

SCENARIO IN INDIA

Suggestions

- Keeping in view best international practices, the FRBM Review committee headed by N.K Singh and D.K. Srivastava Committee on Fiscal Statistics have proposed to set up independent Fiscal Council in India.
- The N.K Singh Review committee recommended that Fiscal Council should be an autonomous body, under the aegis of the Ministry of Finance (Department of Economic Affairs).
- It is proposed that it should comprise a Chairperson and two Members to be appointed by the Central Government. The persons to be appointed ought to have significant experience in public finance, economics or public affairs.

Need for Fiscal Council in India

- The General Budget of the Government is based upon the forecasts related to Revenue Collection and Expenditure of the Government for the upcoming financial year. Normally, it is found that the Government usually comes out with ambitious targets related to fiscal parameters such as Tax collection, reduction in Fiscal Deficit etc.
- However, the government fails to meet these ambitious targets wherein there is wide margin between the budget forecasts and actual targets met by the Government. Hence, it is required to ensure that the Government sets realistic fiscal targets.
- Further, in recent years, the Government has resorted to Off-Budget financing in order to reduce its expenditure and to contain Fiscal Deficit. The CAG has raised concerns with respect to off-budget financing since it understates the Government’s Fiscal deficit and reduces the accountability of the Government to the Parliament.

What should be the role of Fiscal council in India?

- **Fiscal Data Coordinator**: As a fiscal data coordinator, the Fiscal Council will have the responsibility of compiling and collating centre, state, and local government fiscal data and provide individual and consolidated fiscal accounts of the governments in India on a timely basis and make such data accessible to governments and public.
- **Fiscal Data Analyst**: It should utilize the compiled fiscal data to provide valuable insights into the underlying fiscal trends and highlight their policy significance.
- **Fiscal Consolidation Path Monitor**: The central as well as state governments follow their respective fiscal consolidation paths according to targets set under their FRBM Acts. The Fiscal Council should monitor the compliance of these targets by the Central and State Governments. It should highlight deviations in the targets by publishing quarterly and annual reports.
- **Fiscal Policy Advisor**: Fiscal Council should provide guidance to the central and state governments on appropriate fiscal policy interventions aimed at improving growth and macro-stabilization outcomes.
In order to expedite the resolution of NPAs in India, the RBI had issued a circular on Feb 12, 2018. The circular directed the banks to classify a loan account as stressed and start resolution process within one day of default. Due to this RBI’s circular, debt worth around Rs 3.8-lakh crore across 70 large borrowers came under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) for resolution. However, this circular was challenged by various power sector and infrastructure companies on the grounds that RBI circular does not take into account the unique problems faced by these sectors. Accordingly, the Supreme Court has recently declared the RBI’s February circular as “ultra vires” the Indian Constitution. In this regard, let us understand about the RBI’s February circular and why was it quashed by the Supreme Court.

**THINGS TO KNOW**

**What was RBI’s February 2018 Circular?**
- Under the new framework, the RBI discontinued programmes for banks to restructure their defaulted loans such as *corporate debt restructuring* (CDR), *sustainable structuring of stressed assets* (S4A), *strategic debt restructuring* (SDR) and made the *Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code* as the main tool to deal with defaulters.
- The framework made it mandatory for banks to identify signs of incipient stress in loan accounts and classify *stressed assets* as *Special Mention Account* (SMA), immediately on default. Even a single day’s default would require reporting to the RBI and implementation of Resolution Plan.
- Furthermore, lenders were asked to finalise a resolution plan in case of a default on large accounts of Rs 2,000 crore and above within 180 days, failing which insolvency proceedings would be invoked against the defaulter under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board.

**Rationale for introducing February Circular**
- Earlier the Banks had resorted to “ever greening” of bad loans in order to keep their NPAs at the lower level.
- Further, the schemes introduced by RBI such CDR, S4A etc. were quite lenient and most of the times, the resolution plans were not finalised on time leading to undue delays in recovering bad loans.
- The circular was intended to identify the stress levels in the banks at an earlier stage and immediately take necessary steps for their resolution.

**Why was the circular challenged before the Supreme Court?**
- Several companies from the power sector and shipping sector had argued that the RBI’s circular was based on "One-Size-fits-all" approach.
- These companies were facing problems that were beyond their control and hence it was extremely difficult for them to implement the resolution plan. For example, the power producers had argued that they faced shortage of fuel and delays in regulatory clearances which were beyond their control.
- In this regard, even the Indian Banks Association (IBA) had sought relaxation in the RBI’s norms for infrastructure and power companies.

**Why did the Supreme Court declare the RBI’s Circular as Ultra vires the constitution?**
- The Supreme Court took recourse to two sections of the *Banking Regulation Act, 1949* to declare the circular as ultra-vires. The *Section 35A* talks about general powers of RBI to issue directions to banking companies,
- *Section 35AA* gives power to the Central Government to authorize RBI to direct any bank to initiate insolvency process in respect of a default.
- The RBI sought to sustain the circular by tracing its source to the general powers under Section 35A, instead of Section 35AA, which is inserted as per 2017 amendment. The RBI had argued that since no
authorization from Central Government is needed to exercise powers under Section 35A, the circular was valid.

- On the other hand, the SC ruled that after the insertion of Section 35AA in 2017 with a specific condition of authorization from central government, recourse cannot be made to general powers under Section 35A for issuing directions to take insolvency action in respect of bad debts.

- Apart from that, the general application of Circular to all debts above Rs. 2000 crores was challenged by petitioners as it failed to draw a distinction between various forms of “stressed assets” from different industrial sectors.

- They further contended that the circular failed to distinguish between genuine and wilful defaulters. The Court held that reference to IBC under Section 35AA can be made only on a case to case basis, and that there cannot be a blanket direction to that effect.

### Likely impact of the SC Judgement
- Delay in the process of resolution of stressed assets.
- No likely impact on the resolution that have already been completed or under the due process.
- Relief to the stressed power sector companies

### WAY FORWARD

- It can be argued that the circular failed to take into account the peculiar problems of specific industries or borrowers and came up with a one-size-fits-all approach. It is also equally true that not all borrowers were wilful defaulters, and sectors such as power faced problems which were beyond the control of borrowers.

- However, the Supreme Court order of quashing the RBI’s circular is being considered as a serious setback to the process of Debt resolution. The circular had introduced a certain level of credit discipline among the banks and broke the nexus between the banks and defaulters by prohibiting “ever greening” of loans.

- The RBI should study the judgment closely, and quickly reframe its guidelines so that they are within the framework of the powers available to it under the law.

### Prelims: RBI’s February Circular; Banking Regulation Act, 1949

### Mains: Q. The Supreme Court order on quashing the RBI’s February circular can be considered as a serious setback to the process of resolution of stressed assets in India. Analyse.

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**RBI’s MONETARY POLICY # BANKING AND FINANCE**

In its latest meeting, the Monetary Policy Committee of the RBI has cut the policy repo rate by 25 basis points from 6.25% to 6%. This is the second consecutive cut in the policy rates by the MPC. However, the RBI has decided to maintain its “Neutral Policy” Stance.

Further, the RBI has allowed an additional 2% of SLR to be considered as Level 1 High Quality Liquid Assets (HQLAs) for the purpose of computing the Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) of banks.

In this regard, let us understand about the various decisions taken during the MPC Meeting.

### THINGS TO KNOW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present Policy Rates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Repo rate</strong>: 6%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reverse Repo</strong>: 5.75% (Usually maintained 0.25% lower than Repo)</td>
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</table>
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rationale for the reducing the Policy rates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Marginal Standing Facility (MSF): 6.25% (Usually maintained 0.25% higher than Repo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bank Rate: 6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The rate of inflation (2.57%) has remained below the targeted 4%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Decrease in the GDP forecasts to 7.2% from 7.4% for the current financial year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Output Gap</strong> has remained negative. The output gap refers to the difference between the actual output of the economy and its maximum potential. The output gap can be positive or negative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ A <strong>positive output gap</strong>, which results when actual output is above potential output, reflects excess demand in the economy which can generate inflationary pressures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ In contrast, a <strong>negative output gap</strong> – actual output being lower than potential output – occurs when the available resources in the economy are not fully utilised and reflects deficient demand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Slowdown in the investment and consumption demand in economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Decrease in the credit flows to the Industrial sector, particularly MSMEs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Concerns related to Global Economic Recession which could adversely affect Indian Economy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes in LCR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Earlier, the RBI had allowed the banks to take into account 15% of their deposits under the mandatory SLR requirement for the calculation of Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It has now allowed the banks to take into account additional 2% of their deposits (i.e. total 17% of deposits) under the mandatory SLR requirement for the calculation of LCR.</td>
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</table>

**RELATED INFORMATION**

**Concept of Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR)**

- A failure to adequately monitor and control liquidity risk led to the **Great Financial Crisis in 2008**. To improve the banks' short-term resilience to liquidity shocks, the **Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS)** introduced the LCR as part of the Basel III post-crisis reforms.
- The **LCR** is designed to ensure that banks hold a sufficient reserve of **high-quality liquid assets (HQLA)** to allow them to survive a period of significant liquidity stress lasting 30 calendar days.
- **HQLA** are cash or assets that can be converted into cash quickly through sales (or by being pledged as collateral) with no significant loss of value.
- The **LCR** requires banks to hold a stock of HQLA at least as large as expected total net cash outflows over the stress period of 30 days.

\[
\text{Stock of HQLA} \geq 100\% \times \frac{\text{Total net cash outflows over the next 30 calendar days}}{\text{Total net cash outflows}}
\]

**Total net cash outflows** are defined as the total expected cash outflows minus the total expected cash inflows arising in the stress scenario.

**High Quality Liquid Assets (HQLAs)**

- HQLAs can include the following:
  - Cash reserves in excess of required CRR
  - Government securities in excess of the minimum SLR requirement
  - Government securities to the extent allowed by RBI under Marginal Standing Facility (MSF)
  - Government securities under SLR (To the extent allowed by RBI)

**Statutory Liquid Ratio**

- The SLR refers to the percentage of deposits which the banks would be required to maintain at all the times.
(SLR) • The SLR has to be maintained in the form of gold, cash and G-Secs.  
• The present SLR Rate is 19.5%.  
• The RBI has now allowed 17% of deposits under the mandatory SLR requirement for the calculation of LCR.

Prelims: Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR); High Quality Liquid Assets (HQLAs); Statutory Liquid Ratio (SLR)

India is presently under Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations which aim to facilitate Free trade among the ASEAN and its six free trade partners. However, concerns have been raised that signing of this FTA would adversely hurt domestic manufacturing since India has around $110 billion trade deficit with the RCEP member countries.

Hence, in order to fulfil the dual objective of protecting domestic manufacturing and to promote trade integration, there is need for India to insist on Tariff rate Quota in the trade negotiations.

**THINGS TO KNOW**

**What is RCEP?**
- It is a proposed free trade agreement between the ten member states of the ASEAN and the six Asia-Pacific states with which ASEAN has existing free trade agreements. These countries are India, China, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea.
- The RCEP negotiations were formally launched in 2012 and presently, the member countries are negotiating on the various aspects of free trade agreement.

**Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ)**
- A country imposes two types of trade barriers- Tariff (Customs Duty) and Non-Tariff barriers (Quota). Quota refers to the quantitative restriction imposed by a country on its imports.
- **Tariff rate Quota** is a combination of Tariff and Non-Tariff barrier. Under this mechanism, a country may import goods at lower or nil rate of customs duty only up to a certain limit (Quota). However, once the quota is breached, the country imports the goods at higher customs duty.
- Thus, the TRQ has features of Quota as well as higher customs duty on the imported goods.

**Use of TRQs in Global Trade**
- The TRQ is provided under various trade agreements signed between the countries. It is estimated that a large number of TRQs are operated each year by WTO members such as EU, Japan, Canada and the US.
- They are made applicable on a wide range of products, particularly the agricultural commodities. TRQs have now become a way of reaching a consensus with trading partners.
- This is because, on one hand, the TRQs protect the domestic manufacturers by reducing the import of cheaper products and on the other hand, it ensures that the consumers in the importing country are able to get a limited number of imported goods at cheaper prices.

**Importance of TRQs for India**
- Presently, India has a trade deficit of around $110 billion with the RCEP member countries. Hence, if India decides to reduce the customs duty as part of RCEP negotiations, there could be further increase in the trade deficit. This can have adverse impact on the domestic manufacturing and may go against the government’s stated objective of "Make in India".
- However, India cannot afford to remain outside RCEP since it provides an opportunity for the Indian Economy to get integrated with the global economy and could help India to increase its exports in future.
Hence, India needs to protect its interests by insisting on TRQs as part of RCEP negotiations.

- Inclusion of TRQs in the RCEP would enable India to fulfil its dual objective of trade integration and protection of domestic manufacturing.

Prelims: Concept of Tariff Rate Quota; RCEP Member Countries

Mains: Q. The Tariff Rate Quota can emerge as important tool for trade negotiations for India since it balances the interests of consumers and producers. Discuss.

**BASE EROSION AND PROFIT SHIFTING**

**THINGS TO KNOW**

- It refers to tax avoidance strategy wherein the companies take undue advantage of the tax exemptions in order to pay less tax.

- As part of tax avoidance strategy, the Multinational companies shift their profits from high tax jurisdictions to low tax jurisdictions (tax havens) in order to pay less tax. This leads to erosion of the tax base of the high tax jurisdictions. This causes significant revenue losses for the high tax jurisdictions.

- A report published by OECD in 2017 has stated that BEPS is responsible for tax losses of around $200bn globally.

**What is Base Erosion and Profit shifting (BEPS)?**

**DTAA**

- A DTAA is a tax treaty signed between two or more countries. Its key objective is that tax-payers in these countries can avoid being taxed twice for the same income. A DTAA applies in cases where a taxpayer resides in one country and earns income in another.

- DTAs are intended to make a country an attractive investment destination by providing relief on dual taxation. Such relief is provided by exempting income earned abroad from tax in the resident country. India has signed DTAA with more than 80 countries.

**Misuse of DTAA**

- India has signed DTAA with the tax havens such as Mauritius, Singapore, Cayman Islands etc. These DTAs have been misused by the MNCs in order to reduce their tax liability in India.

- For example, if a company (Shell Company) is registered in tax haven and carries out the operations through its subsidiary based in India. Under the provisions of DTAA, the company would be liable to pay tax only in the tax haven country, even for the profits which it makes in India. This causes significant revenue loss for India.

**Treaty Shopping**

- Under Treaty Shopping, a foreign company routes its investment into India through a tax haven country i.e. it registers a company headquartered in tax haven and then establishes its Indian subsidiaries to carry out the operations. For example, Hutch’s investment into India was routed through Cayman Islands.

Recently, India and the US have signed an agreement for the exchange of country-by-country (CbC) report in order to give relief to subsidiaries of US headquartered companies in taxation-related matter. This was part of action plan adopted by Organisation for Economic cooperation and Development (OECD) in order to mitigate the risks from base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS).

In this regard, let us understand about the Base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) and the recent agreement between India and USA.

# TAXATION
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- Since, the company is based in tax haven, it would be liable to pay tax to the Tax haven country.
  - **Round Tripping**
- Round tripping refers to the practice where, capital belonging to India goes out to tax haven country where it is used to set up Shell Company. The money is then, reinvested back in India in the form of FDI.
- The profit out of such investment cannot be taxed in India as the capital is coming from tax haven.
  - **Transfer Mispricing**
- Transfer price refers to the price at which the parent/subsidiary company sells its goods and services to another subsidiary company.
- Under transfer mispricing, a subsidiary company located in India buys goods and services at higher prices from another subsidiary company located in low tax jurisdiction.
- This leads to higher operating costs of the subsidiary company in India and consequently, lower profits. Thus, the subsidiary company ends up reducing the tax liability.

### About OECD BEPS Project

- In order to combat risks associated with BEPS and to improve the transparency, the OECD has come out with **15 points action** plan based on the recommendations of **G-20**.
- The **BEPS Action 13 report** (Transfer Pricing Documentation and Country-by-Country Reporting) provides a template for multinational enterprises (MNEs) to report annually and for each tax jurisdiction in which they do business. This report is called the **Country-by-Country (CbC) Report**.
- Under this, MNEs are also required to identify each entity within the group doing business in a particular tax jurisdiction, and to provide information about the business activities each entity conducts. This information is to be made available to the tax authorities in all jurisdictions in which the MNE operates.

### Recent Agreement between India and USA

- The filing of Country-by-Country (CbC) Report by the MNEs was seen as placing a huge compliance burden on the subsidiary companies of these MNEs.
- Hence, the agreement between India and USA will enable both the countries to automatically exchange CbC reports filed by the ultimate parent entities of multinational enterprises (MNE) in the respective jurisdictions.
- It would also obviate the need for Indian subsidiary companies of US MNEs to do local filing of the CbC Reports, thereby reducing the compliance burden.

**Prelims:** Base Erosion and profit Shifting (BEPS); DTAA; Treaty Shopping; Round Tripping; Transfer Mispricing

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**LIBOR**

The LIBOR scandal in 2011 has raised concerns on the future of LIBOR (London Interbank Offered Rate). Some of the countries have decided to adopt alternatives to LIBOR by the end of 2021. A transition from this key benchmark to new reference rate would require significant efforts by the banks. The Banks may be required to spend around $100 mn a year for the next two years to adopt these alternatives.

In this regard, let us briefly understand about LIBOR and its importance.

**THINGS TO KNOW**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is LIBOR?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The LIBOR is a benchmark interest rate at which the banks lend money to each other for short term i.e. it indicates the borrowing costs between the banks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rate is calculated and published each day by the Intercontinental exchange (ICX).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How is LIBOR calculated?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is based on five currencies including the <strong>US dollar</strong>, <strong>Euro</strong>, <strong>British pound</strong>, the <strong>Japanese yen</strong>, and the <strong>Swiss franc</strong>, and serves <strong>seven different maturities</strong>—overnight, one week, and one, two, three, six, and...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12 months.

- The combination of five currencies and seven maturities leads to a total of 35 different LIBOR rates calculated and reported each business day.
- At the start of every day, ICE asks major global banks how much they would charge other banks for short-term loans. The ICE takes out the highest and lowest figures, then calculates the average from the remaining numbers.

What are equivalents of LIBOR?

- Europe- European Interbank Offered Rate (EURIBOR)
- Japan- Tokyo Interbank Offered Rate (TIBOR)
- India- Mumbai Interbank Offered Rate (MIBOR)

Note: The MIBOR is calculated every day by National Stock Exchange of India (NSEIL)

Importance of LIBOR

- Some of the global banks across the world use LIBOR as a base rate for setting interest rates on consumer and corporate loans. Further, the interest rates on floating rate Government and corporate bonds is also linked to LIBOR.
- In case of India, the interest rates on Foreign Currency Non-Resident (FCNR) deposits have been linked to LIBOR by RBI.

LIBOR Scandal

- For the calculation of LIBOR, the banks are supposed to submit the actual interest rates they are paying, or would expect to pay, for borrowing from other banks.
- However, in 2012, it was found out that banks were falsely inflating or deflating their rates in order to manipulate the market and earn more profits. This led to major financial scam with respect to LIBOR.

Transition away from LIBOR

- The countries across the world have planned to move away from LIBOR and adopt other alternatives by the end of 2021.
- Some of the alternatives to LIBOR are:
  - UK: Sterling Overnight Index Average (SONIA)
  - USA: Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR)
  - Switzerland: Swiss Average Rate Overnight (SARON)
  - Japan: Tokyo Overnight Average Rate (TONAR)
  - European Union: Euro Short-Term Rate (ESTER)

Prelims: Concept of LIBOR; Importance of LIBOR in India; Mumbai Interbank Offered Rate (MIBOR)

The Government has urged Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) to make a collective effort to double their contribution to GDP and become the “Third Arm” of revenue generation for the Centre after Direct and Indirect taxes. In this regard, the current policy of Government of India on investment and disinvestment in CPSEs gains importance.

In pursuance to this policy, in Feb 2019, the Union Cabinet had approved institutional framework for monetization of identified non-core assets of the CPSEs. Accordingly, the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) has come out with detailed guidelines for monetisation of non-core assets of CPSEs.

In this regard, let us understand various facets related to Asset Monetisation of CPSEs.
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**THINGS TO KNOW**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is Asset Monetization?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Asset Monetisation</strong> refers to the selling of the non-core and sub-optimally utilized assets of the central public enterprises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is mainly done in order to raise revenue and to efficiently manage the assets of the PSUs.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Rationale for Asset Monetisation</th>
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<tr>
<td>• The assets of the Public sector are diverse and spread out across the country. These assets could be categorized broadly into various types (a) <strong>Land and Buildings</strong> (b) <strong>Operational assets such as pipelines, mobile towers etc.</strong> (c) <strong>Financial assets such as equity shares, debt securities etc.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Normally, it is observed that some of the assets of the PSUs such as land and buildings are not efficiently used and more importantly, such assets may be considered as non-core assets as they may not be integral to the efficient working of such PSUs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In this regard, the Government of India has come up with a framework to identify and sell off these non-core assets of the PSUs.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional framework for Asset Monetisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The institutional framework for asset Monetisation of the PSUs includes <strong>Alternative Mechanism, Core Group of Secretaries on Asset Monetisation (CGAM) and Inter Ministerial Group.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Alternative Mechanism comprises of Union Finance Minister, Minister of Road Transport and Highways and Minister of the concerned administrative ministry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Core Group of Secretaries on Asset Monetisation is headed by Cabinet secretary and includes the secretaries from the relevant ministries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG) is headed by Secretary, DIPAM and includes the secretaries from the relevant ministries.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Procedure for the Asset Monetisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The <strong>Alternative Mechanism</strong> would approve the CPSEs and their assets to be monetized based on the recommendations of Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The IMG will make the recommendations either on its own or on the basis of recommendations of NITI Aayog. The IMG/ CGAM would also recommend the value of the non-core assets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Once the AM approves the assets for Monetisation, it should be duly completed within 12 months. The amount received by the government through asset Monetisation will be counted as Disinvestment proceeds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If the CPSE fails to monetize the non-core assets within 12 months, the finance ministry has been empowered to restrict budgetary allocations to such CPSEs.</td>
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</table>

**Prelims:** Institutional Framework for Asset Monetisation; Procedure for Asset Monetisation

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**STATE FINANCES - CONCERNS**

# BUDGETING

The economists at the SBI have recently released a report which analyses the State Budgets. It highlights that states have managed to contain Fiscal deficit, however there has been reduction in their capital expenditure. This reduction in the capital expenditure has been attributed to the announcement of loan waivers.

Apart from that, this report has also highlighted other concerns with respect to the finances of the States wherein it has highlighted the peculiar problem of “Missing Muddle”.

In this regard, let us understand the concerns raised in this report.
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**THINGS TO KNOW**

| Details about Revised Estimates and Actuals in the Budget | The Budget is presented on 1st Feb every year before the completion of the financial year (April 1- Mar 31). Hence, it presents the revised estimates for the current financial year and estimates for the next financial year. Along with it, it also presents the actuals of the previous financial year. 

For example, the budget presented on 1st Feb 2019 would contain the following:
2. Estimates for the next Financial Year (April 1, 2019- Mar 31, 2020)
3. Actuals of the previous financial Year (April 1, 2017- Mar 31, 2018) |

| Concerns with States' Finances | This report has mainly highlighted two concerns with respect to State Budgets.
1. Even though the states in India have been able to contain fiscal deficit, however it has been possible due to reduction in Capital Expenditure. (The states are required to maintain FD at 3% of GSDP which can be relaxed by 0.5% under certain conditions)  
2. There has been mismatch in the budgeted fiscal deficit and revised fiscal deficit for the financial year. However, the actual fiscal deficit is closer to budgeted fiscal deficit number. The report has referred to this problem as “missing muddle”. |

| Missing Muddle in State Finances | - The report has highlighted that there is mismatch between the budgeted fiscal deficit and revised fiscal deficit for the financial year.
- The sudden expenditure during the middle of the year could be because of the announcements by the individual state governments in the form of loan waiver, incentive schemes etc. which result in dramatic revision of budgeted numbers.
- However, subsequently, the states have been able to reduce the Fiscal deficit by cutting down their capital expenditure and through increase in tax revenue. Thus, they are able to ensure that the actual numbers are able to match the budgeted numbers. |

| Concerns due to Missing Muddle | - The “Problem of Missing Muddle” provides an inadequate and incorrect signalling device to market in terms of overall fiscal consolidation.
- Cut down on the Productive capital expenditure
- Fall in tax revenue may make it difficult for the states to match their actuals with the budgeted numbers. |

**Prelims:** Conceptual understanding of Budget Estimates; Revised Estimates and Actuals in the General Budget

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**GOLD HALLMARKING**

**# GOVT. POLICIES**

The All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) has urged the Ministry of Consumer Affairs for standardisation in hallmarking of gold, contending that multiple measures of purity involved in the process was creating confusion in the industry.

In this regard, let us understand the various facets related to Gold Hallmarking in India.
## Things to Know

**What is Hallmarking?**
- Hallmarking is the accurate determination and official recording of the proportionate content of precious metal in precious metal articles.
- Hallmarks are thus official marks used as a guarantee of purity of precious metal articles.
- The principal objectives of the Hallmarking Scheme are to protect the public against adulteration and to obligate manufacturers to maintain legal standards of purity.

**Who does Hallmarking in India?**
- The Indian government has identified the **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** as the sole agency to operate the Hallmarking Scheme.
- BIS Hallmarking Scheme is voluntary in nature and operates under the BIS Act, Rules and Regulations.

**How the Hallmarking is done?**
- The Bureau of Indian Standards has formulated Hall Marking Scheme for certification of gold/silver jewellery & artefacts.
- As per this scheme, the jewellery retailer/manufacturer desirous of obtaining a licence has to apply to BIS for use of Standard Mark (Hallmark).
- After grant of licence, the jeweller must follow a BIS-approved Scheme for certification. A BIS-certified jeweller has right to approach any of the BIS-recognized Assaying and Hallmarking Centres to get his/her jewellery hallmarked.

**Components of Hallmarking**

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<th>BIS hallmarking consists of four components to ensure the purity of gold which are as follows:</th>
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<tr>
<td>BIS Mark;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purity in Karat and fineness;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purity of gold is indicated in two ways: Karat (denoted as KT) and fineness number. Fineness number is purity in parts per thousand.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Hallmarked Gold jewellery is available in three grades of 14 Carat (14K585), 18 Carat (18K750) and 22 Carat (22K916)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assaying and Hallmarking Centre's identification mark/number;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeweller's Identification mark/number</td>
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**Is Gold Hallmarking Mandatory?**
- Presently, it is not mandatory and it is voluntary in nature. Not all jewellers offer hallmarked BIS jewellery.
- Some jewellers offer their in-house hallmarking of jewellery which is not verified by the BIS.

## Related Information

### About Bureau of Indian Standards
- Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is the National Standard Body of India and works under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs. BIS is responsible for the harmonious development of the activities of standardization, marking and quality certification of goods.
- BIS operates a Product Certification scheme for ensuring compliance to Indian Standards. Presence of BIS standard mark (popularly known as ISI mark) on a product indicates conformity to the relevant Indian Standard.
- The BIS certification scheme is voluntary in nature. However for a number of products, compliance to Indian Standards made mandatory by the Central Government under various statutes in public interest.

### Foreign
- BIS has been operating a separate scheme for foreign manufacturers in order to certify goods
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Manufacturers Certification Scheme (FMCS)</th>
<th>manufactured outside India.</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Under this scheme, foreign manufacturers can seek certification from BIS for marking their products with BIS Standard Mark after ensuring conformity of the products to relevant Indian Standards.</td>
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</table>

**Prelims:** Various facets related to Gold Hallmarking; Bureau of Indian Standards; Foreign Manufacturers Certification Scheme (FMCS)

### NATIONAL MINING POLICY

**# GOVT. POLICIES**

There is a huge demand for minerals in view of the rapid urbanization and the projected growth in the manufacturing sector. With the thrust on Make in India initiative, the demand for minerals is likely to grow at a rapid pace. In this regard, the Union Cabinet has recently unveiled National Mining Policy which ensures that extraction and management of minerals is guided by long-term national goals and mineral extraction is integrated into the overall strategy of the country's economic development. Let us look at some of the important highlights of the National Mining Policy 2019.

#### THINGS TO KNOW

**Objective**

- The aim of this policy is to have a more effective, meaningful and implementable policy that brings in further transparency, better regulation and enforcement, balanced social and economic growth as well as sustainable mining practices.

**Prospecting and Exploration of Minerals**

- The Policy places special attention towards exploration of energy critical minerals, fertilizer minerals, precious metals and stones, strategic minerals and other deep seated minerals which are otherwise difficult to access and for which the country is mainly dependent on imports.
- In order to provide thrust to exploration of such minerals, the policy seeks to encourage private sector participation through the following tools:
  - Right of First Refusal at the time of auction
  - Seamless transition from Reconnaissance permit (RP) to Prospecting Licence (PL) to Mining Leases (ML)
  - Auctioning of composite Reconnaissance permit (RP) cum Prospecting License (PL) cum Mining Lease (ML) in virgin areas.

**Financial**

- Mining is an eligible activity for obtaining financial support from financial institutions. However, at present

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Note:

- **Reconnaissance permit (RP)** is granted for preliminary prospecting of a mineral through regional, aerial, geophysical or geochemical surveys and geological mapping.
- **Prospecting Licence (PL)** is granted for undertaking operations for purpose of exploring, locating or proving mineral deposit.
- **Mining Lease (ML)** is granted for undertaking operations for mining mineral.
- **Right of First Refusal**: Usually, the mines are leased for a specified period of time and upon the expiry of the lease period, the mine is auctioned once again. Under the Right to First Refusal Option, when the mine is to be auctioned through bidding, the company presently involved in the exploration of the mine would be given the option of keeping the mining lease by paying the bidding amount. However, if it refuses to pay the bidding amount, only then the mining lease gets transferred to a third party.
## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

| Support for Mining | only those mining projects which have a substantial component of mining machinery, equipment and buildings are being financed.  
- The 2019 Policy proposes to grant status of industry to mining activity to boost financing of mining for private sector.  
- Getting ‘Industry’ status will help in easy sanction of loans for mining projects. |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Protection of Environment | • The Policy states that all mining related activities shall be undertaken within the parameters of a comprehensive Sustainable Development Framework. The guiding principle shall be that a miner shall leave the mining area in an ecological shape which is as good as it was before the commencement of mining or better with least impact on flora and fauna of the area.  
- Mining operations shall not ordinarily be taken up in identified ecologically fragile and biologically rich areas. The Government shall identify such areas that are critically fragile in terms of ecology and declare as ‘in-violate areas’ or ‘no-go areas’ out of bounds for mining.  
- In order to achieve balance between mineral based development and environment, the policy seeks to create Exclusive Mining Zone (EMZ) with prior in-principle statutory clearances demarcated for the mineralized belt/zone to avoid conflict of interest and to curtail delay in commencement of mining operation. |
| Small Deposits | • Small and isolated deposits of minerals are scattered all over the country. However, they are not economically sustainable to extract due to lower economies of scale.  
- In order to economically extract such minerals, the policy proposes a cluster approach for granting the deposits together as a single lease within a geographically defined boundary. Similarly, it encourages the establishment of common smelting and refining facilities. |
| Inter-Ministerial Mechanism | • The Policy seeks to establish a unified authority in the form of an inter-ministerial body under Ministry of Mines with members like Ministry of Coal, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Ministry of Tribal Affairs etc.  
- It would provide for sustainable mining with adequate concerns for environment and socio-economic issues in the mining areas. |

Prelims: Salient Features of National Mining Policy; Exclusive Mining Zone (EMZ); “No-go areas”

### NEWS SNIPPETS

**IN NEWS:** The number of complaints by bank customers to the Reserve Bank of India’s banking ombudsman increased by 25% in the financial year 2017-18 as compared to the previous year.

#### RBI’S BANKING OMBUDSMAN SCHEME

<table>
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<th>What is it?</th>
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| • The Banking Ombudsman Scheme, 1995 was notified by the RBI under Section 35-A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.  
• The aim and objective of the Scheme is to provide a quick and cost-free resolution mechanism for complaints relating to deficiency of banking services of common bank customers.  
• The Banking ombudsman is a quasi-judicial authority created to resolve customer complaints against banks relating to certain services provided by them. |
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

→ Whom does it cover?

- The scheme is applicable to Scheduled Commercial Banks, Scheduled Primary Urban Co-operative Banks and the Regional Rural Banks.
- It covers the deposit taking NBFCs as well as to the non-deposit taking NBFCs having total assets of more than 100 crores.

→ When can a customer approach Banking Ombudsman?

- A customer can approach the RBI’s ombudsman if the reply is not received from the bank within a period of one month after the bank concerned has received one’s complaint, or the bank rejects the complaint, or if the complainant is not satisfied with the reply given by the bank.
- Further, the Banking Ombudsman does not charge any fee for filing and resolving customers’ complaints.

→ Maximum penalty imposed by Banking Ombudsman

- The Banking Ombudsman can impose a maximum penalty of Rs 20 lakh if the bank fails to address the complaints of the customers.
- RBI has tightened the banking ombudsman scheme with the objective to strengthen the grievance redressal mechanism for customers.

→ New Guidelines

- All commercial banks having 10 or more banking outlets to have an independent internal ombudsman (IO) to review customer complaints that are either partly or fully rejected by the banks.
- The IO shall examine customer complaints which are in the nature of deficiency in service on the part of the bank, that are partly or wholly rejected by the bank.
- As banks should internally escalate complaints that are not fully redressed to their respective IOs before conveying the final decision to the complainant, customers need not approach the IO directly.

IN NEWS: In the recent times, the companies have resorted to promoter pledging to raise finances from Banks and NBFCs. In this regard, let us understand the concept of Promoter Pledging and its concern for Indian Economy.

→ What is Promoter Pledging?

- Banks usually accept assets such as property, gold jewellery, shares etc. as collateral for giving loans. The promoters of the company may pledge the shares held by them in order to avail loans from the Banks. This is referred to as “Promoter Pledging”.
- The RBI has capped the loan amount to 50% of the value of pledged shares. In case, the promoters fail to repay back the loans, the banks can sell off the pledged shares in order to recover the loan amount.

→ Extent of Promoter Pledging in India

- The share of pledged shares held by NBFCs has touched an all-time high of nearly 42%. Similarly, there has been increase in the share of pledged shares held by the banks.
- More than 500 companies have opted for promoter pledging in India. The total value of pledged shares is around Rs 2 lakh crores. More than 50 companies have pledged more than 90% of their
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Concerns with regulatory Framework

• Currently, the company needs to disclose the extent of promoter pledging. However, there is no need for the company to disclose the reasons for which it has resorted to promoter pledging.
• Hence, the regulatory obligation on the company to disclose the purpose of promoter pledging would improve the transparency and corporate governance in India.

ADVANCED PRICING AGREEMENTS (APAS)

In News: The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has recently entered into 200th Unilateral Advance Pricing Agreement (UAPA). The Advanced Pricing Agreement (APA) is basically a tool to address the problem of transfer mispricing.

What is Transfer mispricing?

• Transfer price refers to the price at which the parent/subsidiary company sells its goods and services to another subsidiary company.
• Under transfer mispricing, a parent/subsidiary company located in low tax jurisdiction (such as Mauritius) sells its goods and services at higher prices to a subsidiary company located in India.
• This leads to higher operating costs (due to higher input prices) of the subsidiary company in India and consequently, lower profits. Thus, the subsidiary company ends up reducing the tax liability in India.
• Thus, in order to address this problem of transfer mispricing, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) signs advanced pricing agreement with the MNCs.

About Advanced Pricing Agreement (APA)

• It is an agreement between the tax authority and MNC on the appropriate transfer pricing methodology for a certain period of time. Under this, the transfer price is fixed based on the "Arm's length principle".
• This principle states that the transfer price must be closer to the price at goods and services are transacted between two unrelated entities.

Types of Advanced Pricing Agreement (APA)

• Unilateral APA: Agreement between the company and the tax authority of the country
• Bilateral APA: Agreement which involves taxpayer located in the country, tax authority of the taxpayer's location, associated enterprise (AE) of the taxpayer in a foreign country and tax authority of the country where the associated enterprise is located.
• Multilateral APA: Agreement involves multiple entities which get into an agreement about transfer pricing. These entities include the taxpayer in a country, the tax authority of the taxpayer's company, two or more associated enterprises of the taxpayer and the respective tax authorities of the countries where these AEs are located.

REMITTANCES INTO INDIA

In News: The World Bank has recently released a report titled as "Migration and Development Brief". This report provides updates on global trends in migration and remittances.

Significance of the Report

The Report highlights developments related to migration-related Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).
indicators for which the World Bank is a custodian. These Sustainable goals related to migration are:

- Increasing the volume of remittances as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP)
- Reducing remittance costs
- Reducing recruitment costs for migrant workers.

**Highlights of the Report**

- The Remittances to low- and middle-income countries reached a record high in 2018 ($530bn), registering an increase of 9.6 percent over the previous year. Global remittances, which include flows to high-income countries, reached $689 billion in 2018.
- Among countries, the top remittance recipients were India with $79 billion, followed by China ($67 billion), Mexico ($36 billion), the Philippines ($34 billion), and Egypt ($29 billion)
- The remittances into India contribute around 3% of its GDP. However, for some countries such as Nepal and Philippines, the share of remittances as proportion of their GDP is much higher.
- India receives its highest remittances from UAE, USA, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman etc. The only non-gulf country is the top 5 is USA.

**WAYS AND MEANS ADVANCES**

**In News:** The Reserve Bank of India, in consultation with the Government of India, has decided that the limits for Ways and Means Advances (WMA) for the first half of the financial year 2019-20 (April 2019 to September 2019) will be Rs 75000 crore.

**What is Ways and Means advances (WMA)?**

- The RBI acts as banker to the government i.e. it lends money to the Central and State Government. Earlier, the government relied on ad-hoc Treasury bills to borrow money from RBI. However, it was replaced by Ways and Means advances in 1997.
- Ways and Means advances acts as a loan facility to the central and state governments to meet their cash requirements. This facility is availed by the Government due to the temporary mismatches in their receipts and expenditure. The loan taken by the government through ways and means advances need to be paid back in 90 days. The interest rate of WMA currently is the repo rate. The limits for WMA are mutually decided by the RBI and Government of India.
- When the WMA limit is crossed the government takes recourse to overdrafts, which are not allowed beyond 10 consecutive working days. The interest rate on overdrafts would be 2 percent more than the repo rate.

**Reasons for replacing Ad-Hoc T-Bills with WMAs**

- Earlier, under an agreement between RBI and Government, the central government needed to always hold certain amount of cash balances. The minimum cash limit was fixed in order to ensure smooth conduct of Government business and to ensure that government has sufficient cash to meet its operational requirements.
- However, if the cash balances reduced to below the threshold level fixed, the RBI provided the cash through the creation of ad-hoc treasury bills. The ad hoc Treasury Bills, which were meant to be temporary, gained a permanent as well as a cumulative character. Further, ad-hoc treasury bills became an attractive source of financing Government expenditures since it was available at an interest rate which was below the market rate of interest.
- Thus, the ad-hoc treasury bills led to increase in the government borrowings leading to poor
**Economic Development**

Financial discipline.

- **Differences between ad-hoc Treasury Bills and WMA.**
  - WMA would not be a source of financing Budget Deficit. It is only a mechanism to cover day-to-day mismatches in receipts and payments of the Government. WMA will also not be shown as a source of financing in the Budget estimates.
  - Secondly, limits on WMA will be fixed and any excess withdrawal by Government beyond the limit will become permissible for not more than 10 consecutive working days.
  - Thirdly, WMA will be charged at market related interest rate i.e. Repo rate.

**In News:** The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has recently released the Trade related Statistics for India for the period **April 2018 -February 2019.**

- **Top Export Commodities (in the descending order)**
  - Petroleum Products > Precious, Semi-precious stones > Pharmaceutical Drugs > Gold and Other Precious Metal Jewellery > Iron and Steel

- **Top Export Destinations (in the descending order)**
  - USA > UAE > China > Hong Kong > Singapore

- **Top Import Commodities (in the descending order)**
  - Crude oil > Gold > Petroleum products > Coal, Coke and Briquettes etc. > Pearl, Precious stones, semi-precious stones

- **Top Import (in the descending order)**
  - China > USA > UAE > Saudi Arabia > Iraq

- **FDI Statistics for India**
  - At a cumulative level (From April 2000 to December 2018)
  - **Source:** Mauritius > Singapore > Japan > UK > Netherlands
  - However for the period April 2018 to December 2018:
  - **Source:** Singapore > Mauritius > Netherlands > USA > Japan > UK > Germany > France > UAE > Cyprus

- **FDI Inflow Trends**
  - Total FDI inflow in India has increased from about $4 billion in 2000-01 to about $60 billion in 2017-18. FDI does not show clear increasing trend with some years showing decline in FDI inflows. However, in the last five years it has increasing trend.

- **Sectoral Break of FDI in India (From April 2000 to December 2018):**
  - Services Sector (includes Financial, Banking, Insurance, NBFC, Outsourcing, R&D, Courier, Technology testing and Analysis) (17%) > Computer Software and Hardware (9%) > Telecommunications (8%) > Construction Development (6%) > Trading (5%) > Automobile Industry (5%) > Chemicals (other than fertilisers) (4%) > Drugs and Pharmaceuticals (4%) > Construction (Infrastructure) activities (4%) > Power (3%).

**APPOINT-**

**Context:** The Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank has unanimously selected David R. Malpass as President of the World Bank Group for a five-year term.
About World Bank

The World Bank is an international financial institution that provides loans to member countries of the purpose of economic growth and development.

It comprises two institutions: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (IDA).

The structure of World Bank comprises:

- **Board of Governors**: The World Bank comprises of 189 member countries. Every member country is represented by its Minister for Finance. All these representatives of the member countries form the Board of Governors, which is the highest decision making body of the World Bank. They meet once in a year at the Annual Meetings of the Boards of Governors of the World Bank Group.

- **Board of Executive Directors**: The Board of Governors delegate specific duties to 25 Executive Directors, who work on-site at the Bank and are responsible for day-to-day management of the World Bank. The five largest shareholders of the World Bank appoint an executive director, while other member countries are represented by elected executive directors.

- **World Bank President**: The World Bank President chairs meetings of the Boards of Directors and is responsible for overall management of the Bank.

How is the World Bank President appointed?

The President of the World Bank is selected by the Board of Executive Directors for a five-year. As per the convention followed so far, the World Bank President has been an American Citizen, while the IMF President has been a European.

About World Bank Group

The World Bank Group consists of five organizations:

- **The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)**: It lends loans to governments of middle-income and creditworthy low-income countries.

- **The International Development Association (IDA)**: It provides interest-free loans and grants to governments of the poorest countries.

  *Note*: Together, IBRD and IDA make up the World Bank.

- **The International Finance Corporation (IFC)**: It is the largest global development institution focused exclusively on the private sector. It helps developing countries achieve sustainable growth by financing investment, mobilizing capital in international financial markets, and providing advisory services to businesses and governments.

  *Note*: The International finance corporation has enabled investments into India through the launch of Masala Bonds.

- **The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA)**: It promotes foreign direct investment into developing countries to support economic growth, reduce poverty, and improve people’s lives. MIGA fulfills this mandate by offering political risk insurance (guarantees) to investors and lenders.

- **The International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)**: It provides international facilities for conciliation and arbitration of investment disputes. India is not a member of ICSID.

Reports published by World Bank

**LIVESTOCK CENSUS**

**Context:** Presently, the 20th Livestock Census is being conducted in all the districts of the India in participation with all States and Union Territories.

→ **Importance of Livestock Census**
- Livestock census covers the census of livestock, poultry, implements and machinery used for livestock rearing.
- India has largest livestock population in the world. Sound and timely available database are the basic requirement for any planning and policymaking purposes.
- The conduct of livestock census is thus essential for making plans and policies for growth of livestock sector and also for overall growth of the economy

→ **Current Status**
- Data on livestock numbers are collected through a quinquennial (every 5 years) Livestock Census that is a complete enumeration of all households with regard to livestock population.
- The data collected are quite detailed; the livestock is classified according to various species of animals by breed, sex and age.
- The First Livestock Census was conducted in 1919-20 and presently 20th Livestock census is in process.

→ **About 20th Livestock Census**
- The 20th Livestock Census is conducted in all the districts of the India in participation with all States and Union Territories. Various species of animals possessed by the households, household enterprises/non-household enterprises and institutions will be counted at their site.
- The collection of breed-wise information of various species would give vital information for determination of threatened indigenous breeds and to take initiatives accordingly for their conservation.
- Considering this aspect, the 20th Livestock Census would be a Breed-wise Livestock Census which will be helpful for framing policies or programmes for Breed improvement.

**CURRENCY CHESTS**

**Context:** Recently, the RBI has released guidelines for banks to set up new currency chests.

→ **What are Currency Chests?**
- Currency chests are branches of selected banks authorised by the RBI to stock rupee notes and coins. The RBI offices in various cities receive the notes and coins. These are sent to the currency chests and small coin depots from where they are distributed to bank branches.
- The currency management infrastructure consists of a network of 19 issue offices of the Reserve Bank, 3,975 currency chests and 3,654 small coin depots of commercial, co-operative and regional rural banks spread across the country.

→ **Currency Management**
- Currency management essentially relates to issue of notes and coins and retrieval of unfit notes from circulation.
- The printing of Currency notes is the responsibility of the RBI. However, the minting of coins is the responsibility of the Central Government under the Coinage Act, 1906.
- Coins are issued for circulation only through the Reserve Bank in terms of the RBI Act.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

• The Department of Currency Management under the RBI has the responsibility of administering the functions of currency management. The Department receives notes from four currency note printing presses. Two of the currency note printing presses are owned by the Government of India and two are owned by the Reserve Bank, through its wholly owned subsidiary, the Bharatiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran Ltd. (BRBNML).

• The government owned presses are at Nasik (Western India) and Dewas (Central India). The other two presses are at Mysore (Southern India) and Salboni (Eastern India). Coins are minted in four mints owned by the Government of India. The mints are located at Mumbai, Hyderabad, Calcutta and Noida.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>No. of Currency Chest</th>
<th>No. of Small Coin Depot</th>
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<td>Co-operative Banks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional Rural Banks</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-treasury Offices</td>
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<td>Reserve Bank of India</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,975</td>
<td>3,654</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: RBL

GLOBAL REPORT ON FOOD CRISSES 2019


➔ Highlights of the Report

• More than 113 million people across 53 countries experienced acute hunger requiring urgent food, nutrition and livelihoods assistance.

• The worst food crises in 2018, in order of severity, were: Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan, South Sudan and north Nigeria. These eight countries accounted for two thirds of the total number of people facing acute food insecurity – amounting to nearly 72 million people.

• Conflict and insecurity, climate shocks and economic turbulence were the main drivers of food insecurity.

How to address the Food severity? Ending conflicts, empowering women, nourishing and educating children, improving rural infrastructure and reinforcing social safety-nets are essential for a resilient, stable and hunger-free world.

➔ About Global Network Against Food Crises

• The Global Network against Food Crises was launched at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit by the European Union, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) with the objective of tackling the root causes of food crises through shared analysis and knowledge.

• The Global Report on Food Crises 2017 was the first step towards this commitment as it provided the required evidence base for coordination around decision making processes and resource allocations.

Note: The UNSC has adopted resolution 2417 in May 2018 to address food crises. It allows the Council to consider its full range of tools — including sanctions — to ensure that parties to conflict do not violate
international humanitarian law (IHL) by, for example, starving civilians as a weapon of war, unlawfully denying humanitarian access to civilian populations in need and depriving people of their means to produce food.

**Context:** Oxfam India, an NGO, has published a new report "Mind the Gap- State of Employment". This report highlights gender and caste based discrimination with respect to employment opportunities in India.

→ About "Mind the Gap- State of Employment" Report

- Oxfam India released its first India Inequality Report in February 2018. This particular report Mind the Gap: The State of Employment in India is building on the first report.
- The second report analyses the state of employment in India from the lens of gender. Women's labour force participation in India is one of the lowest in the world. Women comprise half of the Indian population but make up less than a quarter of the labour force. Three in four Indian women do not work in the country.

→ Highlights of the Report

- On an average, women are paid 34 per cent less than similarly qualified male workers for performing the same tasks.
- In 2015, 92 per cent of women and 82 per cent of men were earning a monthly wage less than Rs 10,000, far below the Seventh Central Pay Commission (2015) recommendation of Rs 18,000 per month.
- There is an over-representation of women in unpaid care work. If unpaid care and household activities are included in the NSSO’s definition of work, the Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) in 2011-12 rises from 20.5 per cent to 81.7 per cent, more than that of men.
- Declining FLFPR comprises demand and supply side challenges: decreasing demand for farm work, relatively low employment demand from sectors that are more likely to employ women (e.g. garments), lower likelihood of working women in richer households, occupational segregation, and to some extent enrolment of girls in the higher education.

→ Recommendations given in the Report

- Shift development focus on labour-intensive sectors to create more jobs.
- Growth in jobs must be inclusive and new jobs need to be decent and secure with better work conditions including social security benefits and the right to organise.
- Substantially higher investments in health and education to improve productivity. These two are also the sectors which could be large employment generators in the future.

**Context:** The proposed e-commerce policy has raised concerns over the future of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms such as Hotstar, Netflix, Amazon Prime etc.

→ What are OTT Services?

- The TRAI defines “OTT provider” as an entity that offers Information and Communication Technology (ICT) services, but neither operates a network nor leases network capacity from a network operator.
- Instead, OTT providers rely on the global internet and access network speeds to reach the user,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- The best known examples of OTT apps are Skype, WhatsApp, Chat On, Snapchat, Instagram etc.

Why are the OTT Platforms concerned?

- The OTT platforms are concerned due to the definition of e-commerce as provided in the e-commerce policy. It defines e-commerce as “buying, selling, marketing or distribution of goods, including digital products and services, through electronic network”. Thus, e-commerce would cover even the sale of digital services by the OTTs such as Hotstar, Netflix etc.

- Further, it reiterates the FDI policy in e-commerce and states that e-commerce platform in which foreign investment has been made cannot exercise ownership or control over the inventory sold on its platform. It is to be noted that 100% FDI is allowed in Market based Model of E-Commerce but FDI is not allowed in inventory based model.

- The OTT Platforms such as Hotstar, Netflix, Amazon Prime etc. host the content of other production houses. Apart from that, these OTT platforms also produce their original content which is streamed through internet.

- Since, some of the OTTs produce their original content, they may be considered as inventory based model of e-commerce under the new e-commerce policy.

- Thus, under the current draft e-commerce policy, OTTs may be barred from streaming original productions. They may be able to only host the content of other production houses.

UPI SCORES OVER E-WALLETS

Context: The digital payments have received a much needed fillip post demonetisation in November 2016. The digital payments have seen surge in payments through both UPI and e-wallets.

Even though there has been rapid growth of digital payments, UPI has clearly scored over e-wallets as evident in the fact that UPI has seen a remarkable growth of over 400% in the financial year 2018-19 as compared to 120% growth of the e-wallets.

Further, in terms of transaction value, UPI accounts for almost 85% of the total transactions.

About Unified Payments Interface (UPI)

- UPI is a payment system that allows money transfer between any two bank accounts by using a smartphone.

- UPI allows a customer to pay directly from a bank account to different merchants, both online and offline, without the hassle of typing card details, IFSC code, or net banking/wallet passwords.

- UPI can be used for both sending as well as requesting money. Presently, the upper limit per UPI transaction is Rs 1 lakh.

Probable reasons for increase in UPI Transactions

1. Ease of Transaction

- A wallet transaction involves multiple legs, including transfer of money from bank account to the wallet and then to the beneficiary.

- However, using UPI, people can do the transactions directly from their bank accounts without the need for loading the wallet with the money.

2. Adoption of UPI by Payment operators

- Some of the payment system operators such as Google Pay have adopted UPI-based payment system leading to increase in the volume of transactions.
Economic Development

3. **No KYC**
   E-Wallets need to follow the mandatory KYC Norms. As of now, KYC is not required for UPI as it is just like any other internet banking transaction.

4. **Interoperability**
   - Till recently, it was not possible to transfer the money from one e-wallet to another. This had in turn led to increase in the value of UPI transactions.
   - The RBI has recently decided to introduce interoperability between the mobile wallets in a phased manner. Users will be able to transfer funds between wallets and also from their wallets to bank accounts. Till now, a user who has, say, a Paytm wallet couldn’t make a payment from his wallet to another wallet run by a rival firm.

   ➔ **How is UPI unique?**
   - Immediate money transfer through mobile device round the clock 24*7 and 365 days.
   - Single mobile application for accessing different bank accounts.
   - **Single Click 2 Factor Authentication** (Two factor authentication means besides the password or user name an additional piece of information is to be added (like OTP) by the individual to authenticate the payment).
   - UPI allows all transactions to be at least 2-FA using mobile and second factor (PIN or Biometrics). Thus, it makes all transactions compliant with the existing regulatory guidelines.

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**FIXED MATURITY PLANS (FMPs)**

**Context:** Even as the Banks in India are grappling with problem of growing NPAs, the Mutual Fund industry is presently staring at the crisis related to Fixed Maturity Plans. In this regard, let us understand about Fixed Maturity Plans and the present crisis.

➔ **What are Mutual Funds?**
   - Mutual Fund Company pools money from the investors which in turn is invested in different financial instruments such as shares, bonds, debentures, commercial paper etc.
   - A mutual fund is required to be registered with Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) before it can collect funds from the public.

➔ **Types of Mutual Fund Schemes**
   - A mutual fund scheme can be classified into open-ended scheme or close-ended scheme depending on its maturity period.
   - An open-ended scheme is one that is available for subscription and repurchase on a continuous basis. These schemes do not have a fixed maturity period.
   - On the other hand, a close-ended scheme has a stipulated maturity period e.g. 3-5 years. The fund is open for subscription only during a specified period at the time of launch of the scheme. Investors can invest in the scheme at the time of the new fund offer and thereafter they can buy or sell the units of the scheme on the stock exchanges where the units are listed.

➔ **What are Fixed Maturity Plans (FMPs)?**
   - FMPs are close-ended mutual funds that one can invest in only during a new fund offer (NFO).
   - The FMPs typically invest in debt instruments such as Bonds, commercial papers etc. that have the same maturity as that of the FMP. For example, if the duration of FMP is of 2 year, it would invest in only those debt instruments that have maturity period of 2 years.
• Because of such a nature of investment, the FMPs do not face interest rate risks. However, they face credit risks as there could be default on the payment by the company which issues the debt instrument.

→ What’s the present crisis with FMPs?
• The Mutual Fund companies had invested in debt instruments issued by companies such as IL&FS, Essel Group etc. These companies have failed to fulfil their debt obligations and consequently defaulted on the repayment.
• This has put strain on the mutual fund companies.
• Accordingly, some of the mutual fund companies have decided investors in affected FMPs will receive part payment of maturity proceeds as of now. The remaining amount may be paid if and when the mutual fund company recovers the money from the companies.
Recently, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) published the 2019 edition of the State of the World Population report. The year 2019 marks two important milestones in the field of reproductive health: 50 years since UNFPA began operations, and 25 years since the landmark International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo.

**GLOBAL EXPANSION**

India's large youth bulge will continue to fuel population growth, the report said.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
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<td>India</td>
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<td>Brazil</td>
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**Population by age (%)**

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<td>67</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.7% Least developed countries, mostly in Africa, have the fastest growing populations.

Least developed countries are 47 nations with the lowest socio-economic indicators (poverty, human resource, economic vulnerability), according to UN Human Development Index ratings.

Source: UNFPA State of the World Population 2018

**UNFPA**

- UNFPA is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency.
- It was established as a trust fund in 1967 and began operations in 1969.
SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

- In 1987, it was officially renamed the United Nations Population Fund. However, the original abbreviation, UNFPA (United Nations Fund for Population Activities), was retained.
- The mandate of UNFPA is established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
- UNFPA is a subsidiary organ of the UN General Assembly.
- UNFPA is entirely supported by voluntary contributions of donor governments, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, and foundations and individuals, NOT by the United Nations regular budget.
- UNFPA works directly to tackle Sustainable Development Goal 3 on health, Goal 4 on education and Goal 5 on gender equality.

ABOUT 2019 EDITION

- The findings on women aged between 15-49 years were published for the first time as part of United Nations Population Fund’s (UNFPA) State of World Population 2019 report.
- It includes data on women's ability to make decisions over three key areas: 1. Sexual intercourse with their partner, 2. Contraception use, and 3. Health care.
- According to the analysis, the absence of reproductive and sexual rights has major and negative repercussions on women’s education, income and safety, leaving them “unable to shape their own futures”.
- Early marriage continues to remain an obstacle to female empowerment and better reproductive rights.
- The report highlights the threat to women’s and girls’ reproductive rights posed by conflicts or climate disasters.

FACTS AND FIGURES OF THE REPORT

- The least developed countries recorded the highest population growth, with countries in Africa registering an average of 2.7% a year.
- **India’s population**: 1.36 billion in 2019. It grew at 1.2% a year between 2010 and 2019 (China grew at 0.5%) marginally higher than the global average of 1.1% a year in this period.
- Around half of India’s population in 24 states have achieved the replacement fertility rates of 2.1 children per woman, which is the desired family size when the population stops growing. (Replacement level rate is the average number of children born per woman—at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next, without migration)
- However, the country’s large youth population will continue to fuel population growth even as the size of the ageing population increases.
- In India, the total fertility rate is 2.3 in 2019.
- India’s maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in 2015 was 174 deaths per lakh live while global MMR in 2015 was 216.
- Adolescent birth rate in India (28 in every 1,000) is much lower than the global rate (44 per 1,000) for the year 2017.
- Age Composition: 27% of India’s population was in the age bracket of 0-14 years and 10-24 years, while 67% of the country’s population was in the 15-64 age bracket. 6% of the country’s population was of the age 65 and above.
- Life expectancy at birth: India registered an improvement in life expectancy at birth which is 69 years in 2019. The global average is 72 years.
UNESCAP’s report has projected that countries in Asia Pacific have to make an additional annual cost of $1.5 trillion to meet the targets set in SDG by 2030.

**SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

- The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) - a regional arm of the UN – has come out with the Survey 2019: Ambitions Beyond Growth.
- As per the report, an additional annual investment of $1.5 trillion — equivalent to a dollar per person per day — would allow countries in the Asia-Pacific region to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.
- This is 5% of the combined GDP of Asia-Pacific developing countries in 2018.
- As per the report, the progress on 17 SDGs in Asia Pacific is -
  1. Progress made but not enough to meet target - SDG 1 (poverty eradication), SDG 3 (health), SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 7 (reliable and clean energy).
  2. Fell short - SDG 6 (water and sanitation), SDG 8 (decent work) and SDG 12 (sustainable consumption and production).

**CHALLENGES**

1. **Income Inequality**: Top 10% people accounting for more than half of income. And social protection benefits is unable to reach to extremely vulnerable groups including children, women, old aged and poor.
2. **High Poverty and Hunger** in South and South East Asia.
3. **Climate Change**: GHG emissions have increased 6 fold, from 0.9 to 5.8 metric tons per capita. 5 of the world’s 10 economies most affected by climate change in the past 10 years in Asia Pacific are - Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.
4. **Job Losses**: Weaker demand in Europe and United States and trade war between US and China has increased tariffs and a loss of at least 2.7 million jobs.
5. **Low social sector spending**, due to distressed bank assets, high corporate debt and household debt.
6. **Late entrant in Manufacturing**: Countries are shifting from an agriculture-based economy to services-based one, bypassing the manufacturing sector and this reduces the scope for industrialization.

**UJJWALA: BENEFICIARIES STILL USE EARTHEN STOVE**

A new study from the Research Institute for Compassionate Economics (RICE) shows that 85% of Ujjwala beneficiaries in rural Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan still use solid fuels for cooking, due to financial reasons as well as gender inequalities.

**PM -UJJWALA YOJANA**

- It is under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas
SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

- It is aimed at providing 5 Crore LPG connections in the name of women in BPL (Below Poverty Line) households across the country. Some of the objectives of the scheme are:
  - Empowering women and protecting their health.
  - Reducing the serious health hazards associated with cooking based on fossil fuel.
  - Reducing the number of deaths in India due to unclean cooking fuel.
  - Preventing young children from significant number of acute respiratory illnesses caused due to indoor air pollution by burning the fossil fuel.

ELIGIBILITY FOR THE YOJANA

The identification of eligible BPL families is made on the basis of SECC-2011 data. However below is the basic eligibility criteria for the scheme.

- The applicant's name should be in the list of SECC-2011 data.
- The applicant should be a women above the age of 18 years.
- The women applicant should belong to BPL (Below Poverty Line).
- The women applicant should have a saving bank account in any nationalized bank across the country.
- The applicant's household should not already own a LPG connection in anyone's name.

RECENT FINDINGS

- The study shows that in the four states (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan), there has been a substantial increase in LPG ownership due to the scheme, with 76% of households now owning an LPG connection.
- However, more than 98% of these households also own a chulha and 85% of Ujjwala beneficiaries still use solid fuels for cooking, due to financial reasons as well as gender inequalities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for low gas stove usage</th>
<th>1. Financial Reason: Refilling the cylinder is expensive i.e. 70% of households do not spend anything on solid fuels, thus the relative cost of an LPG cylinder refill, even if subsidized, is far higher.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Gender inequality: Women are not typically economic decision-makers in the household, hindering a shift to LPG usage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Lack of awareness: Majority of the people were ignorant of the harmful effects of ambient air pollution.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues with using solid fuels for cooking</th>
<th>1. Indoor air pollution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Infant deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Deteriorate the development of child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Non-communicable diseases including stroke, ischemic heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and lung cancer.</td>
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</table>

E-CIGARETTES: BAN DEMANDED

The Union Ministry of Commerce has urged the Health Ministry to frame a law for banning sale and manufacture of e-cigarettes as in the absence of a domestic legislation, it would not be possible to put a blanket ban the import of e-cig.
E-CIGARETTES

- E-cigarette is a **battery-powered device** which vaporizes a liquid solution containing water, flavourings, **propylene glycol** and **vegetable glycerol**.
- They are considered as a healthier smoking alternative as they do not contain carbon monoxide or tar.
- The Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) market or the e-cigarette market is also rapidly growing threatening a major health risk in the country.
- More than 30 countries have banned e-cigarettes according to WHO.
- **Harmful effects**: It has nicotine which causes increased risk of cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal disorders, decreased immune response, negative impact on reproductive health, DNA mutation leading to cancer etc. It is also considered as a gateway product because nicotine addiction through e-cigarettes may lead to its consumer to try conventional tobacco products.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

- In August, 2018, the Health ministry issued an advisory to all states and Union Territories (UTs) to stop the manufacture, sale and import of ENDS (Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems).
- The decision came after the **Delhi High Court** lashed put at the centre for the inordinate delay in taking appropriate measure to tackle the emerging threat of e-cigs.
- Further, the Health ministry asked the commerce ministry to issue a notification banning the import of ENDS including hookah and e-cigs.
- In response to this request by the Health ministry, the commerce ministry has asked the Health ministry to first come out with a law which will ban the domestic manufacture and sale of e-cigs.
- Because without banning the domestic sale and manufacture, putting an import ban will be infringement of global trade norms.

ZINC DEFICIENCY: RISING AMONG INDIANS

A study by Harvard school of public health has found that rising carbon dioxide levels can accelerate zinc deficiency in crops and thus in human consumption. The study states that inadequate zinc intake has been rising in India for decades, causing tens of millions of people to become newly deficient in it.

WHAT DOES ZINC DO IN THE HUMAN BODY?

- Zinc supports cell function, helping an estimated 100 enzymes — molecules that make chemical reactions happen — perform their duties.
- Zinc plays additional roles in the body, including:
  - boosting immune function;
  - helping cells divide;
  - maintaining the sense of smell and taste;
  - promoting wound healing.
- Zinc also supports a person’s growth and development. As such, it is an essential mineral for pregnant women as well as growing children.
A person's body does not store zinc, which means getting enough of the mineral from food is important in preventing a deficiency.

SYMPTOMS OF ZINC DEFICIENCY

- Some of the most common zinc deficiency symptoms include: appetite loss, slower than expected growth, poor immune system function, severe zinc deficiency can cause even more concerning symptoms. Examples include: delayed sexual maturity, diarrhoea, eye and skin lesions, feeling lethargic, funny-taste sensations, hair loss, poor wound healing, unexplained weight loss.
- Men and boys can also experience impotence and hypogonadism, which is when a male's body does not produce enough testosterone.

FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

- Inadequacy of zinc was higher in rice diet dominated southern and north-eastern States: Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Manipur and Meghalaya.
- Zinc deficiency in India has risen by 25% between 1983 and 2012.
- It accounts to 82 million additional population becoming zinc deficient.

Reasons for zinc deficiency

- **Rice dominated diets**: White rice is poor in zinc. Therefore, states with rice-dominated diets have highest zinc-deficient population.
- **Climate change**: Climatic change is causing increased carbon emissions. Higher carbon emissions is causing nutrient deficiency in crops especially that of zinc and protein. Hence people to are not getting adequate zinc content through consumption of crops.
- **Changes in nutrition and dietary intakes**: Rural population these days is moving towards white rice-dominated diets from their traditional coarse cereals diets which included jowar, ragi etc. even urban population is increasingly consuming food which is high in sugar and lacking in nutrients.

Steps to be taken

- **Bio fortification of Rice**: as a short-term solution, government can bio fortify white rice with zinc. Earlier also Golden rice was adopted which was genetically engineered rice fortified with beta-carotene. Researchers have been working on Golden Rice 2.0 to fortify zinc and iron in addition to beta-carotene
- **Reduction in carbon emissions**.
- **Better and nutritious diets**: including Dairy Products, Leguminous Plants, Whole grains in diet

NEWS SNIPPETS

**INDIA IS THE LARGEST CONSUMER OF YOUTUBE**

**IN NEWS**: With substantial growth in India's internet coverage and data growth, the country has become YouTube's largest and fastest growing market with 265 million Indians watching the video-sharing website every month.
- In the last one year, YouTube's consumption on mobile has increased to 85%, with 60% of the watch time coming from outside the six largest metros in India.
- Today, YouTube creators have become effective storytellers, with more than 1,200 Indian creators crossing the million subscriber-milestone, compared to five years ago, when there were only two creators.
**SOCIETY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

- User behaviour has shifted massively to mobile video and therein lies the opportunity for marketers today.
- It has become an integral touchpoint to drive business as companies can advertise and engage with the audience.

**IN NEWS:** In order to counter fake, sub-standard and expired drugs, the Union Health Ministry has said Hindi and regional language will be used in the tendering process for polio and iron tablets.

- The Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) recently recommended that government procurement agencies should take necessary steps in the tendering process to include the regional language, along with English, on the label of iron tablets and polio drops in government programmed.
- Since last year, the government has been working on ensuring the most stringent quality control for both the products which directly affect almost all the children born in India.
- Drug names and expiry date during tendering will be in Hindi/regional language too for — polio drop and Iron tablets — procured for children under the government programmes;
- DTAB considered the proposal to amend Rule 96 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 for labelling of iron tablets and polio drops distributed to the children under government programmes with name and expiry date in Hindi also.

**MEDICINE LABELS IN REGIONAL LANGUAGE**

**YANADI TRIBE**
- A nomadic tribe, Yanadi live in the state of Andhra Pradesh.
- A significant Yanadi population used to be concentrated on Sriharikota Island, a barrier strip in southern Nellore District next to the Bay of Bengal.
- The Yanadi have traditionally preferred a semi-nomadic forest subsistence of hunting, fishing, and gathering nuts, yams, and roots.
- Since 1970, the government of India has resettled many into permanent villages, though others still retain their semi-nomadic lifestyle.

**CHENCHU TRIBALS**
- The Chenchus are Adivasi, a designated Scheduled Tribe in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Odisha.
- They are an aboriginal tribe whose traditional way of life has been based on hunting and gathering. The Chenchus speak the Chenchu language, a member of the Dravidian language family.
- **In History:** The Chenchus revolt (Nallamala Hills (AP): The tribal people of Nallamala Hills revolted against British forest laws under the leadership of k. Hanumanthu in 1921-22. He organised Palanadu – Forest Satyagraha against British Forest Laws. Their revolt was against the increasing British control over forests.
The Event Horizon Telescope (EHT) is an international collaboration of eight ground-based radio telescopes. It was launched in 2009. It was designed to capture images of a black hole.

Recently, EHT researchers have revealed that they have succeeded in unveiling the first direct visual evidence of a supermassive black hole and its shadow. The image is consistent with the prediction of Einstein’s general theory of relativity and is an independent substantiation of the theory.

The central idea of general relativity is that space and time are two aspects of spacetime. Spacetime is curved when there is gravity, matter, energy, and momentum.

### WHAT IS A BLACK HOLE?

- It is a cosmic body of **extremely intense gravity** from which nothing, not even light, can escape.
- Despite the name, they are **not empty** but instead consist of a huge amount of **matter packed densely into a small area**, giving it an immense gravitational pull.
- There is a region of space beyond the black hole called the **event horizon**. This is a "point of no return", beyond which it is impossible to escape the gravitational effects of the black hole.
- Black holes are **freezing cold on the inside, but incredibly hot just outside.**
- The internal temperature of a black hole with the mass of our Sun is around **one-millionth of a degree** above absolute zero.

### How is a Black Hole formed?

- A black hole can be **formed by the death of a massive star**.
- When such a star has exhausted the internal thermonuclear fuels in its core at the end of its life, the core becomes unstable and gravitationally collapses inward upon itself, and the star’s outer layers are blown away.
- The crushing weight of constituent matter falling in from all sides compresses the **dying star to a point of zero volume** and infinite density called the **singularity**.
- The singularity constitutes the centre of a black hole and is hidden by the object's “surface,” the **event horizon**.
- The radius of the event horizon is called the **Schwarzschild radius**, after a German astronomer.
- **Schwarzschild radius** is proportional to the mass of the collapsing star.
- Details of the structure of a black hole are calculated from Albert Einstein’s general theory of relativity.
- These **cannot be observed directly** on account of both their small size and the fact that they emit no light.
- They can be “observed by the effects of their **enormous gravitational fields** on nearby matter.
How black hole has a vast attractive force? What is its density in comparison with Earth and Sun?

- The gravitational field at a point is dominated by that due to the masses that are closest and heaviest.
- Near a black hole the gravitational field is very intense because a black hole contains a huge amount of mass within a relatively small volume.
- Matter going into it increases the mass of the black hole.
- Black holes have an intense gravitational field near them because of the large amount of mass they have which is concentrated in a very small volume. If one defines the density of a black hole as the ratio of its mass to its volume, then the density decreases as the size of the black hole increases. So the “density” would depend on the size of the black hole.

Does Black hole emit light?

- The black hole itself does not emit or radiate light, or any other electromagnetic waves that can be detected by instruments built by human beings.
- However, the area just outside the boundary of the black hole — referred to as event horizon — which has vast amounts of gas, clouds and plasma swirling violently, emit all kinds of radiations, including even visible light.

ISRO: TO LAUNCH A STRING OF ‘DEFENCE’ SATELLITES #SPACE #SECURITY

Starting May 2019, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) plans to send up at least eight earth observation (EO) satellites of various types.

RECENT LAUNCHES BY ISRO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite</th>
<th>Details</th>
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| HysIS       | Launched in 2018.  
              | It is the primary satellite of PSLV-C43 mission, weighing about 380 kg, is an earth observation satellite configured around ISRO's Mini Satellite-2 (IMS-2) bus.  
              | The primary goal of HysIS is to study the earth's surface in the visible, near infrared and shortwave infrared regions of the electromagnetic spectrum. |
| About Microsat-R | It is an imaging satellite, was successfully injected into intended orbit of 274 km by PSLV-C44 in January, 2019.  
                | It is meant for military purposes. |
| EMISAT      | It is a satellite built around ISRO's Mini Satellite-2 bus weighing about 436 kg.  
              | The satellite was successfully placed in its intended sun-synchronous polar orbit of 748 km height by PSLV-C45.  
              | The satellite is intended for electromagnetic spectrum measurement. |

FORTHCOMING LAUNCHES BY ISRO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite</th>
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| RISAT-2B    | Radar imaging satellites like India’s RISAT series can provide almost an uninterrupted view of earth, day or night, rain or shine, a handy feature for the forces to detect border infiltration.  
              | This satellite enhances ISRO's capability for Disaster Management applications. |
Cartosat-3

- It will have 30 cm resolution, which is at a par with the world's best.
- It means the satellite can clearly 'see' and capture images of guns, devices, objects or human movement at that scale from space.
- The imagery sent by satellite will be useful for cartographic applications such as
  - Urban and rural applications;
  - Coastal land use and regulation;
  - Utility management like road network monitoring;
  - Water distribution;
  - Creation of land use maps, change detection to bring out geographical and manmade features;
  - And various other Land Information System (LIS) as well as Geographical Information System (GIS) applications.

Sky monitors

A list of satellites which the ISRO is expected to launch in 2019-20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satellite</th>
<th>Planned launch</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RISAT-2B</td>
<td>May 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cartosat-3</td>
<td>June 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>RISAT-2BR1</td>
<td>July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSAT-1 (new series)</td>
<td>September 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RISAT-2BR2</td>
<td>October 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSAT-2</td>
<td>November 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>RISAT-1A</td>
<td>November 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSAT-32</td>
<td>February 2020</td>
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IN NEWS: Stephen Hawking’s hypothesis on Dark Matter was challenged.

- Dark Matter
  - About 85 per cent of the matter in the universe is believed to be made up of dark matter. Its gravitational force prevents stars in our Milky Way from flying apart.
  - The material is considered to be a ‘matter’ since it appears to have gravitational attraction and it is ‘dark’ because it does not interact with light
  - However, attempts to detect such dark matter particles using underground experiments, or accelerator experiments including the world's largest accelerator, the Large Hadron Collider, have failed so far.
  - The great Stephen Hawking proposed that the majority of dark matter may actually be primordial black holes (PBH) smaller than a tenth of a millimeter in diameter.

- Recent tests
  - A group of scientists led by Kavli Institute for the Physics and Mathematics, Japan have used the gravitational lensing effect to look for primordial black holes between Earth and the Andromeda galaxy. The Andromeda galaxy is the closest big galaxy to our Milky Way.
  - Gravitational lensing is an effect first suggested by Albert Einstein. It manifests itself as the bending of light rays coming from a distant object such as a star due to the gravitational effect of an intervening massive object such as a primordial black hole. In extreme cases, such light bending causes the background star to appear much brighter than it originally is.
  - However, gravitational lensing effects are very rare events because it requires a star in the Andromeda galaxy, a primordial black hole acting as the gravitational lens, and an observer on Earth to be exactly in line with one another.
  - On the basis of observations, the results showed primordial black holes contribute no more than
IN NEWS: On analysing data obtained by NASA's Cassini spacecraft which ended its mission in 2017 with a deliberate plunge into Saturn, the scientists found that Titan, which of moon of Saturn has frigid lakes of liquid hydrocarbons.

→ About Titan

• Titan is the second largest moon in our solar system, only Jupiter's moon Ganymede is larger.

• Of the hundreds of moons in our solar system, Titan is the only one with a dense atmosphere and large liquid reservoirs on its surface, making it in some ways more like a terrestrial planet.

• Both Earth and Titan have nitrogen-dominated atmospheres -- over 95 percent nitrogen in Titan's case.

• However, unlike Earth, Titan has very little oxygen; the rest of the atmosphere is mostly methane and trace amounts of other gases, including ethane. And at the frigid temperatures found at Saturn's great distance from the sun, the methane and ethane can exist on the surface in liquid form.

• It is also tidally locked in synchronous rotation with Saturn, meaning that, like Earth's Moon, Titan always shows the same face to the planet as it orbits.

• The Cassini spacecraft's numerous gravity measurements of Titan revealed that the moon is hiding an underground ocean of liquid water (likely mixed with salts and ammonia).

IN NEWS: Scientists in Israel unveiled a 3D print of a heart with human tissue and vessels. The heart marked “the first time anyone has successfully engineered and printed an entire heart replete with cells, blood vessels, ventricles and chambers.

→ What is 3D Printing?

• 3D printing or additive manufacturing is a process of making three dimensional solid objects from a digital file.

• The creation of a 3D printed object is achieved using additive processes.

• In an additive process, an object is created by laying down successive layers of material until the
object is created.

- Each of these layers can be seen as a thin sliced horizontal cross-section of the eventual object.
- 3D printing is the opposite of subtractive manufacturing which is cutting out / hollowing out a piece of metal or plastic with for instance a milling machine.
- 3D printing enables you to produce complex (functional) shapes using less material than traditional manufacturing methods.
- It can be used to produce robotic prosthetic limbs (human capability-enhancers) that can be controlled by the brain and provide sensory feedback.
- The first 3D printers emerged in the 1980s.
- This manufacturing paradigm has several features that play to the strengths of the Indian ecosystem i.e. it does not require large capital outlays and creation of manufacturing facilities in small towns and foster industrial development outside of major cities.

**IN NEWS:** Globally, many countries have undertaken genome sequencing of a sample of their citizens to determine unique genetic traits, susceptibility (and resilience) to disease. Similarly, in an indigenous genetic mapping effort, nearly 1,000 rural youth from the length and breadth of India will have their genomes sequenced by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

The project aims at educating a generation of students on the “usefulness” of genomics.

- A genome is an organism’s complete set of DNA, including all of its genes. Each genome contains all of the information needed to build and maintain that organism.
- In humans, a copy of the entire genome—more than 3 billion DNA base pairs—is contained in all cells that have a nucleus. All living things have a unique genome.

**Genome Sequencing**

- Sequencing is the process determining the exact order of the bases in a strand of DNA. Because bases exist as pairs, and the identity of one of the bases in the pair determines the other member of the pair, researchers do not have to report both bases of the pair.
- Sequencing is performed by synthesis. DNA polymerase (the enzyme in cells that synthesizes DNA) is used to generate a new strand of DNA from a strand of interest.
- In the process, each base is read not just once, but several times in overlapping segments to ensure accuracy.
- Researchers use DNA sequencing to search for genetic variations and/or mutations that may play a role in the development or progression of a disease. The disease-causing change may be as small as the substitution, deletion, or addition of a single base pair or as large as a deletion of thousands of bases.

**Malaria Vaccine**

**IN NEWS:** RTS,S/AS01 (RTS,S) is the world’s first malaria vaccine shown to provide partial protection against malaria in young children. The vaccine will be provided to young children through national immunization programs in parts of three sub-Saharan African countries beginning in 2019.

**Things To Understand**

- Malaria is a potentially life-threatening parasitic disease caused by the parasites Plasmodium vivax (P.vivax), Plasmodium falciparum (P.falciparum), Plasmodium malariae (P.malariae), and
Plasmodium ovale (P. ovale), transmitted by the female Anopheles mosquito.

- Most of these deaths are in Africa, where more than 2,50,000 children die from the disease every year.
- India ranks very high in the list of countries with a serious malaria burden. Six states of high prevalence are Odisha (40%), Chhattisgarh (20%), Jharkhand (20%), Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, and Mizoram (5-7%).

→ RTS,S Vaccine

- RTS,S was created in 1987 by scientists working in GSK laboratories.
- In early 2001, GSK and PATH—with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation—entered into a partnership to develop the vaccine for infants and young children living in malaria endemic regions in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Its efficacy was established in a Phase 3 trial that concluded in 2014.
- RTS,S aims to **trigger the immune system** to defend against the first stages of malaria when the Plasmodium falciparum parasite enters the human host’s bloodstream through a mosquito bite and infects liver cells.
- The vaccine is designed to prevent the parasite from infecting the liver, where it can mature, multiply, re-enter the bloodstream, and infect red blood cells, which can lead to disease symptoms.

**IN NEWS:** The US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) describes Candida auris as “an emerging fungus that presents a serious global health threat”.

It is killer germ which has showed up in various countries as far apart as Australia and Canada, Venezuela and Japan, demonstrating the impact of over-use of medicines.

→ About Candida auris

- It is a member of the candidaemia fungus family, many of which reside in the human body.
- The fungus can survive in the environment for up to three months.
- While the fungus is impervious to common household detergents, it is not resistant to antiseptics, including hydrogen peroxide, chlorhexidine.
- The first case was noticed in Kolkata in 2011. The patient died of infection. Doctors unable to verify the origin of the pathogen.
- It is highly contagious and increasingly resilient to antibiotics.
- The pathogen can be **passed on by touch**. But afflicts people with a weakened immune system, including those using steroids or suffering from viral infections, HIV, alcohol-induced liver.
- The fungus, which has mortality rate of between 43 and 60 per cent, an incubation period of fewer than 96 hours and can cause death within 30 days.
- Some studies blame **extensive use of pesticides and overuse of antibiotics** for the rise of disease.

→ Concern

- Patients can remain colonized with C. auris for a long time and C. auris can persist on surfaces in healthcare environments.
- This can result in spread of C. auris between patients in healthcare facilities.
- It is difficult to identify with standard lab methods may have had a role to play in the development of
its resistance.
- Drug-resistant strains of microorganisms commonly develop from flawed prescription regimes is a matter of concern for decades.

**MEASLES**

**IN NEWS:** According to WHO, Measles cases have increased 300% worldwide through the first three months of 2019 compared to the same period last year.

**About Measles**
- It is a highly contagious viral disease and remains an important cause of death among young children globally, despite the availability of a safe and effective vaccine.
- Under the Global Vaccine Action Plan, measles and rubella are targeted for elimination in five WHO Regions by 2020.
- It is transmitted via droplets from the nose, mouth or throat of infected persons.
- Severe measles is more likely among poorly nourished young children, especially those with insufficient vitamin A, or whose immune systems have been weakened by HIV/AIDS or other diseases.
- Complications include blindness, encephalitis (an infection that causes brain swelling), severe diarrhoea and related dehydration, and severe respiratory infections such as pneumonia.

**HAEMOPHILIA**

**IN NEWS:** April 17 is observed as World Haemophilia Day.

**About Haemophilia**
- It is a medical condition, mostly inherited, in which the ability of blood to clot is severely reduced, so that even a minor injury can cause severe bleeding.
- As a reason of genetics involved in the way the sex of a child is determined, men are more vulnerable to haemophilia than women.
- Britain’s Queen Victoria (1819-1901) is the world’s most widely known carrier of haemophilia.
- According to the World Federation of Haemophilia’s Annual Global Survey 2017, released in October 2018, there were over 1 lakh persons living with haemophilia across the world in 2017.
- In the country-wise data, India emerges with the highest count at nearly 19,000.

**How is it caused?**
- The disease is inherited.
- The sex of an individual is determined by a pair of “sex chromosomes” (a chromosome is a DNA molecule that contains genetic information).
- Females are identified with an XX pair of sex chromosomes, and males with an XY pair.
- Haemophilia is caused by a defect in the X chromosome.
- If a girl is born with one defective X chromosome, her other X chromosome can compensate for it.
• In such a case, she is a carrier of haemophilia but will not suffer from the condition herself. Only if both her X chromosomes are defective will she suffer from haemophilia herself.
• On the other hand, if a boy is born with a defective X chromosome, he does not have the second X chromosome to compensate for it, and will suffer from haemophilia. That is the reason haemophilia is more common among men.

IN NEWS: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully test fired the underdevelopment long range subsonic cruise missile Nirbhay.

It is the sixth development flight trial with objective to prove the repeatability of boost phase, cruise phase using way point navigation at very low altitudes.

→ About Nirbhay
• It has a range of 1000 km and can fly very low to the ground to avoid detection by enemy radar called terrain hugging capability.
• The missile is primarily designed and developed by the Advanced Defence Establishment of DRDO.
• Nirbhay is similar to U.S. Tomahawk cruise missile and will give Indian armed forces a long range standoff capability to strike targets on land.
UN: STATE OF NATURE REPORT
#ECOLOGY #BIODIVERSITY

UN’s Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services released a summary report on the state of biodiversity on Earth. It finds that species of all kinds i.e. mammals, birds, amphibians, insects, plants, marine life, terrestrial life are disappearing at a rate which is tens to hundreds times higher than the average over the last 10 million years due to human activity.

THINGS TO UNDERSTAND

► QUESTION: How long would it take for evolution to replace all the mammal species that have gone extinct in the time humans have walked the earth?

Answer: Some 300 mammal species have died off since the last ice age 130,000 years ago. It would take 3 to 7 million years for evolution to generate 300 new species. Humans have been around for about 200,000 years and that is a blink of an eye in terms of the age of the planet. Nevertheless, in that time, humans have caused damage that may well last longer than our species itself.

In all, it warns, as many as 1 million species are now at risk of extinction if humans don’t act to save them; that number includes 40 percent of all amphibian species, 33 percent of corals, and around 10 percent of insects. It amounts to a biodiversity crisis that spans the globe and threatens every ecosystem. It echo that: Life on Earth is in peril.

► QUESTION: What’s causing the biodiversity crisis?

Answer: It breaks down into five main factors, but the presence of humanity looms over them all.

1. Changes in land and sea use. A third of the world’s land is currently reserved for agriculture or livestock. Around 100 million hectares of tropical forest disappeared between 1980 and 2000.

3. **Climate change**: increases hardships for species in so many ways, from the polar bears in the Arctic losing ice to hunt upon to the fact that when ocean waters warm, they cannot hold as much oxygen or sustain as much life.

4. **Pollution**: Huge amount of plastic that enters the ocean every year.

5. **Invasive alien species**: Due to a globalized world, species from one continent can move to another, where they don't have natural predators, and dominate the environment.

**QUESTION**: What are the other notable findings?

**Answer**: Given below:

1. 75% of land environment and some 66% of the marine environment have been significantly altered by human actions.

2. More than a third of the world’s land surface and nearly 75% of freshwater resources are used for crops or livestock.

3. Up to $577 billion in annual global crops are at risk from pollinator loss.

4. Between 100 million and 300 million people now face increased risk of floods and hurricanes because of loss of coastal habitats and protection.

5. Since 1992, the world’s urban areas have more than doubled.

6. Plastic pollution has increased tenfold since 1980, and from 300-400 million tons of heavy metals, solvents, toxic sludge and other industrial waste are dumped into the world’s water systems.

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**GLOBAL AIR REPORT 2019**

**#POLLUTION**

Air pollution is the fifth leading risk factor for mortality worldwide. It is responsible for more deaths than many better-known risk factors such as malnutrition, alcohol use, and physical inactivity. Each year, more people die from air pollution-related disease than from road traffic injuries or malaria. The report is published by Health Effects Institute (HEI) from USA.

**THINGS TO KNOW**

Two main pollutants are considered key indicators of ambient, or outdoor, air quality: fine particle pollution—airborne particulate matter measuring less than 2.5 micrometres in aerodynamic diameter, commonly referred to as PM2.5 — and **ground-level (tropospheric) ozone**.

Air pollution exposure is linked with increased hospitalizations, disability, and early death from respiratory diseases, heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, and diabetes, as well as communicable diseases like pneumonia.

Air pollution collectively reduced life expectancy by 1 year and 8 months on average worldwide, a global impact rivalling that of smoking. This means a child born today will die 20 months sooner, on average, than would be expected in the absence of air pollution.

**PM2.5**

- Fine particle air pollution comes from vehicle emissions, coal-burning power plants, industrial emissions, and many other human and natural sources.
**GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY & DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

- Around the world, ambient levels of PM2.5 continue to exceed the Air Quality Guideline established by the WHO. The guideline for annual average PM2.5 concentrations is set at 10 μg/m³ based on evidence of the health effects of long-term exposure to PM2.5.
- Exposure to high average concentrations of PM2.5 over the course of several years is the most consistent and robust predictor of mortality from cardiovascular, respiratory, and other types of diseases.
- In 2017, 92% of the world’s population lived in areas that exceeded the WHO guideline for PM2.5.
- PM2.5 pollution contributed to nearly 3 million early deaths in 2017. More than half of this disease burden fell on people living in China and India.
- In 2017, exposure to PM2.5 was the third leading risk factor for type 2 diabetes deaths.

**OZONE**

- Ozone pollution is a continuing challenge in more developed countries and is increasing in less developed areas, posing new air quality concerns. Ozone is a gas with both natural and human sources.
- When it is high up in the atmosphere (in the stratosphere), ozone plays a protective role, shielding Earth from harmful rays and ultraviolet radiation.
- When it is near ground level (in the troposphere), it acts as a greenhouse gas and a pollutant, with harmful effects on human health.
- Most ground-level ozone pollution is produced by human activities (for example, industrial processes and transportation) that emit chemical precursors (principally, volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides) to the atmosphere, where they react in the presence of sunlight to form ozone.
- Exposure to ground-level ozone increases a person’s likelihood of dying from respiratory disease, specifically chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

**HOUSEHOLD AIR POLLUTION**

- Globally, the number of people cooking with solid fuels has declined. However, disparities persist, and populations in less-developed countries continue to suffer the highest exposure to household air pollution.
- In 2017, 3.6 billion people (47% of the global population) were exposed to household air pollution from the use of solid fuels for cooking. These exposures were most common in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and East Asia.
- It contributed approximately 21% of global ambient PM2.5 concentrations.
- Mitigating at a household level is the easiest and more practical way out for the government to reduce not only the household pollution but also outdoor air pollution at the national scale. Hence mitigating the use of household fuels could
also reduce air pollution-related deaths in the country by approximately 13%, which is equivalent to saving about 270,000 lives a year.

**WMO: STATE OF THE GLOBAL CLIMATE #CLIMATE CHANGE**

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Statement on the State of the Global Climate in 2018, highlights record sea level rise, exceptionally high land and ocean temperatures over the past four years. The physical signs and socio-economic impacts of climate change are accelerating as record greenhouse gas concentrations drive global temperatures towards increasingly dangerous levels. This warming trend has lasted since the start of this century and is expected to continue.

**CLIMATE INDICATORS**

- **Ocean heat**: 2018 saw new records for **ocean heat content in the upper 700 metres** (data record started in from 1955) and **upper 2000m** (data record started in 2005), topping the previous record set in 2017. More than 90% of the energy trapped by greenhouse gases goes into the oceans and **ocean heat content provides a direct measure of this energy accumulation** in the upper layers of the ocean.

- **Sea level**: Sea level continues to rise at an accelerated rate. **Global Mean Sea Level (GMSL)** for 2018 was around 3.7 millimetres higher than in 2017 and the highest on record.

- **Ocean acidification**: In the past decade, the oceans absorbed around 30% of anthropogenic CO2 emissions. Absorbed CO2 reacts with seawater and changes the pH of the ocean. This process is known as **ocean acidification**, which can affect the ability of marine organisms such as molluscs and reef-building corals, to build and maintain shells and skeletal material. Observations in the open-ocean over the last 30 years have shown a clear trend of decreasing pH.

- **Sea-ice**: **Arctic sea-ice extent** was well below average throughout 2018 and was at record-low levels for the first two months of the year. The September monthly sea ice extent was the sixth smallest September extent on record. The 12 smallest September extents have all occurred since 2007. At the end of 2018, the daily ice extent was near record low levels.

  The **Antarctic sea ice extent** reached its annual maximum in late-September and early-October. After the maximum extent in early spring, Antarctic sea ice **declined at a rapid rate** with the monthly extents ranking among the five smallest for each month through the end of 2018.

  The **Greenland ice sheet** has been losing ice mass nearly every year over the past two decades. The **surface mass budget (SMB)** saw an increase due to above-average snowfall, particularly in eastern Greenland, and a near-average melt season. This led to a gain in overall SMB, but had little impact on the trend over the past two decades with the Greenland ice sheet having lost approximately 3,600 gigatons of ice mass since 2002.
**GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY & DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

- **Glacier Retreat:** The World Glacier Monitoring Service monitors glacier mass balance. They cover 19 mountain regions. Preliminary results for 2018, based on a subset of glaciers, indicate that the hydrological year 2017/18 was the 31st consecutive year of negative mass balance.

**CLIMATE IMPACTS**

| Hazards | • In 2018, most of the natural hazards which affected nearly 62 million people were associated with extreme weather and climate events.  
| | • **Floods** continued to affect the largest number of people, more than 35 million.  
| | • **Hurricane** Florence and Michael were two of fourteen disasters in the United States of America (USA).  
| | • **Super typhoon** Mangkhut affected more than 2.4 million people in the Philippines.  
| | • More than 1600 death were associated with **intense heat waves and wildfires** in Europe, Japan and USA, where they were associated with record economic damages of nearly US$24 billion in USA. The Indian state of Kerala suffered the heaviest rainfall and worst flooding in nearly a century.  
| Food security | • Exposure of the **agriculture sector to climate extremes** is threatening to reverse gains made in ending malnutrition. New evidence shows a continuing rise in world hunger after a prolonged decline, according to data compiled by United Nations agencies including the Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Programme.  
| | • In 2017, the number of undernourished people was estimated to have increased to 821 million, partly due to severe droughts associated with the strong El Niño of 2015–2016.  
| Displacement | • Out of the **17.7 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)** tracked by the International Organization for Migration, over **2 million people were displaced due to disasters** linked to weather and climate events as of September 2018.  
| | • Drought, floods and storms (including hurricanes and cyclones) are the events that have led to the most disaster-induced displacement in 2018. In all cases, the displaced populations have protection needs and vulnerabilities.  

**FACE OF DISASTERS REPORT 2019: LOOMING WATER CRISIS**

The ‘Face of Disasters 2019’ report was released by SEEDS (Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society). SEEDS is a non-profit voluntary organisation that aims at protecting the lives and livelihoods of people exposed to disasters, established in 1994 and based in New Delhi.

**WATER AVAILABILITY**

- The truth is an all-India ‘normal’ monsoon rainfall is deceptive as it **masks rainfall variability** not just among the 36 meteorological subdivisions of the country, but within them as well. These kind of forecasts are meant for large scale policy decisions, not necessarily for action in specific locations on the ground.  
- Day to day variability is very large in the monsoon season. Also one place getting **flash floods doesn’t mean that ultimately the seasonal rainfall will be more**. With global warming and climate change aspect, this variability is increasing. We can have on the one hand, large excess rainfall and at the same time large deficient rainfall.
Depleting Ground Water

- The quantity and quality of groundwater are inter-related. As the quantity of groundwater falls, quality is also deteriorating. The TDS (Total Dissolved Solids) in the water gets concentrated because there is no way to dilute it. Until there is a balance between the recharge and the discharge (withdrawal), we will continue to have quality issues.

- **Shimla water crisis**: In May 2018, Shimla, capital of the Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh, found its taps running dry. The crisis was precipitated by a dry winter and long-term water reduction, with drinking water supply falling to less than 50% of the requirement even impacting the tourist season, a major source of livelihood. Shimla was in the headlines, but recharge reduction is occurring across the country. There are an estimated 27 million wells across the country, with bore-wells accounting for over 50% of these. Our usage is growing and a groundwater crisis is gearing its head all over India.

- **Kerala**: The flood water took away the river alluvial soil along with the river runoff and thus has also affected the aquifer material to some extent. So there was less groundwater recharge during the flash floods in and around the river. That is why, just after the floods, there was a drought-like situation in some locations, when people expected there to be more groundwater. Since there is only a few metres of aquifer thickness, it needs time to recharge. Water slowly trickles down and enters the soil. Ideal situation: where there is slow rainfall over an extended period.

Less water as well as poorer quality

- In mid-2018, a Niti Aayog report warned that 600 million people in India (almost half the population) are facing high to extreme water stress. The states that were the lowest performers on the Water Index, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Haryana, are not just some of the most populous, but also account for over a fifth of the agricultural output. What kind of impact will this have on food security going forward?
  - At the same time, with nearly 70% of water being contaminated.
  - India is placed at 120 amongst 122 countries in the global water quality index.

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**NEWS SNIPPETS**

**HUMP BACKED MASHEER**

IN NEWS: The hump-backed mahseer, found in the waters of the Cauvery, has been added to the Red List as Critically Endangered.

THINGS TO KNOW

- Hump-backed mahseer is a large freshwater fish. It is also called the tiger of the water and found only in the Cauvery river basin (including Kerala’s Pamba, Kabini and Bhavani rivers).
- It is more threatened than the tiger is, as per the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Red List of Threatened Species.
- The increasing instances of dynamite fishing, where explosives are used to kill a large school of fish, and the construction of dams and embankments along the river Cauvery, have caused severe damage to the habitats of the hump-backed mahseer.

**INDIAN VULTURE**

IN NEWS: These critically-endangered Indian vultures or Long billed vultures (Gyps indicus) died of unknown reasons in Telangana.
**GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, BIODIVERSITY & DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

**THINGS TO KNOW**

- The Indian vulture (Gyps indicus) is native to India, Pakistan and Nepal.
- It has been listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List since 2002, as the population severely declined. Indian vultures died of renal failure caused by diclofenac poisoning.
- It breeds mainly on hilly crags in central and peninsular India.
- In 2006, the Indian Government announced its support for a ban on the veterinary use of diclofenac.
- Meloxicam, has been found to be harmless to vultures and should prove to be an acceptable substitute for diclofenac.

**IN NEWS:** Indian bullfrogs introduced in the Andaman Islands are invasive, and eat native wildlife including fish and lizards. An experiment revealed that the frogs take to this invasive behaviour early in their lives. Even in the developmental stages, the large bullfrog tadpoles eat other native frog tadpoles.

**INDIAN BULLFROG (HOPLOBATRACHUS TIGERINUS)**

- It is native to the Indian subcontinent and has rapidly invaded the Andaman Islands after it was introduced there in the early 2000s.
- Also, this species is found throughout most wetland areas of Bangladesh and much of northern Pakistan, and is recorded from the southern parts of Nepal, and from upper and northern central Myanmar.
- Concern- impacts that bullfrog tadpoles have on native frog tadpoles.
- IUCN Red List- Least Concern.

**IN NEWS:** Last known female of the Yangtze softshell turtle died in China.

**THINGS TO KNOW**

- The Yangtze giant softshell turtle (Rafetus swinhoei) is considered the most critically endangered turtle in the world, with only four known individuals left on Earth.
- The captive turtle was more than 90 years old and died shortly after an attempt to artificially inseminate her.
- The rare turtle is survived by one male, who also lives in the Suzhou Zoo and is believed to be about 100 years old.
- The world’s final two known R. swinhoei turtles live in separate ponds in Vietnam.

**IN NEWS:** Authorities are considering banning tourists from Komodo, the island home of the ancient Komodo dragon, to allow for conservation efforts amid concerns over animal-smuggling.

**THINGS TO KNOW**

- The Komodo dragon (Varanus komodoensis), also known as the Komodo monitor, is a species of lizard found in the Indonesian islands of Komodo, Rinca, Flores, and Gili Motang.
- They are the largest, heaviest lizards in the world — and one of the few with a venomous bite.
These stealthy, powerful hunters rely on their sense of smell to detect food, using their long, forked tongues to sample the air.

- IUCN Red List: **Vulnerable**

**GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT**

**IN NEWS:** The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), a global event to document birdlife across the world with the help of citizen scientists.

**THINGS TO KNOW**

- The initiative was **launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society**, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time.
- It is a global bird count, during which thousands of birdwatchers all across the world look for birds for four days in February each year and provide checklist of birds seen by them in a particular area.
- GBBC India is the Indian implementation of the Global Great Backyard Bird Count which runs for 4 days in February every year. GBBC India have been active in since 2013.
- This year, it was Salem (district of Tamil Nadu) that submitted the largest number of checklists among all participating districts (or counties) in the world.

**Birds seen in India**
- This year's GBBC captured 15 bird species that were not recorded from previous years. This includes the long-billed wren babbler, the Eastern spot-billed duck and the Kashmir nutcracker.
- The top five most commonly reported species in India are the house crow, common myna, rose-ringed parakeet, large-billed crow and red-vented bulbul.
- Some of the interesting finds were
  - The migratory eastern Orphean warbler,
  - Green-winged teal (a small duck), and
  - The nocturnal Jerdon's nightjar.

**Participation from India**
- 291 districts participated in GBBC making India the country to record the third highest number of species worldwide. India contributed 22,273 lists, which is the second highest after the U.S.
- Participants from 31 States and Union Territories spotted 852 species.

**NANDHAUR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY**

**IN NEWS:** Due to increase in Tiger population in Nandaur Wildlife Sanctuary officials want it to be designated as a Tiger reserve.

**THINGS TO KNOW**

- Nandaur Wildlife Sanctuary is situated close to the Nandaur river in Kumaon region of the state and spread over an area of 269.5 square km.
- It is primarily **Sal forest**.
- It has high density of Tiger population. That is why forest officials want it to be designated as a Tiger reserve.
**NEELAKURINJI**

- **IN NEWS:** According to an estimate, large-scale wildfires on the grasslands where Neelakurunji (Strobilanthes kunthiana) blossomed widely last year after a period of 12 years could have wiped out all the seeds of the endemic flowers from the area.

- As a result, Tamil Nadu government has announced a novel scheme for the protection of the exotic Neela Kurinji plants.

- **THINGS TO KNOW**
  - Kurinji or Neelakurunji is a shrub that is found in the *shola forests* of the Western Ghats in South India.
  - Kurinji once used to cover the Anamalai Hills, Cardamom Hills, Nilgiri Hills, Palani Hills and Bababudangiri
  - Besides the Western Ghats, Neelakurinji is also seen in the Shevroys in the Eastern Ghats, Anamalai hills Idukki district and Aqali hills in Palakad in Kerala and Sanduru hills of Bellary district in Karnataka.
  - Nilgiri Hills, which literally means the blue mountains, got their name from the purplish blue flowers of Neelakurunji that blossoms only once in 12 years.
  - The Paliyan tribal people living in Tamil Nadu used it as a reference to calculate their age.

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**ANNATTO SEEDS**

- **IN NEWS:** Annatto seeds are also called lipstick seeds, grown in Andhra Pradesh are likely to boost farmer income.

- **THINGS TO KNOW**
  - Lipsticks are manufactured from the *non-carcinogenic lipstick* seed cultivated in the backyard of Adivasi habitations in Rampachodavaram, Chaparai, and Maredumilli in Andhra Pradesh.
  - The seeds have a huge demand across the world as they are natural colour agents and are considered to be non-carcinogenic.
  - The seeds reportedly have healing properties and used in treating digestive disorders, weak bones, headache, neural tube defects, eye ailments and respiratory problems.
  - It is mainly grown and marketed in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Maharashtra, Odisha and Karnataka.

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**EUTROPHICATION**

- **IN NEWS:** River Periyar is facing discoloration because of Eutrophication. The discoloration of the river system, which provides drinking water to Kochi city and adjoining areas, has been a cause for worry for residents. Huge quantities of organic load in the form of sewage from nearby townships are regularly reaching the river system.

- **EUTROPHICATION**
  - Eutrophication or hypertrophication is when a body of water becomes overly enriched with minerals and nutrients which induce excessive growth of plants and algae.
**ANTI-BACTERIAL AGENTS IN GANGA?**

**IN NEWS:** A study was commissioned by the Union Water Resources Ministry to probe the “unique properties” of the Ganga found that the river water contains a significantly higher proportion of organisms with antibacterial properties. The study was conducted by the Nagpur-based National Environmental Engineering and Research Institute (NEERI), a CSIR lab.

**THINGS TO KNOW**

- As part of the assessment, five pathogenic species of bacteria (Escherichia, Enterobacter, Salmonella, Shigella, Vibrio) were selected and isolated from the Ganga, Yamuna and the Narmada and their numbers compared with the bacteriophages present in the river water.

- Samples drawn from the Ganga contained almost 1,100 kinds of bacteriophage.

- The stretch from Gaumukh to Tehri had 33% more bacteriophage isolates than from Mana to Haridwar, and Bijnor to Varanasi.

**SOLAR E-WASTE**

**IN NEWS:** By 2050, India will likely stare at a pile of a new category of electronic waste, namely solar e-waste, says a study.

**THINGS TO KNOW**

- India's PV (photovoltaic) waste volume is estimated to grow to 200,000 tonnes by 2030 and around 1.8 million tonnes by 2050.

- India is among the leading markets for solar cells in the world, which has been boosted by the government's commitment to install 100 GW of solar power by 2022.

- So far, India has installed solar cells for about 28 GW and this is largely from imported solar PV cells.

- Solar cell modules are made by processing sand to make silicon, casting silicon ingots, using wafers to create cells and then assembling them to make modules.

- India's domestic manufacturers are largely involved in assembling cells and modules.
• These modules are 80% glass and aluminium, and non-hazardous. Other materials used, including polymers, metals, metallic compounds and alloys, and are classified as potentially hazardous,
• India is poorly positioned to handle PV waste as it doesn’t yet have policy guidelines on the same
• A lack of a policy framework is coupled with the fact that even basic recycling facilities for laminated glass and e-waste are unavailable.
• Despite the e-waste regulation being in place for over seven years, only less than 4% of estimated e-waste is recycled in the organised sector as per the latest estimates from the Central Pollution Control Board.

LONGEST SALT CAVE

In News: Israeli researchers say they have discovered the world’s longest salt cave, overlooking the Dead Sea.

THINGS TO KNOW

• The cave is called Malham.
• It runs through Mount Sodom.
**HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE**

# GS PAPER (PRELIMS) & GS PAPER I (MAIN)

### RAMAPPA TEMPLE

**# MEDIEVAL INDIA # ART AND ARCHITECTURE**

Telangana may get its first UNESCO World Heritage Site, which will be the Ramappa Temple. In this respect, let us understand some basic details of this temple.

### RAMAPPA TEMPLE: KEY INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location and Origin</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ramappa Temple is located at Palampet near Warangal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is considered to be a jewel of the Kakatiya dynasty.</td>
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<tr>
<td>An inscription in the temple dates it to the year 1213 AD and says it was built by a General Recherla Rudra, during the period of the Kakatiya ruler Ganapatideva.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unique features</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This temple is dedicated to Lord Siva.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is perhaps the only temple in the country that is known by the name of the architect rather than the king who commissioned it or its presiding deity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The main structure is in a reddish sandstone.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The temple columns are made of black basalt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Among the sculptural details are the stunning dance sculptures and friezes of the temple. These appear as if they have been machined into shape on black dolomite, rather than being chiselled.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The temple is built on a valley and it rests on bricks that are scientifically shown to float in water.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### GETTING UNESCO HERITAGE TAG: STEPS INVOLVED

- The first step involves creating a detailed dossier showing the outstanding universal value of the site.
- Once the documentation is complete, it requires a push by the State party or the country where the site is located.
- The property is then evaluated by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) then provides advice on conservation of the site, and training.
- After all these steps, the World Heritage Committee evaluates the site and decides to inscribe it or send back the nomination.
**KAKATIYA DYNASTY: IMPORTANT FACTS**

- The **12th and the 13th centuries** saw the emergence of the Kakatiyas.
- They were at first the **feudatories of the Western Chalukyas of Kalyana**, ruling over a small territory near Warangal.
- **Prataparudra I** established a sovereign dynasty in 1163 CE.
- The dynasty saw powerful leaders like **Ganapathi Deva** and **Rudramadevi**.
- Before the establishment of Orugallu/Warangal as the capital, **Hanamakonda** was the first capital of the Kakatiyas.
- The Italian traveller **Marco Polo** visited the Kakatiya Kingdom during Rudramadevi’s tenure.
- The iconic **Kakatiya Thoranam** was built by Rudramadevi's father in the 12th Century.
- The scenic **Pakhal lake** in Warangal was built by Ganapathi Deva.
- The **1000 pillar temple** in Warangal was built during the Kakatiya Rule and is another example to the exquisite Kakatiya Architecture.
- The **Koh-i-Noor Diamond**, which is now among the jewels set in the British Crown, was mined and first owned by the **Kakatiya Dynasty**.
- The Kakatiya rule came to an **end in 1323 A.D.** when Warangal was conquered by the **Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq**, the then Sultan of Delhi.

**JALLIANWALA BAGH MASSACRE (100 YEARS) # MODERN INDIA**

Recently, the Government of India observed the remembrance of 100 years of the historical Jallianwala Bagh massacre. In this respect, let us understand some important facts associated with this event.

**ROWLATT ACT: TRIGGER TO JALLIANWALA BAGH MASSACRE**

- It was officially known as the **Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act, 1919** which was passed in March 1919 by the Imperial Legislative Council.
- This act authorised the British government to **arrest anybody** suspected of terrorist activities for up to 2 years without trial.
- It also empowered the police to **search a place without a warrant** and placed severe restrictions on the freedom of the press.
- The act was passed as per recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee chaired by a judge, **Sir Sidney Rowlatt**.
- The act was passed despite unanimous opposition from the Indian members of the council, all of whom resigned in protest.
- These included **Mohammed Ali Jinnah**, **Madan Mohan Malviya** and **Mazhar Ul Haq**.
- In response to this act, a **nationwide hartal was called by Gandhiji on 6th April known as Rowlatt Satyagraha**.
- Two popular Congress leaders in Punjab, **Satya Pal** and **Saifuddin Kitchlew** were arrested.

**JALLIANWALA BAGH MASSACRE: IMPORTANT FACTS**

- The draconian **Rowlatt Act** was passed in 1919 and as a result the entire country started protesting against it.
- On **13th April, 1919** people gathered at Jallianwala Bagh (Amritsar) to peacefully protest against the arrest of these two nationalist leaders i.e. Satya Pal and Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew. At the same time the crowd also included pilgrims who had come to celebrate Baisakhi.
**HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE**

- **General Dyer** came there with his troops and blocked the only narrow entrance to the garden and then, without warning, he ordered his troops to fire at the unarmed crowd which included children as well.
- The indiscriminate firing went on for about 10 minutes. Official sources gave a figure of 379 identified dead, with approximately 1,100 wounded.
- This tragedy came as a rude shock to Indians and totally destroyed their faith in the British system of justice.
- The **Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab** at that time was **Michael O’Dwyer**. Lord Chelmsford was India’s Viceroy.

### Aftermath of the massacre

- The government set up the **Hunter Commission** to inquire into the massacre. Although the commission condemned the act by Dyer, it did not impose any disciplinary action against him.
- He was relieved of his duties in the army in 1920.
- In protest against the massacre and the British failure to give due justice to the victims, **Rabindranath Tagore** gave up his knighthood and **Gandhiji relinquished his title ‘Kaiser-e-hind’** bestowed on him by the British for his services during the Boer War in South Africa.
- **Michael O’Dwyer**, the then Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab, who had approved the actions of Brigadier General Dyer, was assassinated by **Udham Singh** in London in **1940** as revenge against the massacre.
- Udham Singh is believed to have witnessed the massacre as a child.

### Recent developments to mark 100 years of the event

- One of the first poems written in protest after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919 known as **Khooni Vaisakhi**, is being republished to mark the centenary of the tragedy that galvanised the movement for Indian independence.
- Khooni Vaisakhi is a classic work of protest poetry by the late **Nanak Singh**.
- It was translated by his grandson Navdeep Suri, who is India’s Ambassador to the UAE.
- The long poem is written in **Gurmukhi** and was banned.
- **Vice President Shri Naidu** released a **commemorative coin and a postage stamp** to mark the 100th anniversary of Jallianwala Bagh massacre.
- The Vice President was also appraised of the proposed works for the revitalization of the memorial.
- The Ministry of Tourism has earmarked an amount of Rs. 8 crores under **Swadesh Darshan Scheme** for development of **Virtual Reality Theme Based show** at the Memorial.

### NATIONAL SALT SATYAGRAHA MEMORIAL # MODERN INDIA

Prime Minister inaugurated the National Salt Satyagraha Memorial at Dandi in Navsari district, Gujarat. In this respect, let us understand some basic features of this memorial.

**DANDI MARCH (SALT SATYAGRAHA)**

- **Gandhiji** informed Lord Irwin of his plan on **2nd March 1930** that he would lead a group of people from his Ashram at Sabarmati on **12th March 1930** and walk through the villages of Gujarat.
- On reaching the coastal village of Dandi, he would make salt from seawater thereby **breaking the salt act**.
- Gandhiji started the march as planned with 80 of his followers. They were given strict instructions not to
resort to any kind of violence.

- Thousands of people thronged the path from Sabarmati Ashram to Ahmedabad to witness the historic event.
- He was joined by Sarojini Naidu on the way. Every day more and more people joined him and on 5th April, 1930, they reached Dandi.
- At this time, there were about 50,000 people participating in the march.
- On the morning of 6th April 1930, Gandhiji broke the salt law by making salt. Thousands of people followed suit.
- C Rajagopalachari led a similar march on the southeast coast from Trichy to Vedaranyam in Tamil Nadu. He too was arrested for making salt.
- K Kelappan led a march in the Malabar region from Calicut to Payyanur.
- There were similar marches and salt was produced illegally in Assam and Andhra Pradesh.
- In Peshawar, the Satyagraha was organised and led by Gandhiji’s disciple, Ghaffar Khan. In April 1930 he was arrested.
- Khan’s followers (called Khudai Khidmatgars) whom he had trained in Satyagraha had gathered in a marketplace called the Qissa Khwani Bazaar. There they were fired at by the British Indian Army despite being unarmed.
- Thousands of women also took part in the Satyagraha.
- On May 21, 1930, there was a protest against the Dharasana Salt Works by peaceful non-violent protestors led by Sarojini Naidu.
- The police lathi-charged the protestors brutally and it resulted in the deaths of 2 people with several others being injured.

### Aftermath of Dandi March

- Around 60,000 people including Gandhiji himself were arrested by the government.
- There was widespread civil disobedience carried on by the people. Apart from the salt tax, other unpopular tax laws were being defied like the forest laws, chowkidar tax, land tax, etc.
- The government tried to suppress the movement with more laws and censorships.
- The Congress Party was declared illegal. But this did not deter the satyagrahis who continued the movement.
- The British government was shaken by the movement. Also, its non-violent nature made it difficult for them to suppress it violently.

### ABOUT SALT SATYAGRAHA MEMORIAL

- The memorial is conceived as an experiential journey recreating the spirit and the energy of the 1930 Dandi March led by Mahatma Gandhi and his fellow Satyagrahis.
- The memorial takes the visitors step by step through visualisation of events to aid them in understanding the methodology of Satyagraha, which finally led to India’s Independence from the British colonial rule.
- The Memorial is the project of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India and was advised by a High-Level Dandi Memorial Committee (HLDMC)
- IIT Bombay serves as the Design Coordination Agency for this project.
- Among its unique features the memorial includes 40 solar ‘trees’ — each with 12 panels that sustain the entire memorial and even generate 25% surplus electricity.
Other major attractions are the **light pyramid, the salt cube, the lake, the main Gandhi statue, the sculptures of the 80 marchers, and the 24 murals.**

At the memorial a visitor can make salt and take it back as a souvenir.

Gandhi’s statue is made by well-known sculptor **Sadashiv Sathe**, while the others were sculpted by 40 artists from India, Austria, Bulgaria, Burma, Japan, Sri Lanka, Tibet, U.K. and the U.S.

The 24 narrative murals made of clay and cast in silicon-bronze were created by a team of sculptors from Hyderabad’s Jawaharlal Nehru Architecture and Fine Arts University.

One of the murals narrates the story of how labourers were hired to carry lights so that the marchers could see the path ahead.

Another mural depicts how teenage students were sent ahead on bicycles to gather information for the marchers. They were called ‘arun tukdi’.

**RELATED INFORMATION: SALT**

- Salt has a very rich history. It was the **first commodity that was traded**. It also plays an important role in our body.
- The words **salary** and **soldier** have originated from salt. In ancient Rome, soldiers were given money to buy salt, which was expensive but essential, and sometimes even paid in salt.
- **Salt pans**, play a significant role in the ecology of any city where they are found and an entire culture evolves around it.
- Salt pans have different species of birds and insects thriving on them.
- They have an enormous water-holding capacity that helps in flood control.
- With the government’s plan to use the salt pans for affordable housing projects, they now face a threat of extinction.

**BENGAL FAMINE OF 1943**

Researchers from IIT Gandhinagar have recently used old weather data and modern simulation methods to suggest that the Bengal famine of 1943-44 was not caused by an agricultural drought but was manmade. The new study, has been published in Geophysical Research Letters. In this respect, let us understand some basic information pertaining to this study and the Bengal Famine of 1943.

**BENGAL FAMINE 1943: RECENT STUDY**

- The Bengal famine of 1943 took place during the **second world war**.
- It is estimated that between **2 and 3 million** died in the Bengal famine of 1943.
- In this recent study, scholars used observations from weather stations and simulations with a hydrological model that estimated soil moisture content.
- The research then reconstructed agricultural droughts and established a link between famines and agricultural droughts in India in the half-century between 1870-2016.
- The simulations showed that a majority of famines were caused by large-scale and severe soil moisture droughts that hampered food production.
- Out of six major famines during the period (1873-74, 1876, 1877, 1896-97, 1899, 1943), the researchers concluded that the first five were linked to soil moisture.
- The **Bengal famine of 1943** on the other hand, was **completely due to the failure of policy during the British era**.
Following the **Japanese occupation of Burma in 1942**, rice imports stopped, and Bengal’s market supplies and transport systems were disrupted. Further, the British government also prioritised distribution of vital supplies to the military, civil servants and other “priority classes”.

Humanitarian aid was ineffective through the worst months of the food crisis, and the government never formally declared a state of famine. It first attempted to influence the price of rice, but these measures created a black market and encouraged sellers to withhold stocks.

**RELATED INFORMATION: FAMINE COMMISSIONS IN INDIA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commission</th>
<th>Details</th>
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</table>
| **Campbell Commission, 1866** | - In **1865-66**, a famine engulfed **Orissa, Bengal, Bihar, and Madras** and took a toll of nearly 20 lakhs with Orissa alone losing 10 lakh lives.  
  - Since the famine was most severe in Orissa; it is called the **Orissa famine**.  
  - It was followed by the appointment of a committee under the chairmanship of Sir George Campbell. |
| **Strachey Commission, 1880** | - The great famine of **1876-78** was perhaps the most grievous calamity experienced since the beginning of the 19th century.  
  - It affected **Madras, Bombay, Uttar Pradesh and the Punjab** and about **five million people perished** in a single year.  
  - The Government made half-hearted efforts to help the famine-stricken.  
  - In 1880, the Government of **Lytton** appointed a commission under Richard Strachey to formulate general principles and suggest particular measures of preventive or protective character.  
  - The Commission **recommended to adjust wages from time to time** to provide sufficient food for a labourer’s support.  
  - **Secondly**, it should be the duty of the state to provide gratuitous relief to the poor and listed the category of persons entitled to receive it.  
  - The commission also made suggestions in regard to suspensions and remissions of land revenue and rents.  
  - The cost of famine relief was to be borne by the provincial governments. However, central assistance was to be made available whenever necessary.  
  - The Government accepted in general and commission’s recommendation and steps were taken to fund new resources for the creation of a famine fund.  
  - In **1883**, the **provisional famine code** was formulated which formed a guide to and basis for the provincial famine codes. |
| **Lyall Commission, 1896**   | - Closely following the last famine came the famine of **1896-97**.  
  - It affected almost every province though in varying degrees of intensity and the total population affected was estimated at 34 million.  
  - A commission presided over by Sir James Lyall, ex-Lt Governor of Punjab, adhered to largely the views expressed by their predecessors in 1880.  
  - Adding to them, it suggested some alterations which were designed to impart greater flexibility to the maxims then adopted. |
| **McDonnell Commission, 1900** | - Following the famine of **1899-1900**, the government of Lord Curzon appointed another famine commission led by MacDonnell.  
  - It submitted its report in 1901 in which it summarized accepted principles of relief suggesting variations |
The commission emphasized the benefits of a policy of moral strategy, early distribution of advances for purchase of seed and cattle and sinking of temporary wells.

- It also advocated the appointment of a famine commissioner in a province when relief operations were expected to be extensive.
- It also emphasized enlistment of non-official assistance on a larger scale.
- The commission also stressed the deniability of better transport facilities, opening of agricultural banks, improvement of irrigation facilities, and vigorous measures to faster improved methods of agriculture.
- Most of the recommendations of the commission were accepted and before Curzon left India, he had taken various measures to prevent and combat famine.
- However, most measure were carried out half-heartedly.

The heritage by-laws, drafted in accordance with the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2010, for Purana Qila and the Khair-ul-Manazil mosque, will soon be out in the public domain.

In this respect, let us understand important information about these laws and National Monuments Authority.

**Recent Developments: Heritage By-Laws**

- According to these, only Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) can carry out repairs in the **100 metre-span** from a **protected area**, which is called the **prohibited area**.
- The area starting from 100 metres from such a monument till **300 metres away** from it is the **"regulated area"**, as per the Act.
- For the regulated areas, the NMA is drafting heritage by-laws for each monument or group of monuments that will determine the nature of new construction activity.
- The proposed by-laws will lay down restrictions on the height of new constructions, among other features.

- The by-laws would be aimed at ensuring new constructions will be **“in harmony”** with the protected monuments.
- After these two monuments in Delhi i.e. **Purana Qila and Khair-ul-Manazil mosque**, the NMA will be working towards finalising by-laws for several monuments in MP and UP, for which drafts have been received from regional officials.

**Related Information: National Monuments Authority (NMA)**

- NMA under the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India has been setup as per provisions of The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains AMASR (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2010 which was enacted in March, 2010.
- Several functions have been assigned to the NMA for the protection and preservation of monuments and sites through management of the prohibited and regulated area around the centrally protected monuments.
One amongst these responsibilities of NMA is also to consider **grant of permissions to applicants for construction related activity in the prohibited and regulated area**.

The NMA and the Competent Authorities (CA) were setup and now all applications for construction related work in the prohibited and regulated area are to be submitted to the CA and then to NMA for consideration of the application.

- **Statutory provision for the ‘prohibited’ and regulated areas.**
- Complete ban on construction (including public projects) in the prohibited area.
- Providing statutory procedures for applications seeking permission for construction/repair/renovation.
- The authority shall make necessary scrutiny of the Heritage bye laws and accord approval after inviting objections/suggestions from the public.
- Grading and classification of monuments.

**RELATED INFORMATION: KHAIR-UL-MANAZIL MOSQUE**

- The Khairul Manzil Masjid was built in **1561 by Maham Anga**, the famous and powerful wet nurse of Emperor Akbar.
- Some accounts say this was Delhi’s first Mughal mosque, and definitely, the first such mosque to be commissioned by a woman.
- Maham Anga employed her trusted **Shihabuddin Ahmad Khan**, also an influential minister and relative, to build this mosque.
- Literally meaning ‘the most auspicious of houses’, this mosque is made of rubble covered with plaster and has five high arched openings in its prayer hall.
- The most impressive features of the structure are an imposing **gateway of red sandstone** on the east and double-storeyed cloisters, which were used as a madrasa (Islamic School).
- There is a dome at the central bay of the prayer hall while the other bays have been roofed with vaults.
- Khairul Manzil was also a theatre of conflict during the Independence movement.
- It is said that once British officers got wind that some revolutionaries were hiding here; promptly, cannons were set up and the structure was bombed.
- Another major attraction of this mosque is **‘Sher Shah Gate’ also known as Lal Darwaza** which was built by Sher Shah lying west of the Purana Qila.

**SPRING HARVEST FESTIVALS OF INDIA**

**# ART AND ARCHITECTURE**

President Ram Nath Kovind greeted the nation on Vaisakhi, Vishu, Rongali Bihu, Naba Barsha, Vaisakhadi and Puthandu Pirappu. These harvest festivals, which celebrate the birth of a new year are a celebration of the hard work and efforts of farmers.

In this respect, let us understand some basic information pertaining to these harvest festivals of India.

**SPRING HARVEST FESTIVALS OF INDIA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vishu Festival, Kerala</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Vishu festival is celebrated in the state of <strong>Kerala</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It marks the completion of the <strong>spring equinox</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### History, Heritage & Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vishu</td>
<td>Unlike Onam, the other harvest festival of Kerala, Vishu is a rather a quieter affair. Lord Vishnu in his Krishna avatar is the presiding deity of the Vishu festivities. As a part of this festival, Malayalis observe the ritual of <em>Vishukanni</em>, in which seasonal fruits, vegetables, yellow flowers, rice, gold, clothes, coins and holy texts are arranged on a platter in front of the deity and is the first sight of people when they wake up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rongali Bihu, Assam</td>
<td>Assam celebrates Bihu thrice in a year. Among them, Rongali Bihu is the biggest and most popular. Rongali or the Bohag (spring) Bihu starts on the last day of the Assamese calendar month of Chot, which normally falls on April 13 or 14 annually. On this occasion, youngsters visit their elders and seek blessings. <em>'Bihuwan'</em> which is the traditional Assamese towel (<em>Gamocha</em>) is exchanged as a mark of respect during this festival. The festivities are accompanied by the performance of the Bihu dance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bikhoti, Uttarakhand</td>
<td>The Bikhoti Festival is celebrated in the state of Uttarakhand. It involves people taking a dip in the holy rivers. A popular custom involves beating symbolic stones representing demons with sticks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jurshital, Bihar</td>
<td>In the Mithal region of Bihar and Nepal, the new year is celebrated as Jurshital. As a part of its festivities lotus leaves are used to serve sattu to the family members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poila Boishakh, Bengal</td>
<td>Poila Boishak also known as Pahela Baishakh or Bangla Nababarsha is the first day of Bengali Calendar. It is celebrated on 14th April as a national holiday in Bangladesh, and on 14th or 15th April in the Indian states of West Bengal, Tripura and part of Assam by people of Bengali heritage. <em>Shubho Nababarsha</em> (Happy New Year) is how Bengalis usher in the New Year. Prayers are said to Goddess Lakshmi (for wealth) and Lord Ganesh (for wellbeing).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahabishuva Sankranti, Odisha</td>
<td>On the same day as Poila Boishakh, Odisha celebrates Mahabisuha Sankranti, better known as Pana Sankranti. It coincides with the preparation of the popular local drink known as Bela Pana. It is made using golden apple or bael (Aegle marmelos) in Hindi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puthandu: Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>Puthandu is celebrated in the state of Tamil Nadu and it marks the first day of the Tamil New Year. Puthandu Vazthukkal (New Year greetings) is how friends and relatives greeted one another. The new year is celebrated on the first day of Tamil month Chithirai, which normally falls on April 13th or 14th annually.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL**

A fire broke out in Paris's Notre-Dame cathedral which caused enormous damage to the over eight-centuries-old church, which is known for its religious and historical significance as well as architectural beauty. In this respect, let us understand some key information pertaining to this world-famous site.
HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE

→ NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL: IMPORTANT FACTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Significance</th>
<th>Architectural Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• It took 182 years to complete the construction of the Notre-Dame de Paris.</td>
<td>• Two distinct features of Notre-Dame are its flying buttresses and gargoyles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• According to the official cathedral history, Paris Bishop Maurice de Sully started the construction of the cathedral dedicated to the Virgin Mary in 1163.</td>
<td>• The flying buttresses are arching supporting structures providing stability to a roof or vault of the main hall, and they connect with a vertical support outside.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The church has priceless artefacts in its possession such as the Holy Crown of Thorns, believed to have been worn by Jesus before the crucifixion, a piece of the “True Cross” upon which he was said to be crucified, and a nail from the crucifixion.</td>
<td>• This Gothic design feature allowed for the creation of familiar high ceilings in churches of that era, and has endured in several churches worldwide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is believed that King Louis IX of France, who was later venerated as a saint, brought the Crown of Thorns and the fragment of the cross from the Latin Empire of Constantinople to Paris in the 13th century.</td>
<td>• A second intriguing feature is its gargoyles. Gargoyle is a grotesque carved human or animal face or figure projecting from the gutter of a building, typically acting as a spout to carry water clear of a wall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Notre-Dame, attracted the anger of protesters during the French Revolution in 1789.</td>
<td>• One of the more iconic ones immortalised in numerous pictures and films came to be called le Stryge, or the vampire, sitting with its hands on the chin, tongue protruding, staring down at the city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They ransacked the cathedral, destroyed the royal statues and brought down the original spire.</td>
<td>• He does not, however, serve the classic gargoyle function of a drain pipe for rainwater that is usually found in cathedrals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When Catholicism was banned in France during the Revolution, Notre-Dame was turned into a Temple of Reason.</td>
<td>• But in 1801, after a reconciliation agreement was signed between Napoleon Bonaparte and Pope Pius VII, the cathedral was returned to the Catholic Church.</td>
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<td>• Napoleon chose the damaged church for his coronation as Emperor of France in 1804.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When Catholicism was banned in France during the Revolution, Notre-Dame was turned into a Temple of Reason.</td>
<td>• In 1844, King Louis Philippe ordered its renovation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When Catholicism was banned in France during the Revolution, Notre-Dame was turned into a Temple of Reason.</td>
<td>• Architect Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc and his team started the ambitious project and in 20 years, he restored it, with a new spire.</td>
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<td>• Architect Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc and his team started the ambitious project and in 20 years, he restored it, with a new spire.</td>
<td>• The church Viollet-le-Duc rebuilt would survive till this month’s inferno.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NEWS SNIPPETS

PO:RAG FESTIVAL

IN NEWS: The festival was recently celebrated in the Dhemaji district of Assam.

• Po:rag is one of the three farming-related festivals of the Mishing community of Assam.
• It is particularly celebrated in the Dhemaji district.
• The term Po:rag is derived from Apong, the rice wine brewed by the Mishings, and Rag that
encompasses merriment, music and dance.

- It includes a unique feature i.e. **coronation of a king** chosen by the community, for three days.
- The community invariably chooses a resourceful person as a king because it involves feasting to be paid for.
- Dhemaji is famous for its **perennial floods** caused by a number of Brahmaputra tributaries flowing down the hills of Arunachal Pradesh which include the Jiadhal, Moridhal, Telijan, Kaitongjan, Laipulia, Sissi, Gai, and Tangani.
- The damage done by these “playful” rivers is believed to have given Dhemaji its name, a corruption of ‘dhal dhemali’, loosely translating into ‘play of flood’.

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**VASANTHOTS AVAM**

**IN NEWS:** The Annual Vasanthotsavam has been recently celebrated in Tirumala.

- The Annual Vasanthotsavam is performed on the auspicious days of **Trayodasi, Chaturdasi and Pournami in the month of Chaitra (March/April)** every year.
- According to the temple Legend, the Vasanthotsavam Festival was started during the period of King Achyutaraya in 1460’s.
- This annual fete was believed to have introduced by the King to mark the **arrival of Spring Season**.
- Lord and his consorts are given aromatic bath on these three days which is believed to give a soothing relief to the deities from the scorching Sun.
- This three-day festival starts with **ankurarpanam** (sowing the nine kinds of seeds) ceremony conducted on the day of Uttarabhadra star, one day before the commencement of Vasanthotsavam festival.
- On all these three days, Sri Malayappa Swamy and his consorts are brought to beautifully decorated Vasanta Mandapam.
- In Vasanta Mandapam, Abhisekham is performed to the processional deity of Lord Sri Malayappa Swamy and his consorts on first two days.
- On the third day, **Lord Sri Rama with Sita, Lakshmana and Anjaneya and Sri Krishna with Rukmini and Satyabhama** are also taken out in procession along with **Lord Malayappa Swamy** and his consorts.
- At the end of procession, all Utsava murthies are brought to Vasanta Mandapam where Snapana Tirumanjanam is performed with religious fervour.

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**GOHAIN ULIUWA MELA**

**IN NEWS:** The mela was recently celebrated in the state of Assam.

- The traditional ‘Gohain Uliuwa mela’ festival is celebrated in the **Mayong village in Morigaon district of Assam**.
- **Karbi tribesmen and women** take part in a religious procession of this festival.
- The festival is organized with ancient traditional customs of Mayong village for its spiritual and mistrial powers.
- Mayong is considered as the **Indian capital of black magic** and **witchcraft**.
- The old people of the area suggest that the ancient melas were organised probably in the later part of the **17th century AD during the tenure of 10th king of Mayong named Sarassachandra**
Singha in 1668.

- Since then, the melas were organised by the people with ancient traditional customs.
- The **three-day long programme** includes ceremonial bath to Pancha Gohain cum Pancha Devata, processions along with the Pancha Gohain from Hatimuria Bamun Gohain Than to Rajagaria Namghar via Kechaikhai Than through Gorbhanga festival.

**IN NEWS:** Conch is being used as the election symbol by the Biju Janata Dal and has become a catalyst for the promotion of a traditional folk-dance form named ‘Jodi Sankha’ from Ganjam district of Odisha.

- Jodi Sankha is a unique folk-dance native to **Ganjam District of Orissa**.
- The term Jodi Sankha, literally means **Double Conch**.
- It is a combined presentation of rural music along with **Badya and Nrutya**.
- This dance form had a **martial art** beginning as it needs high stamina.
- Conch is a salient feature of the ‘Jodi Sankha’ troupes and the sound of conch is considered auspicious.
- The performers come in colourful attire and blow two fused conch shells while dancing and creating physical formations to the beats of drums.
- This dance was traditionally performed at religious functions, marriages and other processions. ‘Jodi Sankha’ troupes also perform during cultural fests throughout the country.
- The accompanying instruments are traditional **’changu drum and ’mahuri’**, the Odia version of ‘shehnai’.
- There are around 100 ‘Jodi Sankha’ troupes in Ganjam district, each having 20 to 40 members.
SECURITY

# GS PAPER III (MAIN)

CURBING FAKE NEWS

Fake news is becoming a huge menace in promoting more biases, divisions, hatred and violence in society. New Zealand attacks, manipulation of elections, lynching are some of the examples of negative impacts. A recent Microsoft survey, covering 22 countries shows that as many as 64 percent of the Indians surveyed have encountered fake news as against the global average of 57 per cent.

For e.g. Indians and the ‘Indian National Anthem’ being adjudged the best by UNESCO is probably the most common fake news on the Internet. While this false information may have been innocuous, it captures the larger menace we face today. With the advent of new age digital and social media, fake news has pervaded all spheres of life, political and social.

THINGS TO UNDERSTAND

Fake news exists within the larger context of misinformation and disinformation.

- **Misinformation** is false or inaccurate information that is mistakenly or inadvertently created or spread where the intent is not to deceive.
- **Disinformation** is false information that is deliberately created and spread in order to influence public opinion or obscure the truth.

Further, the advent of fake news is not new or recent, only its potential to reach people has amplified due to online platforms and applications that are free. Users creating hate content and sharing it can be booked under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). But the sheer expanse of the Internet and the anonymity it grants makes it difficult to track down people.

Unlike mainstream media that falls under comprehensive regulation, online platforms have scope for wrongdoing due to the lack of binding rules, and the ability to keep owners and editors private like in the case of fake news sites. In the absence of such crucial information, there is no understanding of the liability and the credibility of the information that is being hosted on their respective sites. This is the main strength of the creators of fake news, the ability to remain anonymous in the guise of a media outlet.

Fake news is a threat to democracy in a way more perverse than most people appreciate. In these times of easy access to the ability to crunch large amounts of data, unstructured and in real time, it is possible for political parties or, more realistically, specialist troops employed by them, to profile individual voters and flood them with news, fake and real, that would accentuate perceived favourable political propensities or neutralise perceived hostile inclinations.

HOW TO COMBAT?

- The lack of uniform guidelines, regulation and policy regarding such fabricated content needs to be addressed urgently.
- Government should take steps to combat the use of communication networks to spread rumours &
mis-information such as through WhatsApp, rather than shift the responsibility to communication networks, wherein accountability should be fixed with police and public officials for maintaining law and order.

- Regulation should avoid emphasizing censorship of means of fake news such as communication networks, but rather emphasize awareness towards fake news and regulating creators of fake news and its after-effects.

### Onus of Social Media platforms

Recently, Google, FB and WhatsApp raise stakes to tackle ‘fake menace’.

#### WhatsApp
- The first action was by WhatsApp when it released **advertisements** in Indian newspapers about identifying fake news.
- WhatsApp has even added **a ‘forwarded’ sign** that comes with a message that is not original.

#### Google
- Google rolled out a **train-the-trainer programme** with its Google News Initiative India Training Network. The programme aims to train working journalists to create in-house experts who can help identify fake news. The trainers are expected to train journalists in digital tools like advanced search, reverse image search and other tools where even videos can be subjected to reverse image search to debunk fake news.
- Google is also funding 87 outlets through its **Google News Initiative (GNI) YouTube innovation funding**. The funding aims to help news outlets in 23 countries across the world in exploring live and fact-checking formats. In Hyderabad, Factly, a firm that has tried to push data driven information, is now collaborating with Google.

#### Facebook
Facebook has taken a community route hosting a workshop on **Community Leadership Circles**, aims to build a community of admins in cities who can develop policies and control the content that is shared in the groups. They will be part of a network who can mentor and groom admins.

### Promotion of Fact Checking

- Numerous fact-checking websites such as **Alt News** have sprung up and a few of them have even partnered with big players like Google and Facebook to provide factual accuracy.
- The fact checking organization **Boom Live** is available on WhatsApp in India.

### Onus of consumers

- Due diligence is required on part of the users as actual consumers and targets of fake information and online content to contain the spread of fake news.
- Human judgment and wisdom therefore is critical to solving the spread and reactionary activities of Fake news.
- Before sharing dubious content, users can exercise judgement to question the source and its credibility, or to check the credentials of the individual it has come from.

### Use of Artificial Intelligence

- Form a database of specific accounts, sources, geographical locations or IP addresses which are a known source of fake news and linked to A.I. detection mechanism.
- Run a content cross-check for the news story against a dynamic database of stories which demarcates legit and fake stories.
- Run an evaluation for the headline text and the content of the post, looking for consistency between both or sift through similar articles over other news media platforms for fact checking.
- Spot manipulated or doctored images and videos, which can further alert the users of the dubious
content.

Crowd Sourcing

- Human networks through crowd-sourcing can be carried out to combat fake news. It would be similar to the concept of Wikipedia where a network of volunteers keeps the information updated.
- A collective effort of individuals, governments, social media and content platforms with the additional use of technology solutions, needs to be integrated with social causes and awareness among the masses to combat the influence and spread of fake news.

VIRTUAL SIM

In the Pulwama attack, Government of India came to know that terrorists used Virtual sims to keep contact with their leadership in Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) across the border in Pakistan.

THINGS TO DO

How does a Virtual Sim work?

- Virtual SIMs are not physically attached to a mobile and created online to help one communicate.
- The Virtual SIM provider generates a telephone number and the user downloads an application of the service provider on their smartphone.
- It can also potentially allow devices to host more than two numbers or lines of service.
- It provides an ability for not paying expensive roaming charges or buy a local SIM of another country.

How it different from simple SIM Card?

- Unlike a SIM card, virtual SIMs are not attached to a mobile and created online to help you communicate. It is a cloud-based number that can be used from any device via an app.
- The app also allows linking multiple numbers. All one needs is a single account to link additional numbers.
- In this technology, the computer generates a telephone number and the user downloads an application of the service provider on their smartphone.
- The number is linked to social networking sites like WhatsApp, Facebook, Telegram or Twitter.
- The verification code generated by these networking sites is received on the smartphone and the user is ready.

More Features of Virtual Sim

The number operated through virtual sim were pre-fixed with “+1”, which is the area code of United States and used by the Mobile Station International Subscriber Directory Number (MSISDN) number in the United States.

MILITARY EXERCISES

AUSINDEX

- Third Instalment of the Joint Naval Exercise of India and Australia AUSINDEX was held off the coast of Vishakhapatnam.
- The joint exercise focused on anti-submarine warfare, as part of efforts to ramp up bilateral
naval cooperation in the strategic Indian Ocean region.

- The exercise featured the deployment of Australian personnel on Indian ships and vice versa.
- AUSINDEX 2019 also witnessed the largest ever deployment of an Australian defence group to India and proposed logistics sharing pact between Australia and India.

**MITRA SHAKTI VI**

- **India and Sri Lanka** conducted joint military exercise Mitra Shakti.
- The primary focus of the exercise was to train and equip the contingents to undertake joint counter insurgency and counter terrorist operations in urban/ rural environment under the United Nations flag.
- The exercise provided an ideal platform for both contingents to share their operational experience and expertise while being instrumental in broadening interoperability and cooperation between the armies of India and Sri Lanka.
- Mitra Shakti exercise conducted annually as part of military diplomacy and interaction between armies of the two countries.

**IND-INDO CORPAT 2019**

- The 33rd edition of India-Indonesia coordinated patrol (IND-INDO CORPAT) was inaugurated at Port Blair, Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- Navies of both countries have been carrying out coordinated patrolling twice a year since 2002 in an effort to keep the Indian Ocean region (IOR) safe and secure for commercial shipping and international trade.
- As part of the Indian Government's vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region), the Indian Navy has also been involved in assisting countries in the Indian Ocean Region with EEZ Surveillance, Search and Rescue, and other capacity-building and capability-enhancement activities.
- 33rd IND-INDO CORPAT which coincides with 70 years of India-Indonesia diplomatic ties will contribute towards the Indian Navy's efforts to consolidate inter-operability and forge strong bonds of friendship across the seas.

**TROPEX-2019**

- Conducted by Indian Navy, Tropex is an inter-service military exercise involving the participation of the Indian Army, Air Force, Navy and the Coast Guard.
- TROPEX 19 had commenced with Tri-services Amphibious Exercise in the Andaman & Nicobar islands with the participation of Army and Air Force.
- Under this, Indian Navy conducted large-scale coastal defence exercise ‘Exercise Sea Vigil’

**VARUNA NAVAL EXERCISE 2019**

- **India and France** is conducting their largest ever naval exercise ‘Varuna’ off Goa coast.
- India is deploying its aircraft carrier, **INS Vikramaditya** with its MiG-29K fighters and French side is represented by its aircraft carrier **FNS Charles de Gaulle** with its Rafale-M naval jets.
- India and France are working closely to implement their action-oriented joint strategic vision for cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
**INDIA-VIETNAM NAVAL EXERCISE**

- Navies of **India and Vietnam** held a four-day maritime exercise off **Cam Ranh Bay** in Vietnam with an aim to boost operational cooperation.
- The exercise was undertaken as a part of the ongoing overseas deployment of eastern fleet ships to South East Asian countries.
- From the Indian side warships, INS Kolkata and INS Shakti participated in the annual exercise, comprising a harbour and a sea phase.

**BOLD KURUKSHETRA-2019**

- Joint Military Exercise of **India and Singapore** was inaugurated at Babina Cantonment of Jhansi.
- The joint exercise was aimed at developing military technology, enhance the maritime security and bolster the nations' fight against terrorism.
- Both India and Singapore have also agreed to step up intelligence and information sharing in maritime security, especially in the field of counter-terrorism, and agreed to expand collaboration on submarine safety and rescue.

**OPERATION SUNRISE**

- India has carried out **Operation Sunrise** to wipe out the insurgent camps planning to hit the Indian workers at the **Kaladan Transit project**.
- **Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project** aims to connect seaport of Kolkata (India) with Sittwe seaport in Myanmar by sea. The project links Sittwe seaport to Lashio in Myanmar via Kaladan river through boat route and then from Lashio to Mizoram in India by road transport.
- Operation Sunrise was a joint operation carried out by both Indian and Myanmar armies.
- The target of the Operation Sunrise was the Arakan Army, an insurgent group trained by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) which is reportedly trained by China.
ELECTION TRIVIA INDIA

#ELECTION FEVER

**Question:** What is a reserved constituency?

**Answer:** A constituency reserved for SC, ST communities. General category candidates cannot contest in such constituencies. Out of 543 elected Lok Sabha seats, 84 are reserved for SC and 47 for ST.

**Question:** What is the minimum age to vote?

**Answer:** In the first general elections 1951-52, the minimum age of voting was 21 years. It was lowered to 18 years in 1988 after 61st Constitutional Amendment Act, 1988.

**Question:** Who can vote?

**Answer:** Any Indian citizen over 18 years of age, except prisoners. Voters are registered as:

- **General voters:** residing within India
- **Overseas voters:** residing overseas for education or employment, and not acquired citizenship of any other country.
- **Service voters:** Govt. officials working abroad and those employed with armed forces.

**Question:** How are Lok Sabha seats allocated to various states?

**Answer:** The present constituencies were carved out on the basis of 2001 census. It shall continue to be in operation till the first census after 2026. The current number of elected Lok Sabha seats at 543 came in 1977 elections.

**Question:** What is the representation of women in Lok Sabha?

**Answer:** In 1st Lok Sabha, there were 24 women MPs, and in the 16th Lok Sabha, there were 66.

**Question:** How many registered political parties in India?

**Answer:** As per March 2019, there are 2293 registered political parties in India. Out of these, there are 7 National and 59 state parties.

**Question:** What are the approximate voters for 2019 general elections?

**Answer:** There are around 90 crore voters. Out of these, the Third Gender voters who have enrolled as ‘Others’ are 38,325. The ‘Others’ category was introduced in 2014, following Supreme Court’s order.

**Question:** When was NOTA introduced in elections?

**Answer:** NOTA was used first time in Chhattisgarh Assembly elections in 2013, and in Lok Sabha elections in 2014.

**Question:** Which is the polling station for one voter?

**Answer:** Banej village, in Junagarh district of Gujarat.

**Question:** Who bears the cost of elections?

**Answer:** Lok Sabha elections by GoI, State elections by GoI and State Govt. on 50:50 basis. Only honorariums of observers deployed for elections are paid by Election Commission.
QUOTES ON ELECTION

#ELECTION FEVER

- “A vote is like a rifle: its usefulness depends upon the character of the user.” Theodore Roosevelt
- “Vote for the person who promises the least; he will be least disappointing” Bernard Baruch
- “People never lie so much as after a hunt, during a war or before an election” Bismarck
- “The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all” John F. Kennedy
- “Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government” Jefferson

CARTOON SPEAK ON ELECTION

#ELECTION FEVER

AND
M.K. GANDHI’S EXPRESSION ON THE ABOVE

THE STEEL FRAME

# BOOKS AND AUTHORS

Genre: Polity and Governance
Author: Deepak Gupta (IAS)
Flow of the book: Is an interesting read...
- “You will not have a united India, if you do not have a good all-India service which has the independence to speak out its mind.” The words of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel are written in stone below his bust at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie.
- The history of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) begins by tracing the evolution of the administration system in India from the years of the East India Company and then the Indian Civil Service.
- The changing role of the IAS over the years since Independence has more immediate implications for the country today.
- It notes the observations of former director of the national training academy, P.S. Appu, on the need for the IAS in 2005: first, that such a service can resist the arbitrary actions of those in power; second, by upholding the Constitution uncompromisingly, without fear or favour, it can enable millions of citizens to claim the rights guaranteed to them.
- How the service should be reinvented for the 21st century needs more nuanced reflection? This has been analysed in the book.
ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE

# GS PAPER IV (MAIN)

**ETHICAL JOURNALISM**

#ETHICS, INTEGRITY AND APTITUDE

> IS THE MEDIA AS THE 4TH PILLAR OF DEMOCRACY LOSING ITS CREDIBILITY?

“The moment we no longer have a free press, anything can happen. What makes it possible for a totalitarian or any other dictatorship to rule is that people are not informed.” - Hannah Andret

> ONGOING TUSSLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ETHICAL JOURNALISM</th>
<th>UNETHICAL JOURNALISM</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Ethical Journalism" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Unethical Journalism" /></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

On the basis of above, let us start with a thought provoking article on the current scenario of Indian media.

**READ AND PONDER !**

Media makes us aware of various social, political and economic activities around us. It is like a mirror which reveals us the bare truth and harsh realities of life. A news media, be it in print form or TV/radio, its main job is to inform people about unbiased news without any censorship or tampering. People always trust actual and honest news. The media also has its own opinion. But they can only put it in their own personal space (editorials) leaving it for the public to make its own assessment. At the same time, they have to incorporate other opinions too, however contradicting the editor’s view might be. The purpose of news media is to present accurate news and all types of views in front of people. That way they maintain their credibility. The Media is considered to be a double-edged sword. An accountable media can lift the nation to heights by providing a sturdy support for its development and an unaccountable media can cause disarray in the society.
ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE

Democracy is considered to be a rule of the people through their elected representatives. One of the merits of a democratic system is the freedom of expression and the space that is provided to disagreement by different sections of society. For the democratic system to operate to its full potential, the participation on a part of the public is imperative, that successively needs circulation of reliable info to the masses on numerous public problems. This is where the mass media come in.

CORPORATIZATION OF MEDIA HOUSES

The true test of vibrant democracy is the independence of media. Over a past few year media in our country has become advocates of different political parties and voice of corporates. What happened in the electronic era is that mainstream media became corporatized to spread its business as well as to acquire advanced infrastructure. To corporatize, it required corporate financing. Entry of corporates brought in the culture of profiteering and that culture first killed the neutrality of news media. Corporates get most profit if they can be close to the broker lobby of power. “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts even more”. Thus, many news media started selective reporting. Apart from that they instead of presenting views started imposing views.

Journalism in our country is facing significant crisis. In the race of sensationalism and TRP, media houses have taken a corporate turn. News which is TRP generating are shown in repetitive loops, while notable news gets neglected. We can say its selective when it comes to coverage. Drought in Vidarbha and Marathwada did not get the required coverage as that time of IPL matches. Media houses have resorted so low that they are willing to compromise national security and secrecy. Be it broadcasting 26/11 or fake claims on number of causalities in Balakot. To gain popularity and profits they have started framing accusations on IB, Supreme Court and even Army.

Former Indian President Pranab Mukherjee resoundingly made point to the Indian media that “discussion and dissension are crucial for a spirited democracy, and it must hold public institutions accountable for all their actions and inactions. There should always be room for the argumentative Indian, and not the intolerant Indian. The media must be the watchdog, the mediator between the leaders and the public”.

POLITICAL DOMINANCE

India is such a populated and diverse country that its democratic life is hard contemplate. So is the range of media through which political opinions can be expressed. The media, regrettably, like the political polarization in the country, is also divided into anti-government, pro-government, and rightist groups with each entity trying to impose its own partisan views on serious national issues and even resorting to tarnish work of their rivals. Consequently, truth and social responsibility have become casualties of this uncontrolled media culture. Media expansion has led to a shrinking of the public sphere, resulting in the spread of elitist’s opinions.

The Indian media has now become the B team of the government. It is intently indulging in creating such pranks in the society and vitiating the already charged atmosphere with political war games. This doctrine clearly spells out the fact that there is always a ‘limitation’ for freedom of speech or rather freedom to sloganeering if that prank likely to harm the society. This is exactly what is happening on wider scale now.

As hard as it is to believe, the biggest thing that drives elections is simple name recognition by media. Media has now become a tool for political parties to brainwash the public by showing fabricated predicted votes via exit polls. Obviously, they can influence voter’s perceptions about the closeness of the election and the value of their votes. Campaigns are now getting covered like a
Ethics, Integrity & Aptitude

Sport with a special emphasis on who's up, who's down, who's winning, who's losing, how they are moving ahead or behind in the polls. Surprisingly, exit polls aren't the only medium to influence opinion and spread rumours among voters. In this age of social media, it wouldn't be too difficult to make impressions, courtesy the mammoth internet armies most media houses have. Word-of-mouth, village meets, informal gatherings – there are more than just one means through which ideas can be spread among voters.

⇒ RELIGIOUS DOMINANCE

Indian media lacks social diversity and it doesn't reflect the social profile of country. Mainly Hindu upper caste dominate in the media houses. They constitute around 16% of India's population but among the key decision makers of the national media, their share is as high as 71%. Serious issues like the lynching, Kashmir crisis, protests in universities, farmers’ march and even where Dalits getting discriminated or killed, have received hardly any mention in media coverage. According to 2019 report, abysmal position of India at 140 among 180 countries in the annual World Press Freedom Index, which is another worrying point for Dalits and minority communities.

Religion and caste based ‘Divide and Rule’ is propagated deliberately rather than promoting amity and co-existence among different religions and communities. This manipulation is promoted to satisfy vote ban politics of various political parties.

⇒ MEDIA TRIALS

"Media trial is a matter of serious concern. Media trial creates a perception of prejudice against the accused. Judgment should be delivered in court only".

In a one hour debating by news channels in which accused is framed with allegations and debated by some so called “experienced people of that field” after which the anchor gives an instant predefined verdict, which is definitely more captivating, amusing to public rather than the multifaceted and apodictic judicial procedure established by law of Indian judiciary, to which the most citizens are unaware. The journalists have started acting more or less as both prosecution and judge alleging, shouting, pronouncing verdicts.

In India, freedom of the press has been treated as part of the freedom of speech and expression guaranteed by Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, vide Brij Bhushan and Another vs. The State of Delhi, AIR 1950 SC 129 and Sakal Papers (P) Ltd vs. Union of India, AIR 1962 SC 305, among others. However, as mentioned in Article 19(2), reasonable restrictions can be placed on this right, in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence. Hence, freedom of the media is not an absolute freedom.

⇒ MEDIA TRIAL V. FREE AND FAIR ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

By conducting a parallel trial with the court, media often prejudices the judicial administration of a country by influencing the opinion of the judges. Sometimes, excessive publicity given to an accused or suspect by media before trial commences prejudices a fair trial thereby characterising him as a person who actually has committed the crime. This results in undue interference with the “administration of justice”, calling for proceedings for contempt of court against the media. Media should play a constructive role in the betterment of the legal system. Media must exercise due care and caution while reporting criminal matters to avoid any kind of disrespect to the Constitution and the judicial system in the country.

One of the examples in this respect is the case of Aarushi Talwar. In this case, media has played a major role in incriminating parents without any sufficient evidence. Likewise, there are many instances where the media has changed the whole way of perception. Media is often blamed of conducting the trial of the accused and passing the judgement even before the court thereby interfering with the judicial process. The trial is essentially a process to be carried out by the courts. Therefore, media must confine its role to reporting matters and not assuming the role of the court.
WHAT SHOULD BE THE MEDIA'S ROLE?

Many channels show film stars, pop music, disco-dancing and fashion parades, astrology, or cricket. Is it not a cruel irony and an affront to our poor people that so much time and resources are spent on such things? What have the Indian masses, who are facing terrible economic problems, to do with such things? Is this not sheer escapism? This is a matter of great concern to India as it faces massive problems of poverty, unemployment, corruption, price rise and so on.

The media have a great responsibility to fight backward ideas such as casteism and communalism, and help the people in their struggle against poverty and other social evils. Since a large section of the people is backward and ignorant, it is all the more necessary that modern ideas are brought to them and their backwardness removed so that they become part of enlightened India. The media have a great responsibility in this respect.

For this, scientific thinking should be promoted. Science alone is the means to solve this country's problems. By science, it does not mean physics, chemistry and biology alone. It means entire scientific outlook, which must be spread widely among our people. Our people must develop rational, logical and questioning minds, and abandon superstition and escapism. For this purpose the media can, and must, play a powerful role.

FIVE CORE ETHICS OF JOURNALISM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethic</th>
<th>Key Principles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy and fact-based communications</td>
<td>• Journalists cannot always guarantee ‘truth’, but getting the facts right is</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the cardinal principle of journalism.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Journalists should always strive for accuracy, give all the relevant facts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and ensure that they have been checked.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>• Journalists must be independent voices; they should not act, formally or</td>
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<td></td>
<td>informally, on behalf of special interests whether political, corporate or</td>
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<td>cultural.</td>
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<td>• They should declare to their editors – or directly to the audience – any</td>
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<td>relevant information about political affiliations, financial arrangements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>or other personal connections that might constitute a conflict of interest.</td>
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<td>Fairness and Impartiality</td>
<td>• Most stories have at least two sides. While there is no obligation to</td>
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<td>present every side in every piece, the stories produced by journalists</td>
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<td>should strive for balance and provide context.</td>
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<td>• Objectivity is not always possible, and may not always be desirable (in the</td>
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<td>face, for example, of clear and undeniable brutality or inhumanity), but</td>
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<td>impartial reporting builds trust and confidence.</td>
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<td>Humanity</td>
<td>• Journalists should do no harm. They should show sensitivity and care in</td>
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<td>their work recognising that what they publish or broadcast may be hurtful.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It is not possible to report freely and in the public interest without</td>
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<td>occasionally causing hurt and offence, but journalists should always be</td>
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<td>aware of the impact of words and images on the lives of others. This is</td>
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<td>particularly important when reporting on minorities, children, the victims</td>
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<td></td>
<td>of violence, and vulnerable people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accountability and Transparency</td>
<td>• A key principle of responsible journalism is the ability to be accountable.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Journalists should always be open and transparent in their work except in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the most extraordinary of circumstances. When they make mistakes they must</td>
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<td>correct them and expressions of regret must be sincere. They listen to their</td>
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<td>audience and provide remedies to those dealt with unfairly.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
PREAMBLE

Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. Ethical journalism strives to ensure the free exchange of information that is accurate, fair and thorough. An ethical journalist acts with integrity. The Society declares these four principles as the foundation of ethical journalism and encourages their use in its practice by all people in all media.

SEEK TRUTH AND REPORT IT

Ethical journalism should be accurate and fair. Journalists should be honest and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

Journalists should:
- Take responsibility for the accuracy of their work. Verify information before releasing it. Use original sources whenever possible.
- Remember that neither speed nor format excuses inaccuracy.
- Provide context. Take special care not to misrepresent or oversimplify in promoting, previewing or summarizing a story.
- Gather, update and correct information throughout the life of a news story.
- De-emphasize when making promises, but keep the promises they make.
- Identify sources clearly. The public is entitled to as much information as possible to judge the reliability and motivations of sources.
- Consider sources’ motives before promising anonymity. Reserve anonymity for sources who may face danger, retribution or other harm, and have information that cannot be obtained elsewhere. Explain why anonymity was granted.
- Diligently seek subjects of news coverage to allow them to respond to criticism or allegations of wrongdoing.
- Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information unless traditional, open methods will not yield information vital to the public.
- Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable. Give voice to the voiceless.
- Support the open and civil exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
- Recognize a special obligation to serve as watchdogs over public affairs and government. Seek to ensure that the public’s business is conducted in the open, and that public records are open to all.
- Provide access to source material when it is relevant and appropriate.
- Boldly tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience. Seek sources whose voices we seldom hear.
- Avoid stereotyping. Journalists should examine the ways their values and experiences may shape their reporting.
- Label advocacy and commentary.
- Never deliberately distort facts or context, including visual information. Cleanly illustrate re-enactments.
- Never plagiarize. Always attribute.

MINIMIZE HARM

Ethical journalism treats sources, subjects, colleagues and members of the public as human beings deserving of respect.

Journalists should:
- Balance the public’s need for information against potential harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance or undue intrusiveness.

Show compassion for those who may be affected by news coverage. Use heightened sensitivity when dealing with teenagers, victims of sex crimes, and sources or subjects who are inexperienced or unable to give consent. Consider cultural differences in approach and treatment.
- Recognize that legal access to information differs from an ethical justification to publish or broadcast.
- Realize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than public figures and others who seek power, influence or attention. Weight the consequences of publishing or broadcasting personal information.
- Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity, even if others do.
- Balance a suspect’s right to a fair trial with the public’s right to know. Consider the implications of identifying criminal suspects before they face legal charges.
- Consider the long-term implications of the extended reach and permanence of publication. Provide updated and more complete information as appropriate.

ACT INDEPENDENTLY

The highest and primary obligation of ethical journalism is to serve the public.

Journalists should:
- Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived. Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and avoid political and other outside activities that may compromise integrity or impartiality, or may damage credibility.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; do not pay for access to news. Identify content provided by outside sources, whether paid or not.
- Deny favored treatment to advertisers, donors or any other special interests, and resist internal and external pressure to influence coverage.
- Distinguish news from advertising and opinion that blurs the lines between the two. Prominently label sponsored content.

BE ACCOUNTABLE AND TRANSPARENT

Ethical journalism means taking responsibility for one’s work and explaining one’s decisions to the public.

Journalists should:
- Explain ethical choices and processes to audiences. Encourage a civil dialogue with the public about journalistic practices, coverage and news content.
- Respond quickly to questions about accuracy, clarity and fairness.
- Acknowledge mistakes and correct them promptly and prominently. Explain corrections and clarifications carefully and clearly.
- Expose unethical conduct in journalism, including within their organizations.
- Abide by the same high standards they expect of others.

The SPJ Code of Ethics is a statement of abiding principles supported by additional explanations and position papers (at spj.org) that address changing journalistic practices. It is not a set of rules, rather a guide that encourages all who engage in journalism to take responsibility for the information they provide, regardless of medium. The code should be read as a whole; individual principles should not be taken out of context. It is not, nor can it be under the First Amendment, legally enforceable.
## REASONABLE RESTRICTIONS ON MEDIA IN INDIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Contempt Of Court Act</td>
<td>This was introduced in order to maintain honour and dignity of the Judges and their Judgments. This is one of the restrictions of freedom of expression which are mentioned in Article 19(2) of the constitution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young Person's (Harmful Publications) Act, 1956</td>
<td>This act was introduced in order to prohibit the publication of any literature which glorifies crime, violence and genocide in order to protect the minds of young readers.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Cable television regulation Act, 1995                              | • This act provides for mandatory registration of all operators of cable television network, and also, it makes it compulsory to transmit at least two Doordarshan Channels through the cable service.  
  • In fact, this act along with cable rules makes it very clear that transmission of communal polarization is an offence. |
| Press Council of India Act 1965                                     | • It is a statutory body to govern and regulate the function of mainly print and televised media.  
  • Its preamble states that this institution was established “For protecting the freedom of the press and maintaining and improving the standards of both newspapers and news agencies”.  
  • Its main job is to monitor the conduct of the media; it's basically the watchdog of watchdog.  
  • The press council also provides the norms of journalist conduct which is the guidelines for the principled and ethical journalism. |

Besides the above, **News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA)** is an independent body set up by the News Broadcasters Association. Its task is to consider and adjudicate upon complaints about broadcasts. The nine-member Authority comprises:

- A Chairperson, being an eminent jurist;
- Four eminent persons having special knowledge and/or practical experience in the field of law, education, medicine, science, literature, public administration, consumer affairs, environment, human psychology and/or culture; and
- Four eminent editors employed with a broadcaster.

The **Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards** laid down by NBA for violation of which a complaint may be made, include the following principles:

- Ensure impartiality and objectivity in reporting
- Ensure neutrality
- Ensure that when reporting on crime, that crime and violence are not glorified
- Ensure utmost discretion while reporting on violence and crime against women and children
- Abhor sex and nudity
- Ensure privacy
- Ensure that national security is not endangered
- Refraining from advocating or encouraging superstition and occultism
- Ensure responsible sting operations

**Objects and functions of NBSA**: The objects of NBSA is to lay-down and foster high standards, ethics and practices in news broadcasting, including entertaining and deciding complaints against or in respect of broadcasters in so far as these relate to the content of any broadcast.

NBSA administers the Codes of Ethics & Broadcasting Standards, which has been voluntarily drawn by the News Broadcasters Association (NBA) for its member broadcasters to demonstrate their commitment to responsible broadcasting and to self-regulate themselves. In discharging its functions as aforesaid the NBSA shall act consistently with the following precepts:
1. Maintaining and improving the standards of broadcast, and maintaining the independence of broadcasters, television journalists and/or news agencies;

2. Ensuring compliance by broadcasters, television journalists and news agencies with the Code of Conduct and adherence by the said persons to high professional standards;

3. Ensuring the maintenance of high standards of public taste and fostering a due sense of both the rights and responsibilities of citizens;

4. Fostering and encouraging the growth of a sense of responsibility and public service among all those engaged in and associated with the profession of television journalism and business of broadcasting;

5. Keeping under review and scrutiny any developments likely to or having the tendency to restrict the gathering, supply and dissemination of news of public interest and importance:

6. Such other aspects as may be incidental, consequential, related and/or otherwise materially concerned with the above precepts.

Finally, in any democracy, weakening of pillars is always damaging. There are many factors that make media biased. There is caste, religious, political bias within the media. Media is not completely honest and objective in depiction of important issues. Certain issues are made to look by media in a certain way to benefit a certain group and manipulate the public opinion. Criticisms of social media range from criticisms of the ease of use of specific platforms and their capabilities, disparity in information available, issues with non-reliable and untrustworthy information presented, the impact of social media use on an individual's opinion, ownership of media houses, and the meaning of interactions created by social media. There is a real risk that we will slide into a vicious cycle.

This spells danger for the future of democracy in India, unless it is urgently remedied. This problem can be solved in two ways, first being, democratic that is, through discussions, consultations and persuasion and other way is by using retributive measures against the media, for example, by imposing heavy fines on defaulters, stopping government advertisements to them, suspending their licenses in case of gross violation of code of ethics.

To protect the pillars of democracy will not be an easy task in a current culture cracked by dissension and misleading information. It will require acumen and patience.
# Glossary

## Catch up Effect

- The catch up effect basically states that the poor and developing economies tend to grow faster as compared to developed economies.
- Due to such faster growth, the poor and developing economies ultimately catch up with the developed economies. This is also known as “Theory of Convergence”.

## MIBOR and MIBID

- Mumbai Inter-Bank Offer Rate (MIBOR) and Mumbai Inter-Bank Bid Rate (MIBID) are the benchmark rates at which Indian banks lend and borrow money from each other.
- MIBID is the rate at which banks would like to borrow from other banks and MIBOR is the rate at which banks are willing to lend to other banks.
- The MIBOR and MIBID are calculated on a daily basis by National Stock Exchange of India Limited. They are considered to be Indian counterpart of LIBOR.
- The MIBID/MIBOR rate is used as final benchmark rate for majority of deals struck in the derivative market. The rate/value of Interest Rate Swaps (IRS), Forward Rate Agreements (FRA), Floating Rate Debentures and Long Term Deposits are determined on the basis of MIBOR/MIBID.

## Veblen Goods

- The law of Demand states there is inverse relationship between demand and price of a particular good. The demand for good decreases as its prices increases and similarly, demand increases as its prices reduces.
- However, Veblen goods are considered to be an exception to the law of the demand. The demand for the Veblen Goods increases as their price increases.
- Some of the luxury goods such as diamonds can be considered as “Veblen Goods”.

## Special Drawing Rights (SDRs)

- It is an International reserve asset created by the IMF in order to supplement the forex reserves of the member countries.
- The SDR is based upon the basket of 5 currencies- Dollar, Euro, Pound, Yen and Yuan.
- It can be held and used by member countries, the IMF, and certain designated official entities called “prescribed holders”—but it cannot be held by private entities or individuals.
- Once allocated by the IMF, members can hold their SDRs as part of their international reserves or sell part or all of their SDR allocations. Members can exchange SDRs for freely usable currencies among themselves and with prescribed holders; such exchange can take place...
**Glossary**

**Election Manifesto** *(# Polity)*
- It refers to a statement issued by a political party fighting an election that informs people about the party's programmes and policies on a wide range of issues.
- The manifesto cannot contain anything that is repugnant to the ideals and principles enshrined in the Constitution and must be consistent with the letter and spirit of the Model Code of Conduct.
- Political parties can promise welfare schemes in their manifestos but they cannot make promises which are likely to vitiate the purity of the election process or exert undue influence on the voters in exercising their franchise.

**Party Symbol** *(# Polity)*
- Every political party in India has a symbol, which enables voters to easily identify the party on the ballot.
- A party can submit a symbol of its choice to the EC for consideration.
- If a party does not submits it, EC allots a symbol to the party.
- The Election Commission stipulates that no symbol should represent a religion or a caste.

**Electoral Roll** *(# Polity)*
- An electoral roll is a list of persons who are eligible to vote.
- Every Indian citizen who has attained the age of 18 years on the qualifying date unless otherwise disqualified, is eligible to be registered as a voter in the roll of the polling area of the constituency where she is ordinarily a resident.
- Qualifying date is the first day of January of the year of revision of the electoral roll.

**Tender Votes** *(# Polity)*
- It is a concept whereby if a voter realises that someone has already voted in her name, she can approach the presiding officer at the polling booth and flag the issue.
- Upon answering the presiding officer's questions about her identity satisfactorily, the voter will be allowed to cast a tender vote.
- Tendered Votes have been defined under Section 49P of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961.
- Tender votes are cast on ballot papers and sealed and locked away. These votes are useful when the margin between the winning candidate and the runner-up is slim.
- However, if the difference is large, tender votes are not counted.

**Bicameral Legislature** *(# Polity)*
- Bicameralism is the practice of having two Houses of Parliament.
- At the State level, the equivalent of the Lok Sabha is the Vidhan Sabha (Legislative Assembly), and that of the Rajya Sabha is the Vidhan Parishad (Legislative Council).
- Under Article 169, Parliament may by law create or abolish the second chamber in a State if the Legislative Assembly of that State passes a resolution to that effect by a special majority.
- At present, seven Indian States have bicameral legislatures.
PART TWO

CONTRIBUTORS

ZONE

articles .opinions .essays .notes
by rau’s professors & students
LEAD ARTICLES

JOURNEY OF CIVIL SERVICES IN INDIA [PART-2]

#POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

NAWEED AKHTAR
EDITORIAL TEAM & EDUCATOR DAILY NEWS SIMPLIFIED

“Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity. That future is not one of ease or resting but of incessant striving so that we may fulfill the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity.” – Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

INTRODUCTION

Indian Independence gave us the freedom to step out in the new from old shackles of ideas, understanding and imagination for a better society. The idea behind the words of first Indian Prime Minister to become an ideal nation free from poverty, ignorance, disease and inequality could not have been possible without the dedicated and honest efforts of our public servants over the period of years. This idea of relentless public service in the cause of national sovereignty and integrity has given the public service its present reputation. Still there is a long way ahead and much needs to be achieved as a society in order to become an ideal nation as imagined by Jawaharlal Nehru. Keeping these words of Jawaharlal Nehru in mind, in this article, let us explore how civil services in India for the betterment of humanity and society transformed itself with changing times.

In the previous article covered in FOCUS-March 2019, we learnt how civil services through different legislations and Committee's recommendations slowly became a part of Indian administration. The present article deals with the growth of civil services in India, post-Independence. These changes give us an idea as to how civil services adapted to the changing political, social and economic situation in India. Let us learn about the organisational structure of civil services in India along with different reforms undertaken in due course of time.

REFORMS IN CIVIL SERVICES

POST-INDEPENDENCE

CONSTITUTION OF INDIA – PART XIV

Government of India Act, 1935 Act provided for Services of the Crown in India in Part X. This part provided for Defence Services, Civil Services, Special provisions as to Judicial Officers and Public Service Commissions for the Federation and Province respectively. After independence, Constitution of India replaced Government of India Act, 1935 which provided for Services under the Union and States in Part XIV, into two chapters namely Services and Public Service Commission. Article 312 of the Indian Constitution empowered the Parliament to create the All India Services, whenever required in the national interest. The objective was
to preserve unity and integrity of the nation through unified structure and standards of administration.

Public Service Commission is required to be consulted on all matters relating to recruitment to civil services and posts. The functions of the Commission under Article 320 of the Constitution includes conduct examinations for appointment to the services of the Union; Direct recruitment by selection through interviews; Appointment of officers on promotion / deputation / absorption; framing and amendment of Recruitment Rules for various services and posts under the Government; Disciplinary cases relating to different Civil Services; Advising the Government on any matter referred to the Commission by the President of India. Thus, appointment and the removal of civil servants for the Union and the States were affirmed by the Constitution and it also gave them the constitutional security of tenure which also allowed them to function independently without any fear from the political class. The All India Services in India serves at central, state as well as at local levels.

GROWTH OF CIVIL SERVICES THROUGH REFORMS POST-INDEPENDENCE

India had much to achieve after independence and consolidation of its territory including different princely states was of prime concern. Apart from consolidation of territory other major issue to be addressed was with respect to re-locating people who had migrated to India from East and West Pakistan. Post-independence threw up greater challenges for the administrators of the country at national, region and local level. Thus, to cope up with these growing challenges and with an aim to improve the administrative mechanism in the country, different committees and commissions were constituted.

Now, let us go through the recommendations of important committees and understand how they impacted both bureaucracy and governance for the betterment of society at large.

REPORT ON REORGANIZATION OF THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT (N. GOPALASWAMI AYANGAR) 1949

Gopalaswami Ayyangar’s report on Reorganization of the Machinery of Government in 1949 aimed at streamline government services and maintain efficiency in the public sphere. The report led to the formation of the Defence Committee, the Economic Committee, the Parliamentary and Legal Affairs Committee, and the Ad Hoc Administrative Organization Committee by the Central government.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA- REPORT (PAUL H. APPLEBY) 1953

In his report, Paul Appleby highlighted the importance of decentralisation of functions of government. He also expressed his concerns on the rigidity of cadres in the public services and the immobility which resulted from modes of recruitment as it made an All India Service officer restrict only to one state unless he/she opted for central deputation. He also complained about the feudalistic hierarchy existing among the officers of government. Mr. Paul H. Appleby’s reports (1953 & 1956) on Indian Administration resulted in the setting up of an Organisation and Methods Division (O&M) in the Cabinet Secretariat and Indian Institute of Public Administration in 1954 with the aim of initiating and sustaining a concerted effort to improve administrative efficiency in all branches of administration. Indian Institute of Public Administration was created under the Societies Act of 1860.

Organisation and Methods or O&M study refers to continuous checking of office work at every stage and continuous research for the improvement and simplification of office methods. Thus, the idea was to continuously study improvement of governmental structures and administrative methods and manners. This culture would have provided continuous employment for the outside experts for the above mentioned purpose.

Thus, presently as per the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances Organisation and methods include Formulation and implementation of common office procedures, Publication and updating of the Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure (CSMOP) and implementation of its provisions, Aiding and advising the State Governments on O&M aspects, Quality Management in Government including laying down norms and standards for
processes, and implementation of the Plan Scheme of Modernization of Government offices.

**THE FIRST ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS COMMISSION**

The First Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) under the chairmanship of Shri Morarji Desai (later Shri K. Hanumanthaia) was set up as a Commission of Inquiry in January, 1966 to examine the public administration of the country and make recommendation for reform and reorganisation involving the following aspects: the machinery of the Government of India and its procedures or work; The machinery for planning at all levels; Centre- State relationships; Financial administration; Personnel administration; Economic administration; Administration at the State level; District administration; Agricultural administration and Problems of redress of citizens grievances.

The Commission submitted its reports in 20 parts containing 537 major recommendations. First ARC recommended to reduce political presence of Prime Minister in Planning Commission (PC) as Planning Commission with the help of Prime Minister had steadily entered into the area of the executive authority of the centre and the state governments. Consequently, PC was viewed by public as parallel cabinet or super cabinet thereby adding levels of decision making in the government. Further, it suggested to re-constitute National Development Council and Prime Minister to be the Chairman of the re-constituted Council, while the secretary of the Planning Commission should act as its secretary. With respect to centre-state relations, it suggested Inter-State Council under [Article 263](#) to discuss all issues of national importance in which the States are interested. It recommended Inter-state Council to replace the National Development Council, the Chief Minister’ Conference, the Finance Minister’ Conference, the Food Ministers’ Conference and the National Integration Council. It further elaborated Inter-state Council to have its own Secretariat. Based on First ARC recommendations, the Inter-State Council Secretariat was set up in 1991. The Secretariat is headed by a Secretary to the Government of India, assisted by two Advisers in the rank of Additional Secretary to the Government of India, two Directors and three officers each in the rank of Deputy Secretary and Under Secretary. Even the secretarial functions of the Zonal Councils (established under The States Reorganisation Act, 1956) have been transferred to the Inter-State Council Secretariat with effect from 1st April, 2011. It also recommended constituting Lokpal & Lokayukta to redress citizens grievances. The government of India has recently appointed former Supreme Court Judge Pinaki Chandra Ghosh as India’s first Lokpal.

**THE COMMITTEE ON PREVENTIONS ON CORRUPTIONS (K. SANTHANAM) 1964**

A Committee on Prevention of Corruption was appointed by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1960 under the chairmanship of K. Santhanam. The purpose of the Committee was to examine the organisation, set up, functions and responsibilities of the Vigilance Units in the Ministries and Departments of the Government of India, to examine the organisation, strength, procedures and methods of work of the Special Police Establishment and any difficulties, to consider and suggest steps to be taken to emphasize responsibilities of each Department and to check corruption suggest changes in law which would ensure speedy trial of cases of bribery, corruption and criminal misconduct, and make more effective rules and laws. It was on the basis of the recommendations of this Committee that the Central Vigilance Commission was set up in 1964 through an executive order for looking into the cases of corruption against the central government and other employees. Later, in 2003, CVC became a statutory body as Parliament passed Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003. Thus, Santhanam Committee played a key role in establishing an institutional regime of checking cases of corruption under Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 of officers of the government.

**KOTHARI COMMITTEE & SATISH CHANDRA COMMITTEE**

In 1976, Kothari Committee recommended three stages of examination for civil services appointments. The three stage process comprised an objective type preliminary examination comprising one optional and general studies, a main examination which was to comprise of nine written papers and finally a personality test of 250 marks. In 1989, Satish Chandra Committee suggested some minor changes to Kothari model. The committee recommended inclusion of an
THE NATIONAL POLICE COMMISSION 1977

Police forms an important aspect of civil services in India as maintains law and order and safety of citizens by preventing, detecting, and investigating criminal activities. Thus, police reforms become an integral part of overall civil services reforms. The Government of India (Janta Government) appointed the National Police Commission (NPC) in 1977 which was chaired by Mr. Dharam Vira in the backdrop of emergency period which saw misuse of police by political establishment. The Commission was asked to review Indian Police Act 1861, as well as Police Commission Report of 1902 and particularly such changes which had taken place since Independence at the national level. NPC also examined the role and performance of the police, both as a law enforcement agency and as an institution to protect the rights of the citizens enshrined in the Constitution. NPC produced eight reports between February 1979 and May 1981. The report said that police without a criminal justice system cannot function properly. It recommended that Law Commission may be enlarged to function as a Criminal Justice Commission on a statutory basis at centre and states. Such a commission will comprehensively monitor the performance of all agencies and apply corrective measures. The Report highlighted gross misuse of police has led to gross abuses, resulting in erosion of rule of law and loss of police credibility as a professional organisation.

It suggested reducing superintendence of state governments over police officials especially in matters of postings and transfers. It also recommended establishment of special Investigation Cell in the police department at State level to monitor the progress of investigation of cases under the Protection of Civil Rights Act or other atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Tribes. It suggested establishing Composite Cell at district level under the Sub-Divisional Officer to inquire into complaints emanating from scheduled Castes/Tribes, particularly those relating to lapses in administrative measures meant for their relief. The Commission rooted for a transparent mechanism of functioning of police except in four areas namely (i) operations, (ii) intelligence on the basis of which operations are planned and conducted (iii) privacy of the individual citizen and (iv) judicial requirements. It further recommended to replace the Police Act of 1861 should be replaced by a new Model Police Act, which not only changes the system of superintendence and control over the police but also enlarges the role of the police to make it function as an agency which promotes the rule of law in the country and renders impartial service to the community.

SARKARIA COMMISSION ON CENTER–STATE RELATIONS, 1983

Ministry of Home Affairs constituted a Commission under the Chairmanship of Justice R.S. Sarkaria to reviewing the working of the existing arrangements between the Union and the States in the changed socio-economic scenario. The Commission submitted its report in 1988 on different aspects of centre-state relations such as legislative administrative and financial relations among centre and states, role of governor, reservation of Bills by Governors for President’s consideration and Promulgation of Ordinances, Emergency Provisions, deployment of union armed forces in states for public order duties, All India Services, Inter-governmental councils, Economic and Social Planning, Industries, Minerals and Mines, Agriculture, Forests, Food and civil supplies, Interstate river water disputes, Trade, Commerce and Inter-course within territory of India. These recommendations on different issues highlighted the changing scenario in Indian polity and the need for a course correction on different aspect of governance specially on centre-state relationship. Officers All India Services and state civil services hold pivotal role in the governance and administration of India and it is through them most of the changes sought are implemented by the government. Let us go through the key recommendations of Sarkaria Commission.

Among its major recommendations, it recommended that a permanent Inter-State Council called the Inter-Governmental Council should be set up under Article 263 to improve mutual understanding and trust between the Chief Executives of the Union and State Governments. Such an atmosphere ensure spirit of co-operative federalism. Another key recommendation was about the constitutional office of Governor. The report stated that Governor should be detached figure and not too intimately connected with the local politics of the State, should be a person from outside the State and while selecting a governor, persons belonging
to the minority groups should be given a chance. The Governor after demitting his office, should not be eligible for any other appointment or office of profit under the Union or a State Government except for a second term as Governor or election as Vice-President or President of India. When the Legislative Assembly is in session, the question of majority should be tested on the floor of the House. In case of hung assembly in state elections, the Governor should select a Chief Minister from among the following parties or groups of parties by sounding them, in turn, in the order of preference as indicated (i) An alliance of parties that was formed prior to the Elections. (ii) The largest single party staking a claim to form the government with the support of others, including 'independents'. (iii) A post-electoral coalition of parties, with all the partners in the coalition joining government. (iv) A post-electoral alliance of parties, with some of the parties in the alliance forming a Government and the remaining parties, including 'independents', supporting the government from outside.

CONCLUSION
These were some of the important reforms proposed after independence not only in civil services but in overall governance and administration of the country. Some of these recommendations were even accepted by different governments at different time. Growth of civil services in India thus can be seen through recommendations of these different committees. Constitution of these different committees on various aspects of governance also reflects the dynamic nature of government’s ability to tackle challenges and also to adapt to changing environment. Economic policies pursued by Indian Government post liberalisation transformed Indian economy and this also saw various changes in the functioning of government as slowly we moved towards specialised governance through creation of autonomous tribunals. Further, changing environment including addition of technology in our lives also lead to certain changes in governance methods. In the next article, we will discuss reforms proposed in Indian administration and governance post liberalisation.

MATERNAL MORTALITY IN INDIA

#SOCIAL ISSUE

MEHAQ RAO
EDITORIAL TEAM & EDUCATOR DAILY NEWS SIMPLIFIED

In June 2018, Sample Registration System (SRS) bulletin reported that India has registered a significant decline in Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) recording a 22% reduction in such deaths since 2013. The MMR stood at 167 in 2011-2013 and has seen a drastic fall in just two years by now standing at 130 in 2014-2016 - a significant improvement on a parameter widely used by analysts and developmental economists to rate a country's progress

This is a huge feat for India as the country embarks on an effort to fulfil the goal set out in its National Health Policy, 2017. The National Health Policy has set an MMR target of 100 by 2020, which if achieved will bring in a safe steady to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of target 3.1 of reducing the MMR to 70 per 100,000 live birth by 2030.

Maternal Mortality ratio is defined as number of maternal deaths over 100,000 live births. Further maternal death as defined by WHO is the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management but not from accidental or incidental causes. Complications during pregnancy and childbirth are a leading cause of death and disability among women of reproductive age especially in developing countries. Hence, the maternal
mortality ratio represents the risk associated with each pregnancy.

The data released by the Sample registration system (SRS) reveals that India has gone beyond the Millennium development Goal target of reducing Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) to 39 by 2015. Further three states in India - Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have already met the SDG target for MMR of 70 per 1,00,000 and India's MMR is lower than the global average of 216 (2015 data).

STILL A LONG WAY TO GO

Despite all these facts and figures, India still has a long way to go. A maternal death is the outcome of a chain of events and disadvantages throughout a woman's life - poor nutrition during childhood, early marriages, lack of institutional healthcare during and post pregnancy are just few of the causes for maternal deaths.

The major reason for India's improvement is still the major reason why maternal deaths remain high in India - Institutional healthcare and deliveries or the lack of it.

Women die as a result of complications during and following pregnancy and childbirth. Most of these complications develop during pregnancy and most are preventable or treatable. But such complications go unaddressed because women don't have access to the required healthcare services - poverty, remoteness of healthcare centres, lack of quality health workers, lack of antenatal services, lack of awareness are some of the reasons for the same.

All these reasons translate into women not being able to have an institutional/hospital delivery. This means that lakhs of births are not assisted by a midwife, a doctor or a trained nurse and are conducted at home without any medical supervision.

Secondly, unsafe abortions are another leading cause of maternal deaths in India. Research by The Lancet, January 2018 shows that half the pregnancies in India are unintended and that a third result in abortion. Only 22% of abortions are done through public or private health facilities. Lack of access to safe abortion clinics, particularly public hospitals, and stigma and attitudes toward women, especially young, unmarried women seeking abortion, contribute to this. Doctors refuse to perform abortions on young women or demand that they get consent from their parents or spouses despite no such requirement by law. This forces many women to turn to clandestine and often unsafe abortions. Further, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 provides for termination only up to 20 weeks. If an unwanted pregnancy has proceeded beyond 20 weeks, women have to approach a medical board and courts to seek permission for termination, which is extremely difficult. The MTP Act is long overdue for a comprehensive reform.

In addition to this, various social factors contribute to maternal deaths. The prominent grey areas in our society are the age at marriage and child bearing, child spacing, family size and fertility patterns, literacy, socio-economic status and also not to forget the customs and beliefs. All this add to the problems of women especially the adolescent girls who are at a larger risk.

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The high number of maternal deaths in some areas of the world reflects inequities in access to health services, and highlights the gap between rich and poor. Almost all maternal deaths (99%) occur in developing countries. More than half of these deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa and almost one third occur in South Asia. More than half of maternal deaths occur in fragile and humanitarian settings.

The maternal mortality ratio in developing countries in 2015 is 239 per 100,000 live births versus 12 per 100,000 live births in developed countries. There are large disparities between countries, but also within countries, and between women with high and low income and those women living in rural versus urban areas. Women in developing countries have, on average, many more pregnancies than women in developed countries, and their lifetime risk of death due to pregnancy is higher. A woman's lifetime risk of maternal death - the probability that a 15 year old woman will eventually die from a maternal cause - is 1 in 4900 in developed countries, versus 1 in 180 in developing countries.

STEPS BY INDIAN GOVERNMENTS

India's success in reducing MMR has been attributed to the government's effort
• The Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) is a centrally sponsored Scheme which is being implemented with the objective of reducing maternal and infant mortality by promoting institutional delivery among pregnant women. Under the JSY, eligible pregnant women are entitled for cash assistance irrespective of the age of mother and number of children for giving birth in a government or accredited private health facility.

• Another major scheme is the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana. PMMVy is a Maternity Benefit Programme that is implemented in all the districts of the country in accordance with the provision of the National Food Security Act, 2013 and it aims to provide partial compensation for the wage loss in terms of cash incentive so that the woman can take adequate rest before and after delivery of the first living child. The cash incentive provided would lead to improved health seeking behaviour amongst the Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers.

• Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA) is a fixed day strategy, every month across the country during which a range of quality maternal health services are envisaged to be provided as part of Antenatal Care. Under the campaign, a minimum package of antenatal care services is to be provided to the beneficiaries on the 9th day of every month at the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Clinics to ensure that every pregnant woman receives at least one check-up in the 2nd/ 3rd trimester of pregnancy.

• Additionally under the Ayushman Bharat Abhiyaan, more than 1.5 lakh wellness centres have been planned to provide comprehensive health care (this includes non-communicable diseases, maternal and child health services, free essential drugs and diagnostic services).

• Other major initiatives under the umbrella of National Health Mission (NHM) like augmentation of infrastructure and human resource, capacity building have led to an improvement. Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram which provides for free transport, deliveries and care for pregnant women at public health institutions, and have also contributed to the success.

In addition to this, the facilities in public hospitals and health centres have also improved and government is providing free drugs and diagnostics among other incentives to pregnant women and that has led to increase in admissions for delivery over the years.

Apart from the increase in institutional deliveries, other factors include involving private doctors to provide free health check-ups to pregnant women at government hospitals, decline in child marriages, a reduction in teenage pregnancies by 50%, and more women being treated for anaemia.

WAY FORWARD

Sexual and reproductive rights in India must include a concern with maternal deaths, access to maternal care to safe abortions, access to contraceptives, adolescent sexuality, prohibition of forced medical procedures such as forced sterilisations and removal of stigma and discrimination against women, girls and LGBTI persons on the basis of their gender, sexuality and access to treatment.

Access to healthcare in terms of maternal health should be given to all women. This encompasses a broad spectrum of interventions ranging from educating and empowering women with regard to maternal health; family planning initiatives; addressing inequities in access to and quality of sexual, reproductive, and maternal healthcare; widening the parochial minded stigma against unmarried pregnant women; enhanced mobilisation of individual and communities; and increased government funding for improving infrastructure and training staff to tackle major causes of maternal deaths across all delivery points.

Each and every kind of barrier – be it social, economic or institutional- that limit access to quality maternal health services must be identified and addressed at all levels of the health system.
Economic development versus environmental sustainability has been at the centre of debate in the modern times. Some argue that for developing countries like India, economic development should be the priority. However, focusing only on development might lead to generation of negative externalities like pollution, deforestation and overexploitation of resources. Thus, the need of the hour is to ensure a rapid economic growth which takes into account the question of environmental sustainability also.

To make the development environmentally sustainable an important tool is to assess the environmental impact of any development projects. So, let us understand various aspects of Environmental impact assessment.

**WHAT IS ENVIRONMENT IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)?**

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a process of evaluating the likely environmental impacts of a proposed project or development, taking into account inter-related socio-economic, cultural and human-health impacts, both beneficial and adverse. Thus it also takes into account the Social, cultural and health related impacts besides the environmental costs.

UNEP defines Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as a tool used to identify the environmental, social and economic impacts of a project prior to decision-making.

It aims to predict environmental impacts at an early stage in project planning and design, find ways and means to reduce adverse impacts, shape projects to suit the local environment and present the predictions and options to decision-makers.

By using EIA both environmental and economic benefits can be achieved, such as reduced cost and time of project implementation and design, avoided treatment/clean-up costs and impacts of laws and regulations.

**EVOLUTION OF EIA**

- EIA as a mandatory regulatory procedure originated in the early 1970s, with the implementation of the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) 1969 in the US.
- A large part of the initial development took place in a few high-income countries, like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (1973-74).
- However, there were some developing countries as well, which introduced EIA relatively early - Columbia (1974), Philippines (1978).
- The EIA process really took off after the mid-1980s. In 1989, the World Bank adopted EIA for major development projects, in which a borrower country had to undertake an EIA under the Bank's supervision.

**EVOLUTION OF EIA IN INDIA**

- Started in 1976-77 when the Planning Commission asked the Department of Science and Technology to examine the river-valley projects from an environmental angle.
- This was subsequently extended to cover those projects, which required the approval of the Public Investment Board.
- Till 1994, environmental clearance from the Central Government was an administrative decision and lacked legislative support.
- Government of India, under the Environmental (Protection) Act 1986, promulgated an EIA notification making Environmental Clearance (EC) mandatory for
expansion or modernisation of any activity or for setting up new projects listed in Schedule 1 of the notification.

- The notification makes it mandatory for various project to get environmental clearance.
- However, unlike the EIA Notification of 1994, the new legislation has put the onus of clearing projects on the state government depending on the size/capacity of the project.

STAGES OF EIA

a) Screening to determine which projects or developments require a full or partial impact assessment study;

b) Scoping to identify which potential impacts are relevant to assess (based on legislative requirements, international conventions, expert knowledge and public involvement), to identify alternative solutions that avoid, mitigate or compensate adverse impacts on biodiversity (including the option of not proceeding with the development, finding alternative designs or sites which avoid the impacts, incorporating safeguards in the design of the project, or providing compensation for adverse impacts), and finally to derive terms of reference for the impact assessment;

c) Assessment and evaluation of impacts and development of alternatives, to predict and identify the likely environmental impacts of a proposed project or development, including the detailed elaboration of alternatives;

d) Reporting the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or EIA report, including an environmental management plan (EMP), and a non-technical summary for the general audience.

e) Review of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), based on the terms of reference (scoping) and public (including authority) participation.

f) Decision-making on whether to approve the project or not, and under what conditions; and

g) Monitoring, compliance, enforcement and environmental auditing. Monitor whether the predicted impacts and proposed mitigation measures occur as defined in the EMP. Verify the compliance of proponent with the EMP, to ensure that unpredicted impacts or failed mitigation measures are identified and addressed in a timely fashion.

LIMITATIONS OF EIA PROCESS IN INDIA

- Formal legislation has been provided for EIA, however it has put the onus of clearing projects on the state government.

- Limited involvement of public and government agencies in the initial phases. This often results in poor representation of the issues and impacts in the report, adversely affecting the quality of the report.

- Mainly environmental aspects considered and less attention is paid to social or health aspects.

- The consideration of alternatives is more or less absent, the government tries to provide clearance because of economic compulsions and lobbying.

- Earlier scoping was done by consultant or proponent with an inclination towards meeting pollution control
requirements, rather than addressing the full range of potential environmental impacts from a proposed development. However, the new notification has put the onus of scoping on the expert committee based on the information provided by the proponent. Consultation with public is optional and depends on the discretion of the expert committee.

- Most reports in English and not in the local language. In some case, executive summary is translated into local language.

- Lack of trained EIA professionals often leads to the preparation of inadequate and irrelevant EIA reports. The selection criterion for the organisation/professionals is fees/cost rather than the expertise of EIA team.

- EIA review is not upto the marks in India. The review agency called Impact Assessment Agency (IAA) lacks interdisciplinary capacity. No representation of NGO in IAA is provided, which is a violation of the EIA notification.

- The poor environmental performance can partially be attributed to a weak EIA process in India, which is diluted further by changes in policy and practices. The EIA is treated more as a means to get EC than as a tool to evaluate the actual impact of the project(s) on the environment and the community.

- The March 2017 report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) report on environmental clearance and post-clearance monitoring delays in carrying out EIA, Highlights no consideration of cumulative impact in the EIA, non-appointment of a national regulator to oversee the entire process as directed by the Supreme Court, granting clearance without checking for compliance, poor coordination among the ministry, state pollution control boards /Union territory pollution control committees and project proponents, lack of proper mechanism to ensure redressal of public concerns in the final EIA report/EC letter and implementation of commitments made by the proponent during public consultation in a time-bound manner.

**CONCLUSION**

In the latest Environmental Performance Index (EPI), India figured in the bottom five countries. It went from 141 in 2016 to 177 in 2018 out of 180 countries. Further Tamil Nadu witnessed protests against the pollution by Sterlite copper plant. All these instances highlight the lack of sensitivity of policy makers towards environmental issues and concerns of local communities which are directly affected by such projects. Any economic development which is not environmentally sustainable is a sure road to disaster.
‘I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress its women have achieved’ proclaimed Babasaheb Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution.

The 21st century has seen greater strides in achieving equality status in the work-sphere between the sexes. But with it have also increased the frequency of hassles which the modern Indian woman juggling work and home faces. It would be an understatement to say that the Indian working woman faces a multitude of problems in the social, economic, political, domestic, psychological sphere and that she is not facing a fair deal. This essay attempts to tackle this very important issue affecting nearly half of our 1.35 billion population. The Indian Constitution itself tried to set up an example, by including as a provision in the Directive Principles of State Policy, Article 51A (e), which exhorted society to renounce practices derogatory to the status of women.

Any analysis of the status of Indian working women has to first start by looking at the attitudes prevalent in one of our prime social institution, the Indian family.

Women are the prime creators and progenitors of the institution of the family, having bestowed by god the power to beget offspring. For this reason, the position of the mother figure in the Indian cultural sphere is a very strong one and obtains a lot of respect. Traditionally, women have been seen as the group responsible for taking care of the children while the men are delegated the task of ensuring the financial stability. So the dominant idea through the centuries seems to have been the women staying at home to take care of the child while the father ventures out to work.

While women are respected for sustaining the family and having ‘Shakti’ or mother power, they still seem to be submissive to their husband’s interests. The Indian working woman does not seem to be getting a fair deal in managing her relationships at home and her work commitments. Often, a woman’s wants are subjugated to the interests of her better half in a patriarchal society. But this situation gains even more significance in the modern age, when substantial women empowerment has resulted in both the man and woman in the family undertaking profitable employment. Even in such cases, the scenario still seems to be that a woman must bend herself and accompany her husband to a different place in case of a transfer of the place of occupation.

The burden of taking care of the household seems to have been entrusted solely to the women who are responsible for all the manual work from cooking to cleaning the home. It would not be an exaggeration to say that they are looked down upon by the male section of the population for failing to contribute economically to the family. Also, when the tide has shifted in recent times, with more and more women taking up gainful employment outside the confines of the home, they are again facing hurdles much to their distress. The menfolk are unwilling to contribute their part to finishing the household work and as a result women are entrusted with the double burden of doing household work and their official employment outside of home. The strong psychological bias of the Indian male mind, which considers work inside the household as unworthy and beneath his male ego is the reason for this prejudice. A fundamental shift in this attitude needs to occur if the Indian woman is to get an honourable treatment as the 21st century working woman.

India is undergoing a transition of sorts in the workplace atmosphere. From being a society in which economic work
outside the home was conducted solely by men, steady strides have been taken forward to bring evermore greater women participation in various occupations through the spread of literacy, educational opportunities and improved health indicators. Greater spread of education has brought with it increased awareness about the plight of Indian women.

Household work is officially not considered an ‘economic good’ and is therefore not included while calculating and estimating the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of goods and services produced in a country. This is an extreme injustice as it implies that the back-breaking work within a house often entails to somehow insignificant in the development of a country. It needs scarcely be reminded that it is only the nourishment and hard-work which a woman puts into bringing up her children and building her home, that go on to become future architects of the nation.

While women at workplaces outside the home are seen to be positively working towards increasing the economic output of a nation, women inside the home who perform a more important task of bringing up the future of the country and nurturing obedient and law-abiding citizens are put down as simply being ‘housewives’. And women who absorb themselves in the office are frowned upon for neglecting their family, children and home. It seems that women are caught between a rock and a hard place in India.

Whether it be the taking of ‘maternity leave’ to ensure the successful delivery of her child or taking off from work early to care for a sick child at home, these practices are despised as detrimental to the career progress and prospects of a woman in the male-dominated culture of the workplace. Certain studies have documented the fact that women are paid much lesser than an equally talented man for comparable work, despite the Equal Remuneration Act enacted by the Indian Government in 1976. This workplace inequality is narrowing but still persists.

A positive development occurred in this area recently with the tabling of a bill to quantify the contribution of a woman to household work in the Parliament. There are women who head Fortune 500 companies. There have been women head of corporations in India as well. The SBI (State Bank of India) chairperson Arundhati Bhattacharya, Biocon CEO Kiran-Mazumdar Shaw, PepsiCO ex-CEO Indra Nooyi are examples of successful Indian women. But the supposed ‘glass-ceiling’ exists in various ways and manifests itself in different forms to prevent women from rising up to the higher echelons of an organization. Owing to stereotypes, women are evaluated and doubted as to whether they would be suitable to occupy a powerful and decision-making position. This ends up as a vicious cycle and women do not rise above a particular level in an organization as her care-taking abilities so naturally suited to building a home are not seen as a proper fit in the corporate world. As women do not rise up to decision-making positions and are not hence given a say in appointments, the attitude persists for succeeding generations.

Psychological studies have documented that women bring in their own particular skill set and ability to the global business processes and they are an asset to increasing the resource allocation to the weaker sections, the women and children. They are also credible partners in trying to build a more equitable society which does not have the huge income inequality which exists presently. The 33% reservation for women in local government bodies such as panchayats and municipalities has been documented to have mobilized more benefits to women. Similar effect could be observed if the Women’s Reservation Bill is passed by the Parliament for providing reservation in the central and state legislatures.

India is benefited every year by the number of women who enter its administrative and police services and other allied government services. Their entry will pave the way for a government which identifies and takes care of inclusive development. But, the basic struggle of juggling their work at home and the office may still persist, if a shift in the societal behaviour does not occur. It is an ordeal for the working woman to obtain safe and unmolested conduct from the workplace to home. The public environment is so vitiated against single women caught alone without male support that female freedom is intensely circumscribed in India. The 2012 Delhi Rape case and the Mumbai Shakti Mills Compound Rape cases is a powerful reminder of this fact. It is difficult for a woman to venture out of her home alone.

Any discussion on the complications faced by the Indian working woman is incomplete without analysing the socio-political and socio-economic problems concerned with the employment of rural Indian women. The informal and unorganized sector accounts for most of the employment numbers in our country. Added to this is the increasing casualization of the workforce in the wake of the reforms of 1991 which ushered in Liberalization, Privatization and
Globalization. The number of workers employed on a contractual basis has now increased to 75% of the regular workforce. This means more job insecurity and a smaller social security net. Women in rural areas thus are affected much more by globalization since the informal sector is much larger in rural India than in urban India. For example, the influx of cheap agricultural products into the Indian market has affected Indian rural women landless labourers much more. This is because men can be much more mobile in their search for work and migrate to other areas in search of employment. But women are bound by societal constraints and family responsibilities, like taking care of children and old parents. Hence they would find it difficult to migrate.

The traditional village society may not intervene in what seems to be a husband wife issue unlike in urban areas where modernization and westernization have brought with it increasing assertiveness and confidence to stand up for one's rights in the part of the urban Indian woman. Thus, in this aspect the condition of the rural Indian woman seems to be much worse than the urban Indian woman in this case.

True emancipation would be reached when women are given complete freedom to unleash their creative energies. Micro-finance institutions that promote women entrepreneurship are a good start. The Self-Employed Women's Association is undertaking a stellar role in this field. Rural women should be empowered to be economically independent of their husbands. Until then, Indian rural and urban women would be facing a multitude of problems on the home and work front and would not be getting a fair deal.

The political sphere can also be considered to be a workplace of sorts and a public service office. If our country has such flourishing women political leaders it is equally possible to attain equality in all workplaces in the country. The Prevention of Sexual Harassment at the Workplace Act, 2013 is a good step in this direction. In accordance with our liberal democratic constitution, India has had female heads of State and women Chief Ministers. Thus in a sense, Eastern civilization can be conceived to be much more liberal in accepting women leaders in the political sphere. But in contradiction to this, the status of crime against women in the developed western world is much lesser than Indian conditions.

Indian culture provides glimpses of a time when women were liberated and there existed a much more egalitarian society than what is now. Examining the position in ancient India it is clear from the evidence in the Rig-Veda, the earliest literature of the Indo-Aryans, that women held an honourable place in early Indian society. There were a few Rig Vedic hymns composed by women. Women had access to the highest knowledge and could participate in all religious ceremonies. In domestic life too she was respected and there is no suggestion of seclusion of women and child marriage.

Buddhism also accorded to women a position approximating to equality. The highest spiritual states were within the reach of both men and women and the latter needed no masculine assistance or priestly intermediary to achieve them.

Increased women participation in the political sphere, paid maternity leave, day care centres for children, baby care centres or crèches at the workplace, increased gender sensitization are some of the steps can be taken to improve the status of women. Importantly, the next generation of children must be made sensitive to the hardships faced by their mothers at the home and workplace. This would improve the current bottom ranking of India in the Gender Inequality Index.

If some women in our country are blessed with such supportive partners, it is in the capacity of every person in this country to understand that working women are getting facing a fair share and to be concurrently supportive. The day is not long off when this shift will occur and change the status of Indian women for the better.

**Disclaimer:** The views and opinions expressed in this essay are those of the writer.
PART THREE

PRACTICE ZONE

mcqs . descriptive questions .
questions based on editorials
1. Which of the following is correctly associated with ‘Kessler Syndrome’?
   (a) Creation of space debris
   (b) Discovery of new exo-Planets
   (c) Linear growth in Greenhouse gases
   (d) Disappearance of Coral reefs

2. India is a signatory to which of the following UN treaties related to Outer Space?
   1. Outer Space treaty, 1967
   2. Moon Agreement, 1979
   Select the correct answer from the codes given below:
   (a) 1 only
   (b) 2 only
   (c) Both 1 and 2
   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

3. With reference to United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, consider the following statements:
   1. Only committee of UN dealing exclusively with international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.
   2. Sole Outer Space disarmament negotiating forum of the international community.
   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

4. ‘Irish Backstop’ agreement is in context of:
   (a) Rights of Island States in Paris Agreement
   (b) Expansion of NATO
   (c) Scottish referendum to leave UK
   (d) British withdrawal from European Union

5. Which of the following is/are correctly matched?

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<th>Awards</th>
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<td>1. Zayed Medal</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
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<td>2. Order of St. Andrew</td>
<td>Russia</td>
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</table>

Select the correct answer from the codes given below:
   (a) 1 only
   (b) 2 only
   (c) Both 1 and 2
   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

6. Which of the following are member(s) of the International Criminal Court?
   1. United States
   2. India
   3. Afghanistan

Select the correct answer from the codes given below:
   (a) 1 only
   (b) 1 and 2
   (c) 3 only
   (d) 2 and 3

7. Which of the following was/were Trade Facilitation Centre on the Line of Control (LoC)?
   1. Salamabad, Uri
   2. Chakan-da-Bagh, Poonch

Select the correct answer from the codes given below:
   (a) 1 only
   (b) 2 only
   (c) Both 1 and 2
   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Here are given 50 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) for self-practice. These questions have been framed from this issue itself. So, a reader is expected to attempt the questions, and also refer to the Answer Key given after the MCQs. These are helpful for General Studies- Paper I (Preliminary Examination).
8. Which of the following are tiers within the Indian Ballistic Missile Defence Programme?
1. Prithvi Air Defence
2. Advanced Air Defence
3. Anti-Satellite Missile Defence
Select the correct answer form the codes given below:
(a) 1 and 3
(b) 1 and 2
(c) 2 and 3
(d) 1, 2 and 3

9. ‘Kyaukphyu’ was in the news, in context of:
(a) North Korean Nuclear facility
(b) Chinese man-made island in South China Sea
(c) Kurili Island dispute between Russia & Japan
(d) China – Myanmar Economic Corridor

10. Which of the following countries are members of the Lima Group?
1. Argentina
2. Mexico
3. United States
Select the correct answer form the codes given below:
(a) 1 and 2
(b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3
(d) 1, 2 and 3

11. Which among the following parameters has been given the highest weightage for the tax devolution to the states by the 14th Finance Commission?
(a) Population (1971 Census)
(b) Area of the state
(c) Demographic Change (2011 Census)
(d) Income Distance

12. The FRBM review Committee has proposed setting up Fiscal Council in India. In which among the following ways would the setting up of Fiscal Council help India?
1. It would formulate General Budget and hence avoid the Political interference in the formulation of the Budget.
2. It would produce independent forecasts related to Tax Collection and expenditure of the Government so as to improve the formulation of the Budget.
3. It would monitor the Government’s fiscal performance including adherence to the fiscal rules.
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
(a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

13. With reference to Tariff rate Quota, consider the following statements:
1. It is a combination of Tariff and Non-Tariff barriers to International Trade.
2. The Tariff rate Quota goes against the principle of free and fair international trade and hence, it is completely prohibited by the World Trade Organisation (WTO).
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

14. Consider the following statements with respect to National Mining Policy, 2019:
1. It proposes to grant the status of industry to mining activity to boost financing of mining for private sector.
2. The Policy seeks to establish a unified authority in the form of an inter-ministerial body under the Ministry of Mines for sustainable mining in India.
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. Which among the following international organisations has come out with Base Erosion and
Profit Shifting (BEPS) Action plan to mitigate the risks arising from tax avoidance by the Multinational Enterprises (MNEs)?

(a) World Bank  
(b) International Monetary Fund  
(c) Organisation for Economic cooperation and Development (OECD)  
(d) World Economic Forum (WEF)

16. With respect to Output Gap, consider the following statements:
1. The output gap refers to the difference between the actual output of the economy and its maximum potential.
2. A positive output gap can generate inflationary pressures while a negative output gap reflects reduced demand.

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 Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR), consider the following statements:
1. The LCR is designed to ensure that banks hold sufficient reserves of high-quality liquid assets (HQLAs) to allow them to survive liquidity stress lasting 30 days.
2. It has been introduced as part of BASEL III by the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS).
3. The Banks are allowed to take into account a certain percentage of deposits under the mandatory SLR requirement for the calculation of LCR.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only  
(b) 2 and 3 only  
(c) 1 and 3 only  
(d) 1, 2 and 3

18. Which among the following international agencies publishes the “Migration and Development Brief” report?
(a) International Monetary Fund  
(b) World Bank  
(c) United Nations Development Programme  
(d) International Organisation for Migration

19. With respect to Ways and Means Advances (WMAs), consider the following statements:
1. The WMAs are the long term loans given by the RBI to the Central and State Government.
2. The Limits on the WMAs is decided solely by the RBI.
3. The Government need not pay any interest on the loans availed through WMAs.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?
(a) 1 only  
(b) 1 and 2 only  
(c) 2 and 3 only  
(d) 1, 2 and 3

20. With respect to RBI’s Banking Ombudsman Scheme, consider the following statements:
1. A Customer can directly approach the RBI’s Banking Ombudsman without the need for filing complaint with the Bank.
2. The Banking Ombudsman does not charge any fee for filing and resolving customers' complaints.

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. World’s longest salt cave has recently been found in which of the following countries?
(a) Israel  
(b) Syria  
(c) India  
(d) Kazakhstan

22. “State of Global Climate Report” is published by which of the following?
(a) UNEP  
(b) WMO
23. Hump backed musheer which is a fresh water fish found in cauvery river basin has been listed in IUCN Red List as?
(a) Vulnerable
(b) Endangered
(c) Critically Endangered
(d) Least Concerned

24. “State of Global Air Report” which has highlighted that air pollution has shortened the average lifespan of a South Asian child by two-and-a-half years is released by which of the following?
(a) UNDP
(b) UNEP
(c) UNCCC
(d) Health Effects Institute (HEI) from USA

25. Which of the statements are correct about Indian Vultures (Gyps Indicus)?
1. It has been listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List.
2. Its population has decreased because of Renal failure caused by Diclofenac poisoning.
Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

26. NeelaKurinji flower which blooms every 12 years is found in which of the following places?
(a) Anamalai hills
(b) Mahadeo hills
(c) Vindhyas
(d) Satpuras

27. Nandhaur wildlife sanctuary is located in which of the following states?
(a) Arunachal Pradesh

28. The face of disasters report 2019 is released by which of the following?
(a) UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)
(b) UNFCCC
(c) Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS)
(d) None of the above

29. Which of the following pollutants are covered in National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS)?
1. Benzene
2. Arsenic
3. Nickel
Select the correct answer using the codes given below:
(a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

30. Indian Bullfrog an invasive species is found in which of the following?
(a) Maharashtra
(b) Karnataka
(c) Andaman
(d) Western Ghats

31. Model Code of Conduct provides for guidance on which of the following?
1. Polling Day
2. Observers
3. Guidelines on Party Manifesto
4. Party in Power
Select the correct answer using the code given below:
(a) 1, 3 and 4 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 2, 3 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
32. Election Commission of India can ban a cinematograph or a documentary during an ongoing elections on which of the following grounds?

1. If it either diminish or advance the electoral prospects of a candidate or political party in the garb of creative freedom.
2. If it disturb level playing field during elections.
3. If it violates Model Code of Conduct.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
(a) 1 and 3 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 2 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

33. Which of the following can be said to be a public authority under Right to Information Act, 2005?

1. State Bank of India
2. Indian Oil Corporation
3. Election Commission of India
4. Board of Control for Cricket in India
5. Reserve Bank of India

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
(a) 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
(b) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
(c) 2, 3 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3 only

34. Consider the following statements:

1. The legislature of Delhi enjoys the same power as enjoyed by the Legislature of Puducherry.
2. The Administrator of Puducherry does not enjoy any discretionary power.

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

35. Consider the following statements about The Internet & Mobile Association of India (IAMAI):

1. It is not-for-profit industry body and aims to expand and enhance the online and mobile value added services sectors.
2. It has presented a “Voluntary Code of Ethics for the General Election 2019”
3. The ‘Code of Ethics’ has been developed to ensure free, fair & ethical usage of Social Media Platforms to maintain the integrity of the electoral process for the General Elections 2019.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

36. A person shall be disqualified for registration in an electoral roll because of which of the following reasons?

1. Is not a citizen of India
2. Unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent court
3. Medically unwell
4. Currently is an under-trial in an ongoing case

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 and 4 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 2, 3 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3 only

37. On the recommendations of which of the following committee, the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act has been partially removed from three of the nine districts of Arunachal Pradesh?

(a) Justice Radhakrishnan Committee
(b) Justice B.P. Jeevan Reddy Committee
(c) Justice D. Datta Committee
(d) Justice Mukherjee Committee

38. Which of the following statement about Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) is/are correct?

1. TKDL has translated ancient texts on Indian Systems of Medicines into five international languages.
2. TKDL aims to prevent misappropriation of country's traditional medicinal knowledge at International Patent Offices.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

39. Which among the following pollutants are covered under the National Clean Air Programme?
1. Carbon Monoxide
2. Sulphur Dioxide
3. Particulate Matter (PM)

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
(a) 2 only
(b) 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

40. Which of the statements about Dhimsa Dance is/are correct?
1. It is a popular form of folk dance in Gujarat.
2. It is mostly performed by women from Porja Caste.
3. Origin of Dhimsa dance can be traced to the Koraput Area which is home to Ghond Tribe.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
(a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

41. Which of the following temple is named after its sculptor?
(a) Brihadeshvara temple
(b) Ramappa temple
(c) Meenakshi temple
(d) Guruvayur temple

42. With respect to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, consider the following statements:
1. Minto was the viceroy of India during this event.
2. Rabindranath Tagore gave up his title of knighthood after the massacre.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 3
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

43. Consider the following artefacts:
1. Monalisa
2. Crown of thorns
3. Piece of true cross

Which of the above artefacts are placed in the Notre Dame cathedral, Paris?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 and 3
(c) 3 only
(d) 1 and 3

44. Select the Viceroy under whom the Strachey Famine Commission was appointed.
(a) Ripon
(b) Mayo
(c) Lytton
(d) Wellesley

45. Consider the following statements:
1. The National Monuments authority comes under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture.
2. Only the Archaeological Survey of India is allowed to carry out repairs in the 100 metre span or the prohibited area of a monument.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

46. Consider the following pairs:
1. Mahabishuva: West Bengal
2. Vishu: Assam
3. Jurshital: Bihar
Which of the above is/are correctly matched?
(a) 1 and 2
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 3
(d) 3 only

47. Consider the following statements:
1. IIT Bombay serves as the design coordination agency for the National Salt Satyagraha Memorial.
2. A unique feature of this memorial is the development of 20 solar panels.
Which of the above statements is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

48. Which of the following community is the Po:Rag festival related to?
(a) Karbis
(b) Mishing
(c) Khasi
(d) Bodo

49. Consider the following statements:
1. Vasanthotsavam festival is celebrated annually in Tirumala.
2. The processional deity of this festival is Lord Malayappa.
Which of the above statements is/are correct?
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

50. Select the place which is famous as the India's capital of black magic and witchcraft.
(a) Mayong
(b) Nagaon
(c) Tinsukhia
(d) Dibrugarh

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Q1. “Disaster management is all about pre disaster preparedness”. In the light of this statement, discuss the various aspects of disaster management focusing on lessons learnt from the handling of cyclone Fani in Odisha.

Cyclone Fani: Odisha lessons in Disaster Management  
*Times of India | Disaster Management*

With ‘extremely severe’ cyclone Fani making landfall in Odisha, life has been significantly disrupted in several areas of the state. While the full extent of the damage is yet to be ascertained, initial assessment suggests considerable structural damage to private and public properties. The roof of a building at AIIMS Bhubaneswar was ripped off but thankfully all patients, staff and students were reported safe. Winds measuring upto 200 km per hour uprooted trees and damaged power lines. Telecom networks have been disrupted in Puri and Bhubaneswar districts. At the time of going to press, six people were reported dead.

This has revived memories of the super cyclone that struck Odisha in 1999. Back then, the cyclone had killed around 10,000 people and inflicted massive material damage. However, much has changed in Odisha’s cyclone preparedness since. The state government and other agencies constructed many cyclone shelters and instituted a disaster risk reduction system that included preparedness activities by families, communities, government bodies and NGOs. These efforts drastically minimised the damage wrought by cyclone Phailin in 2013 – something that was even recognised by the UN.

Even this time more than a million people have been evacuated to shelters, probable flood inundation villages have been identified, rapid response teams have been formed, and aircraft and navy ships have been kept on standby to aid rescue efforts. Add to this accurate updates about the cyclone path by the India meteorological department. Natural disaster management today has certainly become more effective with the aid of technology. Still, there’s no room for complacency. With extreme weather phenomena increasing due to climate change, there’s a need to constantly expand disaster management capacities. In fact, disaster management should become a critical component of all development projects. That’s the only way we won’t be caught unawares.

**Key words**: 1. Extremely severe; 2. Disaster management; 3. Cyclone Phailin

Q2. Phasing out diesel vehicles is key step in handling pollution. Discuss the statement in the background of implementation of Bharat stage VI norms.

Downbeat diesel: on Maruti Suzuki phasing out diesel cars  
*The Hindu | Environment*

The decision taken by Maruti Suzuki, India’s largest passenger vehicle manufacturer, to eliminate diesel models from April 1, 2020, when the Bharat Stage VI emission standard is introduced, mirrors emerging global trends. Although diesel has powered India’s commercial transport segment for decades, its fortunes are declining for several reasons, beginning with the narrowing of the price differential with petrol. It has lost its shine in Europe, the world’s biggest market for diesel cars where sales of even well-known marques have fallen during 2018 by 20%. In a variety of mandated and suggestive ways, car-owners are being nudged towards petrol and alternative fuels. The diesel emissions data scandal involving carmaker Volkswagen dismayed many
consumers. Given the prevailing economics and diesel's reputation as a dirty fuel that adds to pollution from cars, buses and freight vehicles, auto companies see a weak business case to upgrade them. Maruti Suzuki's decision makes it clear that in spite of being a strong past performer, this fuel is riding into the sunset as far as the personal vehicle is concerned. This outcome should be welcomed for the positive impact it will have on air quality and public health.

Automotive emissions, especially in congested cities, have risen due to steady economic growth, proliferation of vehicles and more vehicle kilometres travelled. In Delhi, for instance, the effect of shifting the three-wheeler and bus fleet to Compressed Natural Gas during a four-year period from 1998 improved air quality, but the gains were quickly negated by a rise in overall vehicle numbers, especially those run on diesel, besides a rise in other sources of pollution. Marking the steady deterioration in air quality, one study found that people on the road in Delhi had 1.5 times greater exposure to the city's average ambient air pollution level. Diesel emissions pose hidden hazards, too. Besides the harmful fine and ultra-fine particulates that they contain, the vehicular exhaust adds to ground-level ozone formed from nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons combining in the presence of sunlight, seriously harming respiratory health. The national plan to shift to higher quality BS VI grade fuels may offer some mitigation of pollution, but that can only be a respite. Improving air quality in the cities requires a transformative planning approach guided by the singular objective of reducing the use of polluting vehicles. Such a policy would prioritise less-polluting and alternative fuels for vehicles, but more important, encourage walking, cycling and using public transport. This is the direction that many world cities are taking. Paris, Madrid and Athens have announced a prohibition on diesel vehicles by 2025, while London has made it more expensive for older vehicles to enter the city. India has to chart its own equitable and accessible green path.

**Key words:** 1. Bharat Stage VI; 2. CNG

Q3. With a below average monsoon forecast on the back of El Niño event, India is likely to face a heat wave again. Discuss the guidelines of NDMA in this regard.

**The heat is on: protection during summer**

A forecast of a below average monsoon in 2019, after last year's erratic rainfall that flooded Kerala and crippled agriculture in eastern and western States, is a cause for worry. If the assessment from one agency, Skymet, is any indication, there is a prospect of an El Niño, often associated with drought conditions, taking hold. This must, of course, be considered along with other factors that seem to weaken the El Niño link, such as a dipole weather phenomenon in the Indian Ocean. Should the monsoon, which normally sets in between June 1 and July 15 across the country, turn out to be deficient, it will add to the pressures on rural employment and the economy as a whole. Things may become clearer when the India Meteorological Department also issues its forecast, although error margins and the erratic nature of rainfall in different regions render the exercise fraught with uncertainty. Last year, for instance, the realisation of rainfall was 91% of the long-term average, while the prediction was for 97%. More immediately, India will go to the polls in the peak of summer after an intensive campaign. It is the responsibility of State administrations to prepare for the likelihood of a heat spike, particularly during April and May, to prevent loss of life and extreme distress to communities. Official agencies and NGOs should start adopting the drill on this, using the template drawn up by the National Disaster Management Authority.

The key elements of protection in a heat wave are avoiding exposure during the hottest part of the day around noon, especially in the case of senior citizens, staying adequately hydrated, wearing suitable clothing including headgear, and creating shade in public places. These messages and weather alerts can be disseminated through television, mobile phone messaging and social media platforms. Urban local bodies in particular have a responsibility to care for the large number of vulnerable city dwellers. Yet, few cities have drawn up proper heat action plans to respond to extreme weather or made them public. During the current year, there is apprehension that the focus of administrators will mainly be on the conduct of the elections, relegating the public health risk of heat waves to the backburner. With the availability of advance weather alerts, there is no reason why local bodies cannot institute remedial measures. Mitigating the effect of heat waves is vital to ensuring a high turnout in the elections by
making it safe for voters. India is looking at another uncertain monsoon, bringing into sharp relief the neglected potential of decentralised water-harvesting. It is more than a decade since the National Commission on Farmers suggested the wider adoption of both rainwater harvesting and aquifer recharge, in order to provide irrigation for small farmers. It is time to take measures that will help communities achieve resilience.

**Key words**: 1. National Disaster Management Authority; 2. El Nino; 3. Heat Wave; 4. Monsoon forecast

Q4. A Paradigm shift is needed in the Indian agriculture so as to double the farmers’ income by 2022. In this regard, Zero Budget Natural farming can enable the Government to achieve this objective. Discuss

**Opportunity waits for no one**

Zero budget natural farming’s (ZBNF) core principles include complete elimination of all chemical fertilisers and pesticides; rearing of only indigenous breeds of cows which are used as principle source of nutrients with one cow sufficing for 30 acres of farmland; botanical extracts prepared by using only locally available inputs and minimum tillage, which makes the soil soft and porous. All the four pillars and their related practices put together increases the humus content in the soil that fuels the vast number of organisms above and below the soil. This entire soil food web is what enhances agriculture productivity, biodiversity, carbon sequestration and water availability. This scientific understanding was rooted in Indian tradition.

There is an important process in which the “sugars” (produced by plants through photosynthesis) are actively fed to the soil microorganisms. Plants use around 30-40 per cent of the sugar produced by photosynthesis for its shoot development (development of new leaves, stems, branches, flowers, fruits etc). Another 30 per cent is used for the root system development (branching of roots, root elongation root hairs etc). The remaining 30-40 per cent of the sugar are released into the soil by the root system. This release of sugar and other substances into soil by roots is called root exudation. The substances exuded serve as food for the soil micro-organisms. The micro-organisms increase in number and associate with the roots and help in humus formation in the soil.

Practicing all the four wheels of ZBNF enhances this process efficiently. Keeping the ground covered with multi-layered crops for 365 days and increased porosity of soils and microbial action increases water use efficiency, water conservation, and increased absorption of water from atmosphere. Together, farm productivity increases, risks are diversified, costs reduced and food-nutrition-health security of the farmers and citizens is enhanced. Carbon sequestration comes as the huge positive externality.

However, practicing ZBNF is knowledge-intensive. While a week-long training camp, under Subhash Palekar’s guidance, exposes the farmers to ZBNF practices, they need hand holding before making a successful transition from chemical input based farming to ZBNF. The agro-extension network needs to be thoroughly revived and preferably run through self-help groups (SHGs), which constitute an enormous volume of social capital. SHGs could work with champion farmers who have successfully transitioned to ZBNF for demonstrating the technology to other farmers. Such a combination of champion farmers and SHGs can scale up ZBNF across India in the next 15 years.

Indian Agriculture would emerge as an example for the rest of the world, which is today desperately looking for ecologically supportive agriculture practices to try and pull back our planet from the edge of the cliff, where we find ourselves today.

ZBNF’s claims about carbon sequestration and enriching the organic carbon (OC) content of the soil have recently been certified by the CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, and the Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana. These institutions have pioneered the first green revolution in India and have the highest credibility in the agro-scientific circles. In their evaluation of the land quality in a 180 acre farm (Gurukul) in Kurukshetra district of Haryana they have certified that OC increased by 49 per cent from 0.61 per cent to 0.91 per cent in one year and was maintained at 0.75 per cent across all seasons. It was further found that while yields in ZBNF remained comparable to those achieved by farms using chemical inputs, the level of micronutrients like zinc, manganese, iron and copper also increased and potassium and phosphorus content in the soil were also higher. ZBNF
achieves this increase in micronutrient levels by promoting the symbiotic relationship between plants and soil, which generates the micro-organisms that work with newly-grown fungi to release the micro-nutrients locked up in the soil.

ZBNF's positive features have begun to attract international attention. The UNEP is now working closely with the movement and so is the FAO, which organised a special session on agro ecology in one of its recent conferences. The International Council for Research in Agroforestry has also taken it on board. The UK government has reportedly shown interest in the process. France, as we know, has already passed the law to make its agriculture completely free of chemicals in the coming years.

This unique and proven solution for comprehensively addressing India’s serious twin problems of accelerating environmental degradation and persistent farmer distress is now within our grasp. It is up to us to harness this indigenously developed technology and scale it across the country. Waiting for a certification from some ‘respected foreign institutions’, which often happens as a result of our inherent diffidence, may see India missing the bus once again. We cannot afford that.

**Key words:** 1. Zero Budget Natural farming; 2. Four pillars of ZBNF; 3. Carbon Sequestration

**Q5:** The Government’s proposal for introducing the Direct Benefits Transfer (DBT) for the fertilisers is a well-intentioned move. However, its implementation would face multiple challenges. Comment
tend to be put to other uses. Thus, the new system for fertiliser DBT would need to aim specifically at promoting efficient, balanced and need-based use of plant nutrients keeping in view the interests of all categories of farmers, whether landowners, tenants or share-croppers. Otherwise, the very purpose of DBT would be defeated.

**Key words:** 1. DBT for Fertilisers; 2. PM-KISAN Scheme

**Q6. The Ujjwal discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY) has failed to address the problems afflicting the Power distribution companies in India. Analyse**

**Reforms Short-circuited**

The financial condition of power distribution companies has only worsened after the launch of the Ujjwal Discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY). Their dues to power generators, at over Rs 41,000 crore, have been rising after the launch of UDAY in 2015. The **aims of UDAY** — reduction in aggregate technical and commercial losses, reduction of the gap between costs and revenue and tariff revisions — have not been met. A complex tangle of factors is responsible for the power sector being persistently in the red.

A key factor is the problem of unaccounted power. The fact that all connections are not metered (and this is true even of urban pockets) means that discom estimates of consumption cannot be taken at face value. Electricity regulators have not been proactive enough in ensuring that ‘interface metering’, which would provide an account of offtake from a baseload station is complete and its record reliable. It is inexplicable that such meters are manual rather than digitised, allowing discoms to claim, often to their convenience, that their readings are prone to error. This lack of basic transparency allows for power theft, which is often attributed to farm consumption. Hence, ‘commercial losses’ are a bigger issue than ‘technical’ losses. While providing free power to agriculture is unadvisable for its ecological impact, the discoms too need to keep their side of the bargain — which is to serve rural areas with reliable supply of power, so that the people are willing to pay for it. The existing trust deficit has held up efforts to provide metered power, check theft and charge consumers appropriately. The onus, therefore, lies on the discoms to first improve the quality of power — for livelihood and economic functions — and the upkeep of infrastructure, before charging users more.

While the discoms have mismanaged supplies, they too have been overwhelmed by ecosystem changes. One of these is the falling cost of renewables. This has created a two-fold complication. Large consumers have moved to open access or captive generation, jeopardizing the age-old **cross-subsidy model of the discoms**. Meanwhile, the discoms have locked themselves into costly long-term power purchase pacts with legacy generators. A way out of this is to ensure that large consumers get into long-term open access contracts. This will enable discoms to plan their power purchases more accurately. They should stick to short-term contracts. With the falling cost of renewables, discoms need to enhance their share. As for the cost of securing the grid from fluctuations that arise out of renewables generation, a CEA study estimates that this is not such a significant issue.

It is remarkable that electricity has reached all of India, thanks to a sustained 20-year effort. It needs to be clean, affordable and reliable for it to lift the economic and general well-being of 1.3 billion people. Schemes like UDAY need a periodic reality check.

**Key words**: 1. Aims of UDAY Scheme; 2. Cross Subsidy Model of DISCOMs

**Q7: The design of the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles Phase II (FAME 2.0) is tailor made to suit India’s interests and hence it would give fillip to the electric mobility in India. Comment.**

**A Shot in the arm for Electric Mobility**

The recently announced **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles Phase II (FAME 2.0)**, a three-year Rs. 10,000 crore initiative by the Centre, is a laudable effort by the Department of Heavy Industries.
How is FAME 2.0 policy tailor-made for our needs? India can ill-afford the same level of generous subsidies per vehicle that higher income countries offer for EVs. But, how could one expect better outcomes with lower subsidies?

The key is in recognizing that replacing a fossil-fuel vehicle that is driven a lot will reduce both petroleum and pollution more relative to a vehicle that is driven less.

From this perspective, whereas the priority clearly ought to be public buses and even taxicabs rather than pure private-use cars, policies the world over continue to focus simply on subsidizing vehicle purchase.

**Right model**

That FAME 2.0 marks a departure from this costly approach, with buses accounting for the lion’s share of 35 per cent (Rs. 3545 crore) of the total outlay while that for cars is about 6 per cent, the bulk of which is for vehicles holding commercial licence plates. Having said that, it makes sense also to prioritise two-wheelers over four-wheelers; in India, the former outnumbers the latter by six to seven times.

Prioritizing the two-wheeler segment over cars is justified both on equity and efficiency grounds. One could make similar arguments for putting three-wheelers (auto-rickshaws) ahead of cars. Again FAME 2.0 ticks the right boxes for allocation for two-wheelers and three-wheelers accounts for 20 per cent and 25 per cent of the budget, respectively. Therefore, the first salient aspect of FAME 2.0 is that it rightly puts electric mobility ahead of electric vehicles.

A second salient aspect is that subsidies for buses will be delivered per kilometre of actual bus operation. FAME 2.0 is perhaps the first EV policy the world over to deliver buses on such a basis, referred to as OPEX subsidies. Such subsidies can ensure self-selection of high mileage vehicles for EV adoption. This is akin to production of tax credits for wind and solar facilities which have led to greater generation per unit subsidy relative to investment subsidies and fixed price feed-in tariffs.

A central focus on buses (followed by two and three-wheelers) and OPEX subsidies are two stand-out features of FAME 2.0, and these are aspects that the rest of the world could learn from India. However, much works remains ahead in ensuring that this smartly designed policy is indeed successful in putting India on the path to a more sustainable transportation future.

For one, we need to ensure that there emerges a thriving, competitive domestic EV manufacturing sector that is able to deliver high-quality, low cost vehicles on a large scale. While evidence from FAME 1.0 is not encouraging there are some clear lessons. This includes a need for standardization of bus specification along with aggregation of demand from across the entire nation in order to achieve scale economies; procuring these buses through large centralized auctions akin to how solar and wind electricity is procured by the Solar Energy Corporation of India and how Energy Efficiency Services Limited drove down the price of LED light bulbs today.

Second, even while subsidies for buses are to be delivered on an OPEX basis, the total subsidy per bus is capped at Rs. 50 lakh, which is both sizeable and generous. As deserving as cash-strapped public bus agencies are of these subsidies, there is a need for devising innovative mechanisms that would lead to healthy competition among public bus agencies for subsidies that results in less subsidy demanded both per kilometre and in aggregate per vehicle adopted.

Third, there needs to be policy coordination across the different central ministries, and also with state and city governments who actually will be utilizing the buses.

There is a need for coordination between the Ministry of Power, the Ministry of Road Transport and the Ministry of Renewable Energy for direct access to low-cost solar and wind generation.

**Key words:** 1. FAME 2.0; 2. Solar Energy Corporation of India
Q8. India needs to draw lessons from the growth of the IT sector so as to ensure comparable success in the Manufacturing sector. Elucidate

**Replicating IT success in manufacturing**

One of the widely-held myths about the extraordinary growth achieved by the information technology sector in India has been that this was possible as the sector remained below the radar the government and, therefore, left alone. The truth, however, is the exact opposite.

Information technology (IT) succeeded because the government, at the outset, did the necessary things, needed for success. Drawing lessons from this experience is essential when trying for comparable success in manufacturing.

**What did the government do right then?**

The government spent public money in creating high-speed internet connectivity of global standards with the US for the IT software parks. This was done years ahead of telecom modernization in India. Creating islands of high-speed connectivity for a nascent industry independent of the telecom system was a bold move.

This enabled seamless integration of the Indian IT industry into the US market. For the IT value chain, Indian firms could as well have been located in the US.

The government then brought trade in services into the regulatory framework of imports and exports. It allowed the IT industry to import duty-free both hardware and software and also gave it all the incentives that were being provided to exporters of goods.

This enabled the nascent IT industry to get integrated in the dynamic US market without any disadvantage, especially in terms of hardware and software costs.

In addition, the IT industry was able to function under the *Shops and Establishment Act*. It was, therefore, not subject to the over 40 laws relating to labour and the onerous regulatory burden these impose.

Further, the IT sector had the benefit of low-cost high-value human capital created by the investments made a generation earlier in higher scientific and technical education. Without all these, the IT success story would not have occurred.

The key lesson is that the state can take steps to nurture competitive advantage. The false ideological divide of 'state' verses the 'market' and growing faith in the latter has been coming in the way of India replicating this for manufacturing.

China created world class infrastructure, including housing for workers, in its Special Zones along the coast. It supported them in getting foreign and domestic investment in manufacturing. Within a few years, China started becoming the factory of the world. It is now becoming an economic superpower.

**Feeble effort**

In India, development of industrial areas has been the responsibility of the States. Given the political need to spread scarce resources equitably across regions, the creation and maintenance of globally competitive infrastructure for manufacturing remains a challenge. The Central government did recognise this problem. But its efforts to address it have been feeble and constrained by an excessive faith in the potential of private investment.

First, the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) were conceived and promoted from the year 2000. These had a zero import duty regime along with no taxes on profits. While the government provided a favourable regulatory regime, it assumed that the private sector would develop these zones successfully. But other than the IT SEZs, few manufacturing ones with scale took off.
The private sector succeeded in the IT sector as the land and investment needed were modest. But the Indian private sector just did not have the scale to create globally competitive physical and social infrastructure, including workers’ housing, for manufacturing to be competitive.

If the Centre in partnership with the States had taken the lead in assembling land and investing adequately and had got the private sector to come in on where it could, the outcome could have been quite different.

In 2005 came the ambitious Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor. Here again, the initial decision was to get the private sector to invest and develop industrial areas along the Delhi-Mumbai Dedicated High Speed Freight Corridor. It then took some years to find out that private investment on the scale needed would not be forthcoming and to accept the need for Central government financing for the trunk infrastructure.

Even in the most advanced project under the Corridor, it would still be a while before the first industrial unit would get going. In addition, Kolkata-Amritsar and Bengaluru-Chennai Industrial Corridors were also announced. More recently, the idea of developing large economic zones with world-class infrastructure around sea ports was mooted by the former Vice-Chairman of the NITI Aayog.

Still in the works

A successful IT park equivalent for manufacturing, where the physical and social infrastructure are comparable to the best in the world and one that helps connect to the global markets seamlessly, is still by and large work-in-progress.

Workers’ housing, the key to productivity, is yet to become an integral part of industrial area development, whereas software SEZs have housing and workplaces within walking distance. In addition, such an industrial area needs to be large enough to have the critical mass for generating positive externalities and the increasing returns to scale that follow. This has been the key to China’s success, where such economies of scale have resulted in unbeatable prices for a wide range of manufactured products.

India needs to build new and large world-class manufacturing areas speedily, especially in the industrial corridors and along the ports. These are critical for the competitiveness needed for being part of global manufacturing supply chain. India can and must find the resources for this. The economic returns and job creation from such investment will be tremendous.

Key words: 1. SEZs; 2. Shops and Establishment Act; 3. Initiatives of the Government to nurture IT Sector

Q9. Outer space might become an active military theatre and therefore requires India to be pragmatic in shaping new rules for regulation of outer space. Comment.

Rethinking India’s space policy

India needs to come to terms with a number of factors that are transforming the political and economic nature of outer space. Four issues demand India’s attention. And all of them call for a reorientation of India’s national strategy towards outer space.

First is the unfolding drift towards the weaponisation of outer space. Over the last two decades, India has joined other powers in developing space assets for passive military uses of outer space — such as surveillance, targeting and military communication. It now needs to prepare for an outer space that might become an active military theatre. In intercepting and destroying a satellite in orbit, India has signalled its determination to deter threats to its growing number of space assets. But Delhi has a long way to go before it can claim effective deterrence against such attacks. For the great powers are investing heavily in developing a wide range of capabilities to conduct space warfare. These include systems that are far more sophisticated than the one India tested.

In February of this year, the Trump administration announced its decision to set up a space force — the sixth arm of the military after army, navy, marine corps, coast guard and the air force. Meanwhile, China and Russia are said to be well on their way to deploying space weapons. To effectively secure its interests in outer space, India will need a comprehensive military space policy and the necessary investments to realise its goals.
Second, the challenge of the rapid expansion of commercial space and the growing role of the private sector. India’s national space programme has been quite successful in mobilising an advanced technology for development. The Indian Space Research Organisation has also been conscious of the need to draw industry, both public and private sector, to participate in the space endeavour over the decades. While its capabilities for the construction, launch and delivery of satellite services are impressive, India must now wrestle with the exponential growth of the space market. Today’s global space business is estimated to be $350 billion and according to some estimates it could nearly triple in the next two decades. Delhi must promote a massive expansion of the private sector’s role in space to ensure that India gets a reasonable slice of the growing global space business. In the early decades of space technology development, private sector companies worked for and with the government programmes. Today in the US and more broadly the West, the private sector is taking the lead. Third, as space becomes the site for expansive commercial enterprise, national space agencies are under pressure to redefine their role. Until recently, the national agencies were the researchers, investors, developers and champions of the space programme at the political level.

This all-encompassing role of the national agencies was necessary when space technology was in its infancy. It was a precondition for countries like India that embarked on the space journey with limited resources and capabilities. As the knowledge and capabilities begin to spread and the number of actors in the space domain grows rapidly, the national space agencies must necessarily redefine their role. While NASA has gone through multiple reinventions, the structure remains essentially unaltered in India. Instead of trying to do everything, the national agencies could focus on a few critical objectives — to promote a dynamic national ecosystem for space research and development both within and outside the government, lay out a long-term vision for space policy, identify priorities, anticipate potential challenges, and become the face of the space programme at home and abroad.

Fourth, the need to promote effective domestic and international regulatory frameworks for the development of space programmes. After the ASAT test, many in India pointed to the importance of Delhi having the capabilities to shape the security order in outer space. They recall that India’s inability to conduct an atomic weapon test before the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty was finalised in 1968 had severely undermined India’s position in the global nuclear order.

In the near term, though, it is even more urgent to develop commercial space laws at home that attract investment, clarify property rights, limit liability for space operators and set standards for space products and operations. Externally, India must prepare for the inevitable evolution of the global space regime centred around the 1967 Outer Space Treaty that insisted on peaceful uses of outer space, barred the national appropriation of celestial bodies, and declared outer space to be “common province of mankind”. As technological innovation, commercial competition and geopolitical rivalry put great strain on the old order in space, Delhi will need all the strategic pragmatism, legal acumen and diplomatic skill in shaping new rules for the regulation of outer space. Above all it needs collaboration with allies and partners in outer space.

**Keywords**: 1. Outer Space treaty, 1967; 2. ASAT test; 3. ISRO; 4. US Space Force

**Q10.** The consultation process on Afghanistan has moved forward on a trilateral format led by US, Russia and China, in absence of India. Critically analyse the geo-political developments in Afghanistan visa-via India.

**Afghan peace: US, Russia and China**

A measure of political consensus on Afghanistan unveiled after the trilateral consultations in Moscow at the end of April between the US, China and Russia offer some hope for the construction of a sustainable framework for peace in a nation that has seen nothing but war over the last four decades. But sceptics might say that the great power talk on Afghanistan is indeed interesting but would keep their fingers crossed on their ability to cooperate on the ground. In a joint statement issued after the consultations America, Russia and China outlined agreement on a set of broad parameters for promoting peace in Afghanistan.
is built around four axes–withdraw foreign forces, prevent Afghanistan from becoming a haven for terrorism, end the current violence and launch an intra-Afghan dialogue that will define a new political arrangement in Kabul. These elements had already been identified in the US peace initiative led by Special Envoy to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad over the last few months. That Russia and China might be prepared to support the US peace initiative is quite welcome. After the international solidarity in the wake of the al Qaeda bombing of New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, slowly dissipated over the last two decades. Renewed great power cooperation might open the door for some concerted political action in the UN Security Council on Afghanistan.

Before the trilateral talks in Moscow, Khalilzad won similar endorsement from the European allies to the framework he has sought to develop in the engagement with the Taliban. The Moscow declaration hopes to build regional consensus around this framework. As part of building wider consensus, Khalilzad is traveling to a number of regional capitals, including Islamabad and Delhi. From the Indian perspective at least three issues are of concern in the joint approach that the three powers have identified. First is the question of ceasefire. In any conflict, ceasefire is the critical element that provides the conditions for the pursuit of a peaceful negotiations. Until now the Taliban has been reluctant to accept a ceasefire, let alone end its attack on innocent civilians in Afghanistan. The trilateral statement certainly recognizes ‘the Afghan people's strong desire for a comprehensive ceasefire’. "As a first step", the three powers "call on all parties to agree on immediate and concrete steps to reduce violence." The reference to ‘all parties’ is one of those escape clauses that hides the seeming reluctance to confront principal culprit in the production of Afghan violence and terror–the Taliban. In urging ‘immediate and concrete steps to reduce violence’, one worries that the great powers might be willing to let the Taliban and its patrons slice and dice the question of a ceasefire. The imprecision and indirection might not be too damaging if Russia and China can impress upon the Taliban that its refusal to end violence will have consequences.

That brings us to the second issue–the question of Taliban's sanctuaries in Pakistan. The joint statement avoids the issue completely. While Washington has often called on Pakistan to end its support to cross border destabilisation of Afghanistan, Moscow and Beijing have been hesitant to press Pakistan on the question of terror sanctuaries. Without a real effort by the major powers to dissuade Pakistan from supporting the Taliban, the prospects for Afghan peace will be limited. A third issue of concern that Delhi has often articulated is the danger of delegitimising the Kabul government in a desperate effort to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table. In keeping Kabul out of his recent engagement with the Taliban, Khalilzad might already have done some damage. To be sure, the US continues to insist on a role for Kabul in the ‘intra-Afghan dialogue’ that will include all sections of the Afghan society, including the government and the Taliban. The Taliban, on its part, has refused to engage the Kabul government in any form. In the Moscow statement, Russia and China have joined America in urging the Taliban “to participate in peace talks with a broad, representative Afghan delegation that includes the government as soon as possible.” Delhi, however, would want to know how the three powers would follow through on this demands, especially if the Taliban refuses to oblige. While India's concerns are real, the great power agreement on Afghanistan is something that Delhi would want to politically embrace and work with.

**Keywords:** 1. Moscow Declaration; 2. Intra-Afghan Dialogue; 3. Taliban

**Q11. Assess India's engagement with the Middle East. How has it evolved in the recent past?**

**Embracing the Islamic world**

India has shed its traditional defensiveness towards the region. The Middle East, in turn, has responded with great enthusiasm to India's new pragmatism. That brings us to a paradox. The significant expansion of India's engagement with the Muslim neighbourhood comes at a time when religious nationalism has sharpened domestic political divisions. While the ruling party has
been accused of fomenting Hindu majoritarianism, some of the more important diplomatic successes of the Modi government have been with Muslim countries. Within the Subcontinent, Afghanistan and Bangladesh see India as a valuable partner and their engagement with India has gained a strong foundation. Both Kabul and Dhaka have better relations with Delhi than with Islamabad. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation invited India's Minister for External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj to address a meeting of its foreign ministers in the face of Pakistan's strong objections.

India's relations with Sunni Arab states like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have never been better than today. At the same time, the last four years have seen progress in implementing strategic projects like the Chabahar port in Shia Iran. Modi has also brought out India's longstanding partnership with Israel from behind the veil. There have been few objections from the Arab or Muslim world. There is no doubt that most countries love to demonstrate solidarity with other states and peoples on the basis of shared political values, common religious faith or ethnic kinship. Yet, this empathy is more often than not discarded when a government has to choose between national interest and external solidarity. In the Middle East, the fear of Iran's expansionism and potential hegemony has driven Saudi Arabia and the UAE into political collaboration with the Jewish state of Israel. Much in the manner that communist ideology was not strong enough to bind Soviet Union and China in the 1960s and 1970s, religion has never been a sticky enough glue for Muslim majority nations. While the proposition that national interest trumps all else appears self-evident, it was not easy for Independent India to operate on that premise. The partition of the Subcontinent and Pakistan's claim to speak in the name of Islam and its relentless efforts to mobilise the Islamic world in its favour on disputes with India complicated Indian diplomacy. It has been a rather long learning curve for Delhi to separate presumed transcendental religious solidarity and the logic of national self-interest in engaging the Middle East.

Complicating the Pakistan factor outside has been Delhi's concern about the reaction of its large Muslim population at home on foreign policy issues, especially those relating to the Middle East. The idea that India's relationship with Israel or the United States matters more to the Indian Muslims than securing their rights as citizens has always been a political myth of Lutyens' Delhi. In the end, what matters in foreign policy is not the colour of national ideology or the flag of its faith. Internal coherence and the capacity for practical give and take are the factors that count. Diversity, along multiple axes, has been India's greatest structural vulnerability. Anything that deepens those faultlines will inevitably undermine, over the longer term, Delhi's ability to effectively engage the world.

**Keywords**: 1. OIC; 2. Saudi Arabia & UAE; 3. Iran; 4. Israel; 5. Pakistan Factor

**Q12. What are the growing concerns for India from the continuous out-reach of Belt & Road Initiative of China?**

**A silk road for the heavens**

As the second iteration of China's Belt and Road Forum convenes this week in Beijing, India has a strange karma to cope with. Profound concerns about the impact of the Belt and Road Initiative on India's territorial sovereignty and the geopolitics of its immediate neighbourhood compel India to resist its apparent charms. Delhi, which stayed away from the launch of the Forum in 2017 despite considerable pressure from Beijing, has announced that it will sit out again. Yet, even as it shuns the BRI, India has no choice but to emulate China on connectivity of all kinds. Although India has adopted the mantra of connectivity more than a decade ago, China's BRI has pressed Delhi to get its act together on regional connectivity. The scale of the challenge has also encouraged India to shed its traditional "lone-ranger" mentality and consider working with others, especially Japan, Australia and the United States, in promoting regional connectivity in the Indo-Pacific.

Meanwhile, India is coming to terms with the fact that the BRI is more than two-dimensional. Under the BRI, the "belt" was about overland connectivity and the "road" (in a peculiar twist) referred to the maritime corridors spreading out from China's eastern seaboard. The additional and inter-related dimensions of BRI are about connectivity in outer space and the digital domain. Unlike...
the land and sea corridors, for India, it is not just a question of supporting or rejecting the space and digital silk roads. Delhi finds itself already tied into these initiatives, one way or another. India's deep dependence on Chinese telecom giants is now a reality. So is the growing reliance of India's neighbours — including Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka — on China's space services. The challenge for Delhi is to expand shall we say, India's "strategic autonomy" in a market that Beijing is poised to dominate.

At the heart of China's space silk road is the BeiDou satellite navigation system. Over the weekend, China launched a satellite for the BeiDou system that is expected to rival the American Global Positioning System (GPS), the Russian GLONASS and the European Galileo. BeiDou will consist of a number of satellites in the geostationary and intermediate earth orbits. The third generation BeiDou system will be operational by next year and is expected to provide better accuracy than the current Western and Russian systems. Although the first BeiDou system goes back to 2000, it is now being presented as an important component of the Belt and Road Initiative that was launched in 2013. Some analysts have called BeiDou the digital glue that holds the BRI together. By connecting industries and infrastructure projects along the BRI, China's satellite navigation and communication system hopes to dominate the new digital infrastructure in the BRI space. At the end of 2018, China launched the first of its planned constellation 320 satellites in the low-earth orbit. By the end of this year, a network of nine satellites is expected to demonstrate the possibilities for space based internet services. The entire fleet of 320 satellites under the Hongyan project is expected to be operational by 2025. The Hongyan mega-constellation is designed to facilitate two-way communications at all times across all terrain, providing a wide range of civilian services such as ground data collection and exchange, ship identification and tracking, mobile broadcasting and navigation signal enhancement.

China has also launched a Big Earth Data initiative that will develop the generation of massive remote-sensing data and commercial products based on it for use across the entire spectrum of sustainable development — from agriculture to disaster management. China is not only into providing space-based services, but is also in the business of exporting satellites to a large number of countries, seeding space-related infrastructure and training space personnel. While China presents these dramatic advances as part of its effort to promote space and digital connectivity through international cooperation, there is no mistaking its geopolitical implications — especially in expanding Beijing's global surveillance and intelligence capabilities, upgrading the PLA's military effectiveness, and a big say in shaping the digital infrastructure of developing nations.

India's space programme too has grown by focusing on modernising national telecommunication, application of remote sensing data for national development and more recently on developing assets for national security. India has a satellite navigation system of its own, the GAGAN. India's remote sensing capability too is impressive. If India has missed a trick it is in the expansive scale that China has brought to its space programme. While the origin and development of both space programmes was led by state entities, China has more recently opened up room for the participation of non-state entities and encouraged private innovators. As the commercial and geopolitical stakes in outer space grow rapidly, the next government in Delhi has its task cut out: To reform India's space sector to allow private corporations to play a larger role, promote space startups, and rejuvenate India's international space collaboration, both civilian and military — with friends and allies. Unlike in the traditional Belt and Road projects, India has significant capabilities in the space and digital domains. With policies that will lend them the necessary political support, commercial ambition and organisational scale, Delhi can surely shape the future of space and digital connectivity.

**Keywords:** 1. Belt & Road Forum; 2. Space & Digital Silk Roads; 3. BeiDou System; 4. GAGAN

**Q13. Analyse India – Maldives relations in the after-math of the recent political developments within Maldives.**

**Back on track: On India-Maldives ties**

India and the Maldives appeared to return to the old days of strategic bonhomie when External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj met her counterpart Abdulla Shahid in Male during a brief visit this week. It is the first full-fledged bilateral visit at the political
level from India to the Maldives after the new government assumed office in the wake of the historic election last September. President Ibrahim Solih assumed charge after a multi-party, pro-democracy coalition led by his Maldivian Democratic Party was swept to power. Mr. Solih's inauguration, which was marked by the attendance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was assumed to be a potential inflection point in the trajectory of bilateral ties with India.

The previous five years witnessed Male's disconcerting drift, under the aegis of the Abdulla Yameen government, into what many Maldivians felt was the stifling embrace of China. Chinese financing for infrastructure and construction projects poured in even as the functioning of the political Opposition and the judiciary was harshly curtailed. All of this flux appeared to have been washed away on September 23, 2018 when the Maldivian electorate voted resoundingly for the coalition that backed Mr. Solih for President. Yet it would be unwise for New Delhi to take the Indian Ocean nation for granted. There is indeed an opportunity for reset on numerous policies, and some of that has already happened. In December, when Mr. Solih visited India, a $1.4 billion financial assistance package for the Maldives was announced. While the proximity of the Indian general election may have precluded any major policy announcements from New Delhi, the two countries have agreed to exempt holders of diplomatic and official passports from visa requirements, inked an MoU on Indian grant-in-aid for “high-impact community development projects”, and other agreements on energy efficiency and renewable energy, areas critical to the agenda of Mr. Solih. At a broader level, the archipelago and the larger Indian Ocean region could expect more collaborative approaches on regional maritime security issues, including counterterrorism and trans-national crimes.

However, Male is still grappling with the legacy of the Yameen administration's headlong plunge into the orbit of Beijing. The massive debts the Maldives incurred, by some estimates to the tune of $3 billion, linked to infrastructure investments need to be unwound. Second, the multiparty alliance must hold firm despite immense political pressures that arise from varying visions for governance.

**Keywords:** 1. President Solih; 2. Abulla Yameen; 3. Financial Assistance; 4. Maritime Security

Q14. What do you mean by antimicrobial resistance? What are the possible impacts if antimicrobial resistance is left untreated?

The cost of antimicrobial resistance is acknowledged by policymakers as a major health crisis, few have considered its economic impact. Now, a report from the Interagency Coordination Group on Antimicrobial Resistance (IACG) puts the financial fall-out in perspective. Titled "No Time to Wait: Securing The Future From Drug Resistant Infections", it says in about three decades from now uncontrolled antimicrobial resistance will cause global economic shocks on the scale of the 2008-09 financial crisis. With nearly 10 million people estimated to die annually from resistant infections by 2050, health-care costs and the cost of food production will spike, while income inequality will widen. In the worst-case scenario, the world will lose 3.8% of its annual GDP by 2050, while 24 million people will be pushed into extreme poverty by 2030. Nations must acknowledge this eventuality, the IACG says, and act to fight it. For high- and mid-income nations, the price of prevention, at $2 per head a year, is extremely affordable. For poorer countries, the price is higher but still modest compared to the costs of an antibiotic apocalypse.

India first published almost nine years ago the broad contours of a plan to fight antimicrobial resistance. The difficulty has been in implementing it, given the twin challenges of antibiotic overuse and underuse. On the one hand, many Indians still die of diseases like sepsis and pneumonia because they don't get the right drug at the right time. On the other hand, a poorly regulated pharmaceutical industry means that antibiotics are freely available to those who can afford them. The IACG report acknowledges these obstacles, and calls for efforts to overcome them. Some steps can be initiated right away, it says, such as phasing out critical human-use antibiotics in the animal husbandry sector, such as quinolones. But these steps cannot be driven by regulation alone. A multi-stakeholder approach, involving private industry, philanthropic groups and citizen activists is needed. Private
pharmaceutical industries must take it upon themselves to distribute drugs in a responsible manner. Philanthropic charities must fund the development of new antibiotics, while citizen activists must drive awareness. These stakeholders must appreciate that the only way to postpone resistance is through improved hygiene and vaccinations. It is a formidable task as India still struggles with low immunisation rates and drinking water contamination. But it must consider the consequences of a failure. While the 2008-09 financial crisis caused global hardships, its effects began to wear off by 2011. Once crucial antibiotics are lost to humankind, they may be lost for decades.

**Keywords:** 1. antimicrobial resistance ; 2. twin challenges of antibiotic overuse and underuse

Q15. In the light of recent judgment of Madras High Court, examine the scope of powers entrusted to the Administrator of Puducherry and its Council of Ministers as per the Constitution of India.

**Power shift: tussle between Puducherry & Council of Ministers**

The Madras High Court verdict that the Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry should not interfere in the day-to-day administration of the Union Territory is a serious setback to the incumbent Administrator, Kiran Bedi. She has been locked in a prolonged dispute over the extent of her powers with Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy, who says she has been disregarding the elected regime and seeking to run the Union Territory on her own. The court has laid down that “the decision taken by the Council of Ministers and the Chief Minister is binding on the Secretaries and other officials.” Inspired by the Supreme Court’s appeal to constitutional morality and trust among high dignitaries, the High Court has also reminded the Centre and the Administrator that they should be true to the concept of democratic principles, lest the constitutional scheme based on democracy and republicanism be defeated. The judgment is based mainly on the principles that were laid down in last year’s Constitution Bench decision on the conflict between the elected regime in the National Capital Territory (NCT) and its Lt. Governor. The five-judge Bench had ruled that the L-G has to either act on the ‘aid and advice’ of the Council of Ministers, or refer to the President for a decision any matter on which there is a difference with the Ministry, but has no independent decision-making powers. The High Court also says the Administrator is bound by the ‘aid and advice’ clause in matters over which the Assembly is competent to enact laws. The L-G’s power to refer any matter to the President to resolve differences should not mean “every matter”, the court has cautioned.

Justice R. Mahadevan, who delivered the Madras High Court judgment, is conscious of the difference in status between Delhi and Puducherry. The Puducherry legislature is the creation of a parliamentary law, based on an enabling provision in Article 239A of the Constitution, whereas the NCT legislature has been created by the Constitution itself under Article 239AA. The Supreme Court had described the NCT as sui generis. At the same time, the NCT Assembly is limited in the extent of its legislative powers, as it is barred from dealing with the subjects of public order, police and land. However, looking at the Business Rules as well as other statutory provisions on Puducherry, the judge has sought to give greater credence to the concept of a representative government. He has set aside two clarifications issued by the Centre in 2017 to the effect that the L-G enjoys more power than the Governor of a State and can act without aid and advice. In view of the Constitution Bench judgment on Delhi, he has differed with another Madras High Court decision of 2018 in which the LG’s power to act irrespective of the Cabinet’s advice was upheld. In the event that the latest judgment is taken up on appeal, a key question may be how far the decision of the five-judge Bench on the limits of the Delhi L-G’s powers would indeed apply to Puducherry.

**Keywords:** 1. Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry; 2. democratic principles; 3. any matter does not include every matter

Q16. What steps must be taken by the state and central government to reduce bureaucratic control of forests officials over the people residing in the region? Can the traditional forest-dwellers help to restore the rich biodiversity, flora and fauna of the forest? Give reasons for your answer.
Humanise the law: draft Indian Forest Act

Modernising colonial-era laws is a long-delayed project, but the draft Indian Forest Act, 2019 is woefully short of being a transformative piece of legislation. The original law, the Indian Forest Act, 1927, is an incongruous relic, its provisions having been drafted to suit the objectives of a colonial power that had extractive uses for forests in mind. A new law enacted should make a departure and be aimed to expand India's forests, and ensure the well-being of traditional forest-dwellers and biodiversity in these landscapes. The need is for a paradigm that encourages community-led, scientifically validated conservation. This is critical, for only 2.99% of India's geographic area is classified as very dense forest; the rest of the green cover of a total of 21.54% is nearly equally divided into open and moderately dense forest, according to the State of Forest Report 2017. The draft Bill reinforces the idea of bureaucratic control of forests, providing immunity for actions such as use of firearms by personnel to prevent an offence. The hardline policing approach is reflected in the emphasis on creating infrastructure to detain and transport the accused, and to penalise entire communities through denial of access to forests for offences by individuals. Such provisions invariably affect poor inhabitants, and run counter to the empowering and egalitarian goals that produced the Forest Rights Act.

India's forests play a key role in moderating the lives of not just the adivasis and other traditional dwellers, but everyone in the subcontinent, through their impact on the climate and monsoons. Their health can be improved only through collaboration. Any new forest law must, therefore, aim to reduce conflicts, incentivise tribals and stop diversion for non-forest uses. This can be achieved by recognising all suitable landscapes as forests and insulating them from commercial exploitation. Such an approach requires a partnership with communities on the one hand, and scientists on the other. For decades now, the Forest Department has resisted independent scientific evaluation of forest health and biodiversity conservation outcomes. In parallel, environmental policy has weakened public scrutiny of decisions on diversion of forests for destructive activities such as mining and large dam construction. Impact assessment reports have mostly been reduced to a farce, and the public hearings process has been diluted. When a new government takes over, the entire issue should go back to the drawing board. The government needs to launch a process of consultation, beginning with the State governments to ensure that a progressive law is adopted by all States, including those that have their own versions of the existing Act. The Centre must hear the voice of all stakeholders and communities, including independent scientific experts.

Keywords: 1. Draft Indian Forest Act, 2019; 2. traditional forest-dwellers; 3. State of Forest Report 2017; 4. bureaucratic control of forests; 5. very dense forest; 6. open and moderately dense forest

Q17. Involvement of Chief Justice of India in the case where he himself has been accused of sexual harassment violates principles of natural justice. Discuss.

In his own cause: On complaint against CJI Ranjan Gogoi

The manner in which the Supreme Court responded on the judicial side to allegations of sexual harassment made by a former employee against the Chief Justice of India is a textbook example of how not to deal with such a complaint. An issue that squarely fell within the domain of an internal process was taken up by a special Bench constituted by CJI Ranjan Gogoi, comprising himself, Justice Arun Mishra and Justice Sanjiv Khanna. On a ‘mention’ by the Solicitor-General, it was listed as ‘Re: Matter of Great Public Importance Touching upon the Independence of the Judiciary’. The decision to hold an open court hearing is questionable. A complaint of this nature requires an institutional response on the administrative side. There is an internal process to initiate an inquiry mandated by the law regarding sexual harassment at the workplace. The Supreme Court itself has an internal subcommittee under its Gender Sensitization and Sexual Harassment of Women at Supreme Court (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Guidelines, 2015. There is a separate in-house procedure to deal with complaints against judges, under which their judicial peers, and not outsiders, will examine them. It is not known if the complaint will be probed under an internal process, but it is clear that the CJI ought not to have presided over the special Bench that took up the matter that concerned himself. The
onslaught on the complainant’s credibility and the references made to her alleged criminal record when she was not a party to the proceedings are deplorable.

Justice Gogoi was one of the four judges who spoke out against the manner in which his predecessor as CJI, Dipak Misra, managed the roster. It is ironical that as one who was aggrieved that senior-most judges were kept out of Benches handling major cases, he went on to form a Bench that included himself but not the two senior-most judges after him. Nor was there a woman judge on the Bench. CJI Gogoi’s anguish is understandable, if indeed the complaint is baseless and false, as he contended from the Bench. But then, the court’s Secretary General has sent a denial to the online news organisations that carried details of the complaint. The complainant, a former junior court assistant, had made her charge in the form of an affidavit, supported by purported evidence, and sent it to 22 judges of the court. It referred to likely witnesses to the alleged sexual harassment and victimisation. This is a serious matter that requires careful processing. It is possible even now to send the complaint to an independent committee. That is the only reasonable and fair means of establishing the innocence the CJI has asserted. Pronouncements and protestations from the Bench to a captive audience of acquiescent law officers and lawyers are not the way.

**Keywords:** 1. sexual harassment at the workplace; 2. ‘in-house procedure’ 3. send the complaint to an independent committee

Q18. Demonstration of Anti-Satellite missile test conducted in the Low Earth Orbit by Defence Research and Development Organisation has allowed India to enter into elite space club. What is the significance of this test conducted by DRDO? What are the possible benefits such a missile will give India in the outer space region?

**Power in space: on Mission Shakti**

India has entered an elite space club with the Defence Research and Development Organisation blowing up a satellite in a Low Earth Orbit into smithereens. Such Indian capability to take out moving objects has never really been in doubt: the DRDO announced it as early as in 2011. Indeed, India has been in the business of testing long-range missiles for years, although public attention on the space programme has been mostly on its civilian and scientific aspects. The military dimension, though always latent, had not seen a verifiable demonstration as in the case of Mission Shakti, the Anti-Satellite (ASAT) missile test. The display of technological prowess through the test accentuates the military dimension and brings into play an overwhelming assurance of what the Ministry of External Affairs describes as a ‘credible deterrence’ against attacks on India’s growing number of space assets. Although only three other countries, the U.S., Russia, and China, have previously demonstrated this capability, it is possible to surmise that countries with long-range missiles could do the same with equal effectiveness. But India, surely, is staking a forward claim as a space weapons power.

While the country celebrates the test as a scientific achievement, it must also dwell on the possibility that this might goad its none-too-friendly neighbour Pakistan into a competitive frenzy. Also, in the absence of a credible threat to India’s space assets from China or any other country with Anti-Satellite missile capabilities, whether the ‘deterrence’ sought to be achieved by this test would lead to a more stable strategic security environment is not certain. There are other questions, too. Will the test spur space weaponisation? Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while announcing the success of the test, was clear that India wanted to maintain peace rather than indulge in warmongering. And, by targeting a low-orbit satellite, the missile test did the utmost possible to minimise space debris, which is an issue of international concern. But, within India, the timing of the test, when the country is already in election mode, does raise concerns whether this was aimed at the domestic constituency. The Election Commission is now seized of the question whether the Prime Minister might have violated the Model Code of Conduct. If it does find the timing amiss, the Modi government could be in for some serious embarrassment. Ideally, the test should not have been a matter for a partisan political debate, but given the hypernationalist political plank of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Mission Shakti might have more reverberations on the ground than it has had in space.
Q19. Discuss the evolution of corporate governance in India. What are changes introduced in the Companies Act, 2013 on corporate governance?

Boardroom Rot

Many of India's listed firms have a ready template on how they conform to the highest standards of corporate governance. That is increasingly becoming unconvincing as the corporate misconduct in some of the country's top companies show and reflected lately in a series of ongoing stories on ICICI Bank in this newspaper, on a “culture” of doing a deal “at any cost”, mistakes “made knowingly” and “suppressing” facts during the tenure of Chanda Kochhar as the bank's managing director and CEO.

The past few months and 2018 were marked by governance failures or shortcomings in some of India's top listed private banks, leading to the exit of CEOs in Axis Bank and ICICI, of course, and in firms such as Ranbaxy and IL&FS, besides the National Stock Exchange. Unlike earlier such episodes, a common thread, and a worrying one at that, in this new wave of misconduct is that almost all of them feature professional managers, and boards that allowed themselves to be overrun by powerful managements.

That's in sharp contrast to the scenario over a decade and a half ago, when a string of corporate scams, including the accounting fudge at the erstwhile software services firm, Satyam, led to a shift in favour of professionally managed companies with attractive salaries and monetary incentives and a more diversified shareholding base. This model, it was argued then, could better align all interests which could lead to maximisation of shareholder value. Sadly, it is that belief which is now open to question as also the larger issue of ethical conduct and integrity underlying corporate governance in the country, both public and corporate.

It is true that India is not an outlier when it comes to corporate scandals, looking around at what keeps unfolding in the US, Japan and some other countries. But unlike in India, huge fines or penalties, class-action suits, shareholder activism and regulatory oversight are often seen as deterrents in those countries. What's encouraging, however, is the growing recourse by India's regulators to claw back bonuses or stock options of executives found guilty of wrongdoing and easing them out. That should be accompanied by tighter supervision and regulation and far greater oversight by boards of companies and drawing clear lines on their accountability. The fact that just a handful of companies command a governance premium is a poor reflection of standards. India needs a huge leg-up on the governance front, not just for companies to raise capital, soak savings and boost the real economy, but also to dispel the unease about growing inequality and ensure that capitalism doesn't get a bad name.

Keywords: 1. highest standards of corporate governance; 2. corporate misconduct

Q20. Technological evolution over the period of years has not been able to decrease long working hours put in by employees across the world. Discuss in light of better work-life balance necessary to ensure optimum result along with good health.

Work 996

In late March, anonymous activists in China introduced 996.ICU, a domain name that represents the grueling life of Chinese programmers, with the warning that these workers would end up in a hospital's intensive care unit (ICU). Since then, a debate has raged across the country: Should Chinese IT sector employees work nine am to nine pm, six days a week? The arguments and discussions, however, have a history that is almost as old as capitalism. 996.ICU's demand to moderate the 72-hour work week in the Chinese IT sector have a striking affinity with the slogan raised by the early socialist, Robert Owen, “Eight hours work, eight hours leisure, eight hours rest”.
Jack Ma, the founder and head of the Chinese IT giant, Alibaba has hit back with exhortations — “If you don’t work 996 when you are young, when will you?” Working overtime could be a “huge blessing” for young workers, the billionaire is reported to have said. Such platitudes, however, can barely hide the fact that the work hours in the tech sector in China and in many other parts of the world harken back to the times when a “sun up to sundown” working day was the norm in factories and workhouses. Ma’s comment that his company expected workers to put in 12 hours a day since it had huge commitments to its clients is testimony that the halcyon days of Fordist capitalism are past us.

Till the second half of the 20th century, many critics of capitalism had hoped that technology would liberate humankind from the drudgery of long work hours. Indeed in many countries that were early to the Industrial Revolution, the debate today is about better work-life balance. But ironically, the pushback to this demand has come from the sectors and in countries which are the harbingers of newer forms of technology.

**Keywords:** 1. 996.ICU; 2. Robert Owen; 3. Industrial Revolution
CASE 1: You are working as Block Development Officer. In one of the Gram Panchayat administered school, a post of cook is lying vacant for long time. Recently, the committee of selection which consists of school head master, panchayat president and other members have shortlisted four women for the post. However, many villagers are unhappy that a dalit woman is included in the list. There are protests being held outside school and panchayat office against selection committee's decision. Village elders are trying to persuade you to cancel the list or to remove the Dalit woman's name from the list in order to maintain harmony in the village. The issue has snowballed into violent fight between Dalits and people of other castes in the village. Apart from dalit woman, the list includes a widow who is abandoned by both her families, an upper caste woman but physically disabled and an acid attack victim. The dalit woman is economically sound, but she is also most eligible for the post in terms of meeting other criteria of the post.

a)  What are the options available to you in handling this situation? Examine their merits and demerits. (150 Words)

b)  Finally, with or without opposition from any quarters, personally whom will you select from four women for the post of cook? Justify. (150 Words)

CASE 2: You are working as Superintendent of Police. In a village which comes under your jurisdiction a gang rape has taken place. A school teacher has been raped by four youths. The parents of the lady directly complain you that the local Sub-Inspector has not registered case against those youths and moreover, when their daughter went to register a complain, he insulted and then threatened her with consequences if she went before media or made the case public. They also tell you that the lady teacher was not sent for medical check-up. Now the media doesn't know about the case, nor does the public. The parents allege that the local Sub-Inspector has taken bribe from those youth and has let them off without registering a case against them. Now the parents are saying that as a last resort they would go before the media, but they are scared about revelation of their daughter's identity and losing her job too.

Question: In this scenario, what will you do? Explain.

CASE 3: As a senior officer in the Ministry, you have access to important policy decisions and upcoming big announcements such as road constructions projects before they are notified in the public domain. The Ministry is about to announce a mega road project for which the drawings are already in place. Sufficient care was taken by the planners to make use of the government land with the minimum land acquisition from private parties. Compensation rate for private parties was also finalized as per
government rules. Care was also taken to minimize deforestation. Once the project is announced, it is expected that there will be a huge spurt in real estate prices in and around that area.

Meanwhile, the Minister concerned insists that you realign the road in such a way that it comes closer to his 20 acres farmhouse. He also suggests that he would facilitate the purchase of a big plot of land in your wife name at the prevailing rate which is very nominal, in and around the proposed mega road project. He also tries to convince you by saying that there is no harm in it as he is buying the land legally. He even promises to supplement your savings in case you do not have sufficient funds to buy the land. However, by the act of realignment, a lot of agricultural lands has to be acquired, thereby causing a considerable financial burden on the government, and also the displacement of the farmers. As if this is not enough, it will involve cutting down of a large number of trees denuding the area of its green cover.

**Question:** Faced with this situation, what will you do? Critically examine various conflicts of interest and explain what your responsibilities are as a public servant. (250 words).
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