



INSIGHTSIAS

SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

INSTA CURRENT AFFAIRS

MARCH 2020

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GENERAL STUDIES – 1

Topics: Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present- significant events, personalities, issues.

1. Marakkars who fought against Portuguese invaders

What to study?

For Prelims: About Marakkars clan and their fight against Portuguese.

For Mains: Significance of their fight.

Context: Recently, a petition was filed in the Kerala High Court against the film- **Marakkar: The Lion of the Arabian Sea**, alleging 'distortion of history' and demanding a stay on the release. It is said to be **the most expensive Malayalam film ever made**.

The film is based on **Kunjali Marakkar IV**, who earned his reputation with his fierce onslaught on Portuguese ships, the favours he gave those who fought against the Portuguese, and his efforts to strengthen **the fort at Kottakkal**.

Why was a petition filed against the film in the High Court?

The petitioner argued that the film's version of events could mislead students and researchers.

However, the High Court declined to impose a stay and asked the film certification Board if it had handed over the complaint to the Centre. The Board conveyed that the subject deals with art and that it cannot interfere in the freedom of expression of the filmmakers.

What is the film about?

It is a war film depicting the heroics of **the Marakkar clan**, whose leaders were **naval chieftains of the Zamorin of Calicut** during the 16th and 17th centuries.

The Zamorin, **Samoothiri in Malayalam**, was **the title given to rulers of the Calicut kingdom on the Malabar coast**.

The Marakkars fought against Portuguese invaders for nearly a century.

Who were the Marakkars?

1. By some accounts, they were of Arab origin and had migrated from Tunisia to Panthalayani near Koyilandy in present-day Kozhikode.
2. They later moved to the region around present-day Kottakkal and Thikkodi near Payyoli.
3. By other accounts, the Marakkars were descendants of affluent businessman from the Cochin kingdom who migrated later to Calicut.
4. The **Marakkars were mostly Muslims**, but in some parts, they have been found to be Hindus as well.

What was the war against the Portuguese about?

1. Faced with invading Portuguese ships, the Zamorin reached out to the Marakkars to defend the coast.
2. They were led in succession by four Marakkars, chief admirals who were appointed by the Zamorin with the title of Kunjali.
3. Their strategy was similar to guerrilla warfare. The Portuguese had massive ships which could not make easy manoeuvres in the sea.
4. The Marakkars used small ships which could easily surround the Portuguese ships, enabling the fighters to attack at will.

Their role in developing modern naval fleet:

In the span of 100 years, the exploits of the Marakkars are said to have improved **the naval fleet of Calicut as well as other kingdoms, stretching from Saurashtra to Ceylon along the Indian coast**. War technologies and ammunition greatly improved as well.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Such small groups associated with fights against the European powers.

www.insightsonindia.com

2. How and when various European powers travelled to India?
3. How small states were gradually acquired by European Powers?

Mains Link:

Who were Marakkars? What was their role in the fight against Portuguese? Discuss.

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/marakk-arabikadalinte-simham-mohanlal-movie-priyadarshan-6305723/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

Topics: Women and women related issues.

1. Nari Shakti Puraskar

What to study?

For Prelims: Awards- objectives, eligibility criteria and benefits.

For Mains: Need for recognition and significance of these awards.

Context: To acknowledge Women's achievements, the Government of India confers Nari Shakti Puraskars on eminent women and institutions in recognition of their **service towards the cause of women empowerment.**

Key facts:

- Initiated in the year 1999.
- The awards are given away by **the President of India every year on 8 March, International Women's Day.**
- **The Ministry of Women and Child Development announces these national level awards** for eminent women, organisations and institutions.
- The Nari Shakti Puraskar carries **a cash award of Rs.1 Lakh and a certificate for individuals and institutions.**

Eligibility Criteria:

1. Open to individuals, groups and institutions for outstanding work towards empowerment of women.
2. Individual applicant must be at least 25 years of age.
3. Institutions must have at least 5 years of relevant experience.

Institutional categories:

Each of the six institutional categories is named after an eminent woman in Indian history.

1. **Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar Award for Best Private Sector organization/ Public sector undertaking in promoting the well-being and welfare of women**, named after Ahilyabai Holkar, 18th-century ruler of the Malwa kingdom.
2. **Kannagi Devi Award for Best State which has appreciably improved Child Sex Ratio (CSR)**, named after Kannagi, the central character of the Tamil epic Silapathikaram.
3. **Mata Jijabai Award for Best Urban Local body for providing services and facilities to women**, named after Mata Jijabai, mother of Shivaji, who founded the Maratha Empire in the 17th century.
4. **Rani Gaidinliu Zeliang Award for Best Civil Society organization (CSO) doing outstanding work for the welfare and well-being of women**, named after Rani Gaidinliu, a 20th-century Naga spiritual and political leader
5. **Rani Lakshmi Bai Award for Best Institution for Research & Development in the field of women empowerment**, named after Lakshmbai, one of the leading figures of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and erstwhile queen of Jhansi.
6. **Rani Rudramma Devi Awards for two District Panchayats and two Gram Panchayats**, named after Rudrama Devi, a 13th-century ruler of Deccan Plateau.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Categories and eligibility criteria for the awards.
2. Significance and contributions of eminent women after whom these awards are named.
3. Other such exclusive awards for women.

Mains Link:

Who was Rani Gaidinliu? Write a note on her contributions to the Indian society.

Sources: pib.

2. International Women's Day 2020

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: About International Women's Day, theme, relevance and significance.

Context: International Women's Day is celebrated on **March 8 every year**. It is a day when the world comes together to appreciate womanhood and their importance in society. The day also celebrates the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women.

International Women's Day 2020: Theme:

According to the United Nations Women, the theme for International Women's Day 2020 is "**Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights**".

Historical background:

Earlier, it was called **National woman's day** and was acknowledged by the U.S. on February 28, 1909. This was done because of the labour movement which was started in 1908 where 15000 female employees went on strike in New York City to protest against poor working conditions.

National Women's Day was recognised as **International Women's Day only in 1910** after German women's rights activist **Clara Zetkin** suggested at an International Conference.

Why March 8?

It was on this day that women in Soviet Russia gained the right the vote in 1917, hence March 8 was declared a national holiday for them. The United Nations General Assembly invited member states to proclaim March 8 as the UN Day for women's rights and world peace in 1977.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Brief overview of various days of international importance.
2. Key themes.
3. Special campaigns wrt women in India and around the World.
4. Schemes for women in India.

Mains Link:

Write a note on International Women's Day.

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GUE77IBHN.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

3. Gender Social Norms Index

What to study?

For Prelims: About the index and key findings.

For Mains: Concerns expressed and ways to address them.

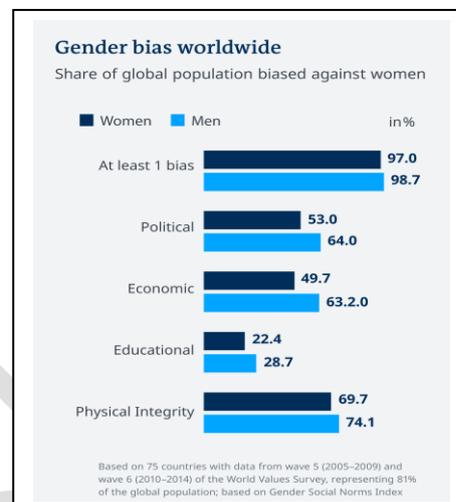
Context: The **first Gender Social Norms Index** was recently released by **the UN Development Programme (UNDP)**.

About the index:

- This index **measures how social beliefs obstruct gender equality in areas like politics, work, and education, and contains data from 75 countries, covering over 80 percent of the world's population.**
- The index found **new clues to the invisible barriers women face in achieving equality – potentially forging a path forward to breaking through the so-called “glass ceiling”.**

Key findings:

1. Despite decades of progress closing the equality gap between men and women, close to 90 percent of men and women hold some sort of bias against women.
2. Almost half of those polled feel that men are superior political leaders.
3. More than 40 per cent believe they make better business executives and are more entitled to jobs when the economy is lagging.
4. Moreover, 28 per cent think it is justified for a man to beat his wife.
5. The analysis also highlighted a **bias shift** in some 30 countries, revealing that while some show improvements, attitudes in others appear to have worsened in recent years – signaling that progress cannot be taken for granted.



Why enormous “power gaps” continue between men and women in economies, political systems and corporations?

Despite tangible progress in closing gender inequalities in developmental areas, such as education and health as well as in removing legal barriers to political and economic participation, there exist power gaps.

- This is because **while men and women vote at similar rates, only 24 percent of parliamentary seats worldwide are held by women and there are only 10 female heads of government out of 193 Member States.**
- Furthermore, **women are paid less than men working the same jobs and are much less likely to be in senior positions.**

Way ahead:

We have come a long way in recent decades to ensure that women have the same access to life's basic needs as men. But, “gender gaps are still all too obvious in other areas, particularly those that challenge power relations and are most influential in actually achieving true equality”.

- Therefore, world leaders to **accelerate action to meet global targets on gender equality.**
- Governments and institutions should **utilize new policies to change these discriminatory beliefs and practices through education, and by raising awareness and changing incentives.**

Facts for Prelims:

1. 2020 marks **the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+25)**, the most visionary agenda on women's empowerment to date.
2. **Few important women's rights demonstrations:** “#MeToo, #NiUnaMenos, #TimesUp, #UnVioladorEnTuCamino.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Various such indices and who released them.
2. Key findings.
3. Campaigns associated.
4. Beijing +25.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of UNDP Gender Social Norms Index and its key findings.

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/bias-against-women-widespread-among-women-too-6305749/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

4. Permanent Commission for Women in Indian Navy

What to study?

For Prelims: PC- features and benefits.

For Mains: Need for and significance of PC.

Context: The Supreme Court has upheld **the right of serving Short Service Commission (SSC) women officers of the Navy** to be granted **permanent commission (PC) on a par with their male counterparts.**

Background:

The judgment was based on a case filed by 17 women SSC officers who were denied PC and discharged despite completing 14 years of service as SSC officers.

- They had challenged a February 26, 2008 policy letter of the government granting PCs to SSC officers in all the three branches of the Armed Forces. However, the offer was **restricted to certain categories and was to operate prospectively for the benefit of future batches inducted on SSCs after January 2009.**
- The Supreme Court on 17 February upheld a 2010 Delhi high court ruling and had directed the Centre to ensure that women officers are given permanent commissions in the Indian Army on a par with male officers, including for command posting.

Observations made by the Supreme Court:

1. Women officers have worked shoulder to shoulder with their men counterparts in every walk of service.
2. Therefore, the “101 excuses” devised by the government, including motherhood and physiological limitations, reeked of a stereotypical mindset.
3. And women naval officers cannot be denied **the right to equal opportunity and dignity entitled to under the Constitution** on specious grounds such as physiology, motherhood and physical attributes.

Implications of the judgment:

1. Women naval officers will now be eligible to apply for permanent commission.
2. All serving women short service commission (SSC) officers in at least seven wings, including the executive, engineering, electrical, education, law and logistics, will be eligible to apply.
3. The grant of PCs will be subject to: (i) availability of vacancies in the stabilised cadre; (ii) Suitability of the candidate; and (iii) recommendation by the chief of Naval Staff.

What is a permanent commission?

A **permanent commission** entitles an officer to **serve in the Navy till he/she retires** unlike **short service commission (SSC)**, which is currently for **10 years and can be extended by four more years**, or a total of 14 years.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. SSC vs PC- differences and benefits.
2. Status of PC for women in Army vs Navy vs Airforce.
3. Women Special Entry scheme.
4. Combat vs non combat roles.

Mains Link:

Discuss why women officers in the navy should be granted permanent commission. What are the benefits associated?

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/sc-allows-permanent-commission-for-women-in-navy/article31089114.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

5. Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020

What to study?

For Prelims: Key changes made.

For Mains: Significance and the need for these changes.

Context: The **Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020**, which seeks to amend the MTP Act, 1971, was passed in Lok Sabha recently.

Key changes:

1. It seeks to **extend the upper limit for permitting abortions from 20 weeks to 24 under special circumstances.**
2. **The “special categories of women” include** rape survivors, victims of incest, the differently abled and minors.
3. The Bill proposes requirement of opinion of one **registered medical practitioner (RMP) for termination** of pregnancy up to 20 weeks of gestation.
4. It also provides for **the requirement of opinion of two RMPs for termination of pregnancy of 20 to 24 weeks.**
5. **Constitution of a Medical Board:** Every state government is required to constitute a Medical Board. These Medical Boards will consist of the following members: (i) a gynaecologist, (ii) a paediatrician, (iii) a radiologist or sonologist, and (iv) any other number of members, as may be notified by the state government.
6. Under the Bill, if any pregnancy occurs as a result of failure of any device or method used by a woman or her partner to limit the number of children, such an unwanted pregnancy may constitute a grave injury to the mental health of the pregnant woman.

Need for overhaul:

1. The present abortion law, which is about five decades old, permits abortion up to a maximum foetal gestation period of 20 weeks.
2. In recent years, there have been strong demands to raise the foetal gestation period for abortion beyond 20 weeks.

Significance:

- The move to amend the MTP Act, 1971 is a progressive step towards empowerment of women. It will provide greater reproductive rights to women as abortion is considered an important aspect of the reproductive health of women. Deaths and injuries from unsafe abortions are largely preventable provided services are performed legally by trained practitioners.

Abortion laws across the world:

Abortion laws vary across the world. It is learnt that around 60 countries prescribe gestational limits.

- 52 % including France, the UK, Austria, Ethiopia, Italy, Spain, Iceland, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland and even Nepal, allow for termination beyond 20 weeks on the diagnosis of foetal abnormalities.
- Some countries go beyond even these limits with laws in 23 countries-Canada, Germany, Vietnam, Denmark, Ghana, and Zambia-allowing for abortion at any time during the pregnancy on the request of the mother.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Provisions in the new bill vs 1971 act.
2. Time limit for abortion in India vs other countries.
3. Contraceptive-failure clause.
4. Constitution and composition of Medical Board.

Mains Link:

Discuss how Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 strives to provide reproductive rights to women in India.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/ls-passes-bill-to-raise-limit-for-abortions-till-24-weeks-for-special-categories/article31093261.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

6. Indira Gandhi Matritva Poshan Yojana

What to study?

For Prelims: Key features of IGMPY and PMMVY.

For Mains: Significance and the need for such missions in India.

Context: The scheme was recently announced by the Rajasthan Government on pilot basis in 4 districts.

- **The scheme will be implemented in** Udaipur, Pratapgarh, Banswara and Dungarpur, where nutrition indicators among children and anaemia levels among mothers are worse than the average for the State.

Key features of the scheme:

- It is a **maternity benefit scheme**.
- Under the scheme **₹6,000 will be offered for the birth of the second child**.
- The government aims to reach out to 75,000 beneficiaries annually. It estimates an expenditure of ₹45 crore per year.
- The State scheme will complement the Central government's **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana** which offers **₹5,000 for the birth of the first child**.

Why focus on second child?

The government feels that the second child doesn't receive as much attention as the first child and, therefore, it is important to extend this cash benefit to ensure adequate nutrition for the second child.

About PMMVY:

- It is a maternity benefit rechristened from erstwhile **Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY)**.
- The scheme is a **conditional cash transfer scheme for pregnant and lactating women**.
- It provides a **partial wage compensation to women for wage-loss during childbirth and childcare and to provide conditions for safe delivery and good nutrition and feeding practices**.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Cash assistance under PMMVY vs IGMPY.
2. Who is eligible and who is not under PMMVY?
3. Applicability of benefits for the birth of second child under these schemes.
4. Relevance of National Food Security Act for PMMVY.
5. States with highest IMR and MMR.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of Rajasthan Government's Indira Gandhi Matritva Poshan Yojana.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/maternity-benefits-for-second-child-in-rajasthan/article31102518.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

Topics: Population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues.

1. ODF+ and ODF++ under Phase 2 of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban)

What to study?

For Prelims: Key features of SBM- urban, targets.

For Mains: Implementation and significance of the mission.

Context: Parliamentary Standing Committee on Urban Development recently tabled its report on the performance of **the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban)** in Lok Sabha.

Key observations:

1. Despite the fact that work on three protocols under the next phase of **Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban-2) — ODF+, ODF++ and Water Plus** — is to be completed by 2024, the ground situation was not matching with the assigned timeline. The progress has been slow.
2. Less than 30 per cent of the cities have been certified as ODF+ so far. Out of 4,320 cities declared ODF, as low as 1,276 cities have been certified as ODF+.
3. The number of ODF++ cities — 411 — means that less than 10 per cent cities are certified as ODF++ so far.

What is ODF+, ODF++?

ODF+ and ODF++ were launched in August 2018 to further scale up and sustain the work undertaken by the cities after achieving the ODF status under **Phase I of the Swachh Bharat Mission — Urban (SBM-Urban)**.

Eligibility: Cities that had been certified ODF at least once, on the basis of the ODF protocols, are eligible to declare themselves as SBM-ODF+ & SBM-ODF++.

What do they mean?

ODF+ and ODF++ are aimed towards proper maintenance of toilet facilities and safe collection, conveyance, treatment/disposal of all faecal sludge and sewage.

While **ODF+ focuses on toilets with water, maintenance and hygiene, ODF++ focuses on toilets with sludge and septage management.**

What is water plus?

Announced in August 2019, Water Plus aims **to sustain toilets by treating and reuse of water**. It contributes to the government's focus on water conservation and reuse under **the Jal Shakti Abhiyan and is in alignment with United Nations-mandated Sustainable Development Goal No 6 on clean water and sanitation.**

Background:

Under Phase 1 of the Swachh Bharat Mission (U), 99 per cent of the cities became ODF, the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) had claimed in December 2019.

What next?

- States have an important role in ensuring progress under these programmes.
- MoHUA needed to move faster with regard to the coverage of the three protocols so as to adhere to the timeline of 2024.
- Additional funds will be required to sustain the ODF status and ensure complete faecal sludge management.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. ODF+ vs ODF++ vs Water plus- introduction and targets.
2. Phase 1 vs Phase 2 of SBM.

3. SBM Urban GS Rural, implementing ministries.
4. Nirmal Bharat Abhiyaan vs SBM.

Mains Link:

“Swachh Bharat Mission campaign has become the global benchmark for participatory and transformative development.” Elucidate.

Link:

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/rural-water-and-sanitation/fast-track-work-on-odf-and-odf-parliamentary-panel-to-govt-69816>.

Sources: down to earth.



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GENERAL STUDIES – 2

Topics: Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure; Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries.

1. Delimitation of Constituencies

What to study?

For prelims and mains: What is delimitation, why is it needed, how is it carried out and special provisions w.r.t to J&K.

Context: The government has constituted a **Delimitation Commission**, to be headed by former Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai, to redraw Lok Sabha and assembly constituencies of the Union Territory Jammu and Kashmir and the northeastern states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland.

What next?

The Commission will delimit the constituencies of Jammu and Kashmir in accordance with the provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, and of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland in accordance with the provisions of **the Delimitation Act, 2002**.

What is Delimitation?

Delimitation literally means **the process of fixing limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies in a state that has a legislative body**.

Who carries out the exercise?

1. Delimitation is undertaken by a highly powerful commission. They are formally known as Delimitation Commission or Boundary Commission.
2. These bodies are so powerful that its orders have the force of law and they cannot be challenged before any court.
3. Such commissions have been constituted at least four times in India -- in 1952 under the Delimitation Commission Act, 1952; in 1963 under Delimitation Commission Act, 1962; in 1973 under Delimitation Act, 1972 and last in 2002 under Delimitation Act, 2002.
4. The **commissions' orders are enforced as per the date specified by the President of India**. Copies of these orders are laid before the Lok Sabha or the concerned Legislative Assembly. **No modifications are permitted**.

Composition of the Commission:

According to the Delimitation Commission Act, 2002, the Delimitation Commission appointed by the Centre has to have three members: a serving or retired judge of the Supreme Court as the chairperson, and the Chief Election Commissioner or Election Commissioner nominated by the CEC and the State Election Commissioner as ex-officio members.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

- 1) Previous delimitation commissions- powers and functions.
- 2) Composition of the commission.

Mains Link:

How and why delimitation of constituencies is carried out? Discuss.

Link:

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/delimitation-commission-for-jammu-and-kashmir-assam-manipur-arunachal-nagaland-formed/articleshow/74518745.cms>.

Sources: ET.

2. The right of an accused to be defended

What to study?

For Prelims: What rights do accused have? Important observations made by courts.

For Mains: Need for these rights and their significance, challenges.

Context: Recently, the Karnataka High Court observed that it is **unethical and illegal for lawyers to pass resolutions against representing accused in court**. This was after local bar associations had objected to four students arrested for sedition being defended in court.

This is not the first time that bar associations have passed such resolutions, despite a **Supreme Court ruling that these are “against all norms of the Constitution, the statute and professional ethics”**.

What does the Constitution say about the right of an accused to be defended?

Article 22(1) gives the fundamental right to every person not to be denied the right to be defended by a legal practitioner of his or her choice.

Article 14 provides for equality before the law and equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

Article 39A, part of the Directive Principles of state policy, states that equal opportunity to secure justice must not be denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities, and provides for free legal aid.

What has the Supreme Court said about such resolutions by bar associations?

Supreme Court observations in **2010 A S Mohammed Rafi vs State of Tamil Nadu** case:

1. Such resolutions are wholly illegal, against all traditions of the bar and against professional ethics.
2. Every person, however wicked, depraved, vile, degenerate, perverted, loathsome, execrable, vicious or repulsive he may be regarded by society has **a right to be defended in a court of law and correspondingly, it is the duty of the lawyer to defend him.**”
3. Such resolutions were **“against all norms of the Constitution, the statute and professional ethics”, called these “a disgrace to the legal community”, and declared them null and void.**

How are professional ethics of lawyers defined?

The Bar Council of India has Rules on Professional Standards, part of the Standards of Professional Conduct and Etiquette to be followed by lawyers under **the Advocates Act**.

An advocate **is bound to accept any brief in the courts or tribunals, at a fee consistent with his standing at the Bar and the nature of the case**. The Rules provide for a lawyer refusing to accept a particular brief in “special circumstances”.

Last year, The Uttarakhand High Court clarified that these special circumstances refer to an individual advocate who may choose not to appear in a particular case, but who cannot be prohibited from defending an accused by any threat of removal of his membership of the bar association.

How frequent are resolutions not to defend an accused?

Various bar associations across the country have passed such resolutions over the years. Among the prominent cases:

1. After the 2008 terror attack in Mumbai, a resolution was passed against representing Ajmal Kasab. A Legal Aid lawyer was assigned the brief but he refused, while another who agreed to defend Kasab faced threats. Subsequently, a lawyer was appointed and given police security.
2. After the 2012 gangrape in Delhi, lawyers in Saket court passed a resolution not to defend the accused.
3. In Hyderabad last year, the Bar Association passed a resolution against representing four men who had been arrested for the rape and murder of a veterinary doctor, and who were later killed in an alleged encounter.
4. In 2017, the Supreme Court directed lawyers of the Gurgaon District Bar Association not to obstruct any lawyer defending the accused in the murder of a seven-year-old schoolboy.

Have lawyers faced action for such resolutions?

Uttarakhand High Court has previously held that, in such instances, the State Bar Council can initiate action against office-bearers of the Bar Association if such resolutions are passed.

It also said **that action under Section 15(2) of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971**, can be considered against advocates who interrupt court proceedings.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Various rights guaranteed under Article 20 and 21.
2. Their relevance.

Mains Link:

What does the Constitution say about the right of an accused to be defended? Discuss.

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/karnataka-sedition-case-bar-association-supreme-court-6303016/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

3. How an MP is suspended from Lok Sabha by the Speaker?

What to study?

For Prelims: Provisions wrt to suspension of MPs.

For Mains: Need for and significance of these provisions, other measures necessary in this regard.

Context: Seven Congress members were recently suspended for unruly behaviour in the Lok Sabha. The motion was passed by a voice vote.

What is the reason for suspending an MP?

The general principle is that **it is the role and duty of the Speaker of Lok Sabha to maintain order so that the House can function smoothly**. This is a daunting task even at the best of times.

In order to ensure that proceedings are conducted in the proper manner, **the Speaker is empowered to force a Member to withdraw from the House (for the remaining part of the day), or to place him/her under suspension**.

What are the rules under which the Speaker acts?

Rule Number 373 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business says: "The Speaker, if is of the opinion that the conduct of any Member is grossly disorderly, may direct such Member to withdraw immediately from the House, and any Member so ordered to withdraw shall do so forthwith and shall remain absent during the remainder of the day's sitting."

To deal with more recalcitrant Members, the Speaker may take recourse to **Rules 374 and 374A**. **Rule 374 says:** "(1) The Speaker may, if deems it necessary, name a Member who disregards the authority of the Chair or abuses the rules of the House by persistently and wilfully obstructing the business thereof.

"(2) If a Member is so named by the Speaker, the Speaker shall, on a motion being made forthwith put the question that the Member (naming such Member) be suspended from the service of the House for a period not exceeding the remainder of the session: Provided that the House may, at any time, on a motion being made, resolve that such suspension be terminated.

"(3) A member suspended under this rule shall forthwith withdraw from the precincts of the House."

What is the procedure for revocation of a Member's suspension?

While the Speaker is empowered to place a Member under suspension, **the authority for revocation of this order is not vested in her. It is for the House, if it so desires, to resolve on a motion to revoke the suspension**.

What happens in Rajya Sabha?

Like the Speaker in Lok Sabha, the **Chairman of the Rajya Sabha** is empowered under **Rule Number 255 of its Rule Book** to "direct any Member whose conduct is in his opinion grossly disorderly to withdraw immediately" from the House.

1. "Any Member so ordered to withdraw shall do so forthwith and shall absent himself during the remainder of the day's meeting."

2. The Chairman may “name a Member who disregards the authority of the Chair or abuses the rules of the Council by persistently and wilfully obstructing” business.
3. In such a situation, the House may adopt a motion suspending the Member from the service of the House for a period not exceeding the remainder of the session.
4. The House may, however, by another motion, terminate the suspension.
5. Unlike the Speaker, however, the Rajya Sabha Chairman does not have the power to suspend a Member.

Need of the hour:

A **balance has to be struck**. There can be no question that the enforcement of the supreme authority of the Speaker is essential for smooth conduct of proceedings. However, it must be remembered that her job is to run the House, not to lord over it.

The **solution to unruly behaviour has to be long-term and consistent with democratic values**.

A step in that same direction could be to **discontinue the practice of herding people out of the visitors’ gallery when the House witnesses chaos**. It has been suggested that it may perhaps be a good idea to let them be — and **to also reserve a few blocks in the gallery for schoolchildren, who could see for themselves the conduct of Members**.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Provisions wrt to Election and suspension of MPs.
2. Relevant authorities.
3. Appeals in this regard.

Mains Link:

How an MP is suspended from Lok Sabha by the Speaker? Write a note on various provisions in this regard.

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-speaker-lok-sabha-congress-members-suspension-6300966/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

4. Quota within quota for SCs in Haryana

What to study?

For Prelims: Overview of the Bill, key provisions, important SC groups in the state.

For Mains: Relevance and significance of this Bill, rationale behind this move, SC’s observations on the matter.

Context: The Haryana cabinet has recently approved **the draft bill ‘The Haryana Scheduled Castes (Reservation in Admission in Educational Institutions) bill, 2020.’**

This bill provides **quota within quota for SCs in the state**.

Key provisions and highlights of the Bill:

1. The bill provides reservation of **50% seats to the deprived scheduled castes**, out of the total 20% reserved for SC in the graduation and postgraduation courses.
2. This will cover all educational institutions maintained by the government or receiving aid out of the state funds. It also includes government and government-aided technical and professional institutions.
3. Here, deprived SC includes all 36 castes which were part of Block A **including Valmiki, Bazigar, Sansi, Deha, Dhanak, and Sapera**.

Why this was necessary?

- As per employees data collected, the total number of the SC employees in the state is nearly 22% of the total strength. However, in respect of representation in various services, the erstwhile Block A scheduled castes representation in Group-A, Group-B and Group-C services is only 4.7 per cent, 4.14 per cent and 6.27 per cent respectively, though their population is about 11% of the total state population.

- The Block A scheduled castes or the deprived scheduled castes were not so educationally qualified as the data from SECC 2011 indicates. Only 2.13% population of the deprived SCs is graduate, 3.78% of them are senior secondary and 6.74% are matriculate. Besides, 33.63% of them are illiterate. This makes them a distinct class of citizens who are deprived of their constitutional right of equality due to lack of education. Thus, it was decided to provide such reservation in admission to candidates belonging to deprived SCs.

Are states empowered to make such decisions?

Article 15(5) of the Constitution authorises the State to make special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for SCs/STs for admission to educational institutions.

Criticisms:

This move is being criticised on the ground that it creates division within a class. Instead of this, critics say, the government should have offered special package or scholarship to Block A to upgrade their educational status.

What has the Supreme Court said in such matters?

The Supreme Court of India in **the case of E.V. Chinnaiyah Vs. State of Andhra Pradesh (2004(9) SCALE)** has held that the castes etc. specified as Scheduled Castes under **Article 341 of the Constitution** is a homogeneous group for the purpose of the Constitution.

The court said that the benefits of reservation are available to members of all such castes which have been specified as Scheduled Caste in relation to a State/Union Territory.

This case deals with the issue that **whether the schedule caste can further be sub-divided so that the benefit of reservation can reach to the outreach.**

The main part of the judgement of the Court is heavily relied upon the argument that **when the groups are been notified by the President in the list under Article 341 of the Constitution**, the same take the shape of a homogenous class and thus there cannot be any further classification of the class.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Overview of Articles 14, 15, 16 and 341.
2. Comparison of Chinnaiyah with that of Sawhney case.
3. Other states which provide reservations with reservation.

Mains Link:

Write a note on the evolution of creamy layer concept in India.

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/what-is-haryanas-quota-within-sc-quota-for-college-admissions-6307345/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

5. What is the Anti Defection Law and how is it implemented?

What to study?

For Prelims: Features of 10th schedule of the constitution, dismissal, exceptions and judicial review of the decision.

For Mains: Significance of anti- defection law, concerns associated with its misuse and measures to improve its transparency.

Context: The crisis in Madhya Pradesh is not going to end anytime soon. The Speaker's role would come into play whether it comes to deciding on the resignations or disqualifying the MLAs.

The **Tenth Schedule, technicalities and also the Anti Defection Law** would be cited during the crisis. Ultimately the matter could also end up in the Supreme Court.

What is the anti-defection law?

The **Tenth Schedule** was inserted in the Constitution in 1985 by **the 52nd Amendment Act**.

- It lays down **the process by which legislators may be disqualified on grounds of defection by the Presiding Officer** of a legislature based on a petition by any other member of the House.
- The decision on question as to disqualification on ground of defection is referred to **the Chairman or the Speaker of such House, and his decision is final.**

The law applies to both Parliament and state assemblies.

Disqualification:

If a member of a house belonging to a political party:

1. Voluntarily gives up the membership of his political party, or
2. Votes, or does not vote in the legislature, contrary to the directions of his political party. However, if the member has taken prior permission, or is condoned by the party within 15 days from such voting or abstention, the member shall not be disqualified.
3. If an independent candidate joins a political party after the election.
4. If a nominated member joins a party six months after he becomes a member of the legislature.

Exceptions under the law:

Legislators may change their party without the risk of disqualification in certain circumstances.

- **The law allows a party to merge with or into another party provided that at least two-thirds of its legislators are in favour of the merger.**
- In such a scenario, neither the members who decide to merge, nor the ones who stay with the original party will face disqualification.

Decision of the Presiding Officer is subject to judicial review:

The law initially stated that the decision of the Presiding Officer is not subject to judicial review. This condition was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1992, thereby allowing appeals against the Presiding Officer's decision in the High Court and Supreme Court. However, it held that there may not be any judicial intervention until the Presiding Officer gives his order.

Advantages of anti-defection law:

1. Provides stability to the government by preventing shifts of party allegiance.
2. Ensures that candidates remain loyal to the party as well the citizens voting for him.
3. Promotes party discipline.
4. Facilitates merger of political parties without attracting the provisions of Anti-defection
5. Expected to reduce corruption at the political level.
6. Provides for punitive measures against a member who defects from one party to another.

Various Recommendations to overcome the challenges posed by the law:

1. **Dinesh Goswami Committee on electoral reforms:** Disqualification should be limited to following cases:

A member voluntarily gives up the membership of his political party

A member abstains from voting, or votes contrary to the party whip in a motion of vote of confidence or motion of no-confidence. Political parties could issue whips only when the government was in danger.

2. **Law Commission (170th Report)**

Provisions which exempt splits and mergers from disqualification to be deleted.

Pre-poll electoral fronts should be treated as political parties under anti-defection

Political parties should limit issuance of whips to instances only when the government is in danger.

3. **Election Commission:**

Decisions under the Tenth Schedule should be made by the President/ Governor on the binding advice of the Election Commission.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Names of various committees and commissions with regard to Anti Defection law.

2. Decision of presiding officer vs Judicial review.
3. Grounds for disqualification and recent examples.
4. Relevant Supreme Court cases and verdicts.

Mains Link:

Examine the provisions of Anti- defection law. Has this law largely failed to meet its objective? Discuss.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GR2784DS0.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

6. What is a floor test or trust vote?

What to study?

For Prelims: What is it? How is it carried out?

For Mains: Significance and the need for this procedure.

Context: Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath has requested Governor Lalji Tandon to hold a **floor test** in the Assembly session starting from March 16, on a date fixed by the Speaker.

What is a floor test or trust vote?

A floor test is a constitutional mechanism. It is used to determine if the incumbent government enjoys the support of the legislature.

How it takes place?

1. This voting process happen in the state's Legislative Assembly or the Lok Sabha at the central level.
2. Technically, the chief minister of a state is appointed by the Governor. The appointed chief minister usually belongs to the single largest party or the coalition which has the 'magic number'. **The magic number is the total number of seats required to form a government, or stay in power. It is the half-way mark, plus one. In case of a tie, the Speaker casts the deciding vote.**
3. However, at times, a government's majority can be questioned. **The leader of the party claiming majority has to move a vote of confidence.**
4. If some MLAs remain absent or abstain from voting, **the majority is counted on the basis of those present and voting.** This effectively reduces the strength of the House and in turn brings down the majority-mark.
5. The voting process **can happen orally, with electronic gadgets or a ballot process.**
6. The Governor can also ask the Chief Minister to prove his or her majority in the House if the stability of the government comes into question.

Composite floor test:

While there is another test, **Composite floor test, which is necessitated when more than one person stake the claim to form the government and the majority is not clear.**

Governor may call a special session to assess who has the majority. The majority is counted based on those present and voting and this can be done through voice vote also.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Floor test vs Composite floor test.
2. Majority required to form the govt.
3. Voting during floor test.
4. Appointment of Chief Minister when there is clear majority vs Hung assembly.
5. Can speaker cast his vote?

Mains Link:

Ambiguity in the law on conducting floor tests often lead to abuses and misuses. Comment.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GSR7896BC.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

7. Delhi Assembly passes resolution against NPR, NRC

What to study?

For Prelims: Overview of NPR, NRC and can states deny centre's directions?

For Mains: Implications and outcomes of such acts.

Context: Delhi Assembly passes resolution **against NPR, NRC.**

As many as 11 Indian States have passed a resolution against the NRC and the NPR.

Can States Refuse To Implement NPR And NRC? What Does The Constitution Say?

Under **Seventh Schedule of the Constitution**, the subject of **citizenship, naturalisation and aliens (foreigners)** finds mention exclusively in **the Union List** which contains a total of 97 subjects.

So, **citizenship and the laws related to it are exclusively in the domain of the central government** and the **refusal by states to implement NRC or NPR has no legal ground.**

What can the states do?

The state governments can move the courts to challenge the central government but a refusal to implement is not within their powers. **Article 365 of the Constitution** makes it mandatory for the state governments to follow and implement the directions of the Central government, failing which the President can hold that the state government cannot carry on.

Why states' cooperation is necessary?

- For all practical purposes, a nationwide NRC is impossible without the help of the state governments.
- It's a huge exercise which involves use of massive administrative machinery. Central government cannot send its officers without the protection provided by the states' law and order machinery. Hence, it will be difficult to go ahead without the co-operation of the state governments.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Article 365 and the power of States.
2. Citizenship under 7th schedule of the Indian Constitution.
3. NPR vs NRC.

Mains Link:

Can States Refuse To Implement NPR And NRC? What Does The Constitution Say? Discuss.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GSR7896BG.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

8. State Election Commission

What to study?

For Prelims: SEC- composition, functions and powers.

For Mains: Issues surrounding their autonomy and functioning, ways to address them.

Context: The Andhra Pradesh government has filed petitions in the Supreme Court and the High Court over the issue of **the State Election Commission (SEC)** postponing the local body elections citing the COVID-19 threat.

What is the issue?

- The government, in its petition before the apex court, accused the SEC of not taking it into confidence while taking the major decision of deferring the polls and called the move anti- constitutional.
- The government also found fault with the SEC for not consulting the High Court on whose instructions the elections were scheduled.

About the State Election Commission:

The **Constitution of India** vests in the State Election Commission, consisting of a State Election Commissioner, the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls for, and the conduct of all elections to the Panchayats and the Municipalities (**Articles 243K, 243ZA**).

The **State Election Commissioner is appointed by the Governor**.

As per **article 243(C3) the Governor**, when so requested by the State Election Commission, make available to the State Election Commission such staff as may be necessary for the discharge of the functions conferred on the SEC by clause (1).

What was the need for State Election Commissions?

Under the Constitution, **establishment of local self-government institutions is the responsibility of the states** (entry 5, List II, Seventh Schedule).

However, experience showed that not all state governments were serious about empowering Panchayati Raj institutions as elections were not being conducted regularly.

The Constitution was **amended in 1992 to define the term (five years) for these institutions**. Simultaneously, another provision was made for setting up a constitutional authority, the SEC, on the lines of the EC to conduct regular panchayat elections.

The ECI and SECs have a similar mandate; do they also have similar powers?

The provisions of **Article 243K** of the Constitution, which provides for setting up of SECs, are almost identical to those of **Article 324** related to the EC. In other words, the SECs enjoy the same status as the EC.

In 2006, **the Supreme Court emphasised the two constitutional authorities enjoy the same powers**. In **Kishan Singh Tomar vs Municipal Corporation of the City of Ahmedabad**, the Supreme Court directed that **state governments should abide by orders of the SECs during the conduct of the panchayat and municipal elections, just like they follow the instructions of the EC during Assembly and Parliament polls**.

How far can courts intervene?

Courts cannot interfere in the conduct of polls to local bodies and self-government institutions once the electoral process has been set in motion.

Article 243-O of the Constitution bars interference in poll matters set in motion by the SECs; **Article 329** bars interference in such matters set in motion by the EC.

Only after the polls are over can the SECs' decisions or conduct be questioned through an election petition. These powers enjoyed by the SECs are the same as those by the EC.

In practice, are the SECs as independent as the EC?

Although state election commissioners are appointed by the state governors and **can only be removed by impeachment**, in the last two decades many have struggled to assert their independence.

One of the most widely remembered cases of confrontation happened in Maharashtra in 2008. Then state election commissioner Nand Lal was arrested and sent to jail for two days in March 2008 after the Assembly found him guilty of breach of privilege in an alleged conflict over his jurisdiction and powers. Lal had asserted that as the state election commissioner he had the power to hold elections to the offices of mayor, deputy mayor, sarpanch and deputy sarpanch. After a Congress MLA moved a privilege motion objecting to the notification, the privileges committee of the Assembly asked him to appear and explain. Lal did not, which led to the committee concluding that he was creating hurdles in "constitutional and legislative functions", **a breach of privilege**. He was sent for two days of civil imprisonment.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Breach of privilege- application, implications and provisions in this regard.
2. Applicability of impeachment process for various bodies under the Indian Constitution.
3. Article 243 vs 324, similarities and differences in powers of state election commissions vs Election Commission of India.
4. Appeals against decisions of Election Commissions.
5. Elections to Parliament and state legislatures vs Local Bodies.

Mains Link:

Are the State Election Commissions in India as independent as the Election Commission of India? Discuss.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/govt-challenges-sec-decision-in-sc-hc/article31084665.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

9. What is Article 142?

What to study?

For Prelims: Overview and applicability of Article 142.

For Mains: Need for and significance of these powers for the Supreme Court.

Context: In an extraordinary display of its constitutional powers under **Article 142 of the Indian Constitution**, the Supreme Court has stripped Manipur Cabinet Minister T. Shyamkumar, who is facing disqualification proceedings for defection, of his office and banned him from entering the Assembly with immediate effect.

What's the issue?

The apex court took this decision after Speaker Y. Khemchand Singh, even after the one month's period given by the apex court, failed to decide on the disqualification petition pending against Shyamkumar. Instead, the Speaker sought adjournment for eight weeks on the matter.

What is Article 142?

Article 142 "provide(s) a unique power to the Supreme Court, to do "complete justice" between the parties, i.e., where at times law or statute may not provide a remedy, the Court can extend itself to put a quietus to a dispute in a manner which would befit the facts of the case.

Article 142(1) states that "The Supreme Court in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it, and any decree so passed or order so made shall be enforceable throughout the territory of India in such manner as may be prescribed by or under any law made by Parliament and, until provision in that behalf is so made, in such manner as the President may by order prescribe".

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Disqualification of MLAs under 10th schedule.
2. Exceptions under the schedule.
3. Examples of invocation of Article 142 by the Supreme Court.
4. Similar powers to High Courts.
5. Original vs Appellate jurisdictions.
6. Judicial review of Speaker's decisions.

Mains Link:

"The Supreme Court's use of its vast powers under the Article 142 has done tremendous good to many deprived sections. However, it is time to institute checks and balances." Discuss.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=G1U78TT0T.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

10. What is Section 188 IPC?

What to study?

For Prelims: What is Section 188 of IPC?

For Mains: Imposition, concerns and how to prevent its misuse.

Why in News?

The **Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897** lays down punishment as per **Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860**, for flouting orders issued by various state governments to contain the spread of COVID-19.

In the past, the Act has been routinely enforced across the country for dealing with outbreaks of diseases such as swine flu, dengue, and cholera. Its penal provisions are currently being invoked by states to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

So, What is Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code?

Section 188 relates to **Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant.**

- It says violators can be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one month or with fine which may extend to two hundred rupees, or with both;
- and if such disobedience causes or tends to cause danger to human life, health or safety, or causes or tends to cause a riot or affray, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both.

What happens if you violate the lockdown orders?

Under Section 188, there two offences:

1. Disobedience to an order lawfully promulgated by a public servant, If such disobedience causes obstruction, annoyance or injury to persons lawfully employed

Punishment: Simple Imprisonment for 1 month or fine of Rs 200 or both

2. If such disobedience causes danger to human life, health or safety, etc.

Punishment: Simple Imprisonment for 6 months or fine of Rs 1000 or both

According to the First Schedule of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), 1973, both offences are cognizable, bailable, and can be tried by any magistrate.

These are extraordinary times, but under what circumstances is Sec 188 IPC invoked normally?

To be punishable under S. 188, the order has to be for **public purposes by public functionaries**. An order made in a civil suit between two parties does not fall under this Section.

There must be evidence that the accused had knowledge of the order with the disobedience of which he is charged. Mere proof of a general notification promulgating the order does not satisfy the requirements of the section. Mere disobedience of the order does not constitute an offence in itself, it must be shown that the disobedience has or tends to a certain consequence.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Difference between sections 144 and 188.
2. When, why and who imposes it?
3. Powers to review actions under this act.
4. Punishment prescribed under this section.
5. Difference between CrPC and IPC.
6. Overview of the Epidemics Act.

Mains Link:

What is Section 188 of the CrPC? Why is it imposed? Discuss.

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-section-188-of-ipc-under-which-you-can-be-fined-rs-1000-for-violating-lockdown-6328022/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

11. Manipur MLA Shyamkumar disqualified for defection

What to study?

For Prelims: Features of 10th schedule of the constitution, dismissal, exceptions and judicial review of the decision.

For Mains: Significance of anti- defection law, concerns associated with its misuse and measures to improve its transparency.

Context: Manipur Speaker Yumnam Khemchand has disqualified Thounaojam Shyamkumar as a member of the Assembly for **defection**.

What is the issue?

Shyamkumar had joined the BJP shortly after being voted to power on a Congress ticket during the 2017 Assembly polls.

This was clearly in violation of the provisions of **the 10th Schedule of the Constitution of India**.

What is the anti-defection law?

The **Tenth Schedule** was inserted in the Constitution in 1985 by **the 52nd Amendment Act**.

- It lays down **the process by which legislators may be disqualified on grounds of defection by the Presiding Officer** of a legislature based on a petition by any other member of the House.
- The decision on question as to disqualification on ground of defection is referred to **the Chairman or the Speaker of such House, and his decision is final**.

The law applies to both Parliament and state assemblies.

Disqualification:

If a member of a house belonging to a political party:

5. Voluntarily gives up the membership of his political party, or
6. Votes, or does not vote in the legislature, contrary to the directions of his political party. However, if the member has taken prior permission, or is condoned by the party within 15 days from such voting or abstention, the member shall not be disqualified.
7. If an independent candidate joins a political party after the election.
8. If a nominated member joins a party six months after he becomes a member of the legislature.

Exceptions under the law:

Legislators may change their party without the risk of disqualification in certain circumstances.

- **The law allows a party to merge with or into another party provided that at least two-thirds of its legislators are in favour of the merger.**
- In such a scenario, neither the members who decide to merge, nor the ones who stay with the original party will face disqualification.

Decision of the Presiding Officer is subject to judicial review:

The law initially stated that the decision of the Presiding Officer is not subject to judicial review. This condition was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1992, thereby allowing appeals against the Presiding Officer's decision in the High Court and Supreme Court. However, it held that there may not be any judicial intervention until the Presiding Officer gives his order.

Advantages of anti-defection law:

7. Provides stability to the government by preventing shifts of party allegiance.
8. Ensures that candidates remain loyal to the party as well the citizens voting for him.
9. Promotes party discipline.
10. Facilitates merger of political parties without attracting the provisions of Anti-defection
11. Expected to reduce corruption at the political level.
12. Provides for punitive measures against a member who defects from one party to another.

Various Recommendations to overcome the challenges posed by the law:

4. **Dinesh Goswami Committee on electoral reforms:** Disqualification should be limited to following cases:

A member voluntarily gives up the membership of his political party

A member abstains from voting, or votes contrary to the party whip in a motion of vote of confidence or motion of no-confidence. Political parties could issue whips only when the government was in danger.

5. Law Commission (170th Report)

Provisions which exempt splits and mergers from disqualification to be deleted.

Pre-poll electoral fronts should be treated as political parties under anti-defection

Political parties should limit issuance of whips to instances only when the government is in danger.

6. Election Commission:

Decisions under the Tenth Schedule should be made by the President/ Governor on the binding advice of the Election Commission.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

5. Names of various committees and commissions with regard to Anti Defection law.
6. Committees vs Commissions.
7. Decision of presiding officer vs Judicial review.
8. Merger vs Split of political parties.
9. Is anti- defection law applicable to the presiding officer?
10. Relevant Supreme Court cases and verdicts.

Mains Link:

Examine the provisions of Anti- defection law. Has this law largely failed to meet its objective? Discuss.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/manipur-mla-shyamkumar-disqualified/article31194383.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

Topics: Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions.

1. SC frees trade in cryptocurrencies, annuls RBI curb

What to study?

For Prelims: What are crypto currencies? SC's order? What the RBI circular said?

For Mains: Implications and significance of this order, what is the way ahead for Virtual Currencies I'm India?

Context: The Supreme Court has set aside an April 6, 2018, circular of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) that prohibited banks and entities regulated by it from providing services in relation to **virtual currencies (VCs)**.

What did the Court say?

1. RBI has not come out with a stand that any of the entities regulated by it namely, nationalised banks/scheduled commercial banks/cooperative banks/NBFCs, have suffered any loss or adverse effect directly or indirectly, on account of **virtual currencies (VCs)** exchanges.
2. Hence, the RBI circular is "disproportionate" with an otherwise consistent stand taken by the central bank that VCs were not prohibited in the country.
3. Besides, the court found that the RBI did not consider the availability of alternatives before issuing the circular.
4. Besides, the court referred to the Centre's failure to introduce an official digital rupee despite two draft Bills and several committees.

Background:

The top court's order followed a plea by **the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IMAI)** objecting to the RBI ban.

In April 2018, the central bank had tightened rules to discourage the use of virtual currencies such as Bitcoins, prohibiting banks and financial institutions from providing any related services.

Arguments by IMAI:

Cryptocurrency is not strictly currency and was more in the nature of commodity, and RBI does not have powers to impose such ban in the absence of a law in that regard prohibiting cryptocurrency.

India should look at most other nations that are not only allowing cryptocurrency trading, but have moved to launch their own virtual currencies.

What RBI said?

1. The RBI contended that it had, right from 2013, been cautioning users of cryptocurrencies and that it considers cryptocurrency a digital means of payment which has to be nipped in the bud so that the payment system in the country is not jeopardized. The regulator also argued that it is empowered to take decisions banning cryptocurrencies.
2. That ban was aimed at "ring-fencing" the country's financial system from the private virtual currencies, deemed illegal by the government.
3. It had also argued that Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies cannot be treated as currencies as they are not made of metal or exist in physical form, nor were they stamped by the government.

What are Cryptocurrencies?

Cryptocurrencies are digital currencies in which encryption techniques are used to regulate the generation of units of currency and verify the transfer of funds, operating independently of a central bank.

Examples: Bitcoin, Ethereum etc.

How is it being regulated worldwide?

While many regulators around the world have been warning against trading in Bitcoin, some have backed it. In 2017, Japan accepted Bitcoin as legal currency and even officially recognised exchanges dealing in the cryptocurrency.



Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Various cryptocurrencies.
2. Cryptocurrencies launched by various countries.
3. What is Blockchain technology?

Mains Link:

What are Cryptocurrencies? Why there is a need for regulation? Discuss.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GG277116T.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

2. Centre Cannot Brand Organisations 'Political': SC

What to study?

For Prelims: Overview of the judgment, FCRA guidelines on foreign funding to NGOs, eligibility.

For Mains: Significance and implications of this judgment, Misuse of foreign funds, issues and the need for stringent measures to prevent the misuse of foreign funds.

Context: The Supreme Court recently held that **the central government cannot brand an organisation political and deprive it of its right to receive foreign funds** for using legitimate forms of dissent to aid a public cause.

What's the case?

A petition was filed by the **Indian Social Action Forum (INSAF)** challenging certain provisions of the **Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 2010** and the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Rules of 2011**.

The **Central Government** is conferred with **unguided and uncanalised power** under these Laws to brand organisations 'political' and shut down their access to foreign funds.

Various provisions in question:

1. **Section 5(1) of the FCRA** was challenged for being vague as it allowed the Centre to decide freely whether a seemingly non-political organisation was actually political in nature.
2. **Section 5(4) of the FCRA** was questioned as it did not exactly identify the authority before which an organisation could represent its grievance.

3. **Various clauses of Rule 3 of the 2011 Rules** were challenged. This provision identified the various types of 'political' activities for which/organisations whose foreign funding could be stopped by the government.

Observations made by the Supreme Court:

1. An organisation, which supports the cause of a group of citizens agitating for their rights without a political goal or objective, cannot be penalised by being declared as an organisation of a political nature.
2. However, foreign funding could be stopped if an organisation took recourse to these forms of protest to score a political goal.
3. Organisations with political objectives in their memorandum of association or bye-laws cannot be permitted access to foreign funds because of their clear political nature.

Implications and significance of the judgment:

The Supreme Court agreeing with the observations made in the earlier judgment of the Delhi High Court has held that **the provisions made under the FCR act and rules are "expansive" and not vague**. It has thus dismissed **the arguments of the provisions being unconstitutional**.

The order makes it clear that **administration is not influenced by foreign-funded political organisation**. However, **the Central government cannot classify an organization political for using legitimate forms of dissent** like bandh, hartal, road roko or jail 'bharo' to aid a public cause. The court noted that **such a classification would deprive the organization of its right to receive foreign funds**.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Overview of FCRA.
2. Definition of foreign contributions.
3. Eligibility and exceptions under the law.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of recent Supreme Court judgment Which said that Centre cannot brand an organisation as 'political' for aiding a public cause.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/centre-cant-brand-an-organisation-as-political-for-aiding-a-public-cause-supreme-court/article31003668.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

3. Allahabad High Court orders removal of controversial 'name and shame' hoardings

What to study?

For Prelims: What is CAA? The recent act and what are the powers available to police and executive under CrPC to issue such orders.

For Mains: Significance and implications of this judgment.

Context: Allahabad High Court has directed the Lucknow administration to remove forthwith the controversial **'name and shame' hoardings** of those arrested during protests against **the Citizenship (Amendment) Act**.

What's the issue?

The police put up several hoardings across Lucknow identifying those accused of violence during the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in December last, triggering those named to fear for their safety. Later, the **Allahabad High Court** had taken **suo motu** notice of this act.

Important observations made by the Court:

1. The action of the State is nothing but **an unwarranted interference in privacy of people**. The same hence, is in violation of **Article 21 of the Constitution of India**.

2. The placement of personal data of selected persons "**reflects colorable exercise of powers**" by the **government**.
3. There are certain provisions empowering the investigating agencies or other Executives **to take picture of accused for the purpose of their identification and record** but that too is not open for publication. The only time these photographs be published is to have assistance in the apprehension of a fugitive from justice.
4. No power is available in **the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973** to police or the Executive to display personal records of a person to public at large.
5. On the issue of court taking the case suo motu, it said "**where there is gross negligence on part of public authorities and government, where the law is disobeyed and the public is put to suffering and where the precious values of the constitution are subjected to injuries, a constitutional court can very well take notice of that at its own.**"

How the administration defended its move?

While accepting absence of any statute permitting executive authorities to put such banners, the govt had opposed the petition by submitting that **the object of displaying personal details of the individuals "is to deter the mischief mongers from causing damage to public and private property."**

The State has also questioned **the territorial jurisdiction of the court in Allahabad** and argued that the court "erred in invoking public interest jurisdiction in the instant matter, that being available to under privileged section of the society only.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. What is Judicial Activism?
2. What is Judicial overreach?
3. Examples of the above two.
4. Article 21?

Mains Link:

What is Judicial activism? Discuss with examples.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/allahabad-high-court-orders-removal-of-controversial-name-and-shame-hoardings/article31022409.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

4. Petitions and safeguards: Understanding the delay convicts' hanging

What to study?

For Prelims: Legal procedure to be followed while executing death sentences.

For Mains: Significance and the need for checks and balances, concerns over delay in execution.

Context: The **mercy plea** filed by one of the four convicts in 2012 Delhi gangrape case was recently rejected by the President. Now, they will be hanged on March 20.

The fresh date is in line with the requirement of **a gap of 14 days between the date of rejection of the mercy petition and the date of hanging.**

What is the regular legal procedure followed in death penalty cases?

The legal procedure by which a convict is sent to his death is complex, and packed with safeguards.

1. First, **a trial court may pronounce the death sentence only in the "rarest of the rare" cases.**
2. Such a sentence is **automatically referred to the High Court for confirmation. A warrant of execution** may only be issued once the sentence has been confirmed by the High Court.
3. Next, the convict has **the option of approaching the Supreme Court against the High Court's decision.**
4. After the Supreme Court's decision, the convict may file **a review petition, and a separate curative petition** before the Supreme Court. Both are standard legal processes, meant to rectify egregious errors in judgments.

5. Thereafter, a **mercy petition before the President may be filed**. Such a petition is disposed of after a process involving a **recommendation from the relevant state government, and sanction from the Home Ministry**.
6. The convict may then approach the Supreme Court again by filing a **petition questioning the legitimacy of the President's decision** in the mercy petition.
7. Finally, the disposal of this petition ends the process, and the death sentence may be executed thereafter.

In conclusion, **four separate petitions are available to a convict even after the Supreme Court has confirmed the conviction**.

Need for such checks and balances:

Regular legal procedure in death penalty cases has multiple checks because of the realisation of past failures. This has resulted in the addition of an extra layer of protections for death row convicts.

Besides, it is a principle of criminal law that **it is preferable to exonerate 10 criminals to condemning even a single innocent**.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Various pleas and petitions mentioned?
2. Power of SC to review its own orders.

Mains Link:

It is preferable to exonerate 10 criminals to condemning even a single innocent. Critically comment.

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/delhi-gangrape-december-16-convicts-hanging-delay-explained-6301272/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

5. SC to hear Uttar Pradesh plea on Lucknow banners today

Context: Uttar Pradesh government has **challenged in Supreme Court** an Allahabad High Court order to the district and police authorities in Lucknow to **“forthwith” remove roadside banners displaying the personal details of select persons accused of “vandalism” during the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests in December 2019**.

- The State has also challenged the jurisdiction of the Allahabad Bench of the High Court to **suo motu** take cognisance of the banners in Lucknow.

What UP state government says?

The State has argued that the HC erred in invoking public interest jurisdiction, saying it was available only to address the problems plaguing the underprivileged lot. The persons whose personal details were displayed on the banners were “capable enough to agitate their grievance, if any, at their own”.

This issue has previously been covered in detail on:

<https://www.insightsonindia.com/2020/03/10/allahabad-high-court-orders-removal-of-controversial-name-and-shame-hoardings/>.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

Regular vs Constitutional bench of High Court vs Constitutional Court.

Jurisdictions of High Court vs Supreme Court.

Appeals against decisions of High Court.

Suo Motu interventions of Courts.

Powers under CrPC to Police and executive to display personal records of a person.

Mains Link:

The placement of personal data of selected persons “reflects colorable exercise of powers” by the government. Critically comment.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GQJ77UT73.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

6. Role of L-G and govt. intertwined: Madras HC

What to study?

For Prelims: Power of LG of Puducherry, sources of these powers and comparison with LG of Delhi.

For Mains: Tussle over executive powers between LG and state legislature, issues, concerns and what needs to be done?

Context: Madras High Court has set aside its own order restraining the L-G from interfering in the day-to-day affairs of the elected government of the union territory.

Background:

- Previously, On March 30, 2019, the Madras High Court had said that the L-G does not have the power to interfere in the day-to-day activities of the union territory.
- LG also doesn't have the right to seek any government documents from the Puducherry government.

Observations made by the High Court in its latest order:

1. The role of Puducherry's Lieutenant Governor and that of an elected government in the Union Territory were **intertwined as per law, and therefore they were expected to act in unison and not in division.**
2. In the past judgment on this issue, **the single judge had erred in holding that the Puducherry Legislative Assembly enjoys similar powers to that of a State legislature.**
3. A government is **"a trustee for the little man who should not have a perception that the running of the government is a gigantic conspiracy"**.

What are the powers and sources of LG of Puducherry?

The **Government of Union Territories Act, 1963** provides for a **Legislative Assembly of Pondicherry (as Puducherry was then called), with a Council of Ministers to govern the "Union Territory of Pondicherry"**.

The same Act says that **the UT will be administered by the President of India through an Administrator (LG).**

- **Section 44 of the Act**, says the **Council of Ministers headed by a Chief Minister** will **"aid and advise the Administrator in the exercise of his functions** in relation to matters with respect to which the Legislative Assembly of the Union Territory has power to make laws".
- The same clause also allows **the LG to "act in his discretion" in the matter of lawmaking**, even though the Council of Ministers has the task of aiding and advising him.

What happens when there is a difference of opinion?

In case of a difference of opinion between the LG and his Ministers on any matter, the Administrator is **bound to refer it to the President** for a decision and **act according to the decision given by the President.**

However, the Administrator can also claim that **the matter is urgent, and take immediate action as he deems necessary.**

When prior sanction of the Administrator is required?

Under **Section 22 of the Act**, prior sanction of the Administrator is required for certain legislative proposals. These include Bills or amendments that the Council of Ministers intends to move in the Legislative Assembly, and which deal with the **"constitution and organisation of the court of the Judicial Commissioner", and "jurisdiction and powers of the court of the Judicial Commissioner with respect to any of the matters in the State List or the Concurrent List"**.

It is also obligatory on the part of the UT government to seek the **"recommendation"** of the LG before moving a **Bill or an amendment to provide for "the imposition, abolition, remission, alteration or regulation of any tax", "the amendment of the law with respect to any financial obligations undertaken or to be undertaken", and anything that has to do with the Consolidated Fund of the UT.**

Assent of LG?

Once the Assembly has passed a Bill, the LG can either **grant or withhold his assent; or reserve it for the consideration of the President. He can also send it back to the Assembly for reconsideration.**

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Powers of LG of Delhi vs Puducherry.
2. Legislative powers of states vs UTs.
3. What happens when there is difference of opinion between LG and legislature?
4. Jurisdiction of High Courts wrt to various UTs.
5. Power of Court to review their own orders.

Mains Link:

Lt Governor plays a pivotal role in running the constitutional machinery of the Union Territory of Puducherry. Discuss.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GQJ77UT71.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

7. Supreme Court dismisses pleas against post-based reservation in Karnataka

What to study?

For Prelims: A 335, overview of Karnataka law on reservation, key observations made by SC in relevant cases.

For Mains: Significance and implications of the judgment.

Context: The Supreme Court has rejected a bunch of pleas seeking exclusion of **creamy layer or better-off individuals** among Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) communities at the entry-level when it comes to **the reservation in promotions.**

The court observed the pleas were an attempt by the petitioners to challenge the actions of the Karnataka government taken pursuant to a law, which was already held to be valid by the top court in 2019.

Background:

The applications were filed in **the BK Pavitra case** in which the top court had, in 2019, upheld the constitutional validity of **the Karnataka Extension of Consequential Seniority to Government Servants Promoted on the Basis of Reservations (to the Posts in the Civil Services of the State) Act.**

The Supreme Court in its 2019 judgment had held that the Act was a valid exercise of power by the government under **Article 16 (4A)** which empowers the state to provide reservations to SC/STs in matters of promotion.

What did the Karnataka law say?

The Act enacted by the Karnataka government provides, among other things, for **consequential seniority to persons belonging to SC and ST categories** promoted under the reservation policy of Karnataka.

Consequential seniority enables reserved category candidates to retain their seniority for subsequent promotions. That is, if an SC/ST candidate is promoted ahead of a general category candidate by reason of reservation in promotion, then the promoted SC/ST candidate will retain that seniority for subsequent promotions and will thus be considered senior to general category candidate who was promoted later.

Why this is significant?

This Supreme Court order is significant because it underlines “a ‘meritorious’ candidate is not merely one who is ‘talented’ or ‘successful’ but also one whose appointment fulfils the constitutional goals of uplifting members of the SCs and STs and ensuring a diverse and representative administration”.

What is the creamy layer concept?

The ‘means-test and creamy layer’ first finds expression in the Supreme Court’s landmark judgment in **Indra Sawhney versus Union of India**, delivered by a nine-judge Bench on November 16, 1992.

‘**Creamy layer**’ are “some members of a backward class who are highly advanced socially as well as economically and educationally.

Constitutional basis for special measures- Article 335:

Article 335 recognises that special measures need to be adopted for considering the claims of SCs and STs in order to bring them to a level-playing field.

Need: Centuries of discrimination and prejudice suffered by the SCs and STs in a feudal, caste-oriented societal structure poses real barriers of access to opportunity. The proviso contains a realistic recognition that unless special measures are adopted for the SCs and STs, the mandate of the Constitution for the consideration of their claim to appointment will remain illusory.

Insta Link:

Prelims link:

1. Article 14, 15 and 335.
2. Evolution of Creamy layer concept.
3. Different benches of the Supreme Court.
4. SC's power to review its own judgments.

Mains Link:

Should the Scheduled caste and scheduled tribes community have reservations in promotions? Critically examine.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/supreme-court-dismisses-pleas-against-post-based-reservation-in-karnataka/article31113125.ece>.

Sources: The Hindu.

8. Contempt of Court

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: What is Contempt of Court? Provisions in this regard, Criticisms and analysis.

Context: The Supreme Court has held that **courts are empowered to order parties in a contempt case to surrender their passport in order to ensure their presence in the proceedings.**

Background:

The court was hearing a contempt case in connection with a **civil suit** on partition of a disputed property in Delhi.

What is contempt under the Indian law?

In India, **the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971**, divides contempt into **civil contempt and criminal contempt.**

'Civil contempt' is a 'wilful disobedience to any judgment, decree, direction, order, writ or other processes of a Court or wilful breach of an undertaking given to the court'.

'Criminal contempt' is 'the publication (whether by words, spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise) of any matter or the doing of any other act whatsoever which:

- Scandalises or tends to scandalise, or lowers or tends to lower the authority of, any court.
- Prejudices, or interferes or tends to interfere with the due course of any judicial proceeding.
- Interferes or tends to interfere with, or obstructs or tends to obstruct, the administration of justice in any other manner.'

Need:

Judiciary ensures justice and equality to every individual and institutions, therefore, the makers of the constitution upheld the sanctity and prestige of the revered institution by placing provisions under **articles 129 and 215 of the constitution**, which enables the courts to hold individuals in contempt if they attempt to demean or belittle their authority.

Is criticism allowed?

Yes. The Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, very clearly states that fair criticism of any case which has been heard and decided is not contempt.

Contempt of Courts (Amendment) Act, 2006:

The statute of 1971 has been amended by the Contempt of Courts (Amendment) Act, 2006 to include **the defence of truth under Section 13 of the original legislation.**

Section 13 that already served to restrict the powers of the court in that they were not to hold anyone in contempt unless it would substantially interfere with the due process of justice, the amendment further states that the court must permit 'justification by truth as a valid defence if it is satisfied that it is in public interest and the request for invoking the said defence is bona fide.'

Constitutional Background:

Article 129: Grants Supreme Court the power to punish for contempt of itself.

Article 142(2): Enables the Supreme Court to investigate and punish any person for its contempt.

Article 215: Grants every High Court the power to punish for contempt of itself.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Powers of SC vs HCs wrt Contempt cases.
2. Constitutional provisions in this regard.
3. Changes brought about by Contempt of Courts (Amendment) Act, 2006.
4. Civil vs Criminal contempt.

Mains Link:

Discuss how contempt cases are handled by Supreme Court in India.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GVD797C7G.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

Topics: Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

1. Privilege motion against SAD MLA for his remarks

Covered previously on:

<https://www.insightsonindia.com/2020/01/03/parliamentary-privileges/>

2. Suspension of seven Cong. MPs revoked

Context: The Lok Sabha has passed a **resolution revoking the suspension of seven Congress members with immediate effect.**

This issue was recently covered in detail on: <https://www.insightsonindia.com/2020/03/07/how-an-mp-is-suspended-from-lok-sabha-by-the-speaker/>.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Power to suspend MPs vs powers to revoke suspension.
2. Difference in procedures followed by Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in this regard.
3. Appeals with regard to election of MPs.

Mains Link:

The solution to unruly behaviour of MPs in Parliament has to be long-term and consistent with democratic values. Comment.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GQJ77UT75.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

3. What are starred questions?

What to study?

For Prelims and mains: Difference between Starred and unstarred questions, supplementary questions.

Context: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi recently said his right as an MP to ask a **supplementary question** in Lok Sabha was taken away as Speaker Om Birla did not allow him to ask one.

Rahul Gandhi was asking the government to name wilful bank loan defaulters, but was not allowed another supplementary question amid uproar in the lower house.

The right of MPs to question:

Members of Parliament have a **right to ask questions** which is one of the devices available to them to seek information on matters of public importance.

The Question Hour is one such mechanism in which the members ask questions on varied aspects of administration and governmental activity.

What is Question hour?

- The first hour of every parliamentary sitting is termed as Question hour.
- It is mentioned in the Rules of Procedure of the House.
- During this time, the members ask questions and the ministers usually give answers.

How many starred questions can be asked?

The number of starred questions was fixed at 20 per Question Hour from the fourth session of the fifth Lok Sabha in 1972.

Type of Questions:

Members have a right to ask questions to elicit information on matters of public importance within the special cognizance of the Ministers concerned. **The questions are of three types:**

Starred Questions: A Starred Question is one to which a member desires an oral answer from the Minister in the House and is required to be distinguished by him/her with an asterisk. Answer to such a question may be followed by supplementary questions by members.

Unstarred Questions: An Unstarred Question is one to which written answer is desired by the member and is deemed to be laid on the Table of the House by Minister. Thus it is not called for oral answer in the House and no supplementary question can be asked thereon.

Short Notice Questions: A member may give a notice of question on a matter of public importance and of urgent character for oral answer at a notice less than 10 days prescribed as the minimum period of notice for asking a question in ordinary course. Such a question is known as 'Short Notice Question'.

Questions to Private Members:

A Question may also be addressed to a Private Member (Under Rule 40 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha), provided that the subject matter of the question relates to some Bill, Resolution or other matter connected with the business of the House for which that Member is responsible. The procedure in regard to such questions is same as that followed in the case of questions addressed to a Minister with such variations as the Speaker may consider necessary.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Question hour vs Zero hour.
2. Starred vs unstarred vs short notice questions.
3. When can supplementary questions be allowed?
4. Role of chairperson in this matter.
5. Questions to private members.

Mains Link:

Examine the various ways in which parliament exercises control over the executive?

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GCB78KF69.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

4. Parliamentary standing committees

What to study?

For prelims and mains: Parliamentary standing committees- roles, need, functions and significance.

Context: All meetings of parliamentary standing committees have been deferred indefinitely because of the lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19.

What are the types of committees?

1. **'Standing' committees:** Their existence is uninterrupted and usually reconstituted on an annual basis. Some standing committees are **departmentally related**.
2. **'Select' committees** formed for a specific purpose, for instance, to deliberate on a particular bill. Once the Bill is disposed of, that select committee ceases to exist.
3. **Finance committees** are considered to be particularly powerful. **The three financial committees** are the Public Accounts Committee, the Estimates Committee and the Committee on Public Undertakings.

Powers:

Parliamentary committees draw their authority from **Article 105 (on privileges of Parliament members) and Article 118 (on Parliament's authority to make rules for regulating its procedure and conduct of business)**.

Significance:

Committee reports are usually exhaustive and provide authentic information on matters related to governance. Bills that are referred to committees are returned to the House with significant value addition. However, **Parliament is not bound by the recommendations of committees.**

Why have parliamentary committees?

1. Parliament is the embodiment of the people's will. **Committees are an instrument of Parliament for its own effective functioning.**
2. The smaller cohort of lawmakers, assembled on the basis of the proportional strength of individual parties and interests and expertise of individual lawmakers, could have **more open, intensive and better-informed discussions.**
3. Members of Parliament may have great acumen but they would require the assistance of experts in dealing with such situations. It is **through committees that such expertise is drawn into lawmaking.**
4. **Executive accountability to the legislature** is enforced through questions in Parliament also, which are answered by ministers. However, department standing committees go one step further and hear from senior officials of the government in a closed setting, allowing for more detailed discussions.
5. This mechanism also enables **parliamentarians to understand the executive processes closely.**

How can these committees be made more effective?

1. Parliamentary committees **don't have dedicated subject-wise research support available.** The knowledge gap is partially bridged by expert testimony from government and other stakeholders. Their work could be made more effective if the committees had full-time, sector-specific research staff.
2. Currently, the rules of Parliament don't require every bill to be referred to a parliamentary committee for scrutiny. While this allows the government greater flexibility and the ability to speed up legislative business, it comes at the cost of ineffective scrutiny by the highest law-making body. **Mandatory scrutiny of all bills by parliamentary committees would ensure better planning of legislative business.**

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Difference between Parliamentary vs Cabinet committees.
2. Standing vs select vs finance committees.
3. Who appoints chairperson and members of these committees?
4. Committees exclusive to only Lok Sabha.
5. Committees where Speaker is the chairperson.

Mains Link:

What are Parliamentary Standing committees? Why are they necessary? Discuss their roles and functions to bring out their significance.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=G7979KTAE.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

Topics: Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary; Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

1. Sukhna Lake is a living entity

What to study?

For Prelims: Legal entity- meaning, implications and previous examples, Sukhna Lake.

For Mains: Significance of this move and need for such protection.

Context: The Punjab and Haryana high court has declared Sukhna Lake a “living entity” or “legal person” with rights, duties and liabilities of a living person.

It also declared all citizens of Chandigarh as *loco parentis* (in the place of a parent) to save the lake from extinction.

Background:

The order was passed in a 2009 *suo motu* petition initiated amid depleting water level in the lake.

What the order says?

1. Sukhna Lake will now be a legal entity for its survival, preservation and conservation.
2. The Chandigarh administration has been directed to declare it a wetland within a period of three months.
3. All structures in Sukhna’s catchment area (which was demarcated by the Survey of India in 2004) should be demolished, and affected owners whose building plans have been approved should be relocated in the vicinity of Chandigarh and they should be compensated with ₹25 lakh each.
4. Chandigarh should ensure that the average capacity of the lake is increased by at least about 100-150 hectare by one-time large scale desilting.
5. Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh have also been told to lower the storage capacity of the check dams to ensure regular flow of water into the lake.
6. Chandigarh will have to ensure that there is no seepage losses.
7. The aquatic weeds are ordered to be removed within a period of six months.

Polluter pays principle:

Invoking the ‘polluter pays’ principle of environmental law, the Court said in its order: “The States should have taken precautionary measures to save the catchment of Sukhna lake. It is the duty of the States of Punjab and Haryana to restore the catchment area. The State government has also failed to take precautionary measures to save the catchment area. The damage caused to the catchment area is enormous.”

What is legal entity?

A legal entity means entity which acts like a natural person but only through a designated person, whose acts are processed within the ambit of law.

About Sukhna lake:

The man-made Sukhna Lake was built in 1958 by Le Corbusier, the architect of Chandigarh. Located in the foothills of the Shivalik Hills, it was designed to collect runoff water from the Hills. The Lake, which is in the process of being officially notified as a wetland, also has a nearby wildlife sanctuary that is home to sambar, pangolin, wild boars, red jungle fowl, cobras and other species.

Facts for Prelims:

In 2018, a bench presided over by justice Sharma had accorded the status of “legal person or entity” to **animals in Haryana**.

In Uttarakhand high court, justice Sharma was part of a bench in 2017, which declared **the Ganga and Yamuna as living entities**, a verdict that was later stayed by the Supreme Court.

In June 2019, the Punjab and Haryana High Court had ruled that **all animals, birds and aquatic life in Haryana would be accorded the status of legal persons or entities**.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Location of Sukhna lake.
2. Geographical location of such water bodies.
3. Constitutional provisions in this regard.

Mains Link:

What are legal entities? What rights do they enjoy?

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/hc-declares-chandigarhs-sukhna-lake-living-entity-fines-punjab-haryana-100-cr-each-for-damaging-catchment-area/article30969711.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

Topics: Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.

1. State funding of elections

What to study?

For prelims and mains: State funding of elections- need, issues and feasibility, electoral reforms in general.

Context: The Election Commission has informed the Government that **it is not in favour of state funding of elections**.

What is state or public funding of elections?

This means that **government gives funds to political parties or candidates for contesting elections**.

Its main purpose is to make it unnecessary for contestants to take money from powerful moneyed interests so that they can remain clean.

Why public funding is good?

1. Political parties and candidates need money for their electoral campaigns, to keep contacts with their constituencies, to prepare policy decisions and to pay professional staff. Therefore, **public funding is a natural and necessary cost of democracy**.
2. Public funding can **increase transparency** in party and candidate finance and thereby help curb corruption.
3. In societies where many citizens are under or just above the poverty line, they cannot be expected to donate large amounts of money to political parties or candidates. If parties and candidates receive at least a **basic amount of money from the State the country could have a functioning multi-party system without people having to give up their scarce resources**.

Why are some people opposed to this idea?

- Those against this idea wonder **how a Government that is grappling with deficit budgets**, can provide money to political parties to contest elections.
- They also warn that **state funding would encourage every second outfit to get into the political arena merely to avail of state funds**.
- Also, given that state expenditure on key social sectors such as primary healthcare is “pitifully small”, **the very idea of the Government giving away money to political parties to contest polls, is revolting**.

Why it is difficult to go for public funding?

1. The funds that a political party advances to its party candidates in an election vary from one candidate to another, and there is much **variation across political parties in this regard**.

2. Assuming that there are five contending candidates in a constituency, and even if each one of them does not spend as much, but just half of their elected counterpart, an amount of about ₹15 crore will be spent in each constituency, which with **about 4,215 MLAs in India works out to an about ₹13,000 crore per annum.**
3. While the legal limit that a Lok Sabha candidate can spend is ₹70 lakh, a victorious candidate on an average does not spend less than ₹10 crore for the purpose. Suppose we assume again an average of five candidates per constituency, and halving the amount to losers, about ₹30 crore will be spent in each Lok Sabha constituency, and given 543 members of the Lok Sabha, about ₹3,300 crore per annum.
4. Then there are elections to the Upper Houses, both at the Centre and in some States, and the local governing bodies. Hence, it is argued that public funding places unnecessary burden on the exchequer.

Insta link:
Prelims Link:
1. Limits on expenditure.
2. Other Facts related to elections.
Mains Link:
Why state funding of elections is not a good idea? Comment.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/election-commission-not-in-favour-of-state-funding-of-elections-anurag-thakur/article30963886.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

2. NPR data useful for welfare schemes, says Union Home Ministry

What to study?

For Prelims: NPR- features, provisions related and data to be collected.

For Mains: Issues and controversies surrounding and ways to address them.

Context: The Union Home Ministry has informed a parliamentary panel that it proposes to collect details on additional questions such as “date and place of birth of parents” in **the National Population Register (NPR)** to “facilitate back-end data processing and making the data items of date and place of birth complete for all households”.

What is the need for NPR when we have Aadhar?

There was a need to update the NPR to “incorporate the changes due to birth, death and migration”. Aadhaar is individual data, whereas NPR contains family-wise data. Various welfare schemes of the State and Central governments are generally family-based, for which NPR data may be used.

What is National Population Register (NPR)?

It is a **Register of usual residents of the country.**

It is being prepared at the local (Village/sub-Town), sub-District, District, State and National level under provisions of **the Citizenship Act 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.**

It is **mandatory for every usual resident of India to register in the NPR.**

Objectives: To create a comprehensive identity database of every usual resident in the country.

Who is a usual resident?

A usual resident is defined for the purposes of NPR as a **person who has resided in a local area for the past 6 months or more or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next 6 months or more.**

What is the controversy around it?

- Comes in the backdrop of **the NRC excluding lakhs of people in Assam.**
- It intends to collect **a much larger amount of personal data on residents of India.**
- There is **yet no clarity on the mechanism for protection of this vast amount of data.**

Why does the government want so much data?

1. Every country must have a comprehensive identity database of its residents with relevant demographic details. It will help the government formulate its policies better and also aid national security.
2. It will ease the life of those residing in India by cutting red tape. Not only will it help target government beneficiaries in a better way, but also further cut down paperwork and red tape in a similar manner that Aadhaar has done.
3. With NPR data, residents will not have to furnish various proofs of age, address and other details in official work.
4. It would also eliminate duplication in voter lists, government insists.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. What is NRC?
2. Constitutional provisions related to Citizenship.
3. Components of NPR data.

Mains Link:

Why are states opposed to the collection of data under NPR. Discuss.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/national-population-register-parents-place-of-birth-query-aimed-at-completing-data-for-households-mha/article30991207.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

Topics: Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

1. Plea against Gogoi's nomination

What to study?

For Prelims: Nominations to Rajya Sabha- eligibility and appointment.

For Mains: Concerns over nomination of former Judges, ways to address them.

Context: A petition was recently filed in the Supreme Court conveying “widespread disquiet and unease” triggered by the nomination of the former Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi to the Rajya Sabha.

The petition sought the court's intervention for extending the post-retirement restrictions imposed on the office of the Lokpal to former judges as well.

What is the demand by the petitioner?

The petition said former judges should be insulated from “post-retirement allurements” like the Lokpal, as faith in the judiciary will dry up.

What's the issue here?

There is **no law or constitutional provision that prohibits such a nomination**. Nor is this an unprecedented decision by the government. Still, it is not a common practice that a government nominates or appoints a former Supreme Court judge or even a high court judge to some office within months of her or his retirement.

What are the exceptions currently in place to ensure independence of the judiciary?

Currently, the only bar imposed on a Judge of the Supreme Court who has retired is that **he shall not thereafter plead or act in any Court or before any authority**.

What has the Law Commission said in this regard?

14th report of the Law Commission of India considered the question of such nominations and appointments before forming a negative opinion.

The report said it is clearly undesirable that Supreme Court Judges should look forward to other Government employment after their retirement.

Explaining the reason for why Supreme Court judges should resist such offers from the government, the Law Commission report says, "**The Government is a party in a large number of causes [cases] in the highest Court** and the average citizen may well get the impression, that a judge who might look forward to being employed by the Government after his retirement, does not bring to bear on his work that detachment of outlook which is expected of a judge in cases in which Government is a party."

Therefore, the practice has a tendency to affect **the independence of the judges and should be discontinued.**

Why Ranjan Gogoi should not have accepted this offer?

Within five months of his retirement as Chief Justice of India, Justice Ranjan Gogoi has been nominated to the Rajya Sabha by the government.

- Shortly before his retirement from the Supreme Court of India, **he delivered several important verdicts with far-reaching political consequences that left the government pleased, including the Ayodhya judgment.**
- Before that, Justice Gogoi dismissed **a review of the Rafale fighter aircraft deal** without substantially dealing with the grounds on which the original judgment, negating an independent investigation, had been challenged.
- During his tenure, Justice Gogoi also presided over and pushed through the **National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam**, an exercise that has excluded more than 19 lakh people from the final version of the citizenship register, and which has been widely criticised on several grounds.
- Then there was **the Sabarimala temple review.** A Constitution Bench judgment of the Supreme Court held that excluding menstruating women from entering the temple was discriminatory, and therefore against "constitutional morality".

What the 16-point code of conduct for judges says?

Also called the "**Restatement of Values of Judicial Life**" (adopted at a Chief Justices Conference in May 1997), **the code** lays the basis of how post-retirement conduct ought to be. For example if a judge after deciding politically sensitive cases involving particular political parties or politicians, soon after retirement seeks and gets a plum post such as a Rajya Sabha nomination by those very politicians or parties, it would obviously raise serious questions about his or her independence as a judge when he or she had decided those cases.

Can this appointment be seen as a way of ensuring cohesion between the judiciary and the legislature?

No. Because, he no longer represents the judiciary, and his contribution will be limited to the expertise and knowledge he can bring to debates in Parliament. Any attempt to create 'cohesion' between the two wings would necessarily encroach on the judiciary's role as a restraining force on the executive and legislature.

Need of the hour:

There is a creeping worry that post-retirement jobs are a result of pre-retirement judgments. Above all, public confidence in the judiciary cannot be shaken through such appointments. The issue needs to be resolved convincingly.

Besides, ethics demand that no retired judge of the highest court accepts a post that will room to criticism and controversy.

Nominated member of the Rajya Sabha:

Under **article 80 of the Constitution**, the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) is composed of not more than 250 members, of whom 12 are nominated by the President of India from amongst persons who have special knowledge or practical experience in respect of such matters as literature, science, art and social service.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Powers and privileges of Nominated members vs Elected members of Rajya Sabha.
2. Voting rights of Nominated members in the elections of President and Vice- President.
3. Can nominated members join a political party?
4. Selection of districts by nominated members under MPLADS.

Mains Link:

How independence of the judiciary in India is ensured under the constitution. What are the recent threats? Discuss.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=G1U78TT0P.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

Topics: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.

1. National Interlinking of Rivers Authority (NIRA)

What to study?

For Prelims: NIRA- key objectives and functions, important ILRs.

For Mains: Need for and significance of ILR projects, concerns associated.

Context: The Central government is working on the establishment of an exclusive body to implement projects for linking rivers- To be called **the National Interlinking of Rivers Authority (NIRA)**.

Functions of NIRA:

- It is expected to take up both inter-State and intra-State projects.
- It will also make arrangements for generating funds, internally and externally.

About National River Linking Project (NRLP):

The NRLP formally known as the **National Perspective Plan**, envisages the transfer of water from water 'surplus' basins where there is flooding to water 'deficit' basins where there is drought/scarcity, through inter-basin water transfer projects.

Significance: It is designed to ease water shortages in western and southern India while mitigating the impacts of recurrent floods in the eastern parts of the Ganga basin.

ILR Projects in India:

As of now, six ILR projects — the Ken-Betwa, Damanganga- Pinjal, Par-Tapi-Narmada, Manas-Sankosh-Teesta-Ganga, Mahanadi-Godavari and Godavari-Cauvery (Grand Anicut) — have been under examination of the authorities.

With regard to the peninsular rivers, the Centre has chosen to focus on the **Godavari-Cauvery link than the earlier proposal to link the Mahanadi-Godavari-Krishna-Pennar-Cauvery rivers.**

Issues and Concerns:

Interlinking of rivers is a **very expensive proposal**. It will adversely affect land, forests, biodiversity, rivers and the livelihood of millions of people.

- Interlinking of rivers will **lead to destruction of forests, wetlands and local water bodies**, which are major groundwater recharge mechanisms.
- It causes **massive displacement of people**. Huge burden on the government to deal with the issue of rehabilitation of displaced people.
- Due to interlinking of rivers, there will be **decrease in the amount of fresh water entering seas and this will cause a serious threat to the marine life.**

Insta link:

Prelims link:

1. Important ILR projects in India and geographical locations.
2. Various National Parks and Tiger Reserves mentioned in this regard.

Mains Link:

Interlinking of rivers may address the issue of paucity of water but poses a serious threat to the indigenous ecological diversity of the said rivers. Comment.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GE476S9EM.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

2. National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAPA)

What to study?

For prelims and mains: NAA- establishment, composition, functions and significance.

Context: The Delhi High Court has stayed the **National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAPA)** order directing Johnson & Johnson to deposit over ₹230 crore it allegedly profited by not passing on benefits of GST reduction in over 306 items, including baby products, through commensurate price cut.

About NAA:

The National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA) has been constituted under **Section 171 of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017.**

It is to ensure the reduction in rate of tax or the benefit of input tax credit is passed on to the recipient by way of commensurate reduction in prices.

The **Authority's core function** is to ensure that the benefits of the reduction is GST rates on goods and services made by GST Council and proportional change in the Input tax credit passed on to the ultimate consumers and recipient respectively by way of reduction in the prices by the suppliers.

Composition:

The National Anti-profiteering Authority shall be headed by a senior officer of the level of a Secretary to the Government of India and shall have four technical members from the Centre and/or the States.

Powers and functions of the authority:

1. In the event the National Anti-profiteering Authority confirms the necessity of applying anti-profiteering measures, it has the power to order the business concerned to reduce its prices or return the undue benefit availed along with interest to the recipient of the goods or services.
2. If the undue benefit cannot be passed on to the recipient, it can be ordered to be deposited in the Consumer Welfare Fund.
3. In extreme cases the National Anti-profiteering Authority can impose a penalty on the defaulting business entity and even order the cancellation of its registration under GST.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Concentrate on various bodies constituted by the government.
2. Their functions and composition.

Mains Link:

What is National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAPA)? What are its functions?

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GG2771159.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

3. Child Adoption Regulatory Authority (CARA)

What to study?

For Prelims: Key facts on CARA.

For Mains: Child adoption- guidelines, issues and ways to address them.

Context: The **Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)** has invited suggestions and feedback for simplification of the adoption process from all stakeholders, including prospective adoptive parents, specialized adoption agencies, child welfare committees, state adoption resource agencies and the general public.

Adoption in India:

In India, an Indian citizen or a non-resident Indian (NRI) can adopt a child under **the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act of 1956 and the Guardian and Wards Act of 1890.**

Eligibility criteria for prospective adoptive parents:

1. The prospective adoptive parents shall be physically, mentally and emotionally stable, financially capable and shall not have any life-threatening medical condition.
2. Any prospective adoptive parents, irrespective of his marital status and whether or not he has biological son or daughter, can adopt a child subject to following, namely: -
 - a) the consent of both the spouses for the adoption shall be required, in case of a married couple;
 - b) a single female can adopt a child of any gender;
 - c) a single male shall not be eligible to adopt a girl child;
3. No child shall be given in adoption to a couple unless they have at least two years of stable marital relationship.
4. The minimum age difference between the child and either of the prospective adoptive parents shall not be less than twenty-five years.
5. The age criteria for prospective adoptive parents shall not be applicable in case of relative adoptions and adoption by step-parent.
6. Couples with three or more children shall not be considered for adoption except in case of special need children.

About CARA:

- Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) is a **statutory body** of Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India.
- It functions as **the nodal body for adoption of Indian children and is mandated to monitor and regulate in-country and inter-country adoptions.**
- CARA is designated as **the Central Authority to deal with inter-country adoptions** in accordance with the provisions of **the Hague Convention** on Inter-country Adoption, 1993, ratified by Government of India in 2003.
- CARA primarily deals with adoption of orphan, abandoned and surrendered children through its associated /recognised adoption agencies.
- CARA is also mandated **to frame regulations on adoption-related matters from time to time as per Section 68 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.**

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. What is Hague convention?
2. Eligibility criteria for prospective adoptive parents in India.
3. Overview of JJ Act.

Mains Link:

How is child adoption regulated in India? What are the reforms necessary to further simplify the process.

Sources: pib.

4. Enforcement Directorate

What to study?

For Prelims: ED- objectives, functions and composition.

For Mains: Controversies and issues surrounding it's independence and misuse, ways to address them.

Context: Yes Bank founder Rana Kapoor was recently placed under arrest by **the Enforcement Directorate.**

- He was charged under **the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).**
- He was also booked for **cheating under the IPC**, along with accepting illegal gratification and misconduct under **the Prevention of Corruption Act.**

Background:

Mr. Kapoor is under the scanner for granting large loans to the crisis-hit Dewan Housing Finance Limited (DHFL), allegedly in exchange for kickbacks to the tune of ₹600 crore that were paid into accounts of his family members. It is argued that sub-standard properties were mortgaged by DHFL for the loans that it took.

About Enforcement Directorate:

It is a Multi Disciplinary Organization **mandated with the task of enforcing the provisions of two special fiscal laws – Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA) and Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA).**

Historical background:

The origin of this Directorate goes back to **1st May, 1956, when an 'Enforcement Unit'** was formed, in Department of Economic Affairs, for handling Exchange Control Laws violations under **Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1947 (FERA '47).**

In the year 1957, this Unit was renamed as **'Enforcement Directorate'**. The **administrative control of the Directorate was transferred from Department of Economic Affairs to Department of Revenue in 1960.** For a short period of 04 years (1973 – 1977), **the Directorate also remained under the administrative jurisdiction of Department of Personnel & Administrative Reforms.**

Powers:

The Directorate enforces two laws;

1. **FEMA, a Civil Law having quasi judicial powers,** for investigating suspected contraventions of the Exchange Control Laws and Regulations with the powers to impose penalties on those adjudged guilty.
2. **PMLA, a Criminal Law,** whereby the Officers are empowered to conduct enquiries to locate, provisionally attach/confiscate assets derived from acts of Schedules Offences besides arresting and prosecuting the Money Launderers.

Composition:

Besides directly recruiting personnel, the Directorate also draws officers from different Investigating Agencies, viz., Customs & Central Excise, Income Tax, Police, etc. on deputation.

Other functions:

- Processing cases of fugitive/s from India under **Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018.**
- Sponsor cases of preventive detention under **Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act, 1974(COFEPOSA)** in regard to contraventions of FEMA.

Special courts:

For the trial of an offence punishable under section 4 of PMLA, **the Central Government (in consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court), designates one or more Sessions Court as Special Court(s).** The court is also called **"PMLA Court"**.

Any appeal against any order passed by PMLA court can directly be filed in the High Court for that jurisdiction.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. What is FEMA?
2. What is PMLA?
3. What is COFEPOSA?
4. Historical background of ED.
5. Which all departments have administered it?

Mains Link:

How ED has become the weapon of choice today? Discuss.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GUE77IBQ6.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

5. National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Bill, 2019 (NCIM)

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: NCIM- objectives, composition and functions.

Context: The **National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Bill, 2019 (NCIM)** was recently passed in Rajya Sabha.

The Bill seeks to **repeal the Indian Medicine Central Council Act, 1970.**

Within three years of the passage of the Bill, state governments have to establish **State Medical Councils for Indian System of Medicine at the state level.**

Key features of the Bill include:

1. Constitution of the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine:

The NCISM will consist of 29 members, appointed by the central government.

These posts will have a maximum term of four years.

They will be recommended by a search committee.

The Search Committee will consist of five members including the Cabinet Secretary and three experts nominated by the central government (of which two should have experience in any of the fields of Indian System of Medicine).

2. Functions of the NCISM include:

Framing policies for regulating medical institutions and medical professionals of Indian System of Medicine.

Assessing the requirements of healthcare related human resources and infrastructure.

Ensuring compliance by the State Medical Councils of Indian System of Medicine of the regulations made under the Bill.

Ensuring coordination among the autonomous boards set up under the Bill.

3. Autonomous boards to be set up:

Board of Ayurveda and the Board of Unani, Siddha, and Sowa-Rigpa.

Medical Assessment and Rating Board for Indian System of Medicine.

Ethics and Medical Registration Board.

4. Entrance examinations:

There will be a uniform National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test for admission to under-graduate education in each of the disciplines of the Indian System of Medicine in all medical institutions regulated by the Bill.

The Bill also proposes a National Teachers' Eligibility Test for postgraduates of each discipline of Indian System of Medicine who wish to take up teaching that particular discipline as a profession.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Boards to be set up under the Bill.
2. Composition and selection of NCISM members.
3. Key functions of NCISM.
4. Autonomous vs Non autonomous bodies.
5. Statutory vs non statutory bodies.

Mains Link:

Discuss the key features of the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Bill, 2019 (NCIM).

Sources: pib.

6. Technology Development Board

What to study?

For Prelims: TDB and GITA- composition, objectives and functions.

For Mains: Need for and significance of technological developments.

Context: **Technology Development Board** under DST invites technology proposals for fighting COVID 19.

The proposal may include technologically innovative solutions like low-cost masks, cost-effective scanning devices, technologies for sanitization of large areas as well as for contactless entry, rapid diagnostic kits and oxygenators, and ventilators.

About Technology Development Board:

It is a **statutory body** established by **Technology Development Board Act, 1995**.

Objective: To promote development and commercialization of indigenous technology and adaptation of imported technology for much wider application.

Roles and functions of the board:

1. Encourage enterprises to take up technology-oriented products.
2. Provide equity capital or loans to industrial concerns and financial assistance to research and development institutions.

Global Innovation & Technology Alliance (GITA):

In order to stimulate private sector's investment in R&D, TDB has established **Global Innovation & Technology Alliance (GITA)**.

It is a **joint venture between Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and TDB with an equity contribution of 51:49 respectively**.

The GITA will assist Department of Science & Technology (DST) in implementing industrial research and development programme with different countries under bilateral and multilateral science and technology cooperation agreements.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Statutory vs Non statutory bodies.
2. Grants vs Loans.
3. Interests on loans provided by TDB.
4. Who appoints TDB Chairperson and members?

Mains Link:

Discuss the role and functions of the Technology Development Board (TDB).

Sources: pib.

7. District mineral foundation (DMF) funds

What to study?

For Prelims: About DMFs, composition, funds and jurisdiction, about PMKKKY, pneumoconiosis.

For Mains: reforms needed.

Context: Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said state governments should use **district mineral foundation (DMF) funds** for response and preparedness to fight the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

DMF funds may be used to supplement and augment healthcare facilities, screening and testing requirements and any other resources that might be required.

About DMFs:

DMFs were instituted under **the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Amendment Act 2015**.

They are **non-profit trusts** to work for the interest and benefit of persons and areas affected by mining-related operations.

Objective: To work for the interest of the benefit of the persons and areas affected mining related operations in such manner as may be prescribed by the State Government.

Jurisdiction: Its manner of operation comes under **the jurisdiction of the relevant State Government**.

The fund is collected at the district level. There are certain high-priority areas identified in all states' DMF rules, where at least 60 per cent of the fund must be used. These include vital and pressing concerns, including healthcare.

The various state DMF rules and the **Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY)** guidelines stipulate some “high priority” issues for DMFs, including:

1. Drinking water.
2. Health
3. Women and child welfare.
4. Education
5. Livelihood and skill development.
6. Welfare of aged and disabled.
7. Sanitation.

Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY):

The programme is meant to provide for the welfare of areas and people affected by mining related operations, using the funds generated by District Mineral Foundations (DMFs).

Objectives of the scheme:

1. To implement various developmental and welfare projects/programs in mining affected areas that complement the existing ongoing schemes/projects of State and Central Government.
2. To minimize/mitigate the adverse impacts, during and after mining, on the environment, health and socio-economics of people in mining districts.
3. To ensure long-term sustainable livelihoods for the affected people in mining areas.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Funding of DMFs.
2. What are High priority areas under DMF?
3. How many states in India have setup DMFs?
4. Who decides about setting up of DMFs?
5. Objectives of PMKKKY.

Mains Link:

Write a note on PMKKKY.

Sources: pib.

Topics: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

1. How the Centre’s planned Sanskrit universities will function?

What to study?

For Prelims: Objectives and key features of the Bill, various authorities to be created- their powers and functions.

For Mains: Significance of the bill and implications.

Context: The **Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2019** was recently introduced in Rajya Sabha. The bill was passed in Lok Sabha in December last year.

The Bill is intended to convert India’s three deemed-to-be Sanskrit universities into Central Sanskrit Universities.

1. Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi.
2. Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, New Delhi.
3. Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, Tirupati.

Other salient features of the Bill:

1. **What the universities will do?**

The proposed central universities will: (i) disseminate and advance knowledge for the promotion of Sanskrit, (ii) make special provisions for integrated courses in humanities, social sciences, and science, and (iii) train manpower for the overall development and preservation of Sanskrit and allied subjects.

2. Powers and functions:

These include: (i) prescribing courses of study and conducting training programmes, (ii) granting degrees, diplomas, and certificates, (iii) providing facilities through a distance education system, (iv) conferring autonomous status on a college or an institution, (v) providing instructions for education in Sanskrit and allied subjects.

3. Some of the authorities that the universities will have:

A court, which will review the policies of the university and suggest measures for its development.

An Executive Council, which will be the principal executive body. The 15-member council will include **the Vice-Chancellor appointed by the Centre, who will be the chairperson**. The council will, among other functions, create teaching and academic posts and their appointment, and manage the revenue and property of the university.

An Academic and Activity Council, which will supervise academic policies.

A Board of Studies, which will approve the subjects for research and recommend measures to improve standards of teaching.

4. Visitor of the universities:

Like at all central universities, the President of India will be the Visitor of the central Sanskrit universities. He may appoint persons to review and inspect the functioning of the University. The Executive Council may take action based on the findings of the inspection.

Insta link:
Prelims link:
1. What are deemed universities?
2. Constitutional provisions wrt to Sanskrit.
3. Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan.
Mains Link:
Write a note the Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2019.

Link: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/how-the-centres-planned-sanskrit-universities-will-function-6295572/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

2. Govt. imposes curbs on drug exports

What to study?

For Prelims: What are APIs, drugs on which curbs have been imposed.

For Mains: Implications and concerns over these measures.

Context: India has restricted **the export of common medicines such as paracetamol and 25 other pharmaceutical ingredients and drugs made from them**, as it looked to prevent shortages amid concerns of the COVID-19 outbreak turning into a pandemic.

Drugs whose exports is restricted:

Besides over-the-counter painkiller and fever reducer paracetamol, drugs restricted for exports included common antibiotics metronidazole, those used to treat bacterial and other infections, as well as vitamin B1 and B12 ingredients.

Background:

In February, the Department of Pharmaceuticals asked the DGFT to issue orders restricting the export of 12 **active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs)** and formulations in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.

What's the concern now?

Although India is source of about 20% of the world's generic drug supply, pharmaceutical companies in the country are dependent on China for two-thirds of the chemical components needed to make them. The outbreak of **COVID-19** has shut factories in China and impacted supplies, leading to fears of a shortage.

Implications:

This restriction has not gone down well with the exporters. For exporters, it is going to be a problem and will have an impact on reputation too.

What are APIs?

API (Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient) means the active ingredient which is contained in medicine. For example, an active ingredient to relieve pain is included in a painkiller. This is called API. A small amount of the active ingredient has an effect, so only a tiny part of the active ingredient is contained in medicine.

Components of Medications:

All drugs are made up of two core components: the API, which is the central ingredient, and the excipient, the substances other than the drug that helps deliver the medication to your system. Excipients are chemically inactive substances, such as lactose or mineral oil in the pill.

Insta Link:

Prelims link:

1. What are APIs?
2. Other ingredients in a medicine?

Mains Link:

How imposing curbs on drugs export affect India's image globally. Critically comment.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GE476S9B6.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

3. IBC Bill discriminates against homebuyers

What to study?

For Prelims: Overview and key provisions in the Bill.

For Mains: Significance of the Bill, issues involved, ways to address them.

Context: The report on the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019** was tabled by the Standing Committee on Finance in Parliament recently.

Three committee members said **the IBC Bill was discriminatory** as it does not treat homebuyers on a par with other financial creditors and violates a Supreme Court ruling,

What's the issue?

The Bill has introduced a new clause that sets **a threshold of 100 homebuyers, or 10% of the buyers, in a residential project, whichever is less, as a requirement to jointly take the developer to an insolvency court.**

This means that an individual homebuyer, who is a financial creditor, cannot file an insolvency application.

Key Highlights Of Insolvency And Bankruptcy (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019:

1. Section 11 of the Code has been amended to clarify that a corporate debtor shall not be prevented from initiating CIRP against any other corporate debtor.
2. Section 16 of the Code has been amended to provide that an insolvency resolution professional should be appointed on the date of admission of the application for initiation of Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP).

3. Section 23 of the Code has been amended to enable the resolution professional to manage the affairs of the corporate debtor during interim period between the expiry of CIRP till the appointment of a liquidator;
4. A new Section 23A has been inserted to provide that the liability of a corporate debtor for an offence committed prior to the commencement of the CIRP shall cease under certain circumstances.

Effects of the amendment:

The amendment brings the much awaited changes needed in the insolvency sector.

It clears the air on various aspects and provides relief to both corporate debtor as well as the creditors. The thresholds introduced will prevent admission of unnecessary cases to the insolvency court.

However, even after anticipation, cross border insolvency framework has not been included in the amendment. Now, the same is expected to get cleared in the next session.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Concentrate on key provisions.
2. Compare with the previous draft and look for key changes made.
3. Understand the insolvency process.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of the Insolvency And Bankruptcy (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019. What are the issues associated?

Link:

Sources: the Hindu.

4. Mineral Laws (Amendment) Bill 2020

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: Overview of the Bill, how is coal mining regulated in India? Current challenges and ways to address them.

Context: The Lok Sabha has given its nod to **the Mineral Laws (Amendment) Bill.**

The Bill amends **the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act) and the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015 (CMSP Act).**

Under the Bill:

1. Allocation of coal/lignite blocks for **composite prospecting licence cum mining lease** has been provided.
2. Requirement of previous approval in cases where allocation of blocks was made by Central Govt has been dispensed with.
3. **Removal of restriction on end-use of coal:** Companies will be allowed to carry on coal mining operation for own consumption, sale or for any other purposes, as may be specified by the central government.
4. **Transfer of statutory clearances to new bidders:** The Bill provides that the various approvals, licenses, and clearances given to the previous lessee will be extended to the successful bidder for a period of two years. During this period, the new lessee will be allowed to continue mining operations.
5. **Advance action for auction:** Under the MMDR Act, mining leases for specified minerals (minerals other than coal, lignite, and atomic minerals) are auctioned on the expiry of the lease period. The Bill provides that state governments can take advance action for auction of a mining lease before its expiry.

Significance:

This will speed up the process of implementation of projects, ease of doing business, simplification of procedure and benefit all the parties in areas where minerals are located.

Background:

- In 2018, the government had allowed commercial mining by private entities but non-coal companies couldn't participate in the auction.

- In August 2019, the government announced 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) under the automatic route in coal mining for open sale, besides creating associated infrastructure, such as washeries.

Implications of this move- significance:

- This opens up the sector to players outside steel and power as well as removes end-use restrictions.
- It will create an efficient energy market and bring in more competition as well as reduce coal imports. India imported 235 million tonnes (mt) of coal last year, of which 135 mt valued at Rs 171,000 crore could have been met from domestic reserves.
- It might also put an end to Coal India Ltd's monopoly in the sector.
- It would also help India gain access to high-end technology for underground mining used by miners across the globe.

New mining target:

In 2018, the government allowed commercial mining by private entities and set a mining target of 1.5 billion tonnes by 2020. Out of this, 1 billion tonnes was set to be from Coal India, while 500 million tonnes was to be from non-Coal India entities. This target has now been revised to 1 billion tonnes by 223-24.

Who grants permission for mining?

The state governments grant permission for mining, known as mineral concessions, for all the minerals located within the boundary of the state, under the provisions of **the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 and Mineral Concession Rules, 1960.**

However, for **minerals specified in the First Schedule to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, Central government approval is necessary before granting the mineral concession.**

Minerals specified under the First Schedule include hydrocarbons, atomic minerals and metallic minerals such as iron ore, bauxite copper ore, lead precious stones, zinc and gold.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. What are major and minor minerals?
2. How they are regulated?
3. Who grants permissions?

Mains Link:

Write a note on Mines and Mineral Laws (Amendment) Bill.

Link: <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/lok-sabha-passes-mines-and-mineral-laws-amendment-bill/article30999041.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

5. Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897

What to study?

For Prelims: Key provisions of the act.

For Mains: Criticisms surrounding, implications of this law and significance.

Context: The Centre has asked states and Union Territories to invoke provisions of **Section 2 of Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897**, so that **Health Ministry advisories are enforceable.**

At present, at least 60 COVID-19 cases have been confirmed in India.

What is Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897?

It is routinely enforced across the country for dealing with outbreaks of diseases such as swine flu, dengue, and cholera.

It was introduced by colonial government **to tackle the epidemic of bubonic plague that had spread in the erstwhile Bombay Presidency in the 1890s.**

Why was this act criticised?

Historians have criticised the Act for its **potential for abuse.**

Using powers conferred by the Act, colonies authorities would search suspected plague cases in homes and among passengers, with forcible segregations, evacuations, and demolitions of infected places.

In 1897, **the year the law was enforced, freedom fighter Bal Gangadhar Tilak** was punished with 18 months' rigorous imprisonment after his newspapers **Kesari and Mahratta** admonished imperial authorities for their handling of the plague epidemic.

Provisions of the 1897 Epidemic Diseases Act:

1. It empowers **state governments/UTs to take special measures and formulate regulations for containing the outbreak.**
2. It also empowers state **to prescribe such temporary regulations** to be observed by the public or by any person or class of persons as it shall deem necessary to prevent the outbreak of such disease or the spread thereof.
3. The state may **determine in what manner and by whom any expenses incurred (including compensation if any) shall be defrayed.**
4. The State Government may take measures and prescribe regulations for **the inspection of persons travelling** by railway or otherwise, and the segregation, in hospital, temporary accommodation or otherwise, of persons suspected by the inspecting officer of being infected with any such disease.
5. It also provides **penalties for disobeying any regulation or order made under the Act.** These are according to section 188 of the Indian Penal Code (Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant).
6. It also gives **legal protection to the implementing officers acting under the Act.**

Examples of implementation:

1. In 2018, the district collector of Gujarat's Vadodara issued a notification under the Act declaring the Khedkarmsiya village in Waghodia taluka **as cholera-affected** after 31 persons complained of symptoms of the disease.
2. In 2015, **to deal with malaria and dengue in Chandigarh**, the Act was implemented and controlling officers were instructed to ensure the issuance of notices and challans of Rs 500 to offenders.
3. In 2009, **to tackle the swine flu outbreak in Pune**, Section 2 powers were used to open screening centres in civic hospitals across the city, and swine flu was declared **a notifiable disease.**

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Previous examples of implementation of this Act, diseases for which it was declared.
2. A notifiable disease.
3. Implementing agency, penalty, protection and inspection of people under the act.
4. Handling of the plague epidemic by British, criticisms by Tilak through his papers.

Mains Link:

Discuss the key provisions of the 1897 Epidemic Diseases Act.

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-what-is-the-epidemic-act-of-1897-govt-has-invoked-to-fight-coronavirus-6309925/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

6. The Mineral Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2020

What to study?

For Prelims: Key provisions.

For Mains: Key changes introduced and their significance.

Context: The Bill was recently passed by the Parliament.

This was covered recently on:

<https://www.insightsonindia.com/2020/03/07/mineral-laws-amendment-bill-2020/>.

Insta Link:

1. Major vs minor minerals, their regulation.
2. Grant of permission for mining various minerals.
3. New mining targets set by the government.
4. FDI in mining.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of the Mineral Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/rs-passes-ibc-mineral-law-bills/article31052728.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

7. Major Port Authorities Bill, 2020

What to study?

For Prelims: Key features of the Bill.

For Mains: Significance of the changes introduced.

Context: Major Port Authorities Bill 2020 Introduced in The Lok Sabha.

Aims and objectives:

1. Decentralise decision making and infuse professionalism in governance of major ports.
2. Impart faster and transparent decision making benefiting the stakeholders and better project execution capability.
3. Reorient the governance model in central ports to **landlord port model** in line with the successful global practice.

Implications:

The bill will **replace the Major Port Trusts Act, 1963**.

This will **empower the Major Ports to perform with greater efficiency on account of full autonomy** in decision making and by modernizing the institutional framework of Major Ports.

The salient features of the Major Port Authorities Bill 2020 are:

1. Compared to the Major Port Trusts Act, 1963 the bill **reduces the number of sections to 76 from 134** by eliminating overlapping and obsolete Sections.
2. **Simplified composition of the Board of Port Authority** which will comprise of 11 to 13 Members from the present 17 to 19 Members representing various interests.
3. **Provision has been made for inclusion of representative of State Government** in which the Major Port is situated, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Defence and Customs, Department of Revenue as Members in the Board apart from a Government Nominee Member and a Member representing the employees of the Major Port Authority.
4. **Tariff Authority for Major Ports (TAMP)** has now been given powers to fix tariff which will act as a reference tariff for purposes of bidding for PPP projects. **PPP operators will be free to fix tariff based on market conditions.**
5. **An Adjudicatory Board** has been proposed to be created to carry out the residual function of the erstwhile TAMP for Major Ports, to look into disputes between ports and PPP concessionaires, to review stressed PPP projects and suggest measures to review stressed PPP projects.
6. **The Boards of Port Authority** have been delegated full powers to enter into contracts, planning and development, fixing of tariff except in national interest, security and emergency arising out of inaction and default.
7. **The Board of each Major Port shall be entitled to create specific master plan** in respect of any development or infrastructure established or proposed to be established within the port limits and the land appurtenant thereto and such master plan **shall be independent of any local or State Government regulations of any authority whatsoever.**
8. Provision has been made for safeguarding **the pay & allowances and service conditions including pensionary benefits of the employees of major ports and Tariff of Major Ports.**

What is landlord model?

1. In the landlord port model, the publicly governed port authority acts as a regulatory body and as landlord while private companies carry out port operations—mainly cargo-handling activities.
2. Here, the port authority maintains ownership of the port while the infrastructure is leased to private firms that provide and maintain their own superstructure and install own equipment to handle cargo.
3. In return, the landlord port gets a share of the revenue from the private entity.
4. The role of the landlord port authority would be to carry out all public sector services and operations such as the award of bids for cargo terminals and dredging.

Need:

1. Currently, most major port trusts in India carry out terminal operations as well, resulting in a hybrid model of port governance.
2. The involvement of the port authorities in terminal operations leads to a conflict of interest and works against objectivity.
3. The neutrality of the landlord port authority is a basic requirement for fair competition between port service providers, particularly the terminal operators.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Major vs Minor ports, locations of major ports in India and their governance.
2. Major Port Trusts Act, 1963 vs Major Port Authorities Bill 2020.
3. Landlord port model.
4. Composition of Board of Port Authority.
5. Role of state governments in creating specific master plan for ports located there.

Mains Link:

Write a note on **the Landlord Port model**.

Link:

<https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=200153>.

Sources: pib.

8. What is Essential Commodities Act?

What to study?

For Prelims: Key features of the Act.

For Mains: Need for and significance of the act, reforms needed.

Context: Govt brings masks and hand sanitizers under **the Essential Commodities Act**.

Under the EC Act, **powers of the Central Government have already been delegated to the States** by way of orders during 1972 to 1978. The States/UTs, therefore may take action against the offenders.

Background:

The coronavirus pandemic has triggered panic buying of masks and hand sanitisers at many places around the world, including in India.

The government's order has come in the wake of reports of a shortage of these commodities and a sudden and sharp spike in their prices, and the alleged hoarding of stocks by manufacturers.

What is Essential Commodities Act?

The ECA was **enacted way back in 1955**.

It has since been used by the Government **to regulate the production, supply and distribution** of a whole host of commodities it declares 'essential' in order to make them available to consumers at fair prices.

The list of items under the Act include drugs, fertilisers, pulses and edible oils, and petroleum and petroleum products.

The Centre can include new commodities as and when the need arises, **and take them off the list** once the situation improves.

Under the Act, **the government can also fix the maximum retail price (MRP) of any packaged product that it declares an “essential commodity”.**

How it works?

1. If the Centre finds that a certain commodity is in short supply and its price is spiking, it can notify stock-holding limits on it for a specified period.
2. The States act on this notification to specify limits and take steps to ensure that these are adhered to.
3. Anybody trading or dealing in a commodity, be it wholesalers, retailers or even importers are prevented from stockpiling it beyond a certain quantity.
4. A State can, however, choose not to impose any restrictions. But once it does, traders have to immediately sell into the market any stocks held beyond the mandated quantity.

But, why the recent Economic Survey said that this act is outdated and must go?

1. In September 2019, the Centre invoked the ECA Act's provisions to impose stock limits on onions after heavy rains wiped out a quarter of the kharif crop and led to a sustained spike in prices.
2. Although the restrictions on both retail and wholesale traders were meant to prevent hoarding and enhance supply in the market, the Survey showed that there was actually an increase in price volatility and a widening wedge between wholesale and retail prices.
3. This is due to the fact that ECA act fails to differentiate between hoarding and Storage.
4. Thus in the long term, the Act disincentivises development of storage infrastructure, thereby leading to increased volatility in prices following production/ consumption shocks — the opposite of what it is intended for.
5. The report finds that the ECA has been enacted in the year 1955, when the economy was ravaged by famine and food shortages. The government should note that today's scenario is much more different.

Why is it important?

The ECA gives consumers protection against irrational spikes in prices of essential commodities.

The Government has invoked the Act umpteen times to ensure adequate supplies.

It cracks down on hoarders and black-marketeers of such commodities.

State agencies conduct raids to get everyone to toe the line and the errant are punished.

Conclusion:

Without the ECA the common man would be at the mercy of opportunistic traders and shopkeepers. It empowers the government to control prices directly too.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Items included under the Act.
2. Powers to include and remove commodities from the list.
3. Is it mandatory for the states to follow centre's guidelines?
4. When and who releases the Economic Survey?
5. Can the govt fix MRP of a product under this act?

Mains:

Discuss the significance of Essential Commodities Act. Why the recent Economic Survey said that this act is outdated and must go? Discuss.

Sources: pib.

9. UP property damage ordinance

What to study?

For Prelims: Features of the Ordinance.

For Mains: Significance of the law and legal challenges ahead.

Context: The Uttar Pradesh cabinet has approved an ordinance that would allow the state to recover the cost of damages to public property from riots accused individuals.

About the UP property damage ordinance:

1. The ordinance makes provisions for the setting up of **claims tribunals**, one or more, to “investigate the damage caused (during protests) and to award compensation” and to cover “cost of action” taken by police and administration for prevention of damage to public properties.
2. **Sweeping powers** have been granted to a **new claims tribunal**, including on collecting compensation ex-parte if required, that is, without hearing the individual who is accused of vandalism.
3. **The award of compensation made by the tribunal will be final** and cannot be appealed against before any civil court.
4. **Composition:** The tribunal will be **headed by a retired district judge appointed by the state government** and may include a member who is an officer of the rank of Additional Commissioner.
5. **The law allows the constitution of multiple tribunals for a single event** to ensure that the proceedings are concluded “preferably within three months” and allows the tribunal to appoint **one assessor “who is technically qualified to assess such damage from a panel appointed by the state government”**.
6. **Procedure to be followed:** The tribunal, may follow “summary procedure as it thinks fit” and has the powers of a civil court for evaluating evidence and enforcing the attendance of witnesses. It **bars any civil court from interfering with any directives of the claims tribunal**.
7. **Burden of proof:** The ordinance also places the burden of proving that one has no “nexus” to a protest, hartal, strike, bandh, riot or public commotion — during which any destruction of public or private property was caused – on the individual, failing which the individual’s properties will be seized.
8. **Principle of absolute liability** under law shall apply once “the nexus with the event that precipitated the damage is established”. The law, however, does not specify what the nature of the “nexus” would be.
9. **Under Section 21(2)**, the new law says that while liability will be borne by the “actual perpetrators of the crime”, one who “instigates” or “incites” the crime would share the liability as per the decision of the claims tribunal. However, the law does not discuss what action constitutes incitement or instigation.

What next?

The timing of the ordinance is significant as it was promulgated four days after the SC refused to stay the Allahabad HC’s order, and a day before the HC’s deadline for removing the state government’s name-and-shame posters of alleged rioters. What remains to be seen is whether the state’s decision will pass the SC test.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Ordinance vs Bill- similarities, differences and procedure to be followed.
2. Do all ordinances require the assent of President or Governors of respective states.
3. Tenure and repromulgation of ordinances.
4. Applicability of judicial review.
5. Jurisdiction of High Courts vs Supreme Court.
6. Original vs appellate vs advisory jurisdiction of Superior Courts.

Mains Link:

Ordinance making power is to be used as a last resort, however in reality it is not so. Discuss the safeguards that are designed to prevent misuse of ordinance making power?

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/up-property-damage-ordinance-tribunal-can-hear-ex-parte-cant-be-questioned-6316140/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

10. Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2020

Context: Parliament Passes Central Sanskrit Universities Bill 2020.

Covered previously on: <https://www.insightsonindia.com/2020/03/03/how-the-centres-planned-sanskrit-universities-will-function/>.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Central vs State universities.
2. What are deemed universities?
3. Sanskrit- origin, roots and protection.
4. Bill vs Resolutions.
5. Finance Bills vs Constitutional Amendment Bills.

Mains Link:

Discuss the objectives and significance of the Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2020.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GCB78KF59.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

11. National Commission for Homoeopathy Bill, 2019

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: Key features and significance of the Bill.

Context: The Bill was recently passed in the Rajya Sabha.

The Bill seeks to repeal **the Homoeopathy Central Council Act, 1973**.

Key features (Note: Have a brief overview.)

Constitution of the National Commission for Homoeopathy: It will consist of 20 members, appointed by the central government and recommended by a Search Committee.

The Search Committee will consist of six members including the Cabinet Secretary and three experts nominated by the central government (of which two will have experience in the homoeopathic field).

Within three years of the passage of the Bill, state governments will establish **State Medical Councils for Homoeopathy at the state level.**

Functions of the National Commission for Homoeopathy: framing policies for regulating medical institutions and homoeopathic medical professionals, assessing the requirements of healthcare related human resources and infrastructure.

Appeal on matters related to professional and ethical misconduct: State Medical Councils will receive complaints relating to professional or ethical misconduct against a registered homoeopathic medical practitioner. If the medical practitioner is aggrieved of a decision of the State Medical Council, he may appeal to **the Board of Ethics and Medical Registration for Homoeopathy.**

Powers: The State Medical Councils and the Board of Ethics and Medical Registration for Homoeopathy have the power to take disciplinary action against the medical practitioner including imposing a monetary penalty.

Appeals: If the medical practitioner is aggrieved of the decision of the Board, he can approach the NCH to appeal against the decision. Appeal of the decision of the NCH lies with the central government.

Sources: pib.

12. National Register of Citizens (NRC)

What to study?

For Prelims: Particulars of NRC.

For Mains: Update of NRC- issues associated including ethical concerns.

Context: Union Home Ministry has filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court stating that preparation of NRC is a “necessary exercise for any sovereign country for mere identification of citizens from non-citizens.”

Basis for NRC- observations of Home Ministry:

- It is the responsibility entrusted with the Central government “to identify/detect illegal migrants and thereafter, follow the due process of law”.
- **The Foreigners Act, 1946**, confers upon the government the power to expel foreigners from India.
- It vests the Central government with absolute and unfettered discretion, and as there is no provision fettering this discretion in the Constitution, an unrestricted right to expel remains.

Background:

More than a dozen States have vociferously opposed the updating of National Population Register (NPR), slated to begin on April 1 along with the house listing phase of the Census. According to Citizenship Rules 2003, NPR is the first step towards the compilation of the NRC.

Concerns now:

There are fears that the CAA, followed by a country-wide NRC, will benefit non-Muslims excluded from the citizens’ register, while excluded Muslims will have to prove their citizenship. The government has denied that CAA and NRC are linked.

How it would be carried out?

Details of how such an exercise will be carried out are not yet known.

In the case of Assam, there was a **cut-off date — March 25, 1971** — after which all foreigners as per the Assam Accord were to be “detected, deleted and expelled in accordance with law”.

Presumably, the Centre will come out with a cut-off for the nationwide NRC, but it will be an arbitrary one.

Why this is worrisome?

Assam’s example: This is an exercise fraught with risks, as the example of Assam shows. The process in the state has been mired in inaccuracies, with low but worrying odds of legal citizens being declared illegal residents in their own country.

Need of the hour:

- Any such exercise demands a robust process that minimizes data infirmities.
- This would mean a complete rehaul of the methods used in Assam.
- Also, those who don’t make it to the list should get adequate legal recourse.

What is NRC?

- The NRC is the list of Indian citizens and was prepared in 1951, following the census of 1951.
- The process of NRC update was taken up in Assam as per a Supreme Court order in 2013.
- In order to wean out cases of illegal migration from Bangladesh and other adjoining areas, NRC updation was carried out under The Citizenship Act, 1955, and according to rules framed in **the Assam Accord**.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Relation between Census and NPR.
2. NPR vs NRC.
3. How NRC is related to Assam accord.
4. Constitutional provisions wrt to grant and revocation of citizenships.
5. Who carries out Census?

Mains Link:

Discuss why a nationwide NRC exercise may not be feasible.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=G1U78TT00.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

13. Defence Procurement Procedure 2020

What to study?

For Prelims: Overview of DPP, key changes introduced.

For Mains: Significance of revised DPP.

Context: Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh unveils draft of **Defence Procurement Procedure 2020**.

It aims at further increasing indigenous manufacturing and reducing timelines for procurement of defence equipment.

Key highlights of the draft:

1. **Indigenous Content (IC)** stipulated in various categories of procurement has been increased by about 10% to support the 'Make in India' initiative.
2. **Leasing has been introduced as a new category** for acquisition in addition to existing 'Buy' & 'Make' categories to substitute huge initial capital outlays with periodical rental payments. Here, **the lessor can be both Indian as well as global.**
3. **New Category Buy (Global – Manufacture in India)** has been introduced with minimum 50% indigenous content on cost basis of total contract value.
4. There is also **long-term product support** -- which would be three to five years after the warranty period is over.
5. A **"price variation clause"** has been introduced that will be applicable to all cases where the total cost of contract is more than Rs 1,000 crore and the delivery schedule exceeds 60 months.

Background:

The first DPP was promulgated in 2002 and has since been revised a number of times to provide impetus to the growing domestic industry and achieve enhanced self-reliance in defence manufacturing.

What is DPP?

The Defence Procurement Procedure mainly contains processes that needs to be followed to streamline and simplify defence procurement procedures and ultimately achieve the objective of self reliance in meeting all the security needs of the Indian Armed Forces by promoting indigenous design, development and manufacture of Defence weapon systems and, platforms in a time-bound manner without any delays.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. New clauses and incentives announced.
2. DAC- head and functions.
3. DPP 2002 vs Draft DPP 2020- key changes.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance and key features of the Draft Defence Procurement Procedure.

Sources: pib.

14. Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC 2.0) Scheme

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: Key features and significance of the scheme.

Context: Cabinet approves **Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC 2.0) Scheme**.

Key features:

1. The scheme provides for development of world class infrastructure along with common facilities and amenities through **Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMCs)**.
2. The Scheme would support setting up of both **Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMCs)** and **Common Facility Centers (CFCs)**.

Where can these clusters be setup?

1. An **Electronics Manufacturing Cluster (EMC)** would set up in geographical areas of certain minimum extent, preferably contiguous, where the focus is on development of basic infrastructure, amenities and other common facilities for the ESDM units.
2. **For Common Facility Centre (CFC)**, there should be a significant number of existing ESDM units located in the area and the focus is on upgrading common technical infrastructure and providing common facilities for the ESDM units in such EMCs, Industrial Areas/Parks/Industrial corridors.

Benefits of the scheme:

1. Availability of ready infrastructure and Plug & Play facility for attracting investment in electronics sector.
2. New investment in electronics sector
3. Jobs created by the manufacturing units;
4. Revenue in the form of taxes paid by the manufacturing units

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Where can EMCs and CFCs be setup?
2. Implementing ministry.

Mains Link:

Discuss the features and significance of Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC 2.0) Scheme.

Sources: pib.

15. Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)

What to study?

For Prelims: Key facts on MPLADS.

For Mains: Significance, performance analysis and need for monitoring of the scheme, demand for a legal framework.

Context: As a part of Government's efforts to contain spread of COVID – 19, **the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** has issued a circular granting one-time dispensation for utilizing funds under **the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)** to address the challenges in the fight against COVID-19.

- This will facilitate Members of Parliament to recommend funds for purchase of equipments for Government Hospitals / Dispensaries for medical testing and screening of patients and also facilitate in setting up other related facilities in their respective constituencies.

About MPLAD scheme:

What is it?

It was launched in December, 1993, to provide a mechanism for the Members of Parliament to recommend works of developmental nature for creation of durable community assets and for provision of basic facilities including community infrastructure, based on locally felt needs.

- The MPLADS is a **Plan Scheme fully funded by Government of India. The annual MPLADS fund entitlement per MP constituency is Rs. 5 crore.**

Special focus:

- MPs are to recommend every year, works costing at least 15 per cent of the MPLADS entitlement for the year for areas inhabited by Scheduled Caste population and 7.5 per cent for areas inhabited by S.T. population.
- In order to encourage trusts and societies for the betterment of tribal people, a ceiling of Rs. 75 lakh is stipulated for building assets by trusts and societies subject to conditions prescribed in the scheme guidelines.

Works under the scheme:

Works, developmental in nature, based on locally felt needs and always available for the use of the public at large, are eligible under the scheme. Preference under the scheme is given to works relating to national priorities, such as provision of drinking water, public health, education, sanitation, roads, etc.

Release of Funds:

- Funds are released in the form of **grants in-aid** directly to the district authorities.
- The funds released under the scheme are **non-lapsable**.
- The liability of funds not released in a particular year is carried forward to the subsequent years, subject to eligibility.

Execution of works:

The MPs have a **recommendatory role under the scheme**. They recommend their choice of works to the concerned district authorities who implement these works by following the established procedures of the concerned state government.

The district authority is empowered to examine the eligibility of works sanction funds and select the implementing agencies, prioritise works, supervise overall execution, and monitor the scheme at the ground level.

Recommendation of works:

1. The Lok Sabha Members can recommend works in their respective constituencies.
2. The elected members of the Rajya Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the state from which they are elected.
3. Nominated members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha may select works for implementation anywhere in the country.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. How is MPLADS connected to Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana?
2. Where can nominated MPs recommend their works?
3. Is there any special focus on SC and ST Welfare?
4. Difference between grants and loans?
5. Implementing agencies.

Mains Link:

Critically examine whether MPLADS has helped in bridging the gaps in provisioning of public services?

Sources: pib.

16. What is a Schedule H1 Drug?

What to study?

For Prelims: Schedule H1 Drugs, overview Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

For Mains: Significance and implications of this decision.

Context: The government has notified anti-malarial drug **hydroxychloroquine** under **Schedule-H1**.

This was done in exercise of its powers conferred by **Section 26B of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 (23 of 1940)**.

- The move is aimed at stopping misuse of the drug which has now been allowed by the government for prophylactic use in high risk contacts of Covid-19 patients and healthcare workers treating such patients.

Implications of this classification:

- It restricts its sale only based on prescription.
- The sale of the drug from now on should be in accordance with the conditions for sale of drugs as specified in Schedule H1 to the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945.

This would mean that any preparation containing the said drug will have a warning label of 'only prescription sale' and against self-medication.

- Additionally, chemists would need to maintain records for name and address of the prescriber, the name of the patient, the name of the drug and the quantity supplied and such records shall be maintained for three years and be open for inspection.

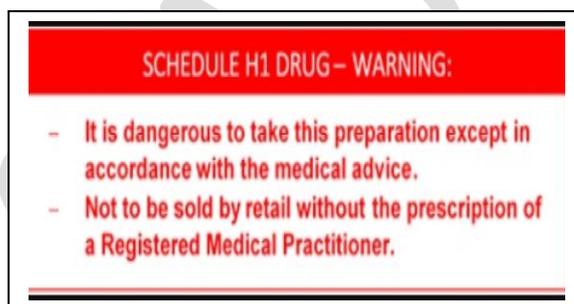
What are Schedule H1 Drugs?

The Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945, are the set of rules under **The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940**, which has provisions for classification of drugs into different schedules and also guidelines for storage, sale, display. **Schedule H1** has been introduced through Gazette notification GSR 588 (E) dated 30-08-2013 to check the indiscriminate use of antibiotics, anti-TB and some other drugs in the country.

The schedule contains certain **3rd and 4th generation antibiotics, certain habit forming drugs and anti-TB drugs**.

As per government notification, these drugs are required to be sold in the country with the following conditions:

1. The supply of a drug specified in Schedule H1 shall be recorded in a separate register at the time of the supply giving the name and address of the prescriber, the name of the patient, the name of the drug and the quantity supplied and such records shall be maintained for three years and be open for inspection.
2. The drug specified in Schedule H1 shall be labelled with the symbol Rx which shall be in red and conspicuously displayed on the left top corner of the label, and shall also be labelled with the following words in a box with a red border:



Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Classification of drugs in India.
2. Schedule H vs X drugs.
3. Important drugs under this schedule.

Mains Link:

The government has recently notified anti-malarial drug hydroxychloroquine under Schedule-H1. What are schedule H1 drugs? Why they are significant? Discuss.

Sources: the Hindu.

17. Why has Kerala sought a relaxation of FRBM rules?

What to study?

For Prelims: Overview of FRBM act and targets set.

For Mains: Performance of the act.

Context: To help fund the emergency relief package, Kerala proposes to borrow as much as ₹12,500 crore from the market in April itself and therefore the Chief Minister has urged the Centre to provide Kerala with flexibility under **the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act** so as to ensure that the State's finances are not adversely impacted in the rest of the financial year starting on April 1.

Background:

Kerala was one of the earliest States to announce an economic package of ₹20,000 crore to mitigate the impact on livelihoods and overall economic activity from the sweeping steps taken to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, including the latest 21-day nationwide lockdown.

How does a relaxation of the FRBM work?

The law does contain what is commonly referred to as an **'escape clause'**.

Under Section 4(2) of the Act, the Centre can exceed the annual fiscal deficit target citing grounds that include national security, war, national calamity, collapse of agriculture, structural reforms and decline in real output growth of a quarter by at least three percentage points below the average of the previous four quarters.

What is the FRBM Act?

The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act (FRBM Act), 2003, establishes financial discipline to reduce fiscal deficit.

What are the objectives of the FRBM Act?

1. The FRBM Act aims to introduce transparency in India's fiscal management systems.
2. The Act's long-term objective is for India to achieve fiscal stability and to give the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) flexibility to deal with inflation in India.
3. The Act was enacted to introduce more equitable distribution of India's debt over the years.

Key features of the FRBM Act:

The FRBM Act made it mandatory for the government to place the following along with the Union Budget documents in Parliament annually:

1. Medium Term Fiscal Policy Statement.
2. Macroeconomic Framework Statement.
3. Fiscal Policy Strategy Statement.

The FRBM Act proposed that revenue deficit, fiscal deficit, tax revenue and the total outstanding liabilities be projected as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) in the medium-term fiscal policy statement.

Amendments:

The Act has been amended several times.

In 2013, the government introduced a change and introduced **the concept of effective revenue deficit**. This implies that effective revenue deficit would be equal to revenue deficit minus grants to states for the creation of capital assets.

In 2016, a **committee under N K Singh** was set up to suggest changes to the Act. According to the government, the targets set under FRBM Act previously were too rigid.

N K Singh Committee's recommendations were as follows:

Targets: The committee suggested using debt as the primary target for fiscal policy and that the target must be achieved by 2023.

Fiscal Council: The committee proposed to create an autonomous Fiscal Council with a chairperson and two members appointed by the Centre (not employees of the government at the time of appointment).

Deviations: The committee suggested that the grounds for the government to deviate from the FRBM Act targets should be clearly specified

Borrowings: According to the suggestions of the committee, the government must not borrow from the RBI, except when:

1. The Centre has to meet a temporary shortfall in receipts.
2. RBI subscribes to government securities to finance any deviations.
3. RBI purchases government securities from the secondary market.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/coronavirus-why-has-kerala-sought-a-relaxation-of-fiscal-responsibility-and-budget-management-rules/article31194488.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

18. Companies Fresh Start Scheme, 2020 and revised LLP Settlement Scheme, 2020

What to study?

For Prelims: Overview of these schemes, what is LLP? How is it different from Companies?

For Mains: Significance and implications of these measures.

Context: Ministry of Corporate Affairs introduces the **“Companies Fresh Start Scheme, 2020”** and revised the **“LLP Settlement Scheme, 2020”** to provide relief to law abiding **companies and Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs)** in the wake of COVID 19.

What do these schemes entail?

1. These schemes incentivise compliance and reduce compliance burden during the unprecedented public health situation caused by COVID-19.
2. The schemes provide a **one-time waiver of additional filing fees** for delayed filings by the companies or LLPs with the Registrar of Companies during the currency of the Schemes, i.e. during the period starting from 1st April, 2020 and ending on 30th September, 2020.
3. They also significantly reduce the related financial burden on them, especially for those with long standing defaults, thereby giving them an opportunity to make a “fresh start”.
4. Both the Schemes also contain provision for **giving immunity from penal proceedings**, including against imposition of penalties for late submissions.
5. They also provide **additional time for filing appeals before the concerned Regional Directors against imposition of penalties, if already imposed.**

What is a LLP?

A Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) is a **partnership in which some or all partners have limited liability**. It therefore exhibits elements of partnerships and corporations.

In an LLP, **one partner is not responsible or liable for another partner's misconduct or negligence.**

Salient features of an LLP:

An LLP is a **body corporate and legal entity** separate from its partners. It has **perpetual succession**.

Being the separate legislation (i.e. LLP Act, 2008), **the provisions of Indian Partnership Act, 1932 are not applicable to an LLP and it is regulated by the contractual agreement between the partners.**

Every Limited Liability Partnership shall use the words **“Limited Liability Partnership”** or its acronym **“LLP”** as **the last words of its name.**

Composition:

- Every LLP shall have at least two designated partners being individuals, at least one of them being resident in India and all the partners shall be the agent of the Limited Liability Partnership but not of other partners.

Need for and significance LLP:

LLP format is an alternative corporate business vehicle that provides the benefits of limited liability of a company but allows its members the flexibility of organizing their internal management on the basis of a mutually arrived agreement, as is the case in a partnership firm.

This format would be quite useful for small and medium enterprises in general and for the enterprises in services sector in particular.

- Internationally, LLPs are the preferred vehicle of business particularly for service industry or for activities involving professionals.

Insta Links:

Prelims Link:

1. Difference between LLP and companies.
2. Difference between LP and LLP.
3. What is a body corporate?

4. Roles and functions of LLP partners.

Mains Link:

Write a note on limited liability partnerships.

Sources: pib.

Topics: Development processes and the development industry- the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.

1. National Sports Development Fund

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: Features, findings and significance.

Context: Under CSR initiative, Security Printing & Minting Corporation of India (SPMCIL) contributes Rs 1 crore towards the National Sports Development Fund.

What is NSDF?

Established in 1998 under **the Charitable Endowments Act 1890** and notified by Government of India in November, 1998.

Purpose of creation is to impart momentum and flexibility to assisting the cause of sports.

Role of the Fund is supplementary to the overall policy and activities of the Department of Sports in achieving excellence in sports.

OBJECTIVES OF NSDF:

1. To administer and apply the moneys of the Fund for promotion of sports in general and specific sports disciplines and individual sports persons in particular for achieving excellence at the National and of International level;
2. To impart special training and coaching in relevant sports disciplines to sports persons, coaches and sports specialists;
3. To construct and maintain infrastructure for promotion of sports and games;
4. To supply sports equipments to organizations and individuals for promotion of sports and games;
5. To identify problems and take up research and development studies for providing support to excellence in sports;
6. To promote international cooperation, in particular, exchanges which may promote the development of sports;
7. To provide low-interest or interest-free loans for projects and activities related to any of the aforesaid objects.

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF NSDF:

Council of NSDF: The Fund is managed by a Council constituted by the Central Government. Union Minister in charge of Youth Affairs and Sports is the Chairperson of the Council. Members of the Council include senior Officers of the Department of Sports, Chairman & Managing Directors of Private and Public Sector Companies / Corporations, representatives of Sports Promotion Boards, etc.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Briefly understand about funds set up under various government bodies.
2. Know their objectives and funding mechanism.

Mains Link:

Write a note on the objectives and significance of NSDF.

Sources: pib.

Topics: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

1. Pradhan Mantri Laghu Vyapari Maan-dhan Yojana

What to study?

For Prelims: Key features, objectives of the scheme.

For Mains: Significance and the role of scheme in ensuring financial security of small traders.

Context: Under performance of **National Pension Scheme for Traders, Shopkeepers and Self-Employed Persons.**

- Just over 34,000 people have signed up so far.
- The Labour Ministry's vision document in 2019 had set a **target of 25 lakh enrolments for the scheme in 2019-2020.**

What is Pradhan Mantri Laghu Vyapari Maan-dhan Yojana?

It is a **voluntary and contribution based central sector scheme.**

The government launched the scheme, entailing monthly minimum assured pension of **₹3,000 for the entry age group of 18-40 years after attaining the age of 60 years**, with effect from July 22, 2019.

Under the scheme, **the government makes matching contribution in the subscribers' account.**

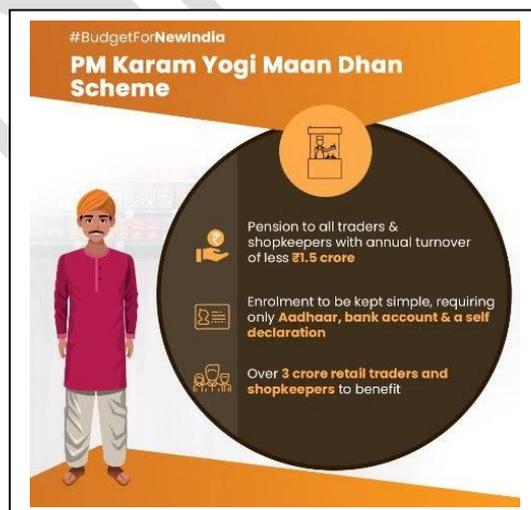
The scheme is based on **self-declaration** as no documents are required except bank account and Aadhaar Card.

Eligibility:

1. All small shopkeepers, self-employed persons and retail traders aged between 18-40 years and with Goods and Service Tax (GST) turnover below Rs.1.5 crore can enrol for pension scheme.
2. To be eligible, the applicants should not be covered under the National Pension Scheme, Employees' State Insurance Scheme and the Employees' Provident Fund or be an Income Tax assessee.

Benefits to the family on death of an eligible subscriber:

During the receipt of pension, if an eligible subscriber dies, his spouse shall be only entitled to receive fifty per cent. of the pension received by such eligible subscriber, as family pension and such family pension shall be applicable only to the spouse.



Insta link:

Prelims link:

Concentrate on Objectives, eligibility and benefits of such schemes.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of National Pension Scheme for Traders and Self Employed Persons.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/just-over-34000-people-sign-up-for-traders-pension-scheme/article30964532.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

2. Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP)

What to study?

For Prelims: Features of PMBJP and Janaushadhi Suvidha.

For Mains: Health facilities for the underprivileged- need and efforts by the government, generic medicines and their increasing popularity worldwide.

Context: Janaushadhi week is being celebrated across the country from 1st March to 7th March 2020.

About PMBJP:

'Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana' is a campaign launched by the **Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. Of India**, to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses through special kendra's known as **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra.**

Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI) is the implementing agency of PMBJP. BPPI (Bureau of Pharma Public Sector Undertakings of India) has been established under the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. of India, with the support of all the CPSUs.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE SCHEME:

- Ensure access to quality medicines.
- Extend coverage of quality generic medicines so as to reduce the out of pocket expenditure on medicines and thereby redefine the unit cost of treatment per person.
- Create awareness about generic medicines through education and publicity so that quality is not synonymous with only high price.
- A public programme involving Government, PSUs, Private Sector, NGO, Societies, Co-operative Bodies and other Institutions.
- Create demand for generic medicines by improving access to better healthcare through low treatment cost and easy availability wherever needed in all therapeutic categories.

What is a generic medicine?

There is **no definition of generic or branded medicines under the Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules, 1945 made thereunder.** However, generic medicines are generally those which contain same amount of same active ingredient(s) in same dosage form and are intended to be administered by the same route of administration as that of branded medicine.

The price of an unbranded generic version of a medicine is generally lower than the price of a corresponding branded medicine because in case of generic version, the pharmaceutical company does not have to spend money on promotion of its brand.

How are they regulated in India?

Drugs manufactured in the country, irrespective of whether they are generic or branded, are required to comply with the same standards as prescribed in the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules, 1945 made thereunder for their quality.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Regulation of generic medicines.
2. What are Jan Aushadi Kendras?
3. About BPPI.

Mains Link:

Write a note on Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana.

Sources: pib.

3. North East Venture Fund (NEVF)

What to study?

For Prelims: Funding, investment and objectives.

For Mains: Significance of the fund.

Context: The **NEVF (North East Venture Fund)** disbursed over Rs.18 crore to 12 start-ups till date- information given in Parliament.

About North East Venture Fund (NEVF):

- Launched in **September 2017**.
- Set up by **North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Limited (NEDFi)** in association with **Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (M-DoNER)**.
- It is a **close ended fund** with capital commitment of Rs 100 crore.
- It is **the first dedicated venture capital fund for the North Eastern Region**.
- **Objective:** to contribute to the entrepreneurship development of the NER and achieve attractive risk-adjusted returns through long term capital appreciation by way of investments in privately negotiated equity/ equity related investments.
- The investment under this scheme **ranges from Rs. 25 lakh to Rs.10 crore per venture, which is long term in nature with investment horizon of 4-5 years.**

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Concentrate on such funds constituted by the government.
2. Their objectives.
3. Who governs them?

Mains Link:

Write a note on **the North East Venture Fund (NEVF)**.

Link:

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1605421>.

Sources: pib.

4. PM Ujjwala Yojana

What to study?

For Prelims: Key features of the scheme.

For Mains: Significance and performance analysis of the scheme.

Context: Parliamentary committee's observations on performance of the **PM Ujjwala Yojana**.

Key observations:

- The government in September, 2019 met **the target of eight crore LPG connections under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana**.
- But, **only three States have become kerosene free. These include-** Haryana, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Union Territories that have become kerosene-free** are the Union Territories of Delhi, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Andaman & Nicobar Island and Puducherry.

Key issues and gaps highlighted by the Committee:

1. The scheme is no longer running. The committee was upset at the closure of the scheme and said there was still a lot of ground to cover.
2. There are poor households in the general category in urban and semi-urban localities that also need to be covered.
3. Large segments of people in various States still depended on kerosene for cooking and household lighting.

What next?

1. The scheme should be extended to poor households in urban and semi-urban slum areas.
2. There is need for achieving a higher LPG coverage of the population by providing connections to households that do not have LPG.

About Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana:

Launched in May 2016.

Aim: To provide **LPG (liquefied petroleum gas)** connections to poor households.

Key features: A **deposit-free LPG connection** is given to eligible with **financial assistance of Rs 1,600 per connection by the Centre.**

Target: The scheme gained traction with its ambit being expanded to include 80 million poor families from the earlier target of 50 million families with an additional allocation of Rs4,800 crore.

Eligibility criteria:

1. Applicant must a woman above the age of 18 and a citizen of India.
2. Applicant should belong to a BPL (Below Poverty Line) household.
3. No one in the applicant's household should own an LPG connection.
4. The household income of the family, per month, must not exceed a certain limit as defined by the government of the Union Territories and State Government.
5. Applicant must not be a recipient of other similar schemes provided by the government.

Objectives of the scheme are:

1. Empowering women and protecting their health.
2. Reducing the serious health hazards associated with cooking based on fossil fuel.
3. Reducing the number of deaths in India due to unclean cooking fuel.
4. Preventing young children from significant number of acute respiratory illnesses caused due to indoor air pollution by burning the fossil fuel.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. What is LPG?
2. What are Parliamentary committees?
3. Targets and goals under the scheme.
4. States and UTs which became kerosene- free under the scheme.

Mains Link:

It is said that the real test of the PMUY and its successor programmes will be in how they translate the provision of connections to sustained use of LPG or other clean fuels such as electricity or biogas. For this which issues need to be addressed? Also discuss the significance of PMUY.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/lpg-scheme-closed-but-only-3-states-have-become-kerosene-free/article31033878.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

5. Foreigners Tribunals

What to study?

For Prelims: Composition, need, powers and functions of these tribunals.

For Mains: Concerns over their functioning and reforms needed.

Context: A series of judgments delivered by the Gauhati High Court over the course of the last few weeks has brought into sharp focus the utter brutality of the regime governing **the Foreigners' Tribunals in Assam.**

What is a Foreigners tribunal?

In 1964, the govt brought in **the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order.**

Composition: Advocates not below the age of 35 years of age with at least 7 years of practice (or) Retired Judicial Officers from the Assam Judicial Service (or) Retired IAS of ACS Officers (not below the rank of Secretary/Addl. Secretary) having experience in quasi-judicial works.

Who can setup these tribunals?

The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has amended **the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964,** and has empowered **district magistrates in all States and Union Territories to set up tribunals (quasi-judicial bodies)** to decide whether a person staying illegally in India is a foreigner or not.

Earlier, the powers to constitute tribunals were vested only with the Centre.

Typically, the tribunals there have seen two kinds of cases: those concerning persons against whom a reference has been made by the border police and those whose names in the electoral roll has a “D”, or “doubtful”, marked against them.

Who can approach?

The amended order (Foreigners (Tribunal) Order, 2019) also **empowers individuals to approach the Tribunals.** Earlier, only the State administration could move the Tribunal against a suspect.

How a person is declared foreigner by these tribunals?

Foreigners Tribunals, quasi-judicial authorities in Assam, have been deciding on matters pertaining to citizenship in order to identify foreigners.

1. The process begins by the border police or the Election Commission referring the case of a suspected foreigner to the Foreigners Tribunal.
2. The tribunal calls on the person to appear before it and prove that they are not a foreigner, and then passes an order in favour or against them.

Identity documentation:

1. Persons appearing before Foreigners Tribunals need to produce **identity documentation** proving that they were born in India and are descended from persons who entered India before **March 24, 1971.**
2. Such persons are allowed to **produce secondary evidence** such as university certificates or gaon panchayat certificates for this purpose.
3. However, in order for such secondary evidence to be considered valid proof of their presence in India pre-1971, **the person issuing the certificate must appear before the tribunal** to testify and prove that the document is genuine.

What’s the issue now?

One in two people are declared foreigners because issuing authorities fail to appear before the Foreigners Tribunals to testify that the documents produced are genuine and true to their knowledge. The consequence of this lackadaisical approach is **a drastic loss of right and liberty.**

Reforms needed:

1. Any such exercise demands a robust process that minimizes data infirmities.
2. This would mean a complete rehaul of the methods used in Assam.
3. Also, those who don’t make it to the list should get adequate legal recourse.

Need for reforms:

A person’s citizenship is a basic human right. Declaring people foreigners in haste without judicially verifying their credentials can leave many human beings stateless.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) (IMDT) Act vs Foreigners Tribunal (Order) 1964.
2. Burden of proof under this order.
3. Powers to approach the tribunal and kind of cases to be decided by the tribunal.
4. Members of the tribunal.
5. NPR vs NRC.
6. Geographical locations of Assam and other NE states.

Mains Link:

Discuss briefly the laws that are in place to tackle illegal non-citizens in the country. Why was the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964 amended? Explain.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/for-a-universal-status-of-personhood/article31033851.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

6. Consumer disputes redressal forum

What to study?

For Prelims: Dispute redressal mechanism under Consumer Protection Act, various bodies, composition, ambit and appeals.

For Mains: Significance and the need for dispute redressal mechanism.

Context: A district consumer disputes redressal forum in New Delhi has directed e-commerce platform Flipkart to compensate a complainant by paying over ₹11,000 for delivering a defective mobile handset and failing to redress the grievance.

Dispute redressal under Consumer Protection Act, 1986:

The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 provides for a **3-tier structure of the National and State Commissions and District Forums for speedy resolution of consumer disputes. They are quasi-judicial bodies.**

Composition: Each District Forum is headed by a person who is or has been or is eligible to be appointed as a District Judge and each State Commission is headed by a person who is or has been a Judge of High Court.

Ambit:

The provisions of this Act cover 'goods' as well as 'services'. The goods are those which are manufactured or produced and sold to consumers through wholesalers and retailers. The services are in the nature of transport, telephone, electricity, housing, banking, insurance, medical treatment, etc.

How Grievance redressal is carried out?

A written complaint, can be filed before the District Consumer Forum for pecuniary value of upto **Rupees twenty lakh**, State Commission for value upto **Rupees one crore** and the National Commission for value above **Rupees one crore**, in respect of defects in goods and or deficiency in service.

- However, **no complaint can be filed for alleged deficiency in any service that is rendered free of charge or under a contract of personal service.**
- The **remedy under the Consumer Protection Act is an alternative in addition** to that already available to the aggrieved persons/consumers by way of **civil suit.**
- In the complaint/appeal/petition submitted under the Act, a consumer is **not required to pay any court fees but only a nominal fee.**

Appeals:

1. If a consumer is not satisfied by the decision of a District Forum, he can appeal to the State Commission. Against the order of the State Commission a consumer can come to the National Commission.
2. In order to help achieve the objects of the Consumer Protection Act, the National Commission has also been conferred with the powers of administrative control over all the State Commissions by calling for periodical returns regarding the institution, disposal and pendency of cases.

CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT 1986	PROVISIONS	CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT 2019
No separate regulator	Regulator	Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) to be formed
Complaint could be filed in a consumer court where the seller's (defendant) office is located	Consumer court	Complaint can be filed in a consumer court where the complainant resides or works
No provision. Consumer could approach a civil court but not consumer court	Product liability	Consumer can seek compensation for harm caused by a product or service
District: up to ₹20 lakh State: ₹20 lakh to ₹1 cr National: above ₹1 cr	Pecuniary jurisdiction	District: up to ₹1 cr State: ₹1 cr to ₹10 cr National: Above ₹10 cr
No provision	E-commerce	All rules of direct selling extended to e-commerce
No legal provision	Mediation cells	BCCI Court can refer settlement through mediation

As per the latest **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**, dispute redressal Commissions will be set up at District, State and National level, with pecuniary jurisdiction up to Rs one crore, Rs one crore to Rs 10 crore, and above Rs 10 crore, respectively. In case of unfair contracts, the State Commissions will hear complaints where the value is up to Rs 10 crore, and National Commissions will hear complaints above that value. These Commissions can declare unfair terms of such contracts to be null and void.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. National vs State Commissions vs District Dispute redressal Forums, their compositions.
2. Ambit, jurisdiction of the courts and Appeals.
3. Need for Court fees.

Mains:

Write a note on consumer dispute redressal mechanism under the Consumer Protection Act of 1986.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/online-portal-told-to-pay-11k-for-defective-mobile-phone/article31044285.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

7. Tech For Tribals

What to study?

For Prelims: Key features of the scheme.

For Mains: Significance and the need for such schemes.

Context: TRIFED Launches transformational “Tech For Tribals” program in partnership with Institutes of National Importance (INIs) to develop Tribal entrepreneurship.

Key features of the program:

- **Aim:** To transform 5 crore Tribal Entrepreneurs.
- It is **supported by Ministry of MSME**.
- It also aims at capacity building and imparting entrepreneurship skills to tribal forest produce gatherers enrolled under **the Pradhan Mantri VanDhan Yojana (PMVDY)**.
- The trainees will undergo a 30 days program over six weeks comprising 120 sessions.
- The Partners will develop course contents relevant to Entrepreneurship in Value Addition and Processing of Forest Produces.
- **The course curriculum will include** Achievement Motivation and positive psychology, Entrepreneurial Competencies, Identification of locally available NTFP based Business Opportunities.

Significance of the program:

It will ensure higher success rate of the Tribal Entrepreneurs by enabling and empowering them to run their business with marketable products with quality certifications.

What are Van Dhan Kendras?

- TRIFED under Ministry of Tribal Affairs is establishing 1,200 "Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK)", across 28 States engaging 3.6 Lakhs Tribal Forest Produce gatherers.
- One typical VDKV comprises of 15 Self Help Groups, each consisting of 20 Tribal gatherers.

About Van Dhan Vikas Kendras initiative:

- The initiative aims to promote MFPs-centric livelihood development of tribal gatherers and artisans.
- It mainstreams the tribal community by promoting primary level value addition to MFP at grassroots level.
- **Significance:** Through this initiative, the share of tribals in the value chain of Non-Timber Forest Produce is expected to rise from the present 20% to around 60%.

Implementation:

1. The scheme will be implemented through Ministry of Tribal Affairs as Nodal Department at the Central Level and TRIFED as Nodal Agency at the National Level.
2. At State level, the State Nodal Agency for MFPs and the District collectors are envisaged to play a pivot role in scheme implementation at grassroot level.
3. Locally the Kendras are proposed to be managed by a Managing Committee (an SHG) consisting of representatives of Van Dhan SHGs in the cluster.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Van Dhan Kendras- objectives, composition and functions.
2. TRIFED- functions.
3. What are classified as MFPs?
4. Institutes of National Importance (INIs)- recognition and benefits.

Mains Link:

Write a note on Pradhan Mantri VanDhan Yojana (PMVDY).

Sources: pib.

8. MSP for MFP

What to study?

For Prelims: What is MSP? MFP? Scheme related?

For Mains: Significance of the scheme and MFP for tribals.

Context: The Union government's 'mechanism for marketing of minor forest produce (MFP) through minimum support price (MSP) and development of value chain for MFP' scheme can offer respite to forest-dependent labourers in the wake of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, according to experts.

What is this scheme all about?

The Union Cabinet, in 2013, approved a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** for marketing of non-nationalized / non monopolized Minor Forest Produce (MFP) and development of a value chain for **MFP through Minimum Support Price (MSP)**.

- This was a **measure towards social safety for MFP gatherers**, who are primarily members of the Scheduled Tribes (STs) most of them in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) areas.
- **Key features of the scheme:**
Ensure that the tribal population gets a remunerative price for the produce they collect from the forest and provide alternative employment avenues to them.
- Establish a system to ensure fair monetary returns for forest dweller's efforts in collection, primary processing, storage, packaging, transportation etc, while ensuring sustainability of the resource base.
- Get them a share of revenue from the sales proceeds with costs deducted.

Coverage:

The scheme would cover 12 MFPs, which are not nationalized in States having Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in accordance with Fifth Schedule of Constitution. These are Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Jharkhand. The 12 MFPs are Tendu, Bamboo, Karanj, Mahuwa Seed, Sal Leaf, Sal Seed, Lac, Chironjee, Wild Honey, Myrobalan, Tamarind, and Gums (Gum Karaya).

1. **Implementation:**
The responsibility of purchasing MFP on MSP will be with State designated agencies.
2. To ascertain market price, services of market correspondents would be availed by the designated agencies particularly for major markets trading in MFP.
3. The scheme supports primary value addition as well as provides for supply chain infrastructure like cold storage, warehouses etc.
4. **The Ministry of Tribal Affairs will be the nodal Ministry for implementation** and monitoring of the scheme. The Minimum Support Price would be determined by the Ministry with technical help of TRIFED.

Significance of the scheme:

The Minor Forest Produce (MFP), also known as Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP), is a major source of livelihood and provides essential food, nutrition, medicinal needs and cash income to a large number of STs who live in and around forests. An estimated 100 million forest dwellers depend on the Minor Forest Produce for food, shelter, medicines, cash income, etc.

However, MFP production is highly dispersed spatially because of the poor accessibility of these areas and competitive market not having evolved. Consequently, MFP gatherers who are mostly poor are unable to bargain for fair prices. This package of intervention can help in organizing unstructured MFP markets.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Who decides about Products to be covered under MFP?
2. How many products are currently covered under MFP?
3. Permission for collection of MFPs inside National Parks and other protected areas?
4. Centrally sponsored vs Central Sector schemes.
5. Who decides on MSP?

Mains Link:

Recognition of tribal rights over non-timber forest products (NTFPs) would accelerate empowerment of the poor and marginalised. Comment.

Link:

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/forests/covid-19-minor-forest-produce-scheme-can-come-to-tribals-rescue-say-experts-69971>.

Sources: down to earth.

9. New measures under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana

What to study?

For Prelims: Key components and features of the scheme.

For Mains: Significance of these measures, implications on govt finances.

Context: The Union Finance & Corporate Affairs Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman has announced Rs 1.70 Lakh Crore relief package under **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana** for the poor to help them fight the battle against Corona Virus.

- These measures are intended at reaching out to the poorest of the poor, with food and money in hands, so that they do not face difficulties in buying essential supplies and meeting essential needs.
- The package includes a range of measures that the Government of India will take to alleviate the economic, health, and food-related distress of India's poor.

Key components of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package:

1. **Insurance scheme for health workers fighting COVID-19 in Government Hospitals and Health Care**

Centres:

What are the benefits?

Any health professional, who while treating Covid-19 patients, meet with some accident, then he/she would be compensated with **an amount of Rs 50 lakh under the scheme.**

Coverage:

1. All government health centres, wellness centres and hospitals of Centre as well as States would be covered under this scheme.
2. Approximately 22 lakh health workers would be provided insurance cover to fight this pandemic.
3. Safai karamcharis, ward-boys, nurses, ASHA workers, paramedics, technicians, doctors and specialists and other health workers would be covered.

2. **PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana:**

Under this scheme, 80 crore poor people, covering about two-thirds of the country's population, will get 5 kg rice or wheat each month for the next three months free of charge, in addition to the 5 kg they already get. Each household will get 1 kg of dal of their choice, for next three months, also free of charge.

Besides, to ensure adequate availability of protein to all the above mentioned individuals, 1 kg per family, would be provided pulses according to regional preferences for next three months.

3. **Benefit to farmers:**

The first instalment of Rs 2,000 due in 2020-21 will be front-loaded and paid in April 2020 itself under the PM KISAN Yojana. It would cover 8.7 crore farmers.

4. **Cash transfers Under PM Garib Kalyan Yojana:**

A total of 20.40 crores **PMJDY women account-holders would be given an ex-gratia of Rs 500 per month for next three months.**

Gas cylinders, free of cost, would be provided to 8 crore poor families for the next three months.

Wage-earners below Rs 15,000 per month in businesses having less than 100 workers: Government proposes to pay 24 percent of their monthly wages into their PF accounts for next three months.

Support for senior citizens (above 60 years), widows and Divyang: Government will give them Rs 1,000 to tide over difficulties during next three months.

MNREGA wages would be increased by Rs 20 with effect from 1 April, 2020. Wage increase under MNREGA will provide an additional Rs 2,000 benefit annually to a worker.

5. **Self-Help groups:**

Limit of collateral free lending would be increased from Rs 10 to Rs 20 lakhs.

6. **Other components:**

Employees' Provident Fund Regulations will be amended to include Pandemic as the reason to allow non-refundable advance of 75 percent of the amount or three months of the wages, whichever is lower, from their accounts.

Welfare Fund for Building and Other Constructions Workers: State Governments will be given directions to utilise this fund to provide assistance and support to these workers to protect them against economic disruptions.

Why these measures were necessary?

For economic agents – particularly poor households and small businesses – the crisis today is a crisis of liquidity. The nationwide lockdown, imposed to stop the novel coronavirus in its tracks, has led to scores of daily wage workers and informal sector entrepreneurs losing earning opportunities from their existing activities.

Concerns and challenges ahead:

Essentially, this package seems to reach those who are connected to bank accounts and formal payment systems. But certain groups of daily wagers and informal workers may be left out.

And the real challenge would come in implementing these measures. For example, while there was sufficient surplus foodgrains available in government warehouses and an existing system for further procurement, the system for procurement of pulses needed to be created in most states.

Sources: pib.

10. **RBI's COVID-19 Economic Relief Package**

What to study?

For Prelims: Key terms mentioned, key changes made.

For Mains: Significance and the need for these measures.

Context: Reserve Bank of India's **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** has come out with its own measures to help deal with economic fall out of COVID-19 pandemic.

This was **the first time that the MPC met outside its bi-monthly meeting calendar.**

Four steps taken by the RBI:

1. Increase the liquidity in the system.
2. Make sure the lower policy rate is transmitted. Steps one and two are linked.
3. Give a three-month window for a payback on all term loans.
4. Take steps to reduce volatility and provide stability.

Measures announced and their impact:

1. Cut in repo rate:

A big cut in the repo rate by 75 basis points (100 basis points make a per cent, so three-quarters of a percentage point) to 4.4%.

A low repo rate has the overall effect of reducing interest rates for the system. **Lower rates make it easier for entrepreneurs to take loans for working capital and for households for homes, vehicles and so on.**

2. Cut in reverse repo rate:

The ratio has been cut by 90 bps to 4%.

This is **the rate at which banks lend to the RBI.**

A reduction of the reverse repo to 4% makes it **unattractive to banks to park it with the RBI and banks will be nudged to lend.**

3. Moratorium on Repayments of Loans:

RBI has also allowed banks to defer payment of Equated Monthly Instalments (EMIs) on home, car, personal loans as well as credit card dues for three months till May 31.

The RBI also allowed lending institutions, banks to defer interest on working capital repayments by 3 months — a move aimed at addressing the distress among firms as production is down.

For banks and lending institutions, **this will affect their cash flows as they may not be getting repayments for three months.** But the RBI has reduced their cash reserve ratio (CRR) requirements, providing them additional liquidity.

4. Cut in Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR):

The RBI reduced the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by a full percentage point down to 3% for a year. **The CRR is the percentage of demand and time deposits banks have to keep with the RBI.**

RBI has reduced the CRR to 3%, freeing up ₹1.37 trillion for banks to lend. CRR has been chosen rather than SLR because this increases 'primary liquidity' with the banks a bit better.

5. Targeted long-term repo operations:

RBI will lend money to banks (a total of ₹1 trillion) that can be invested in bonds and other forms of lending instruments.

TLTRO will provide financing to credit institutions.

6. Marginal standing facility (MSF):

₹1.37 trillion will be made available under the emergency lending window called the **marginal standing facility (MSF).**

Banks will now be able to borrow 3% of their deposits under this window, up from the current 2%. Basically, RBI is willing to lend more than before.

Sources: pib.

Topics: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

1. Rare Disease Day

What to study?

For Prelims: What are rare diseases? How do they occur?

For Mains: Their spread, concerns and issues associated.

Context: Rare Disease Day is observed on **February 29.**

What is a rare disease?

A rare disease, also referred to as **an orphan disease**, is any disease that affects a small percentage of the population.

Most rare diseases are genetic, and are present throughout a person's entire life, even if symptoms do not immediately appear.

The most common rare diseases recorded in India are Haemophilia, Thalassemia, sickle-cell anaemia and primary immuno deficiency in children, auto-immune diseases, Lysosomal storage disorders such as Pompe disease, Hirschsprung disease, Gaucher's disease, Cystic Fibrosis, Hemangiomas and certain forms of muscular dystrophies.

Definition:

While there is no universally accepted definition of rare diseases, countries typically arrive at their own descriptions, taking into consideration disease prevalence, its severity and the existence of alternative therapeutic options.

In the US, for instance, a rare disease is defined as a condition that affects fewer than 200,000 people. The same definition is used by **the National Organisation for Rare Disorders (NORD)**.

Concerns and challenges:

1. They pose a significant challenge to health care systems because of the difficulty in collecting epidemiological data, which in turn impedes the process of arriving at a disease burden, calculating cost estimations and making correct and timely diagnoses, among other problems.
2. Many cases of rare diseases may be serious, chronic and life-threatening. In some cases, the affected individuals, mostly children, may also suffer from some form of a handicap.
3. As per the 2017 report, over 50 per cent of new cases are reported in children and these diseases are responsible for 35 per cent of deaths in those below the age of one, 10 per cent of deaths between the ages of one and five, and 12 per cent between five and 15.

Efforts by India towards this:

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, in January this year, published a **national policy for the treatment of 450 'rare diseases'**.

The Centre first prepared such a policy in 2017 and appointed a committee in 2018 to review it.

Overview of the policy:

1. The policy intends to kickstart a **registry of rare diseases**, which will be maintained by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).
2. Under the policy, **there are three categories of rare diseases** — requiring one-time curative treatment, diseases that require long-term treatment but where the cost is low, and those needing long-term treatments with high cost. Some of the diseases in the first category include osteopetrosis and immune deficiency disorders, among others.
3. **Financial assistance:** As per the policy, the assistance of Rs 15 lakh will be provided to patients suffering from rare diseases that require a one-time curative treatment under **the Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi scheme**. The treatment will be limited to the beneficiaries of **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana**.

Insta- Link:

Prelims link:

- India's policy on rare diseases.
- Which diseases can be classified as rare diseases?

Mains Link:

What are rare diseases? How do they spread? And how can the spread be prevented?

Sources: Down to Earth.

2. World University Rankings by Subject 2020

What to study?

For Prelims: Ranking methodology and categorisation, performance of various institutions.

For Mains: Significance of this ranking and potential of Indian Educational institutions.

Context: QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) has released the World University Rankings by Subject 2020.

Background:

- To produce the QS World University Rankings by subject area for this year, QS analysed over 22 million papers, producing close to 200 million citations.
- 1,368 institutions have been ranked across 48 subjects in 5 broad categories across 159 locations, which reflects the scale behind this internationally benchmarked undertaking to produce these subject rankings.

5 categories are:

1. Arts and humanities.
2. Engineering and technology.
3. Life sciences and medicine.
4. Natural sciences.
5. Social sciences and management.

Performance of Indian Institutions:

1. **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay and IIT Delhi** have secured 44th and 47th positions respectively in **Engineering and Technology category**.
2. **Top 100:** Other Indian technological and engineering institutes like IIT Kharagpur (86), IIT Madras (88) and IIT Kanpur (96) found their places in top 100 of this category.
3. However, **engineering and technology was the only major subject group where Indian institutions were able to crack the elite top 100 tier.**
4. Overall, 12 institutions from the country were ranked in the top 500 in this category alone.
5. In the **Natural Sciences category**, three Indian institutions made it to the top 200: IIT-Bombay at 108th rank, closely followed by the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore at the 111th position, while IIT-Madras scraped in at the 195th rank.
6. Jawaharlal Nehru University remained the country's top institution in the **Arts and Humanities category**, with a global ranking of 162, followed at a distance by Delhi University at 231.
7. Delhi University topped the **Social Sciences and Management category**, with a global ranking of 160, followed by IIT-Delhi at 183.
8. There are no Indian institutions in the world's top 200 when it comes to **Life Sciences and Medicine**. The top institution in the country is the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, which had a global ranking of 231.

Insta Link:

Prelims link:

1. Such reports and performance of various countries.
2. Various institutions and their rankings.

Mains Link:

What are Institutions of Eminence? Discuss the benefits of Institutions of Eminence to India.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GG277115N.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

3. Status of Govt. Schools

What to study?

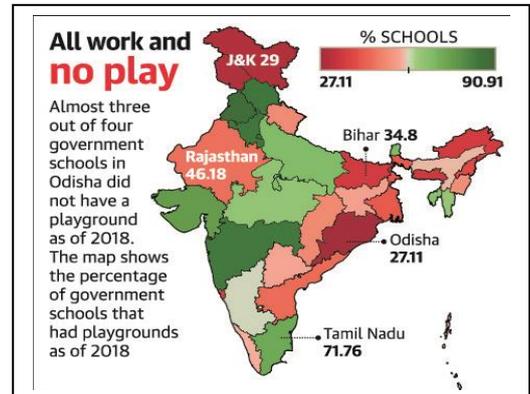
For Prelims: Funding for govt schools under various schemes and schemes associated.

For Mains: Concerns expressed by the report and ways to address them.

Context: The **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development (HRD)** recently submitted its report on the 2020-2021 demand for grants for school education to the Rajya Sabha. In this report, the committee has made various observations on state of government schools in India.

What is the state of government schools?- Findings by the panel:

1. Almost half the government schools in the country do not have electricity or playgrounds.
2. The budgetary allocations saw a 27% cut from proposals made by the School Education Department. Despite proposals for ₹82,570 crore, only ₹59,845 crore was allocated.
3. There is slow progress in building classrooms, labs and libraries to strengthen government higher secondary schools.
4. Overall, for the **core Samagra Shiksha Scheme**, the department had only spent 71% of revised estimates by December 31, 2019.
5. India is also dealing with a scenario of significant teacher vacancies, which are to the tune of almost 60-70 per cent in some states.



Need of the hour- key recommendations:

1. Core schemes should get additional funds at the revised estimates stage.
2. HRD Ministry should collaborate with **the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme** to construct boundary walls.
3. It should also work with **the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** to provide solar and other energy sources so that schools have access to power.

Why reforms are necessary?

The learning crisis is evident in the fact that almost half of the children in grade 5 in rural India cannot solve a simple two-digit subtraction problem, while 67 per cent of children in grade 8 in public schools score less than 50 per cent in competency-based assessments in mathematics.

The Delhi Model of Education:

For too long, there have been **two kinds of education models in the country: one for the classes and another for the masses**. The AAP government in Delhi sought to bridge this gap.

Its approach stems from the belief that **quality education is a necessity, not a luxury**. Hence, it built a model which essentially has **five major components and is supported by nearly 25% of the State Budget**.

Key components of the model:

1. Transformation of school infrastructure.
2. Training of teachers and principals.
3. Engaging with the community by reconstituting school management committees (SMC).
4. Curricular reforms in teaching learning.
5. No fee increase in private schools.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. About Samagra Shiksha Scheme.
2. Various schools run by the Centre including Navodaya, Morarji Desai etc.
3. Special schools set for ST children.
4. Overview of the Delhi Model of Education.

Mains Link:

Comparable to the role of a thermometer in diagnosing fever, an assessment of the quality of teacher education can be a status check on the schooling system. Comment.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GUE77IBIH.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

4. In News- Kyasanur Forest Disease

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: The disease- symptoms, causes, spread, treatment and prevention.

About the Disease:

KFD is caused by **the Kyasanur Forest Disease Virus (KFDV)**. The virus was identified in 1957 when it was isolated from a sick monkey from **the Kyasanur Forest**. Since then, between 400-500 human cases per year have been reported.

Hard ticks (Hemaphysalis spinigera) are the reservoir of the KFD virus and once infected, remain so for life. Rodents, shrews, and monkeys are common hosts for KFDV after being bitten by an infected tick. KFDV can cause **epizootics** with high fatality in primates.

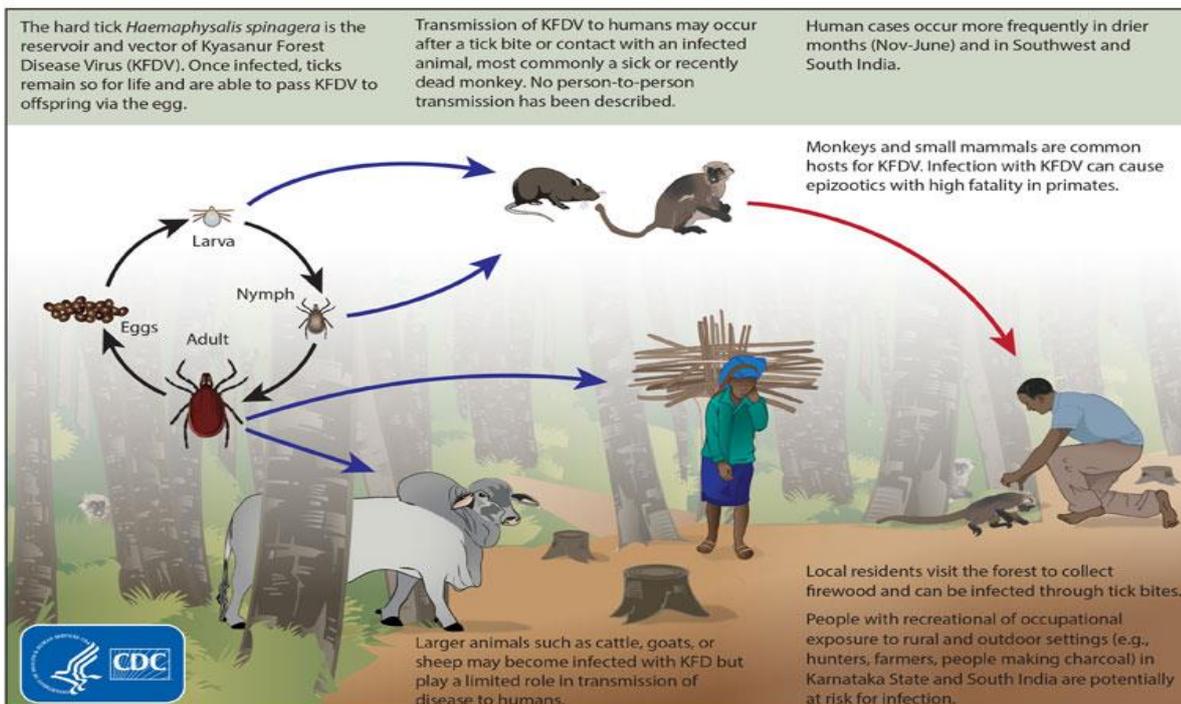
Transmission:

- Transmission to humans may occur after a tick bite or contact with an infected animal, most importantly a sick or recently dead monkey.
- The disease as of now is stated to be transmitted through monkeys. Large animals such as goats, cows, and sheep may become infected with KFD but play a limited role in the transmission of the disease.
- These animals provide the blood meals for ticks and it is possible for infected animals with viremia to infect other ticks, but transmission of KFDV to humans from these larger animals is extremely rare. Furthermore, **there is no evidence of disease transmission via the unpasteurised milk of any of these animals.**

Symptoms:

- After an incubation period of 3-8 days, the symptoms of KFD begin suddenly with chills, fever, and headache. Severe muscle pain with vomiting, gastrointestinal symptoms and bleeding problems may occur 3-4 days after initial symptom onset. Patients may experience abnormally low blood pressure, and low platelet, red blood cell, and white blood cell counts.
- After 1-2 weeks of symptoms, some patients recover without complication. However, the illness is biphasic for a subset of patients (10-20 %) who experience a second wave of symptoms at the beginning of the third week. These symptoms include fever and signs of neurological manifestations, such as severe headache, mental disturbances, tremors, and vision deficits.

Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD) Virus Ecology



Vulnerable Group:

People with recreational or occupational exposure to rural or outdoor settings (e.g., hunters, herders, forest workers, farmers) are potentially at risk for infection by contact with infected ticks. Seasonality is another important risk factor as more cases are reported during the dry season, from November through June.

Diagnosis:

Diagnosis can be made in the early stage of illness by molecular detection by PCR or virus isolation from blood. Later, serologic testing using **enzyme-linked immunosorbent serologic assay (ELISA)** can be performed.

Prevention:

Doctors say there is no specific treatment for KFD, but early hospitalisation and supportive therapy is important. Supportive therapy includes the maintenance of hydration and the usual precautions for patients with bleeding disorders.

A vaccine does exist for KFD and is used in endemic areas of India. Additional preventative measures include insect repellents and wearing protective clothing in areas where ticks are endemic.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Various such diseases in news in the recent past.
2. Symptoms, spread and treatment.
3. Host of viruses spreading these diseases.

Mains Link:

Write a note on Kyasanur Forest Disease.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GUE77IBMI.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

5. WHO declares coronavirus a pandemic

What to study?

For Prelims: What is Pandemic? About COVID 19.

For Mains: Implications of this declaration, significance and the way ahead.

Context: As fresh coronavirus cases continue to be reported from different countries, the **World Health Organization** has finally declared the novel coronavirus a '**pandemic**'.

WHO said it was deeply concerned both by **the alarming levels of spread and severity and by the alarming levels of inaction**.

Earlier, on January 30 the WHO declared it was a "**Public Health Emergency of International Concern**".

What is an outbreak, epidemic and pandemic?

1. An **outbreak** is understood to be a sudden rise in the cases of a disease in a particular place.
2. An **epidemic** is a large outbreak among a particular population or region (such as the current situation in China).
3. A **pandemic** is "the worldwide spread of a new disease". **There is no specific number of countries that a disease must touch for WHO to classify it as a pandemic.**

The spread of COVID 19:

The novel coronavirus disease that emerged in Wuhan, China, in the final days of last year, is now in at least 47 countries around the world, spanning every continent except Antarctica. More than 82,000 people have been infected, and over 2,800 are dead.

Affected countries include Japan, Brazil, Sweden, Canada, Australia, Iran among others.

Previous Pandemics:

In June 2009, the WHO declared a **global pandemic** of novel influenza A (H1N1), commonly known as **swine flu**. The WHO has abandoned that system of classification now, even though the term pandemic can still be used "colloquially".

Implications:

The WHO continues to advise countries "to enact plans based on national risk assessments of local circumstances, taking into consideration the information provided by WHO's global assessments".

About Novel Coronavirus disease:

COVID-19 is a **respiratory infection**. There are many types of coronavirus, some linked to the common cold, but this one is new and was detected toward the end of 2019.

COVID-19 is the official name given to the virus by the World Health Organization. Before WHO officially named the virus, it was also referred to as **coronavirus, the novel coronavirus and 2019-nCoV (to indicate the year when the virus was first detected)**.

Why it is named so?

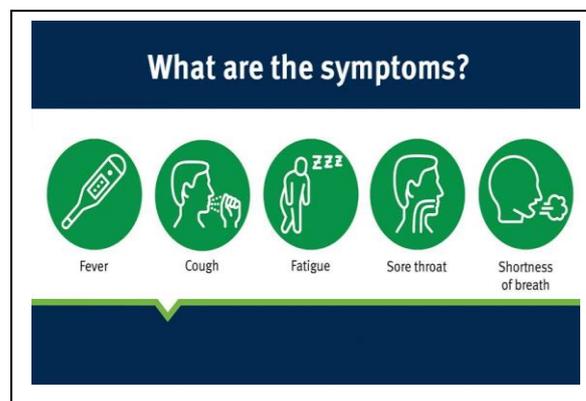
The coronavirus gets its name from **the way it looks**: It has a core of genetic material covered by an envelope with protein spikes that resemble a crown. In Latin, a crown is a corona. It's called a novel coronavirus because it's new and hasn't been detected in people before.

What are the symptoms?

- COVID-19 is similar to other respiratory illnesses and symptoms include a fever, dry cough, sore throat and headache. There may also be aches and pains, fatigue and, in some cases, vomiting and diarrhea.
- While most cases are mild, some individuals may experience more severe symptoms such as shortness of breath and difficulty breathing, and may experience pneumonia in both lungs. Those with health issues or underlying conditions may also have a harder time recovering.
- It may take up to 14 days after exposure for symptoms to appear.

How is COVID-19 spread?

- COVID-19 is transmitted through liquid droplets or particles when a person coughs or sneezes. These droplets, if containing the virus, can infect a person by entering through the eyes, nose or throat. It's not believed to be airborne and it's not known to infect via the skin.
- However, the virus can survive on some surfaces so if a person sneezes into their hand, shakes your hand and you then rub your eye with your hand, transmission is possible through self-inoculation.



What's the difference between a cold, a flu and COVID- 19?

All three are **respiratory illnesses but each is caused by a different virus.**

The cold is caused by the **rhinovirus**, the flu is caused by the **influenza virus**, and COVID-19 is caused by the novel 2019 **coronavirus**.

All three can lead to pneumonia if complicated by other health issues or underlying conditions.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. SARS vs MERS vs Common cold vs COVID 19- similarities, spread and differences.
2. Epidemic vs Pandemic vs Endemic, who declares it?
3. Previous pandemics and epidemics.

Mains Link:

Why COVID 19 was declared Pandemic by WHO? What are its implications? Discuss.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/covid-19-is-now-a-pandemic-says-who/article31043206.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

6. Avian influenza (bird flu)

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: Symptoms, spread and treatment.

Context: Suspected cases of **avian influenza (bird flu)** are being reported from various parts of Kerala.

So, **the Kerala government has decided to pay compensation** to the owners of the hens which were culled as part of the government's precautionary measures following the outbreak of bird flu.

About Avian influenza (bird flu):

It is a **viral infection** that can infect not only birds, but also humans and other animals. Most forms of the virus are restricted to birds.

It is a **highly contagious viral disease** affecting several species of food-producing birds (chickens, turkeys, quails, guinea fowl, etc.), as well as pet birds and wild birds.

Occasionally mammals, including humans, may contract avian influenza.

Influenza A viruses are classified into subtypes based on two surface proteins, **Hemagglutinin (HA) and Neuraminidase (NA)**.

What causes bird flu?

- Although there are several types of bird flu, **H5N1 was the first avian influenza virus to infect humans.** The first infection occurred in Hong Kong in 1997. The outbreak was linked to handling infected poultry.

- H5N1 occurs naturally in wild waterfowl, but it can spread easily to domestic poultry. The disease is transmitted to humans through contact with infected bird feces, nasal secretions, or secretions from the mouth or eyes.

About Bird Flu

What is Bird Flu?

Bird flu is an infectious disease in birds caused by avian influenza type A viruses. It may cause mild to severe illness or sudden death in birds. Domestic poultry like chickens are particularly vulnerable.

Avian influenza viruses do not usually infect humans but may sometimes be transmitted to humans who have contact with infected poultry and their secretions and faeces, or contact with contaminated surfaces.

How does bird flu spread between birds?

- Direct contact with nasal and respiratory secretions from infected birds
- Direct contact with infected bird faeces
- Contamination of feed and water
- Contact with contaminated equipment and humans

Signs in infected birds

- Lack of energy and appetite
- Combs and wattles of chickens turn purplish
- There is discharge from the nose, and coughing and sneezing
- Diarrhoea
- Head region and legs swell

Keeping pet birds safe

- Keep your pet birds away from wild birds and their droppings.
- Use a bird-proof cage or enclosure with fine wire mesh netting preferably with a roof over the aviary.
- Separate all new birds from existing ones for at least 21 days to monitor for signs of illness.
- Adopt hygiene practices such as washing hands thoroughly with soap after handling birds and their cage(s).
- Do not bring birds back to Singapore without a valid import permit from NParks/Animal & Veterinary Service.

What if my pet bird falls sick or dies?

- Immediately bring your sick bird to see a vet.
- Keep it away from healthy birds.
- Wash and disinfect the cage regularly while wearing a mask and gloves.
- Wear a mask and gloves when disposing of dead birds. Place the bodies in a plastic bag tightly sealed with a rubber band or cable tie.
- Adopt hygiene practices such as washing hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling the bird and its cage.

Is it safe for me to come into contact with free-roaming chickens in Singapore?

- As a precaution, please avoid touching or feeding free-roaming chickens.
- If you come into contact with free-roaming chickens, you should practise good hygiene habits and wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.

For more information on bird flu infection in humans, you may refer to the Ministry of Health's website: <https://www.moh.gov.sg/diseases/updates/avian-influenza>

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How H5N1 affects humans?

The symptoms of an H5N1 infection in humans include mild upper respiratory tract infection (fever and cough), early sputum production and rapid progression to severe pneumonia. It can lead to sepsis with shock, acute respiratory distress syndrome and even death.

Prevention: Strict biosecurity measures and good hygiene are essential in protecting against disease outbreaks.

Is India really free from Avian Influenza?

With effect from September 3, 2019 the **OIE-World Organisation for Animal Health** declared India free of H5N1 virus.

India was last declared free of the disease in 2017.

The status was to **last only till another outbreak is reported.**

Insta Link:

1. When a country is declared free from Avian Influenza, who declares it?
2. H5N1 vs H5N6 vs H9N2.

Mains Link:

Write a note on Bird Flu. Discuss how it can be prevented.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/bird-flu-confirmed-at-three-places/article31053025.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

7. OneHealth concept

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: OneHealth- features, objectives and significance.

Context: The concept of 'One Health', which recognises that health of human beings is connected to health of animals and environment, is gaining importance as most of the contagious diseases affecting humans are **zoonotic (animal to man origin)** in nature.

The concept of **One Health can be effectively implemented for reducing incidence of emerging zoonotic threats like COVID-19.**

What is OneHealth concept?

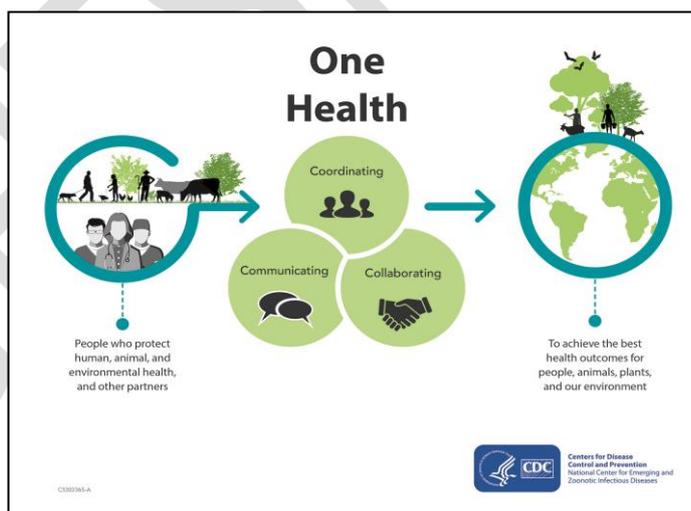
- One Health is the collaborative efforts of multiple disciplines working locally, nationally, and globally, to attain optimal health for people, animals and our environment, as defined by the One Health Initiative Task Force.
- One Health model facilitates interdisciplinary approach in disease control so as to control emerging and existing zoonotic threats.

What are common One Health issues?

One Health issues include zoonotic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, food safety and food security, vector-borne diseases, environmental contamination, and other health threats shared by people, animals, and the environment. Even the fields of chronic disease, mental health, injury, occupational health, and noncommunicable diseases can benefit from a One Health approach involving collaboration across disciplines and sectors.

Significance of the model:

- One Health model is a globally accepted model for research on epidemiology, diagnosis and control of zoonotic diseases.
- The WHO is very effectively addressing emerging issues of antimicrobial resistance through One Health research.
- All the developing countries are in the process of promoting One Health research for developing a sustainable disease control system.



What next?

Need of the hour is to scale up such a model across the country and to establish meaningful research collaborations across the world.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. One Health component under the National Mission on Biodiversity and Human Well Being.
2. Zoonotic vs vector-borne diseases.
3. Common OneHealth issues.

Mains Link:

One Health model is a globally accepted model for research on epidemiology, diagnosis and control of zoonotic diseases. Discuss.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/the-time-is-right-for-onehealth-science/article31069639.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

8. West Bengal invokes Epidemic Diseases Act

What to study?

For Prelims: Key provisions of the act.

For Mains: Criticisms surrounding, implications of this law and significance.

Context: West Bengal invokes Epidemic Diseases Act.

Details of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 is previously covered on:

<https://www.insightsonindia.com/2020/03/12/epidemic-diseases-act-1897/>.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Previous examples of implementation of this Act, diseases for which it was declared.
2. A notifiable disease vs a notified disaster.
3. Implementing agency, penalty, protection and inspection of people under the act.
4. Handling of the plague epidemic by British, criticisms by Tilak through his papers.

Mains Link:

Discuss the key provisions of the 1897 Epidemic Diseases Act.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GCB78KF9A.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

9. Huntingtin Disease

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: Overview of the disease, cause, spread, effects and treatment.

Context: Scientists have found that the pathogenic protein called the Huntingtin Protein causes decrease in overall protein production.

What they have found?

- A team of scientists from **National Centre for Cell Science (NCCS)** in Pune have observed that **the pathogenic Huntingtin protein** causes a decrease in the overall protein production in cells.
- They also found that **the Huntingtin clumps collect together (sequester) molecules of another protein called Orb2**, which is involved in the process of protein formation.

In simple terms, Scientists have found that in a diseased person the Huntingtin protein interfered with the protein production of the cells. This is how wrong instructions are sent, mainly due to faulty protein level. They also reduced the level of protein production of a normal cell.

What is Huntingtin Disease?

It is a progressive **genetic disorder**.

It affects the brain that causes uncontrolled movements, impaired coordination of balance and movement, a decline in cognitive abilities, difficulty in concentrating and memory lapses, mood swings and personality changes.

How is it caused?

It is caused by a mutation in a gene called **HTT**. The HTT genes are involved in the production of a protein called **huntingtin**.

- They provide the instruction for making the protein. When the genes mutate, they provide faulty instructions leading to production of abnormal huntingtin proteins and these form into clumps.
- The clumps disrupt the normal functioning of the brain cells, which eventually leads to death of neurons in the brain, resulting in Huntington disease.

Sources: pib.

10. Coronavirus: Stage by stage in a pandemic

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: Various stages and their implications, preparedness required.

www.insightsonindia.com

What are the stages of a pandemic?

In the first stage of a disease epidemic that eventually takes the form of a pandemic sweeping the globe, **cases are imported into a country in which the infection did not originate**. An infection whose spread is contained within the boundaries of one or a few countries is obviously not a pandemic.

The second stage is when the virus starts being transmitted locally. Local transmission means that the source of the infection is from within a particular area and the trajectory the virus has taken from one person to the next is clearly established.

The third stage is that of **community transmission**.

What is community spread of the infection?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) says community transmission “is evidenced by the inability to relate confirmed cases through chains of transmission for a large number of cases, or by increasing positive tests through sentinel samples (routine systematic testing of respiratory samples from established laboratories)”.

In the simplest terms, **community spread is when you do not know the source of the infection — you are unable to trace it back to someone who has travelled in an affected area overseas, or got it through contact with someone who is infected**.

Why it is worrisome?

Community spread implies that **the virus is now circulating in the community, and can infect people with no history** — either of travel to affected areas, or of contact with the infected person.

In a situation of community transmission, **it is theoretically possible for every person regardless of where they are from or whether they have been in contact, to spread the infection**.

When can it be said that the virus is definitely in the stage of community spread?

There have to be several cases of untraced infection source to conclude definitively that the outbreak has moved to the next level.

What is the fourth stage?

It is when **the disease becomes endemic in some countries**. Among diseases that are currently endemic in India — meaning they occur round the year across the country — are malaria and dengue.

How does categorising an outbreak in this manner help?

The stages of a **pandemic are uniform the world over**.

This is so because in today’s interconnected world, it is important to have a **standardised phraseology that conveys the same thing to every person around the world, and helps countries prepare better**.

The categorisation **helps countries take specific actions that are necessary to target just that particular scenario**.

Worldwide, in which stage is the COVID-19 pandemic now?

The pandemic has spread to nearly every country on the planet. In most, though, it is in the stage of either **imported cases or local transmission**.

Among the countries where **community transmission seems to be operating are** China, Italy, Iran, South Korea and Japan.

How should India be prepared now?

Isolation, and not indiscriminate testing, is the only way India can limit the spread of COVID-19. A lockdown is the most important step in breaking transmission of the infection.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Differences between four stages.
2. When community transmission occurs?
3. Who declares a disease as pandemic?

Mains Link:

What is community transmission? When can it be said that the virus is definitely in the stage of community spread? Discuss.

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/covid-19-coronavirus-pandemic-6327070/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

11. Schemes to boost bulk drugs manufacture

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: Features, implementation, significance of the scheme.

Context: The Union government has approved a package comprising **the scheme on Promotion of Bulk Drug Parks and Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme** to promote domestic manufacturing of critical Key Starting Materials/Drug Intermediates and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients in the country.

Scheme on Promotion of Bulk Drug Parks:

- The scheme aims to promote medical device parks in the country in partnership with the states.
- Under the scheme, **an incentive of five per cent of incremental sales over the base year 2019-20 will be provided on the segments of identified medical devices.**

Implementation of the Scheme:

1. The Scheme for Promotion of Medical Device Parks will be implemented by a **State Implementing Agency (SIA)**.
2. The PLI Scheme for promoting domestic manufacturing will be implemented by a Project Management Agency (PMA) to be nominated by the Department of Pharmaceuticals.

There are four categories of medical devices considered under the PLI Scheme:

1. Cancer care/Radiotherapy medical devices
2. Radiology & Imaging medical devices (both ionizing & non-ionizing radiation products) and Nuclear Imaging Devices.
3. Anesthetics & Cardio-Respiratory medical devices including Catheters of Cardio Respiratory Category & Renal Care Medical Devices.
4. All Implants including implantable electronic devices like Cochlear Implants and Pacemakers.

Significance of these schemes:

Lead to substantial reduction in import of target segments of medical devices.

Boost domestic manufacturing by attracting large investments in the medical device sector.

Sources: pib.

12. Ayushman Bharat

What to study?

For Prelims: Overview and key features of the scheme.

For Mains: Significance and issues surrounding its implementation.

Context: In a change of stance, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government has announced that it would be implementing the Central government's **Ayushman Bharat — Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana** to provide ₹5 lakh health insurance cover to families per year, after having opposed it for several months.

About Ayushman Bharat:

Launched as recommended by **the National Health Policy 2017**, to achieve the vision of **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)**.

This initiative has been designed to meet **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its underlining commitment, which is to "leave no one behind."**

Ayushman Bharat adopts a continuum of care approach, comprising of two inter-related components, which are:

1. Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs).
2. Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY).

Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY):

It is **the largest health assurance scheme** in the world which aims at providing a **health cover of Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.**

- It aims to cover over 10.74 crores poor and vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) that form the bottom 40% of the Indian population.
- The households included are based on the deprivation and occupational criteria of Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011 (SECC 2011) for rural and urban areas respectively.
- PM-JAY was earlier known as **the National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS)** before being rechristened. It subsumed the then existing **Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)** which had been launched in 2008.
- PM-JAY is **fully funded by the Government and cost of implementation is shared between the Central and State Governments.**
- It **covers up to 3 days of pre-hospitalization and 15 days post-hospitalization expenses** such as diagnostics and medicines.
- There is **no restriction on the family size, age or gender.**
- **Benefits of the scheme are portable across the country** i.e. a beneficiary can visit any empanelled public or private hospital in India to avail cashless treatment.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Difference between HWCs and PM- JAY.
2. Coverage of private hospitals.
3. Fund sharing and implementation.
4. Services covered.
5. Eligibility criteria.
6. Pre and post hospitalization coverage.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of Ayushman Bharat — Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GQ579HIM8.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

13. World Tuberculosis Day 2020

What to study?

For Prelims: TB- causes, symptoms, effects and treatment, World TB day- significance and theme.

For Mains: TB prevention efforts, challenges ahead and need for coordination.

Context: **World Tuberculosis (TB) Day** is observed on **March 24** to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of TB, and to step up efforts to end the global TB epidemic.

The date marks **the day in 1882 when Dr Robert Koch announced that he had discovered the bacterium that causes TB**, which opened the way towards diagnosing and curing this disease.

The theme of World TB Day 2020 is "It's TIME".

What is TB?

- TB is an infectious disease caused by **the bacillus Mycobacterium tuberculosis.**
- It typically affects the lungs (pulmonary TB) but can also affect other sites.
- The disease is spread when people who are sick with pulmonary TB expel bacteria into the air, for example by coughing.

- Diagnostic tests for TB disease include – **Rapid molecular test, Sputum smear microscopy, Culture-based methods**
- Without treatment, the mortality rate from TB is high.

Some facts on TB:

1. TB remains the world’s deadliest infectious killer. Each day, over 4000 people lose their lives to TB and close to 30,000 people fall ill with this preventable and curable disease.
2. The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has launched a joint initiative “**Find. Treat. All. #EndTB**” with the Global Fund and Stop TB Partnership, with the aim of accelerating the TB response and ensuring access to care, in line with WHO’s overall drive towards Universal Health Coverage.
3. WHO has published a **global TB report** every year since 1997.

Initiatives in India:

1. TB **treatment is free in India.**
2. India aims to **eliminate TB by 2025.** UN aims to eliminate TB by 2030.
3. **Mass BCG vaccination** to prevent TB.
4. In 1993, **the Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP)** was launched, offering free diagnosis and treatment for patients, rescuing them from otherwise sure death.
5. Rs 12,000 cr fund to fight TB over the next 3 years.
6. **TB Harega Desh Jeetega campaign.**

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Diseases caused by Virus vs Bacteria vs fungi.
2. TB- spread and treatment.
3. Initiatives aimed at TB in India and the world.
4. Highlights of Global TB report wrt India.

Mains Link:

Discuss the challenges faced by India in eradicating Tuberculosis.

Sources: pib.

14. South Korean model to control COVID 19 spread

Context: The Korean Model, a vigorous regime of “**trace, test, treat**”, has shown remarkable results in controlling the spread of the novel coronavirus, without putting a nationwide lockdown in place.

How is the situation in Korea?

Korea is now in full control of the spread of the disease. The number of new confirmed cases per day has been showing steady decline since hitting a peak at 989 in February to double-digit figures as of mid-March. Korea might be the only country that hasn’t imposed a lockdown within its territories or even of its international borders.

How has this been possible? What is the ‘Korean model’?

It is grounded on **concentrated testing of high-risk areas and clusters.**

- Korea found out at the beginning of the spread of the virus that a certain religious cult and its gathering was the cause of a large portion of the spread in a certain area of the country. This group had massive gatherings in a closed-off space.
- The government listed all members of the group across the country, tracked their whereabouts and conducted tests on a massive scale, leading to the rapid increase in the number of confirmed cases.
- However, Korea succeeded in identifying and isolating potential cases at a very early stage and finally flattened the curve.

Other best practices followed by Korea:

The moment the virus DNA pattern was confirmed in Wuhan, Korean medical teams and bio-companies were able to develop new testing kits with surprising speed. This made it possible for Korea to conduct mass-scale testing of 18,000 cases a day.

Anybody in Korea who has symptoms or reasons to be tested can get the test within minutes at 'drive-thru' or 'walk-thru' testing centres and receive the result by text message the very next day. Korea made available over 650 testing centres nationwide.

Is it possible for India to replicate this model?

Given India's demography and medical infrastructure, lockdowns are necessary. However, **openness and transparency is important to tackling this situation**, and identifying and isolating the core of the spread of the virus with full medical capacity at the earliest possible stage is key. This is the essence of the **'Korean model'**.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GNH79ROC9.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

15. Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES)

What to study?

For prelims and mains: AES- causes, symptoms, effects and prevention, how is it related to Li hi fruits?

Context: Amid coronavirus, **Encephalitis** returns in Bihar as toddler dies in Muzaffarpur.

While the causes of AES are still researched, the association with **hypoglycaemia and litchi fruit has drawn attention**.

About AES:

- Acute encephalitis syndrome is a **basket term used for referring to hospitals, children with clinical neurological manifestation** that includes mental confusion, disorientation, convulsion, delirium, or coma.
- Meningitis caused by virus or bacteria, encephalitis (mostly Japanese encephalitis) caused by virus, encephalopathy, cerebral malaria, and scrub typhus caused by bacteria are collectively called **acute encephalitis syndrome**.
- The disease most commonly affects children and young adults and can lead to considerable morbidity and mortality.

Symptoms:

It is characterized as acute-onset of fever and a change in mental status (mental confusion, disorientation, delirium, or coma) and/or new-onset of seizures in a person of any age at any time of the year.

Cause of the disease:

Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) is considered a very complex disease as it can be **caused by various agents including bacteria, fungi, virus and many other agents**.

Viruses are the main causative agents in AES cases, although other sources such as bacteria, fungus, parasites, spirochetes, chemicals, toxins and non-infectious agents have also been reported over the past few decades.

Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) is the major cause of AES in India (ranging from 5%-35%).

Nipah virus, Zika virus are also found as causative agents for AES.

How is it related to litchi fruits? How it affects?

In India, AES outbreaks in north and eastern India have been linked to children **eating unripe litchi fruit on empty stomachs**.

Unripe fruit contain the toxins **hypoglycin A and methylenecyclopropylglycine (MCPG)**, which cause vomiting if ingested in large quantities. **Hypoglycin A is a naturally occurring amino acid** found in the unripened litchi that causes severe vomiting (Jamaican vomiting sickness), while **MCPG is a poisonous compound found in litchi seeds**.

Why it affects undernourished children?

- Blood glucose falls sharply causing severe brain malfunction (**encephalopathy**), leading to seizures and coma, and death in many cases.
- This is because under-nourished children lack sufficient glucose reserve in the form of glycogen and the production of glucose from non-carbohydrate source is blocked midway leading to low blood sugar level.
- This causes serious brain function derangement and seizures.

Measures needed:

1. Increase access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation facilities.
2. Improve nutritional status of children at risk of JE/AES.
3. Preparative measures to be in place before the possible outbreaks.
4. Vector control.
5. Better awareness generation among children, parents through Anganwadi workers, ANMs etc.

Insta Links:

Prelims Link:

1. AES is caused by?
2. Diseases caused by virus vs bacteria vs fungi.
3. What is hypoglycaemia?
4. What is JE?
5. How eating litchi fruits aggravate the problem in malnourished children?

Mains Link:

What is Acute encephalitis syndrome? Discuss the causative agents, do you think authorities failed at several levels in preventing deaths due to encephalopathy in Bihar? Suggest what needs to be done?

Link:

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/health/day-after-toddler-s-death-aes-fears-keep-bihar-doctors-on-toes-70097>.

Sources: down to earth.

Topics: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

1. Freedom in the World 2020

What to study?

For Prelims: Key findings and performance of various countries.

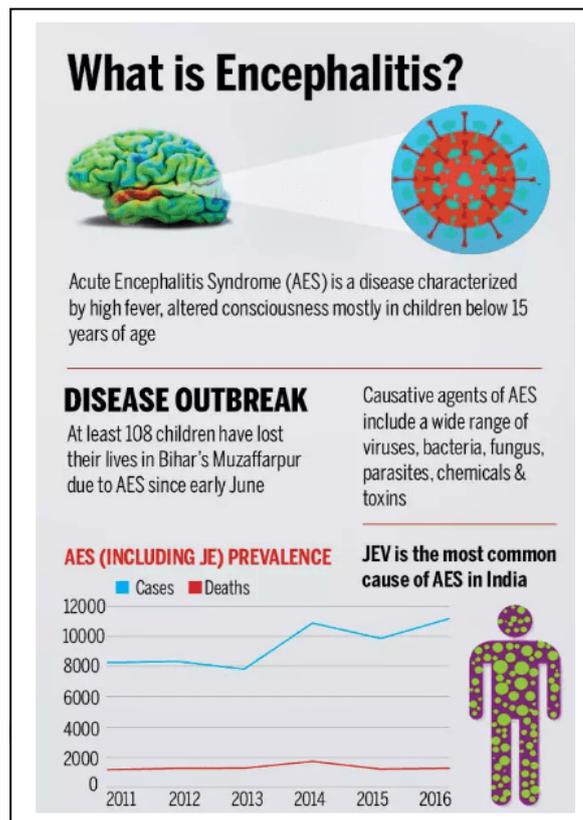
For Mains: Concerns over India's poor performance, reasons and what needs to be done?

Context: Freedom in the World 2020 has been released by America based **Freedom House**.

Top 5: Finland, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands and Luxembourg are the top five countries in the free category.

India's performance:

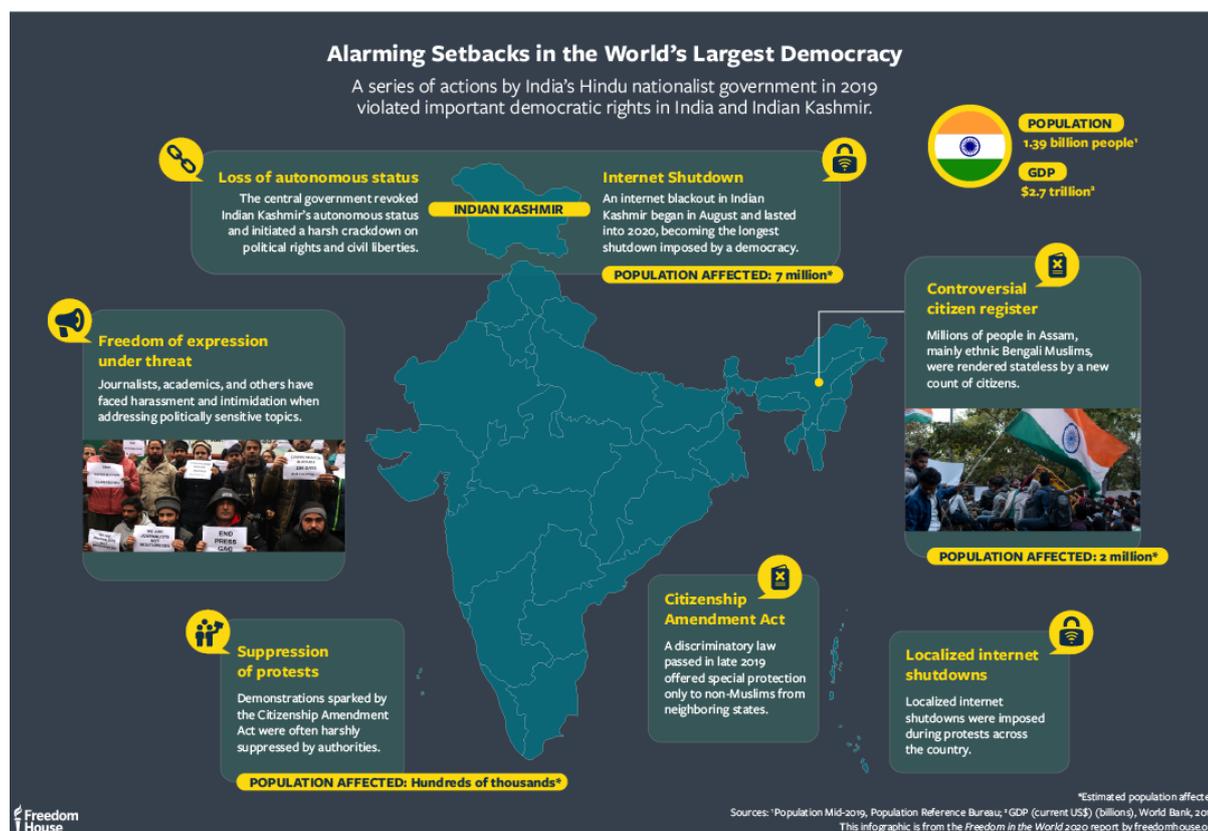
1. The report has placed **India at 83rd** position along with **Timor-Leste and Senegal among the bottom five of "free democracies"**.
2. India witnessed **the worst score decline among the world's 25 largest democracies**.



- India's overall score declined from 75 in 2019 to 71 in 2020, with civil liberties taking the biggest hit.

Background:

Freedom House is a US-based watchdog, which has been tracking global political and civil liberties for almost half a century.



Observations made by the report on India:

- India was bogged down by multiple reasons including its Kashmir policy after abrogating Article 370, the National Register of Citizens for Assam, passage of contentious Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and frequent internet shutdowns across the country.
- It notes, the government has taken its Hindu nationalist agenda to a new level with a succession of policies that abrogate the rights of different segments of its Muslim population, threatening the democratic future of a country long seen as a potential bulwark of freedom in Asia and the world.
- A fierce crackdown on protesters opposing the changes, indicated a deterioration of basic freedoms in the world's largest democracy, says report.
- The report, which treats Kashmir as a separate territory, downgraded the Union territory's status from "partly free" to "not free" due to the Indian government's abrupt revocation of Article 370 in August.
- In terms of internet freedom, India fares worse, scoring just 55 and is categorised as "partly free". As per the report, internet freedom has declined for the fourth year in a row in India.
- It also highlights the spread of fake news and manipulated content, creating political divide. The internet shutdown in Kashmir, has no doubt, contributed to India's performance in terms of internet freedom.
- Stating that "democracy and pluralism are under assault" across the world, the report highlights the decline of the US and India.

Global scenario:

The year 2019 was the 14th consecutive year of decline in global freedom, according to Freedom House. Compared with the previous year, in 2019, individuals in 64 countries experienced deterioration in their political rights and civil liberties while those in just 37 experienced improvements. More than half of the countries that were rated free or not free in 2009 have suffered a net decline in the past decade.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Various such important reports and who releases them.
2. India's performance in such indices.
3. Top 5 and bottom 5 performers.

Mains Link:

Why was India ranked poorly in the recently released Freedom in the World 2020 report. Critically comment.
Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/freedom-in-the-world-2020-report-ranks-india-among-least-free-democracies/article30988277.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

World Consumers Day

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: WCD- significance, theme, features and CPA.

What is it? 15 March is World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD), an annual occasion for celebration and solidarity within the international consumer movement. **It marks the date in 1962 President John F Kennedy first outlined the definition of Consumer Rights.**

The theme for World Consumer Rights Day 2020 is 'The Sustainable Consumer'.

Significance of the day:

It is an opportunity to promote the basic rights of all consumers, for demanding that those rights are respected and protected, and for protesting the market abuses and social injustices which undermine them.

Key facts:

- WCRD was first observed on 15 March 1983, and has since become an important occasion for mobilising citizen action.
- **Consumers International (CI)**, which was founded in 1960 organises WCRD. It is the only independent and authoritative global voice for consumers and has over 220 member organisations in 115 countries around the world.
- **Consumer Rights Day** — India December 24th. On this day **the Consumer Protection Act, 1986** had received the assent of the President.

Sources: pib.

Topics Covered:

Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

What is a Country-by-Country (CbC) Report?

What to study?

For Prelims: What is CbC report?

For Mains: Need for and significance of these reports.

Context: With **Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)** notifying rules for furnishing "**Country-by-Country Report (CbC)**" specifying information pertaining to all large multinational enterprises (MNEs), the Finance Ministry has said that **Joint Director of Income-tax (Risk Assessment)-1** has been designated as **the Income-tax Authority** before whom particulars of the parent entity and alternate reporting entity would be notified.

Background:

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has developed an Action Plan called "**Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) Action Plan 13**" to ensure that a multinational enterprise would report its profit correctly where it is earned.

What is a Country-by-Country (CbC) Report?

The **Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (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 the information set out therein. This report is called **the Country-by-Country (CbC) Report**.

This information enables an enhanced level of assessment of tax risk by both tax administrations.

What CBC contains?

- Aggregated country-by-country information relating to the global allocation of income, the taxes paid, and certain other indicators of a multi-national company.
- A list of all the constituent entities of the multi-national company operating in a particular jurisdiction and the nature of the main business activity of each constituent entity.

What is BEPS?

Base erosion and profit shifting refers to **the phenomenon where companies shift their profits to other tax jurisdictions, which usually have lower rates, thereby eroding the tax base in India.**

India in July 2019 ratified **the international agreement to curb base erosion and profits shifting (BEPS)– Multilateral Convention to Implement Tax Treaty Related Measures.**

About the Multilateral Convention to Implement Tax Treaty Related Measures to Prevent Base Erosion and Profit Shifting:

The Convention is an outcome of the OECD / G20 BEPS Project to tackle base erosion and profit shifting through tax planning strategies that exploit gaps and mismatches in tax rules to artificially shift profits to low or no-tax locations where there is little or no economic activity, resulting in little or no overall corporate tax being paid.

Overview and significance of the convention:

1. The Convention implements two minimum standards relating to **prevention of treaty abuse and dispute resolution through Mutual Agreement Procedure.**
2. It will be **applied alongside existing tax treaties**, modifying their application in order to implement the BEPS measures.
3. The Convention ensures consistency and certainty in the implementation of the BEPS Project in a multilateral context. The Convention also provides flexibility to exclude a specific tax treaty and to opt out of provisions or parts of provisions through making of reservations.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. OECD- objectives, composition and overview of geographical location of members.
2. OECD vs WEF.
3. Difference between signing and ratification.
4. What is BEPS?

Mains Link:

What are Country-by-Country (CbC) Report? Discuss their significance.

Sources: pib.

2. World Consumers Day

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: WCD- significance, theme, features and CPA.

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Sources: pib.

3. Business Immunity Platform

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: Overview and key features of the platform, about Invest India.

Context: Invest India has launched **The Invest India Business Immunity Platform**.

About Business Immunity Platform:

1. The platform is designed as a comprehensive resource to help businesses and investors get real-time updates on India's active response to COVID-19 (Coronavirus).
2. This dynamic and constantly updating platform keeps a regular track on developments with respect to the virus, provides latest information on various central and state government initiatives, gives access to special provisions, and answers and resolves queries through emails and on WhatsApp.
3. It is the active platform for business issue redressal, operating 24/7, with a team of dedicated sector experts and responding to queries at the earliest.

What is Invest India?

- Invest India is the **National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of India**, set up as a non-profit venture under the aegis of Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.
- It facilitates and empowers all investors under the 'Make in India' initiative to establish, operate and expand their businesses in India.
- Operationalized in early 2010, Invest India is set up as a joint venture company between the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP) (now renamed as Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)), Ministry of Commerce & Industry (35% equity), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) (51% equity), and State Governments of India (0.5% each).

Sources: pib.

4. National Teleconsultation Centre (CoNTeC)

Context: Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has launched **the National Teleconsultation Centre (CoNTeC)**.

- The project **CoNTeC, an acronym for COVID-19 National Teleconsultation Centre**, has been conceptualised by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and has been **implemented by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi**.

How it works?

- The CoNTeC is a Telemedicine Hub established by AIIMS, New Delhi, wherein expert doctors from various clinical domains will be available 24x7 to answer the multifaceted questions from specialists from all over the country.
- It is a multi-modal telecommunications hub through which 2-way audio-video and text communications can be undertaken from any part of the country as well as the world at large.
- The modes of communication will include simple mobile telephony as well as two way video communications, using WhatsApp, Skype and Google Duo.

How to Contact the CoNTeC?

A single mobile number (+91 9115444155) can be dialled from anywhere in the country/world by COVID-19 treating doctors to reach the CoNTeC which has six lines that can be used simultaneously at present.

Sources: pib.

Topics: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

1. Sir Creek pact

What to study?

For Prelims: Where is sir creek located, what is the dispute all about?

For Mains: How this dispute has affected the people in this region? What is the solution?

Context: The third edition of **WION's global summit was held in Dubai** recently.

Theme: "Navigating and negotiating global imperatives".

- Several topics, including balancing and recalibrating Pakistan's diplomatic strategy and getting the youth to participate in democracy, were discussed at the summit.
- At the event, Former Pakistan Minister Kasuri recalled the plan for **Sir Creek pact**.

What is Sir Creek?

Sir Creek is a **96-km strip of water disputed between India and Pakistan in the Rann of Kutch marshlands**.

- Originally named **Ban Ganga**, Sir Creek is named after a British representative.
- The Creek opens up in the Arabian Sea and **roughly divides the Kutch region of Gujarat from the Sindh Province of Pakistan**.

What's the dispute?

The dispute lies in the **interpretation of the maritime boundary line between Kutch and Sindh**.

Before India's independence, the provincial region was a part of the Bombay Presidency of British India. But after India's independence in 1947, Sindh became a part of Pakistan while Kutch remained a part of India.

1. Pakistan claims the entire creek as per paragraphs 9 and 10 of **the Bombay Government Resolution of 1914** signed between then the Government of Sindh and Rao Maharaj of Kutch.
2. The resolution, which demarcated the boundaries between the two territories, included the creek as part of Sindh, thus setting **the boundary as the eastern flank of the creek popularly known as Green Line**.
3. But India claims that **the boundary lies mid-channel as depicted in another map drawn in 1925, and implemented by the installation of mid-channel pillars back in 1924**.
4. In its support, it cites **the Thalweg Doctrine in International Maritime Law**, which states that river boundaries between two states may be divided by the mid-channel if the water-body is navigable.

What's the importance of Sir Creek?

Apart from **strategic location**, Sir Creek's core importance is **fishing resources**. Sir Creek is considered to be among the largest fishing grounds in Asia.

Another vital reason is **the possible presence of great oil and gas concentration under the sea**, which are currently unexploited thanks to the impending deadlock on the issue.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Disputed places between India and its neighbours.
2. Locations of these places and surrounding important places.
3. India's land and maritime boundary.
4. Boundary pacts in this regard.
5. Facts related Rann of Kutch.
6. What is Bombay Government resolution of 1914?

Mains Link:

Where is Sir Creek located? What is the dispute surrounding it? Discuss.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=G4G77PTJ4.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

Topics: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

1. What is a Country-by-Country (CbC) Report?

What to study?

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Overview and significance of the convention:

4. The Convention implements two minimum standards relating to **prevention of treaty abuse and dispute resolution through Mutual Agreement Procedure**.
5. It will be **applied alongside existing tax treaties**, modifying their application in order to implement the BEPS measures.
6. The Convention ensures consistency and certainty in the implementation of the BEPS Project in a multilateral context. The Convention also provides flexibility to exclude a specific tax treaty and to opt out of provisions or parts of provisions through making of reservations.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

5. OECD- objectives, composition and overview of geographical location of members.
6. OECD vs WEF.
7. Difference between signing and ratification.
8. What is BEPS?

Mains Link:

What are Country-by-Country (CbC) Report? Discuss their significance.

Sources: pib.

2. World Happiness Report

What to study?

For Prelims: Highlights, key findings and significance of the report.

For Mains: How is happiness related to governance, what needs to be done to increase the level of happiness among citizens?

Context: The World Happiness Report 2020 has been released.

About World Happiness Report:

It is released by the **Sustainable Development Solutions Network for the United Nations by the UN General Assembly**.

It is a landmark survey of the state of global happiness that **ranks 156 countries by how happy their citizens perceive themselves to be**.

What's special about the 2020 report?

This is the eighth World Happiness Report. The 2020 report for the first time ranks cities around the world by their subjective well-being and digs more deeply into how the social, urban and natural environments combine to affect our happiness.

How the countries are ranked?

- Nationally representative samples of respondents are asked to think of a ladder, with the best possible life for them being a 10, and the worst possible life being a 0.
- In the reports, experts in fields including economics, psychology, survey analysis, and national statistics, describe how measurements of well-being can be used effectively to assess the progress of nations, and other topics.

Interconnections between law, governance and happiness: Why do these connections matter?

Happiness has come to be accepted as a goal of public policy. And this discourse has given a fillip to a new narrative where the interconnections between law, governance and happiness are being searched.

Experiences from several nations confirm that the countries with higher GDP and higher per capita income are not necessarily the happiest countries and there exists a link between the state of happiness and rule of law.

The WHRs, over the years, confirmed that people tend to have:

1. Poor mental health.
2. A low score of subjective well-being.
3. Poor perception about the governance and law and order, despite high income levels.

Performance of various countries:

1. Finland is **the world's happiest nation for the third year running.**
2. **Nordic states dominated the top 10, along with countries such as Switzerland, New Zealand and Austria.**
3. India is at 144th place.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Rankings of India and neighbours.
2. Rankings in the previous edition.
3. WHR vs GNH- similarities and differences.
4. Top and bottom performers this year.
5. Consistent performers.

Mains Link:

What is World Happiness Report? How are the countries ranked in this report? Discuss.

Link:

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/world/finland-is-worlds-happiest-country-for-third-time-in-a-row/article31120412.ece#>.

Sources: the Hindu.

3. Extradition Treaty between India and Belgium

What to study?

For Prelims: Salient features of the treaty and exceptions provided.

For Mains: Significance and the need for the treaty.

Context: Cabinet approves signing and ratifying of **the Extradition Treaty between India and Belgium.**

Salient features:

1. **Obligation to Extradite:** Each Party agrees to extradite to the other any person found in its territory, who is accused or convicted of an extraditable offence in the territory of the other Party.
2. **Extraditable Offences:** An extraditable offence means an offence punishable under the laws of both the Parties with imprisonment for a period of one year or more severe punishment.
3. **Duration of sentence:** Where extradition is sought in respect of a convicted person, the duration of the sentence remaining to be served must be at least six months at the time of making the request.
4. **Offences relating to taxation, or revenue or is one of a fiscal character** also fall within the scope of this Treaty.
5. **Extradition of Nationals** is discretionary. The nationality will be determined at the time the offence was committed.

Under the Treaty, extradition shall be refused if:

1. The offence involved is a political offence. However, the Treaty specifies certain offences, which will not be considered as political offences.
2. The offence for which extradition is requested is a military offence
3. The request for prosecution has been made for the purpose of prosecuting or punishing the person on account of his race, sex, religion, nationality or political opinion.
4. The prosecution or enforcement of sentence has become time barred.

What is Extradition?

As defined by Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, 'Extradition is the delivery on the part of one State to another of those whom it is desired to deal with for crimes of which they have been accused or convicted and are justifiable in the Courts of the other State'.

When can it be initiated?

An Extradition request for an accused can be initiated in the case of under-investigation, under-trial and convicted criminals. In cases under investigation, abundant precautions have to be exercised by the law enforcement agency to ensure that it is in possession of prima facie evidence to sustain the allegation before the Courts of Law in the Foreign State.

What is the Legislative Basis for Extradition in India?

The Extradition Act 1962 provides India's legislative basis for extradition. It consolidated the law relating to the extradition of criminal fugitive from India to foreign states. The Indian Extradition Act, 1962 was substantially modified in 1993 by Act 66 of 1993.

Who is the nodal authority for Extradition in India?

CPV Division, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India is the Central/Nodal Authority that administers the Extradition Act and it processes incoming and outgoing Extradition Requests.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Does India extradite its own Nationals?
2. If a fugitive Criminal is found in India, what is the procedure to obtain a warrant of arrest?
3. Can the decision to be extradited be appealed against by the alleged offender?
4. What are the bars to Extradition?
5. Does India need a treaty with a foreign country to make a provisional arrest request?
6. Who can make an extradition request from India's side?

Mains Link:

What is Extradition? What is the Legislative Basis for Extradition in India? Discuss.

Sources: pib.

Topics: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

1. Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan

What to study?

For Prelims: Overview and key features of the agreement.

For Mains: Significance, concerns remaining, relevance for India.

Context: US and Taliban have signed a historic agreement- "**Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan**"- in Doha, Qatar.

It outlines **a series of commitments from the US and the Taliban** related to troop levels, counterterrorism, and the intra-Afghan dialogue aimed at bringing about "a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire."

The agreement could pave the way to ending America's longest-fought war.

Highlights of the agreement:

Military troops withdrawal: It lays out a 14-month timetable for the withdrawal of "all military forces of the United States, its allies, and Coalition partners, including all non-diplomatic civilian personnel, private security contractors, trainers, advisors, and supporting services personnel."

Release of prisoners: The agreement also calls for the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners and 1,000 "prisoners of the other side" on the first day of intra-Afghan negotiations. The relevant sides have the goal of releasing all the remaining prisoners over the course of the subsequent three months.

What Taliban will do?

1. Taliban will take steps "to prevent any group or individual, including al-Qa'ida, from using the soil of Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States and its allies."
2. Those steps include commitments that the Taliban will instruct its members "not to cooperate with groups or individuals threatening the security of the United States and its allies".
3. It "will also prevent any group or individual in Afghanistan from threatening the security of the United States and its allies, and will prevent them from recruiting, training, and fundraising and will not host them in accordance with the commitments in this agreement."

Background:

The US has been at war in Afghanistan since 2001. This agreement in Doha came after more than a year of on and off negotiations with the militant group. The two sides had reached "an agreement in principle" in early September 2019.

Challenges ahead:

- The Afghan government has been completely sidelined during the talks between the US and Taliban. The future for the people of Afghanistan is uncertain, and will depend on how Taliban honours its commitments and whether it goes back to the mediaeval practices of its 1996-2001 regime.
- Much will depend on whether the US and the Taliban are able to keep their ends of the bargain, and every step forward will be negotiated, and how the Afghan government and the political spectrum are involved.

Concerns here for India:

1. Is India an ally?

In **the Doha agreement**, the Taliban has guaranteed "enforcement mechanisms that will prevent the use of the soil of Afghanistan by any group or individual against the security of **the United States and its allies**". However, it is unclear whether **India, which is not a U.S. ally**, is included in this definition, and whether Pakistan-backed groups that threaten India would still operate in Afghanistan.

2. Impact of prisoner release and lifting sanctions:

India is also most worried about the "mainstreaming of **the Haqqani network**", which **Lashkar-e-Taiba** terrorists reportedly fight alongside and were responsible for the 2008 bombing of the Indian embassy in Kabul. Release of prisoners would be a boost for these terror groups.

3. Threats from Pakistan:

The U.S. has committed to taking Taliban leaders off the **UN Security Council's sanctions list** by May 29, 2020, which could considerably bring down the number of terrorists Pakistan is accused of harbouring, according to the **FATF greylist conditions**.

4. Recognition to Taliban:

As per the agreement, the US appears to have submitted to the possibility of a **Taliban-led government**, by extracting promises that the Taliban will not provide "visas, passports, travel documents or asylum" to those threatening the U.S. and its allies. This appears to sideline India's support for the election process for leadership in Afghanistan.



India and Taliban:

India and the Taliban have had a bitter past.

New Delhi nurses bitter memories from **the IC-814 hijack in 1999**, when it had to release terrorists — including Maulana Masood Azhar who founded **Jaish-e-Mohammed** that went on to carry out terror attacks on Parliament (2001), in Pathankot (2016) and in Pulwama (2019).

The Taliban perceived India as a hostile country, as **India had supported the anti-Taliban force Northern Alliance in the 1990s**.

India **never gave diplomatic and official recognition** to the Taliban when it was in power during 1996-2001.

Insta-Link:

Prelims link: Since, the agreement was signed in Doha, please concentrate on:

1. **Map based questions** involving Qatar and its neighbouring countries including middle eastern Countries.
2. Also, understand what is **Black and Grey list of FATF**.

Mains link:

How this agreement makes India vulnerable in its fight against terrorism?

Link: <https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GT376ITQS.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

2. Foreigners being served 'Leave India' notices: How does Indian law define 'anti-govt' activities for them?

What to study?

For Prelims: Provisions regulating foreigners' stay in India.

For Mains: How does Indian law define 'anti-govt' activities for them?

Context: Five foreigners had have asked to leave India for violating visa norms by participating in anti-CAA protests.

How does Indian law define 'anti-govt' activities for them?

According to **visa guidelines laid out by the MHA**, foreign nationals shall be required to strictly adhere to the purpose of visit declared while submitting the visa application.

However, a foreign national (other than a Pakistani national) coming to India on any type of visa will be allowed to avail activities permitted under tourist visa.

However, **there are no provisions specified under "anti-government" activities subhead.**

The absence of any such provision in visa laws or Foreigner's Act makes it necessary for the government to define "anti-government" activities under a statute.

What do 'anti-government' activities mean for an Indian national?

According to the lawyers, "anti-government" activities are those which are listed as punishable under **Section 124A (sedition) of the Indian Penal Code**.

Section 124A IPC states: "Whoever, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards, the Government established by law in India, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, to which a fine may be added; or, with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which a fine may be added; or, with fine."

Does a foreigner on Indian visa have a right to protest?

Right to protest peacefully is enshrined under **Article 19(1)(a)** of Indian Constitution which guarantees the freedom of speech and expression.

Article (19)(b) guarantees the citizens of the country the right to assemble peacefully and without arms.

However, this fundamental right is available only to the citizens of India and not to the aliens. Hence, a foreigner on Indian Visa has not right to protest.

Can a foreigner be asked to leave India without specifying the act committed by him or her amounting to the order?

The government does not have unfettered powers to impose such an order without furnishing reasons. This was clarified by the Delhi High Court in a 2019 case, where a Pakistani national was served a leave India notice without specifying the reason.

Observations and opinions made by legal experts:

1. Despite fundamental rights being applicable only to the citizens of the country, with respect to Article 21, they can also be extended to foreigners.
2. So, the government needs to list out the acts which it considers as anti-government before asking any foreigner to leave.

Insta link:

Prelims link:

What is CAA and what are its key provisions?

What are the constitutional rights available to foreigners?

Mains Link:

How does Indian law define 'anti-govt' activities for foreigners? What are the constitutional rights enjoyed by foreigners in India? Discuss.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GE476S977.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

3. Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI)

What to study?

For Prelims: Who are OCI cardholders, eligibility and benefits.

For Mains: Need for and significance of OCI.

Why in News?

Thousands of **Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders** have been forced to cancel trips to India owing to the recent ban on their entry by the GOI and are apprehensive they will not be able to get back in the event of an emergency.

Who are OCI cardholders?

Government of India launched the '**Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) Scheme**' by making amendments to **Citizenship Act, 1955 in 2005.**

On **09 January 2015**, the Government of India discontinued the **PIO card and merged it with OCI card.**

Eligibility:

Government of India allows the following categories of foreign nationals to apply for OCI Card.

Eligible categories to apply for OCI Card	Is a Citizen of India at time of or after the Constitution came into effect i.e. 26 January 1950.
	Eligible to become citizen of India on 26 January 1950
	Belonged to a territory that became part of India after 15 August 1947
	Child or descendent of a person from any of the above mentioned categories
	A minor child of the persons belonging to any of the above.
	A minor child of whom either or both the parents are citizens of India.
	Foreign origin spouse of Citizen of India or of a person holding OCI status . - Marriage needs to be registered. - They are married for more than two years continuously before the date of application.

Exceptions:

Anyone who is applying for OCI card should hold a **valid Passport of another country.**

- Individuals who do not have citizenship of any other country are not eligible to gain an OCI status.
- Individuals whose parents or grandparents hold citizenship of Pakistan and Bangladesh are not eligible to apply.

Benefits for OCI cardholders:

1. Lifelong Visa to visit India multiple times. (special permission needed for research work in India).
2. No need to register with Foreigners Regional Registration Officer (FRRO) or Foreigners Registration Officer (FRO) for any length of stay.
3. Except for acquisition of agricultural and plantation properties, OCI card holders have similar facilities that are extended to NRIs in economic, financial and educational fields.
4. Same treatment as of NRIs in respect to Inter-country adoption of Indian children.
5. Also treated at par with NRIs regarding – entry fees for national monuments, practice of professions like doctors, dentists, nurses, advocates, architects, Chartered Accountants & Pharmacists.
6. At par with NRIs to participate in All India Pre-medical tests and such.
7. Treated at par with Indian citizens in matters of traffic in airfares in Indian domestic sectors.
8. Same entry fee as for Indians for entry into India’s national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.
9. OCI booklet can be used as identification to avail services. An affidavit can be attached with local address as residential proof.

There are certain restrictions placed on OCI card holders:

1. Do not have right to vote.
2. Do not have right to any public service/government jobs
3. Cannot hold offices of – Prime Minister, President, Vice -President, Judge of Supreme Court and High Court, member of Parliament or Member of state legislative assembly or council.
4. Cannot own agricultural property.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Definition of Citizen.
2. POI vs OCI vs NRI.
3. Who can grant and revoke citizenship?
4. Dual citizenship in India.
5. Applicability of right to vote and contest in elections for OCI card holders.
6. Can OCI holders buy agricultural land?
7. Who cannot be issued OCI cards?

Mains Link:

Who are overseas citizens of India? What are the benefits available for OCI card holders? Discuss.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=G9778OB6U.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

4. What’s in the US’s historic \$2.2 trillion coronavirus stimulus package?

Context: The US Senate has unanimously approved a **\$2.2 trillion economic package** to contain the damage caused to the country’s economy due to the novel coronavirus outbreak.

- The package is **the largest of its kind in modern American history**. It is far bigger than the \$800 billion assistance provided in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis.
- The package intends to respond to the coronavirus pandemic and provide direct payments and jobless benefits for individuals, money for states and a huge bailout fund for businesses.

Background:

Since the outbreak, this is the third occasion when US lawmakers have taken measures to address the economic fallout. On March 6, US President Donald Trump approved an \$8.3 billion emergency package that provided free testing for the virus, paid leave, and support for families affected by the pandemic.

Significance and expected outcomes:

- The deal aims at sustaining businesses and workers that have been losing income, as well as enabling the economy to recover once the quarantine orders are lifted.
- The support for companies is aimed towards ensuring that they keep paying wages to their employees through the crisis, despite losing business activity. The deal also provides increased support for workers who have been fired or who have had their remuneration reduced.
- The companies benefitting from the stimulus package will not be able to buy back outstanding stock, and have to maintain employment levels as of March 13, 2020, as far as possible.

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/coronavirus-us-usd-2-trillion-package-explained-6332369/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

Topics: Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.

1. UNESCO World Heritage List

What to study?

For Prelims: Heritage sites in India.

For Mains: The convention, significance and selection of sites.

Context: Government of India has submitted two nomination dossiers namely 'Dholavira: A Harappan City' and 'Monuments and Forts of Deccan Sultanate' for inclusion in **the World Heritage List for the year 2020**. The list **contains world heritage sites**.

What is a World Heritage Site?

It is a location having an **"Outstanding Universal Value"**.

According to **the World Heritage Convention's Operational Guidelines**, an Outstanding Universal Value signifies "cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity."

Categorisation:

The Sites fall into **three categories**: cultural heritage, natural heritage, and mixed heritage (cultural as well as natural).

Who selects the Sites?

The **UNESCO World Heritage Committee** meets at least once every year, generally in June/July, to deliberate the addition, removal, or modification of items on the list of World Heritage Sites.

How do countries get their preferred spots included?

According to the Guidelines, the State Parties prepare a **Tentative List**, or the **"inventory of those properties situated on its territory which each State Party considers suitable for nomination to the World Heritage List."** A nomination document is then prepared in this regard based on which the application is considered by the Committee.

- In India, the **Indian National Commission for Co-operation with UNESCO (INCCU)**, and the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** are the bodies which play a key role in this regard.

After receiving nominations from the State Parties, the Committee then puts them through a rigorous examination before any new location can qualify as a World Heritage Site.

What happens after a World Heritage Site is declared?

1. Most importantly, getting featured on the list of World Heritage Sites affords the location a coveted status, driving up demand for travel and tourism from around the world geared towards it.
2. At the same time, a heavy onus is placed on the government of the country in which the Site is located for its conservation and upkeep.
3. The Committee conducts regular audits at declared Sites, and can place a spot that is seriously threatened on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

- If the Outstanding Universal Value of the property is destroyed, the Committee can consider deleting the property from the World Heritage List.

Facts for Prelims:

Dholavira is located in the Khadir Island in the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat. It is a mature harappan site.

Insta link:
Prelims link:
1. Various world heritage sites in India and their geographical locations and significance.
2. Overview of harappan civilisation with a special focus on Dholavira.
3. Deccan sultanate architecture.
Mains Link:
What are world heritage sites? Why are they significant? Discuss.

Sources: pib.

2. United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

What to study?

For Prelims: About CAA and OCHCR.

For Mains: Implications of CAA, international concerns and ways to address them.

Context: The **United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights** “intends to file” an **Intervention Application as amicus curiae (third party)** in the Supreme Court of India, seeking to intervene in Writ Petition in ‘**Deb Mukharji & Ors vs Union of India & Ors**’ case which relates to a challenge to **the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019**.

How can a UN body seek intervention in a case involving a domestic Indian law?

The **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights)** is the leading UN entity on human rights.

It is mandated to, Inter alia **protect and promote all human rights and to conduct necessary advocacy in that regard**, established pursuant to the United Nations General Assembly resolution 48/141.

It also has **to promote adherence to international human rights law and**, with this purpose in mind, to support domestic courts, with their constitutional or judicial function, in ensuring the implementation of international legal obligations. This is **the basis for seeking intervention**.

What exactly does the intervention application say? What are the issues raised wrt to CAA?

The CAA, it says, raises “important human rights issues, including its compatibility in relation to **the right to equality before the law and nondiscrimination on nationality grounds under India’s human rights obligations**”.

- It questions **the reasonableness and objectivity of the criterion** of extending the benefits of the CAA to Buddhists, Sikhs, Hindus, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan alone.
- Muslim community is also affected:** It points out that while the Indian government has suggested that persons of Muslim faith, regardless of denomination or ethnicity, are protected in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, recent reports by UN human rights treaty bodies, special procedures and other mechanisms show that Ahmadi, Hazara and Shia Muslims in these countries warrant protection on the same basis as that provided in the preferential treatment proposed by the CAA.

Significance of this intervention:

The issue of nondiscrimination on nationality grounds falls outside the scope of this intervention, but this in no way implies that there are not human rights concerns in this respect.

Way ahead:

India has the history of openness and has exhibited to persons seeking to find a safer, more dignified life within its borders. But, the CAA's stated purpose is protection of some persons from persecution on religious grounds, simplifying procedures and requirements and facilitating the granting of citizenship to such persons, including migrants in an irregular situation, as well as refugees, from certain neighbouring countries.

This selective application of law goes against the very basic right which guarantees equality. In this background, it is necessary to revisit the law, say experts.

In this regard, some **central principles of international human rights law** can be considered. These include:

1. Enjoyment of human rights by all migrants and the rights of all migrants (non-citizens) to equality before the law.
2. The **principle of non-refoulement**, which prohibits the forcible return of refugees and asylum seekers to a country where they are likely to be persecuted.
3. **All migrants** "regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, nationality and/or immigration status enjoy human rights and **are entitled to protection**".
4. **International human rights law** "requires the granting of citizenship under law to conform to the right of all persons to equality before the law and to be free from prohibited discrimination".

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. What RPA and constitution say on citizenship?
2. Grant of citizenship in India.
3. How can it be revoked?
4. Provisions related to equality in Constitution.

Mains Link:

The Citizenship Amendment Act is being criticised at the international level. Discuss.

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-why-has-a-un-body-intervened-in-a-supreme-court-case-against-the-caa-6297618/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

3. International Criminal Court (ICC)

What to study?

For Prelims: ICC- composition, functions and powers.

For Mains: Significance of ICC orders and ICC reforms.

Context: 'Unanimous' ICC gives go-ahead to probe Afghanistan alleged war crimes.

Prosecutors have been given the green light to investigate alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Afghanistan - and beyond its borders – linked to Afghan, Taliban and US troops.

Background:

The prosecutors alleged in a 2017 report they have enough information to prove U.S. forces "committed acts of torture, cruel treatment, outrages upon personal dignity, rape and sexual violence against conflict-related detainees in Afghanistan and other locations, principally in the 2003-2004 period."

About ICC:

The International Criminal Court (ICC), **located in The Hague**, is **the court of last resort for prosecution of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity**.

It is **the first permanent, treaty based, international criminal court** established to help end impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community.

Its founding treaty, **the Rome Statute**, entered into force on July 1, 2002.

Funding: Although the Court's expenses are funded primarily by States Parties, it also receives voluntary contributions from governments, international organisations, individuals, corporations and other entities.

Composition and voting power:

The Court's management oversight and legislative body, the Assembly of States Parties, consists of one representative from each state party.

Each state party has one vote and "every effort" has to be made to reach decisions by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, decisions are made by vote. The Assembly is presided over by a president and two vice-presidents, who are elected by the members to three-year terms.

Jurisdiction:

- The ICC has the jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.
- The ICC is intended to complement existing national judicial systems and it may therefore only exercise its jurisdiction when certain conditions are met, such as when national courts are unwilling or unable to prosecute criminals or when the United Nations Security Councilor individual states refer situations to the Court.

ICJ vs. ICC		
	International Court of Justice (ICJ) La Cour Internationale de Justice (CIJ)	International Criminal Court (ICC) La Cour pénale internationale (CPI)
Year Court Established	1946	2002
UN-Relationship	Official court of the U.N., commonly referred to as the "World Court."	Independent. May receive case referrals from the UN Security Council.
Location	The Hague, The Netherlands	The Hague, The Netherlands
Types of Cases	Contentious between parties & Advisory opinions	Criminal prosecution of individuals
Subject Matter	Sovereignty, boundary, & maritime disputes, trade, natural resources, human rights, treaty violations, treaty interpretation, and more.	Genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, crimes of aggression
Funding	UN-funded.	Assessed contribution from state parties to the Rome Statute; voluntary contributions from the U.N.; voluntary contributions from governments, international organizations, individuals, corporations and other entities.

Criticism:

1. It does **not have the capacity to arrest suspects** and depends on member states for their cooperation.
2. Critics of the Court argue that **there are insufficient checks and balances on the authority of the ICC prosecutor** and judges and insufficient protection against politicized prosecutions or other abuses.
3. The ICC has been **accused of bias and as being a tool of Western imperialism**, only punishing leaders from small, weak states while ignoring crimes committed by richer and more powerful states.
4. ICC **cannot mount successful cases without state cooperation** is problematic for several reasons. It means that the ICC acts inconsistently in its selection of cases, is prevented from taking on hard cases and loses legitimacy. It also gives the ICC less deterrent value, as potential perpetrators of war crimes know that they can avoid ICC judgment by taking over government and refusing to cooperate.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Differences between ICJ and ICC.
2. Geographical locations of these organisations and overview of surrounding countries.
3. Doha accord between US and Taliban.

Mains Link:

How does the recent Doha accord between US and the Taliban affect the ongoing probe on war in Afghanistan. Discuss.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/icc-judges-say-afghan-war-crimes-probe-must-go-ahead/article30993210.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

4. Indian Ocean Commission

What to study?

For Prelims: IOC- composition, objectives and functions.

For Mains: Benefits of IOC membership for India, challenges ahead.

Context: India was recently accepted as an observer in the **Indian Ocean Commission**, getting a seat at the table of the organization that handles maritime governance in the western Indian Ocean.

India's entry is a **consequence of its deepening strategic partnership with France as well as its expanding ties with the Vanilla Islands.**



Significance of this status for India:

1. India will get an official foothold in a premier regional institution in the western Indian Ocean, boosting engagement with islands in this part of the Indian Ocean.
2. These island nations are increasingly important for India's strategic outreach as part of its Indo-Pacific policy. This move would enhance ties with France which is the strong global power in the western Indian Ocean.
3. It lends depth to India's SAGAR (security and growth for all in the region) policy unveiled by PM Modi in 2015.
4. The move would lead to greater security cooperation with countries in East Africa.
5. The move also strengthens **western flank of the Indo-Pacific** and is a stepping stone to security cooperation with East Africa.

About IOC:

It is an **intergovernmental organization** created in 1982.

It was **institutionalized in 1984** by the **Victoria Agreement** in Seychelles.

The COI is composed of five African Indian Ocean

nations: Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion (an overseas region of France), and Seychelles.

COI's principal mission is to strengthen the ties of friendship between the countries and to be a platform of solidarity for the entire population of the African Indian Ocean region.

The Commission has a **Secretariat which is located in Mauritius** and headed by a Secretary General.

The Commission has four observers — China, EU, Malta and International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF).

Objectives:

- Political and diplomatic cooperation,
- Economic and commercial cooperation
- Sustainable development in a globalisation context, cooperation in the field of agriculture, maritime fishing, and the conservation of resources and ecosystems
- Strengthening of the regional cultural identity, cooperation in cultural, scientific, technical, educational and judicial fields.

ReCoMAP:

The COI has funded a number of regional and national conservation and alternative livelihoods projects through **ReCoMAP, Regional Programme for the Sustainable Management of the Coastal Zones of the Countries of the Indian Ocean** (PROGECO in French). This project ended in 2011.

Way ahead for India:

For India, engagements with this region will become critical as the Navy begins to strengthen its presence under its mission based deployments. Engagements with the region, especially with the islands- given their geo-strategic location- could become key in supporting Indian naval presence as well as furthering Delhi's Indian Ocean engagement.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Geographical location of IOC members and their neighbours.

2. Projects launched by IOC.
3. Overview of Sagarmala project.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of Indian Ocean Commission.

Link:

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-joins-indian-ocean-commission-as-observer-bolstering-indo-pacific-vision/articleshow/74518307.cms>.

Sources: ET.

5. What is the Opec+?

What to study?

For Prelims: What is OPEC, OPEC+?

For Mains: Oil crisis, reasons for fall in demand and the crisis, impact on other countries, way ahead.

Context: Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter, plans to raise its crude oil production significantly above 10 million barrels per day (bpd) in April, after the collapse of the **OPEC+ supply cut agreement with Russia.**

What's the issue?

A three-year pact between OPEC and Russia ended in acrimony recently after Moscow refused to support deeper oil cuts to cope with the outbreak of the coronavirus and OPEC responded by removing all limits on its own production.

Oil prices plunged 10% as the development revived fears of a 2014 price crash, when Saudi Arabia and Russia fought for market share with U.S. shale oil producers, which have never participated in output-limiting pacts.

What next?

Effects now could quickly flood global markets at a time when demand has already weakened substantially.

What is the Opec+?

Opec+ refers to the alliance of crude producers, who have been undertaking corrections in supply in the oil markets since 2017.

OPEC plus countries include Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, Russia, South Sudan and Sudan.

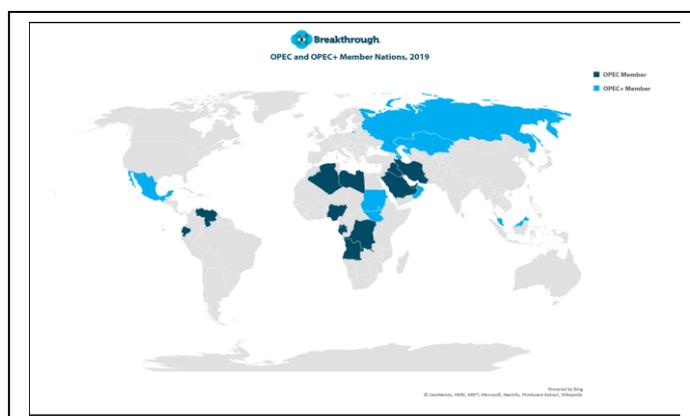
What are their goals?

The Opec and non-Opec producers first formed the alliance at a historic meeting in **Algiers in 2016.**

The aim was **to undertake production restrictions to help resuscitate a flailing market.**

What is OPEC?

- The Organization of **the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** was founded in **Baghdad, Iraq**, with the signing of an agreement in September 1960 by **five countries namely Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. They were to become the Founder Members of the Organization.**
- It is a **permanent, intergovernmental organization.**
- Currently, **the Organization has a total of 14 Member Countries.**
- **OPEC's objective is to co-ordinate and unify petroleum policies among Member Countries, in order to secure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers; an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations; and a fair return on capital to those investing in the industry.**



- It is **headquartered** in Vienna, Austria.
- **OPEC membership is open to any country that is a substantial exporter of oil and which shares the ideals of the organization.**

Why is OPEC+ more influential than OPEC?

OPEC's 14 members control 35 percent of global oil supplies and 82 percent of proven reserves. With the addition of the 10 Non-OPEC nations, notable among them Russia, Mexico and Kazakhstan, those shares increase to 55 percent and 90 percent respectively. This affords OPEC+ a level of influence over the world economy never seen before.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Top oil producers?
2. India's crude oil imports?
3. Components and refining of crude oil.
4. Crude oil storage facilities in India?
5. Geographical location of OPEC members.

Mains Link:

How groups, such as OPEC, influence oil prices across the world? Discuss.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/oil-plunges-as-producers-begin-price-war/article31025917.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

6. Sustainable Development Goals: 36 changes in global indicator framework

What to study?

For Prelims: What are SDGs? Key changes approved by UNSC recently.

For Mains: Relevance, need for and significance of these changes.

Context: Thirty-six major changes to the global indicator framework for **the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** were approved and adopted by **the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC)**, at its **51st session that concluded on March 6, 2020, in New York.**

The revised global framework will have **231 indicators**, approximately the same number as in the original framework.

These changes are based on the **'2020 comprehensive review'** conducted by **the UN Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs).**

Key changes:

Eight additional indicators were added across six SDG goals — 2, 3, 4, 10, 13 and 16. These include:

1. Indicator 13.2.2 on the total greenhouse gas emissions per year for the SDG target 13.2 to integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.
2. Prevalence of anaemia in women aged 15-49 years, by pregnancy status (percentage) under the target 2.2 to end forms of malnutrition by 2030.
3. A new indicator on reducing the percentage of bloodstream infections due to selected antimicrobial-resistant organisms has been added under the Global health goal (SDG 3).
4. Indicator 10.7.3 on the number of migrants killed while attempting to cross maritime, land and air borders.
5. Indicator 10.7.4 on the proportion of the population who are refugees, by country of origin.

Six indicators across six SDG goals — 1, 4, 8, 11, 13 and 17 — have been deleted. These include:

1. Indicator 1.a.1 on the proportion of domestically-generated resources allocated by the government directly to poverty reduction programmes.
2. Indicator 4.2.1 on the proportion of children under five years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex.

- The portion of the indicator that measures progress for children between 0 and 23 months of age, which is currently in tier III was proposed for deletion by the IAEG.
- Under the SDG goal on combating climate change, the indicator 13.3.2, quantifying the number of countries that have communicated the strengthening of capacity-building for implementing adaptation, mitigation and technology transfer, and development actions has been deleted.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

- SDGs vs MDGs- similarities, differences and time period.
- Adoption and administration of these goals.
- United Nations Conference on the Human Environment vs Earth Summit.
- UNCED vs UNCSD.
- Rio+20 vs Agenda 21.
- Addis Ababa Action.
- Goals related to poverty and environment.
- Intended nationally determined contributions (INDC).

Mains Link:

Enumerate the principal goals and targets of Sustainable Development Goals.

Link:

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/climate-change/sustainable-development-goals-36-changes-in-global-indicator-framework-69716>.

Sources: Down to Earth.

7. Trump to host G7 meet via videoconference

What to study?

For Prelims: G7- objectives, composition and functions.

For Mains: Criticisms surrounding and measures to revamp.

Context: President Donald Trump is scrapping this year's **G7 summit** at Camp David near Washington due to the COVID_19 crisis and will instead hold the event by videoconference.

The United States heads the group of seven wealthy democracies in 2020 and Mr. Trump had been due to host fellow leaders at the presidential retreat known as Camp David in June.

The G7 summit is **held by the presiding country each year.**

What is G7 Summit?

- G7 Summit is an event conducted annually where world leaders from seven powerful economies of the world come together to discuss burning issues happening around the globe.
- They, by mutual understanding, also form policies or figure out remedies for the concerned issue.

What is G7?

The G7, originally G8, was set up in 1975 as an informal forum bringing together the leaders of the world's leading industrial nations.

The summit gathers leaders from the European Union (EU) and the following countries:

1. Canada.
2. France.
3. Germany.
4. Italy.
5. Japan.
6. the United Kingdom.
7. the United States.

How did G7 become G8?

1. Russia was formally inducted as a member in the group in 1998, which led G7 to become G8.
2. However, Russian President Vladimir Putin's condemnable act of moving Russian troops into eastern Ukraine and conquering Crimea in 2014 drew heavy criticism from the other G8 nations.
3. The other nations of the group decided to suspend Russia from the G8 as a consequence of its actions and the group became G7 again in 2014.

Significance:

G7 is capable of setting the global agenda because decisions taken by these major economic powers have a real impact. Thus, decisions taken at the G7 are not legally binding, but exert strong political influence.

What criticisms have been made of the G7?

1. G7 gatherings tend to attract thousands of protesters, and it is protested by thousands every year.
2. Many protesters claim the G7 – which has no representative from any African, Russian or Middle Eastern nation – is completely outdated.
3. Protest groups also use the worldwide platform as a stage to lobby and campaign on issues that are important to them.
4. G7 leaders are creating a wide gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' both in their countries as well as across the globe, according to a new report published by non-profit Oxfam International. As a result, they are making the fight against alleviating poverty more difficult, claimed the report.

Need of the hour:

1. Work towards implementing tax models for the rich individuals and corporations to pay their fair share of tax.
2. Consider how new and existing wealth taxes could be used as a tool to fight poverty and inequality.
3. Invest in healthcare and education and provide aid to developing countries.
4. Work towards limiting greenhouse gas emissions down to zero well before mid-century.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. G7 vs G8 vs G20.
2. Geographical location of member countries.

Mains Link:

Discuss the relevance of G7 countries today. What are the reforms necessary to make the grouping more effective?

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/trump-cancels-in-person-g7-summit-to-be-held-via-video-conference/article31115508.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

8. G20 virtual summit

What to study?

For Prelims: G20- composition, objectives, functions and programmes.

For Mains: Significance of the group, criticisms wrt its functioning and reforms needed.

Context: Leaders of the **G20 (Group of Twenty) nations** are holding a video conference.

- The virtual summit will be led by **King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of Saudi Arabia**, which is the current president of the economic grouping.
- For 2020, **Spain, Jordan, Singapore and Switzerland are the invited countries.**

What is the G20?

The G20 is an annual meeting of leaders from the countries with the largest and fastest-growing economies. Its **members account for 85% of the world's GDP, and two-thirds of its population.**

The G20 Summit is formally known as the **"Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy"**.

Establishment:

After the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997-1998, it was acknowledged that the participation of major emerging market countries is needed on discussions on the international financial system, and **G7 finance ministers agreed to establish the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting in 1999.**

Presidency:

1. The group has **no permanent staff of its own**, so every year in December, a G20 country from a rotating region takes on the presidency.
2. That country is then responsible for organising the next summit, as well as smaller meetings for the coming year.
3. **They can also choose to invite non-member countries along as guests.** The first G20 meeting took place in Berlin in 1999, after a financial crisis in East Asia affected many countries around the world.

Full membership of the G20:

Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union.

Its relevance in changing times:

- As globalization progresses and various issues become more intricately intertwined, the recent G20 summits have focused not only on macroeconomy and trade, but also on a wide range of global issues which have an immense impact on the global economy, such as development, climate change and energy, health, counter-terrorism, as well as migration and refugees.
- The G20 has sought to realize an inclusive and sustainable world through its contributions towards resolving these global issues.

What is G20+?

The G20 developing nations, also called G21/G23/G20+ is a bloc of developing nations which was established on August 20, 2003. It is distinct from the G20 major economies.

- The G20+ originated in September 2003 at the 5th ministerial conference of the WTO held at Cancun, Mexico.
- Its origins can be traced to the Brasilia Declaration signed by the foreign ministers of India, Brazil and South Africa on 6th June 2003.

- The declaration stated that the major economies were still practising protectionist policies especially in sectors they were less competitive in and that it was important to see to it that the trade negotiations that took place provided for the reversal of those policies.
- The G20+ is responsible for 60% of the world population, 26% of the world's agricultural exports and 70% of its farmers.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. G20 vs G20+ vs G7 vs G8.
2. Objectives and sub- groups.
3. Overview of Geographical locations of the member countries.

Mains Link:

Do you think the recent G20 summits have turned into talking shops rather than getting down to brass tacks? Critically analyse.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/saudi-king-to-chair-thursdays-g20-virtual-summit/article31161065.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.



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GENERAL STUDIES – 3

Topics: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

1. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana

What to study?

For Prelims: Key features of the programme.

For Mains: Need for and significance of spilling and placement linked trainings.

Context: The **National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR)** will soon undertake real-time assessment of government's flagship youth employment scheme **the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)**.

- The institute has developed an enterprise resource planning platform called '**Kaushal Bharath**,' to enable states to capture data on projects under DDU-GKY and for the information to be collated in one system.

About Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY):

It is a placement linked skill development program which **allows skilling in a PPP mode** and assured placements in regular jobs in an organization not owned by the skilled person.

DDU-GKY is being **undertaken as PPP Project all over the country through Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs)** registered with the Ministry of Rural Development.

- Further, Guidelines of the scheme mandate State Governments to take up skill training projects with Corporate Social Responsibility funding.
- DDU-GKY Guidelines provide for setting apart 15% of the funds of the funds at for national level beneficiaries from among minority groups.

Beneficiary Eligibility:

- Rural Youth: 15 - 35 Yrs
- SC/ST/Women/PVTG/PWD: upto 45 Yrs

Insta Link:
Prelims Link:
Concentrate mainly on Objectives, implementation, eligibility criteria and funding of scutch government schemes.
Mains Link:
Write a note on Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana.

Sources: pib.

2. Solar Charkha Mission

What to study?

For Prelims: Key features and coverage of the mission.

For Mains: Need for and significance of the mission.

Context: Based on **the Expression of Interest (EOI)**, a total of 10 proposals have been approved under **Mission Solar Charkha** till date which is expected to benefit about 13784 artisans/workers.

About Solar Charkha Mission:

1. Launched in 2018.
2. It is a **Ministry of Micro Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) initiative** launched during June 2018.
3. **The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)** would implement the programme.
4. It seeks to generate employment in rural areas and contribute to the green economy.

5. The mission will entail a subsidy of Rs 550 crore in the initial two years for 50 clusters and every cluster will employ 400 to 2000 artisans.
6. The scheme also aims at linking five crore women across the country to the initiative.
7. The mission is expected to create one lakh jobs during the first two years.

The objectives of the Scheme are as follows:

1. To ensure inclusive growth by generation of employment, especially for women and youth, and sustainable development through solar charkha clusters in rural areas.
2. To boost rural economy and help in arresting migration from rural to urban areas.
3. To leverage low-cost, innovative technologies and processes for sustenance.

Significance of the mission:

These solar charkhas are to be operated using solar power which is a renewable energy source. It will help in development of Green Economy as it is an environment friendly programme. It will also generate sustainable employment for the artisans.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Other such missions for employment generation in India.
2. Features of such mission.
3. Implementing ministries or the nodal agencies.

Mains Links:

Write a note on Mission Solar Charkha.

Sources: pib.

3. What are Additional Tier-1 bonds?

What to study?

For Prelims: What are AT- 1 bonds, their key features.

For Mains: Significance and risks associated with these bonds.

Context: The **Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI)** has written to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to allow fund houses a temporary write down of **additional tier 1 bonds of Yes Bank** to avoid a huge hit on the net asset value of schemes that hold such bonds.

Implications:

This assumes significance as many fund houses stand to lose thousands of crores if the additional tier 1 bonds are completely written off.

Background:

Under **the Based III framework**, banks' **regulatory capital is divided into Tier 1 and Tier 2 capital**. **Tier 1 capital** is subdivided into **Common Equity (CET) and Additional Capital (AT1)**.

What are Additional Tier-1 bonds?

They are a type of **unsecured, perpetual bonds** that banks issue to shore up their core capital base to meet **the Basel-III norms**.

Key features:

1. These have **higher rates than tier II bonds**.
2. These bonds have **no maturity date**.
3. The **issuing bank has the option to call back the bonds or repay the principal after a specified period of time**.
4. The attraction for investors is **higher yield than secured bonds issued by the same entity**.

5. **Individual investors too can hold these bonds**, but mostly high net worth individuals (HNIs) opt for such higher risk, higher yield investments.
6. Given the higher risk, **the rating for these bonds is one to four notches lower than the secured bond series of the same bank**. For example, while SBI's tier II bonds are rated AAA by Crisil, its tier I long-term bonds are rated AA+.

However, it has a two-fold risk:

1. First, **the issuing bank has the discretion to skip coupon payment**. Under normal circumstances it can pay from profits or revenue reserves in case of losses for the period when the interest needs to be paid.
2. Second, **the bank has to maintain a common equity tier I ratio of 5.5%**, failing which the bonds can get written down. In some cases there could be a clause to convert into equity as well.

Given these characteristics, AT1 bonds are also referred to as **quasi-equity**.

Differences between **Common Equity (CET)** and **Additional Capital (AT1)**:

Equity and preference capital is classified as CET and perpetual bonds are classified as AT1. Together, **CET and AT1 are called Common Equity**.

By nature, **CET is the equity capital of the bank**, where **returns are linked to the banks' performance and therefore the performance of the share price**.

However, **AT1 bonds are in the nature of debt instruments**, which carry a **fixed coupon payable annually from past or present profits of the bank**.

How RBI can take over the regulation of any bank?

There is an additional trigger in Indian regulations, called **the 'Point of Non-Viability Trigger' (PONV)**.

- In a situation where a bank faces severe losses leading to erosion of regulatory capital, the RBI can decide if the bank has reached a situation wherein it is no longer viable.
- The RBI can then activate a PONV trigger and assume executive powers.
- By doing so, the RBI can do whatever is required to get the bank on track, including superseding the existing management, forcing the bank to raise additional capital and so on.
- However, activating PONV is followed by a write down of the AT1 bonds, as determined by the RBI.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Basel Norms 1 vs 2 vs 3.
2. CET vs AT1.
3. Tier 1 vs 2 capital.
4. 'Point of Non-Viability Trigger' (PONV).
5. Role of RBI during bank crisis.

Mains Link:

Write a note on Basel norms.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GQJ77USV8.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

4. Karnataka seeks quota for locals

What to study?

For Prelims: About the new policy of Karnataka.

For Mains: Significance, challenges and concerns associated, what is the need of the hour?

Context: The Karnataka government has insisted that **private companies provide 80% reservation in jobs for locals (Kannada-speaking people) in all categories**.

The government has already amended **the Karnataka Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Rules, 1961**, to reserve **100% for group 'C' and group 'D' jobs for locals in the private sector**. The government last year amended the rules to allow this.

What's the basis for this move?

Competition from outsiders: In the last few years, Bangalore has witnessed a huge population influx from all corners of India naturally upsetting the local and migrant balance and causing social friction primarily owing to economic reasons.

With **not enough jobs being created** and the poor spread of those that are getting created, the pressure on, and in, relatively better-performing states is growing.

Issues associated with this policy:

1. By arm-twisting the private sector into forcibly hiring Kannadigas irrespective of merit or qualification, the indirect assumption seems to be that **Kannadigas are incapable of finding jobs on their own merit or hard work.**
2. Even as the move will benefit the Kannadiga population, **the private sector could suffer a setback as it would hinder choosing the best candidates,** irrespective of the linguistic background or domicile of the person, to comply with the rule.
3. Also, once it is enforced, **there is no stopping other states from coming up with similar populist policies,** even for white-collar jobs where merit is paramount for productivity. This could mean greater informalisation of labour, which in turn means greater insecurity for the same workers whose interests the Karnataka government is purportedly protecting with the move.
4. The end result of **industry loss of confidence** and business moving elsewhere would, of course, be a decline in the economic well-being of the Kannadiga blue-collar workers the policy is supposed to protect.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Reservations vs Articles 14 and 15 of the Indian Constitution.
2. How and where reservations for locals are provided in Karnataka?

Mains Link:

Amendments to the Karnataka Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Rules of 1961 seek to implement 100% reservation for Kannadigas in private jobs. Is it a good policy move? Critically analyse.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GSR78969L.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

5. NCS (NATIONAL CAREER SERVICE)

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: Objectives, features and significance of NCS.

Context: The **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour** in its report has flagged the under-utilisation of funds by the Union Labour and Employment Ministry, which was yet to spend almost 20% of its 2019-2020 Budget (revised estimate) as on February 10.

The report noted that utilisation of funds for **the National Career Services (NCS) scheme** of the Ministry, which facilitates job-seekers, was the worst compared to other schemes.

About NCS (NATIONAL CAREER SERVICE):

It is one of **the mission mode projects** under the umbrella of E-Governance Plan.

It works towards bridging the gap between job-seekers and employers, candidates seeking training and career guidance and agencies providing training and career counselling by transforming the National Employment Service.

NCS provides a host of career-related services such as dynamic job matching, career counselling, job notifications, vocational guidance, information on skill development courses, internships and alike.

The focus areas for the National Career Service platform are listed below:

1. Enhancing career and employment opportunities.

2. Counselling and guidance for career development.
3. Focusing on decent employment
4. Enhancing female labour force participation.
5. Encouraging entrepreneurial endeavours.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. NCS vs Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY).
2. Parliamentary committees and types vs Cabinet committees.
3. Constitutionally guaranteed powers of these committees.
4. Heads and composition of these committees.
5. Nature of recommendations made by these committees.

Mains Link:

The parliamentary standing committees are often described as ‘mini Parliament’, where the members are able to work outside of the party whip. Discuss their significance, challenges faced and measures needed for effective operations.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/labour-ministry-yet-to-spend-205359-crore-of-2019-20-budget-says-panel/article31075892.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

Topics: Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

1. Merger of Banks

What to study?

For Prelims: Which three banks are being merged?

For Mains: Merger- Significance, pros and cons, concerns.

Context: The government has approved a scheme for the amalgamation of 10 state-owned banks into four. After the process is complete, India will have 12 PSBs instead of 27 back in 2017.

New mergers include:

1. Punjab National Bank, Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India will combine to form **the nation’s second-largest lender.**
2. Canara Bank and Syndicate Bank will merge.
3. Union Bank of India will amalgamate with Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank.
4. Indian Bank will merge with Allahabad Bank.

Why merger is good? – Benefits for various stakeholders:

For Banks:

1. Small banks can gear up to international standards with innovative products and services with the accepted level of efficiency.
2. PSBs, which are geographically concentrated, can expand their coverage beyond their outreach.
3. A better and optimum size of the organization would help PSBs offer more and more products and services and help in integrated growth of the sector.
4. Consolidation also helps in improving the professional standards.
5. This will also end the unhealthy and intense competition going on even among public sector banks as of now.
6. In the global market, the Indian banks will gain greater recognition and higher rating.
7. The volume of inter-bank transactions will come down, resulting in saving of considerable time in clearing and reconciliation of accounts.
8. This will also reduce unnecessary interference by board members in day to day affairs of the banks.
9. After mergers, bargaining strength of bank staff will become more and visible.
10. Bank staff may look forward to better wages and service conditions in future.

11. The wide disparities between the staff of various banks in their service conditions and monetary benefits will narrow down.

For economy:

1. Reduction in the cost of doing business.
2. Technical inefficiency reduces.
3. The size of each business entity after merger is expected to add strength to the Indian Banking System in general and Public Sector Banks in particular.
4. After merger, Indian Banks can manage their liquidity – short term as well as long term – position comfortably.
5. Synergy of operations and scale of economy in the new entity will result in savings and higher profits.
6. A great number of posts of CMD, ED, GM and Zonal Managers will be abolished, resulting in savings of crores of Rupee.
7. Customers will have access to fewer banks offering them wider range of products at a lower cost.
8. Mergers can diversify risk management.

For government:

1. The burden on the central government to recapitalize the public sector banks again and again will come down substantially.
2. This will also help in meeting more stringent norms under BASEL III, especially capital adequacy ratio.
3. From regulatory perspective, monitoring and control of less number of banks will be easier after mergers.

Concerns associated with merger:

1. **Problems to adjust top leadership** in institutions and the unions.
2. Mergers will result in **shifting/closure of many ATMs, Branches and controlling offices**, as it is not prudent and economical to keep so many banks concentrated in several pockets, notably in urban and metropolitan centres.
3. Mergers will result in **immediate job losses** on account of large number of people taking VRS on one side and slow down or stoppage of further recruitment on the other. This will worsen the unemployment situation further and may create law and order problems and social disturbances.
4. Mergers will result in **clash of different organizational cultures**. Conflicts will arise in the area of systems and processes too.
5. When **a big bank books huge loss or crumbles, there will be a big jolt** in the entire banking industry. Its repercussions will be felt everywhere.

Way ahead:

Merger is a good idea. However, this should be carried out with right banks for the right reasons. Merger is also tricky given the huge challenges banks face, including the bad loan problem that has plunged many public sector banks in an unprecedented crisis.

Committees in this regard:

Narasimham committee (1991 and 1998) suggested merger of strong banks both in public sector and even with the developmental financial institutions and NBFCs.

Khan committee in 1997 stressed the need for harmonization of roles of commercial banks and the financial institutions.

Verma committee pointed out that consolidation will lead to pooling of strengths and lead to overall reduction in cost of operations.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Banks to be merged?
2. Number of PSBs in India?
3. How merger takes place?

Mains Link:

Discuss the pros and cons of Bank Mergers.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GG27710RO.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

2. Input Tax Credit

What to study?

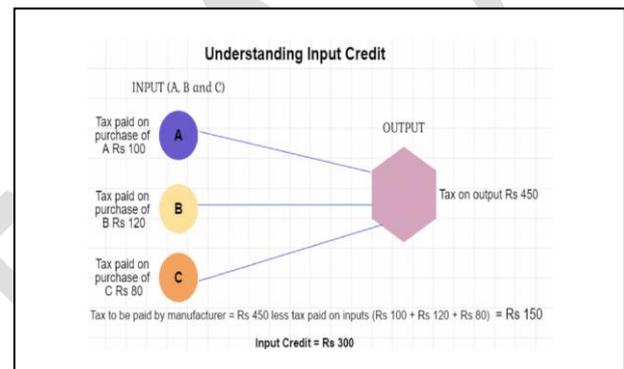
For Prelims: ITC- meaning, objectives and key features.

For Mains: Need for and significance, concerns over its misuse and need for reforms.

Context: Restrictions imposed on **the input tax credit**, used by business establishments to reduce their tax liability, on inward supplies under **the Central Goods and Services Tax Act** have been challenged in the Rajasthan High Court with the plea that the amendment made to a rule to introduce the provision had imposed “unreasonable and arbitrary” conditions.

What’s the issue?

The amended **Rule 36 (4) of the CGST Rules, 2017**, provides that the input tax credit can be availed only when a supplier of goods updates and uploads online the details of supplies through each of the bills. The petition now contended that the right to avail of credit could not be taken away by imposing the restrictions contained in the provisions of Section 43A of the Act, which was yet to be notified, through rules.



What is Input Tax Credit (ITC)?

It is the tax that a business pays on a purchase and that it can use to reduce its tax liability when it makes a sale.

In simple terms, **input credit means at the time of paying tax on output, you can reduce the tax you have already paid on inputs and pay the balance amount.**

Exceptions: A business under **composition scheme** cannot avail of input tax credit. **ITC cannot be claimed for personal use or for goods that are exempt.**

Concerns over its misuse:

1. There could be possibility of misuse of the provision by unscrupulous businesses by generating fake invoices just to claim tax credit.
2. As much as 80% of the total GST liability is being settled by ITC and only 20% is deposited as cash.
3. Under the present dispensation, there is no provision for real time matching of ITC claims with the taxes already paid by suppliers of inputs.
4. The matching is done on the basis of system generated GSTR-2A, after the credit has been claimed. Based on the mismatch highlighted by GSTR-2A and ITC claims, the revenue department sends notices to businesses.
5. Currently there is a time gap between ITC claim and matching them with the taxes paid by suppliers. Hence there is a possibility of ITC being claimed on the basis of fake invoices.

Need of the hour- real time updates:

To fill the gap, a new return filing system has been proposed. Once it becomes operational, it would become possible for the department to match the ITC claims and taxes paid on a real time basis. The revenue department would then analyse the large number of ITC claims to find out if they are genuine or based on fake invoices and take corrective action.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. What is GST?
2. What is composition scheme?
3. What is Input tax credit?

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of Input tax credit.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/restrictions-on-input-tax-credit-challenged-in-hc/article31026330.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

3. Kurzarbeit scheme

What to study?

For Prelims: Key features of the scheme.

For Mains: Significance of the scheme and can it be replicated in India?

Why in News? Amid the all-round disruption caused to the economy by the novel coronavirus outbreak, a concern across the world is the possibility of loss of jobs.

Germany's **Kurzarbeit** is being mentioned time and again in this context. Also, the German cabinet is planning to extend the benefit of short-time work allowance by the first half of April through legislation.

About Kurzarbeit:

Kurzarbeit is German for "short-work".

The policy provides for a **short-time work allowance**, called **kurzarbeitgeld**, which partially compensates for lost earnings during uncertain economic situations.

The policy was rolled out during the 2008 economic crisis while its origins date back as far as the early 20th century, before and after World War I.

How it works?

1. The scheme aims to address workers who are impacted by loss of income due to shortened work hours during such times.
2. They can apply for short-term work benefits under the scheme, with the government stepping in to pay employees a part of their lost income.
3. This helps the companies retain their employees instead of laying them off, and allows the latter to sustain themselves for a period of up to 12 months.

Quantum of payment:

Payment under Kurzarbeit is calculated on the basis of net loss of earnings. As per Germany's Federal Agency for Work, short-time employees generally receive about 60 per cent of the flat-rate net wage, In case there is at least one child in the house of the short-time worker, he/she receives 67 per cent of the flat-rate net wage.

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-germanys-kurzarbeit-scheme-for-payment-of-staff-hit-by-lost-work-hours-6329831/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

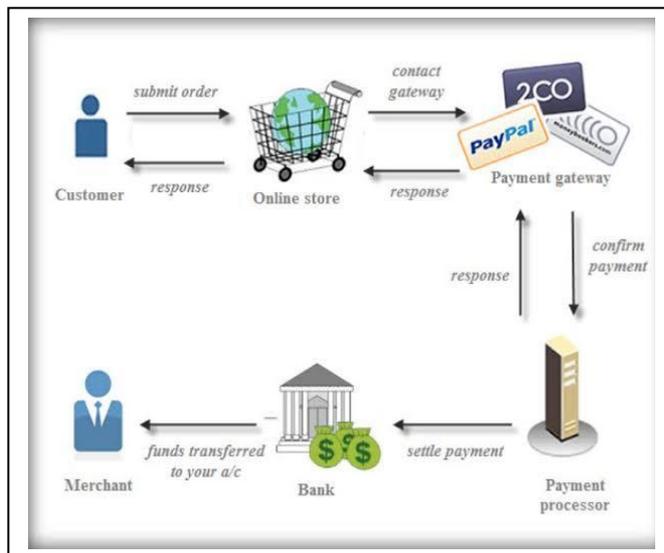
RBI releases new guidelines for payment aggregators

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: PAs- roles, functions and regulation.

As per the new guidelines:

1. **Capital requirements** for payment aggregators has been reduced to Rs 15 crore at the time of application for the licence.
2. This needs to be increased to Rs 25 crore within three years of operations.
3. Existing non-bank entities offering payment aggregation (PA) services shall apply for authorisation on or before June 30, 2021.
4. **Pure-play payment gateway companies** would be separated as an entity and would be identified as technology service providers for banks and non-banks.
5. PAs have also been asked to adhere to strict security guidelines, adhere to all KYC (Know Your Customer) and AML (Anti Money Laundering) rules.
6. The guidelines have also mandated that PAs need to check their merchant customers are not involved in selling of prohibited or fake items.
7. The central bank has also asked PAs to set up designated nodal offices to deal with customer grievance.
8. The RBI has prohibited PAs from allowing online transactions to be done with ATM pin as the second factor of authentication, which few payment gateway companies were offering as a service.



Who are payment aggregators?

These are players who integrate with e-commerce companies and connect them with banks. They receive payments on behalf of these companies and transfer the money to their accounts.

Background:

Entities like Billdesk, CCAvenue, Firstdata, Razorpay, Cashfree, Paytm Payment Gateway and others are offering payment services to e-commerce companies. Given the largescale adoption of digital payments and emergence of so many players, the RBI expressed interest in regulating the space.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Payment aggregators vs Payment Gateways- functions.
2. Capital requirements.
3. NBFCs vs SFBs.

Mains Link:

Who are payment aggregators? Why there is a need for regulation of these entities? Discuss.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=G6378P1HS.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

4. Recapitalisation of RRBs

What to study?

For Prelims: What are RRBs? What is CRAR?

For Mains: Significance of the recapitalisation, the need for it.

Context: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for continuation of the process of **recapitalization of Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)** by providing **minimum regulatory capital to RRBs for another year beyond 2019-20**, that is, up to 2020-21.

This is for those RRBs which are unable to maintain minimum **Capital to Risk weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) of 9%**, as per the regulatory norms prescribed by the Reserve Bank of India.

Why this is necessary?

- A financially stronger and robust Regional Rural Banks with improved CRAR will enable them to meet the credit requirement in the rural areas.
- With the recapitalization support to augment CRAR, RRBs would be able to continue their lending to these categories of borrowers under their PSL target, and thus, continue to support rural livelihoods.

Background:

The recapitalisation process of RRBs was approved by the cabinet in 2011 based on the recommendations of a **committee set up under the Chairmanship of K C Chakrabarty**.

The **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** identifies those RRBs, which require recapitalisation assistance to maintain the mandatory CRAR of 9% based on the CRAR position of RRBs, as on 31st March of every year.

What is Capital to Risk Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR)?

The CRAR, also known as **the Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR)**, is the ratio of a bank's capital to its risk. It is a measure of the amount of a bank's core capital expressed as a percentage of its risk-weighted asset.

It is **decided by central banks and bank regulators** to prevent commercial banks from taking excess leverage and becoming insolvent in the process.

Why CRAR was enforced?

The enforcement of regulated levels of this ratio is intended to protect depositors and promote stability and efficiency of financial systems around the world. It determines the bank's capacity to meet the time liabilities and other risks such as credit risk, operational risk, etc.

The Basel III norms stipulated a capital to risk weighted assets of 8%.

However, **as per RBI norms, Indian scheduled commercial banks are required to maintain a CRAR of 9%.**

What are RRBs?

Regional Rural Banks were set up on the basis of the recommendations of the **Narasimham Working Group (1975)**, and after the legislation of the Regional Rural Banks Act, 1976.

The first Regional Rural Bank "Prathama Grameen Bank" was set up on 2nd October, 1975.

The equity of a regional rural bank is held by **the Central Government, concerned State Government and the Sponsor Bank in the proportion of 50:15:35.**

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Stakeholders in RRBs.
2. RRBs vs Urban cooperative banks.
3. BASEL norms- important targets.
4. Where is Basel?
5. CRAR vs Leverage ratio.
6. What is priority sector lending?

Mains Link:

Recapitalisation will help banks maintain their capital adequacy ratio. Banks' capacity to lend will increase, but that does not mean lending will increase. Comment.

Sources: pib.

Topics: Government Budgeting.

1. Appropriation Bill

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: Features, procedure followed and significance.

Context: The Lok Sabha has passed **the Appropriation Bill 2020-21** that empowers the government to draw over ₹110 lakh crore from **the Consolidated Fund of India** for its working, as well as for the implementation of its programmes and schemes.

- Now, only **the Finance Bill** that pertains to the government's taxation proposal awaiting passage.
- The Appropriation Bill was passed by a **voice vote**.
- Following this, Speaker Om Birla applied "**guillotine**" — the Parliamentary tool to club all other pending subjects for discussion.

What is Appropriation Bill?

Appropriation Bill is a **money bill** that allows the government to withdraw funds from the Consolidated Fund of India to meet its expenses during the course of a financial year.

- As per **article 114 of the Constitution**, the government can withdraw money from the Consolidated Fund only after receiving approval from Parliament.
- To put it simply, **the Finance Bill** contains provisions on financing the expenditure of the government, and **Appropriation Bill** specifies the quantum and purpose for withdrawing money.

Procedure followed:

1. The government introduces **the Appropriation Bill in the lower house of Parliament** after discussions on Budget proposals and Voting on Demand for Grants.
2. The Appropriation Bill is **first passed by the Lok Sabha and then sent to the Rajya Sabha**.
3. The **Rajya Sabha has the power to recommend any amendments in this Bill**. However, it is **the prerogative of the Lok Sabha to either accept or reject** the recommendations made by the upper house of Parliament.
4. The unique feature of the Appropriation Bill is **its automatic repeal clause**, whereby the Act gets repealed by itself after it meets its statutory purpose.

What happens when the bill is defeated?

Since India subscribes to the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy, the defeat of an Appropriation Bill (and also the Finance Bill) in a parliamentary vote would necessitate resignation of a government or a general election. This has never happened in India till date, though.

Scope of discussion:

- The scope of discussion is limited to matters of public importance or administrative policy implied in the grants covered by the Bill and which have not already been raised during the discussion on demands for grants.
- The Speaker may require members desiring to take part in the discussion to give advance intimation of the specific points they intend to raise and may withhold permission for raising such of the points as in his opinion appear to be repetition of the matters discussed on a demand for grant.

Amendments:

No amendment can be proposed to an Appropriation Bill which will have the effect of varying the amount or altering the destination of any grant so made or of varying the amount of any expenditure charged on the Consolidated Fund of India, and the decision of the Speaker as to whether such an amendment is admissible is final. An amendment to an Appropriation Bill for omission of a demand voted by the House is out of order. In other respects, **the procedure in respect of an Appropriation Bill is the same as in respect of other Money Bills**.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Appropriation vs Finance bills- similarities and differences.
2. Scope of discussion and amendments to appropriation bill.
3. Powers of Rajya Sabha wrt to Appropriation Bill vs role of speaker.
4. Procedure to be followed while passing appropriation bill vs financial bills.
5. Consolidated vs Contingency funds.
6. Guillotine- applicability and implications.
7. Components of annual financial statement.

Mains Link:

Differentiate between appropriation bill and finance bill under Article 110 of the Indian Constitution.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GCB78KF63.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

2. What is Finance Bill?

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: Features, components and significance of the bill.

Context: Finance bill passed ahead of coronavirus lockdown.

What is a Finance Bill?

As per **Article 110 of the Constitution of India**, the **Finance Bill is a Money Bill**.

- The Finance Bill is a **part of the Union Budget**, stipulating all the legal amendments required for the changes in taxation proposed by the Finance Minister.
- This Bill **encompasses all amendments required in various laws pertaining to tax**, in accordance with the tax proposals made in the Union Budget.
- The **Finance Bill, as a Money Bill, needs to be passed by the Lok Sabha** — the lower house of the Parliament.
- Post the Lok Sabha's approval, the Finance Bill becomes **Finance Act**.

Difference between a Money Bill and the Finance Bill:

1. A Money Bill has to be introduced in the Lok Sabha as per Section 110 of the Constitution. Then, it is transmitted to the Rajya Sabha for its recommendations. The Rajya Sabha has to return the Bill with recommendations in 14 days. However, the Lok Sabha can reject all or some of the recommendations.
2. In the case of a Finance Bill, Article 117 of the Constitution categorically lays down that a Bill pertaining to sub-clauses (a) to (f) of clause (1) shall not be introduced or moved except with the President's recommendation. Also, a Bill that makes such provisions shall not be introduced in the Rajya Sabha.

Who decides the Bill is a Finance Bill?

The Speaker of the Lok Sabha is authorised to decide whether the Bill is a Money Bill or not. Also, the Speaker's decision shall be deemed to be final.

Why Finance Bill is needed?

The Union Budget proposes many tax changes for the upcoming financial year, even if not all of those proposed changes find a mention in the Finance Minister's Budget speech. These proposed changes pertain to several existing laws dealing with various taxes in the country.

- The Finance Bill seeks to insert amendments into all those laws concerned, without having to bring out a separate amendment law for each of those Acts.
- For instance, a Union Budget's proposed tax changes may require amending the various sections of the Income Tax law, Stamp Act, Money Laundering law, etc. The Finance Bill overrides and makes changes in the existing laws wherever required.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. What changes can be made via Finance Bill?
2. How can changes related to income tax be made?
3. How can changes to Stamp duty and GST be made?
4. Money Bill vs Finance bill.
5. Who decides on matters related to Money and Finance Bills.

Mains Link:

How does a money bill differ from a financial Bill? Analyze whether the process of classifying a bill as money bill needs change?

Sources: the Hindu.

3. States asked to use cess fund to help construction workers

What to study?

For Prelims: What is Cess? Overview of BOCW Act.

For Mains: Significance of the move.

Context: The union government has asked all states to dip into the ₹52,000 crore **Construction Cess fund** to give financial and allied benefits to the construction workers through **direct benefit transfer (DBT)**.

- The central advise comes as Corona outbreak spreads and the country is facing an unprecedented lockdown hampering livelihood of millions of informal workers.
- The advisory comes under **Section 60 of the Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Act, 1996**.
- The amount to be granted to construction workers may be decided by the respective state governments and Union territories.

What is a cess?

- A cess is **levied on the tax payable and not on the taxable income**. In a sense, for the taxpayer, it is equivalent to a surcharge on tax.
- **A cess can be levied on both direct and indirect taxes**. The revenue obtained from income tax, corporation tax, and indirect taxes can be allocated for various purposes.
- The **proceeds of all taxes and cesses are credited in the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI)**, an account of the Government of India.

Difference between tax and cess?

Unlike a tax, a cess is levied to meet a specific purpose; its proceeds cannot be spent on any kind of government expenditure. While the tax proceeds are shared with the States and Union Territories according to the guidelines by the Finance Commission, the cess proceeds need not be shared with them.

Recent examples of cess are: infrastructure cess on motor vehicles, clean environment cess, Krishi Kalyan cess (for the improvement of agriculture and welfare of farmers), and education cess.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Difference between Cess and Tax.
2. Who can levy and collect cess?
3. How is it shared?
4. What is a public account?
5. Who governs is CFI?

Mains Link:

What is Cess? How is it different from a surcharge? Discuss.

Sources: pib.

Topics: Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.

1. Small Farmers' Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC)

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: SFAC- objectives, functions and significance.

Context: **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)** has signed an MoU with the **Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC)** to have a better sync with their activities for the benefit of farmers.

Key facts:

- As per the MoU, both organisations will work towards capacity development, outreach programs, awareness programs and workshops of various stakeholders.
- APEDA will facilitate the certification of organic produce/areas by the FPCs assisted or identified by SFAC.

Significance of this approach:

It is expected that with the approach of joint collaboration with the organizations like SFAC, APEDA will be able to reach to a large farmer base for improving the production base of agri products quantitatively and qualitatively both for maintaining the consistency of supply and establish an image of quality supplier in the international market leading to increase in export volume and value and indirectly contribute to doubling of farmers' income.

About SFAC:

The Government established Small Farmers' Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC) as a **Society in January 1994 to facilitate agri-business ventures** by catalysing private investment through **Venture Capital Assistance (VCA) Scheme** in close association with financial institutions.

The role of State SFACs is to aggressively promote agribusiness project development in their respective States.

Management: The Society is governed by Board of Management which is chaired, ex-officio, by Hon'ble Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare as the President and the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Government of India, is the ex-officio Vice-President.

The main functions of SFAC are:

1. Promotion of development of small agribusiness through VCA scheme.
2. Helping formation and growth of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) / Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs).
3. Improving availability of working capital and development of business activities of FPOs/FPCs through Equity Grant and Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme.
4. Implementation of National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) Electronic Trading platform.

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority:

- It is an authority established under an act of Parliament and under the administrative control of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.
- It has been mandated with the responsibility of export promotion and development of the scheduled products viz. fruits, vegetables, meat products, dairy products, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages etc.
- APEDA has also been entrusted with the responsibility to monitor import of sugar.

Insta Link:**Prelims Link:**

1. APEDA- important functions.
2. What are FPOs?
3. What is eNAM?
4. Provisions wrt Cooperatives.

Mains Link:

Discuss the role and significance of Small Farmers' Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC) in ensuring the welfare of farmers.

Sources: pib.

Topics: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

1. RaiDer-X

What to study?

For Prelims: What is it? Key features?

For Mains: Significance and it's relevance today.

Context: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore have developed a new bomb detection device called **Raider-X**.

What is RaiDer-X?

It is an **explosives detection device**.

It can **detect up to 20 explosives from a stand-off distance of two meters**.

Developed by the High Energy Material Research Laboratory (HEMRL) — an arm of the DRDO — in Pune and the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore.

- It can also discern bulk explosives even if they have been concealed.

Applications:

The device has various applications including narcotics, for local police, for customs and other detection agencies who need to detect various elements which may be explosive or non-explosive in nature.

Significance:

Most of the recent terrorist attacks had explosives that were made from easily available ingredients like petrol and gelatin sticks rather than high-end materials. And devices like RaiDer-X are incremental to thwarting the threat from homemade explosives.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link: Similar such technologies developed by DRDO.

Mains Link:

What is RaiDer-X? Why is it significant?

Sources: pib.

2. How will in-flight WiFi work?

What to study?

For Prelims: How does WiFi work? How in- flight WiFi works?

For Mains: Need for, benefits and concerns associated.

Context: The government has permitted airlines operating in India to provide **in-flight WiFi services to passengers**.

Previously, the **Telecom Commission** had given its green signal to in-flight connectivity of Internet and mobile communications on aircraft in Indian airspace in 2018.

Who can permit?

The **pilot** may permit the access of Internet services by passengers on board an aircraft in flight, through Wi-Fi on board, when laptop, smartphone, tablet, smartwatch, e-reader or a point of sale device is used **in flight mode or airplane mode**.

How in- flight connectivity works?

In-flight connectivity systems use **two kinds of technologies**- terrestrial and satellite internet services.

1. Once flight mode is activated, the plane's antenna will link to **terrestrial Internet services** provided by telecom service providers.
2. Then, when the aircraft has climbed to 3,000 m, the antenna will switch to **satellite-based services**.

This way, there will be no break in Internet services to passengers, and cross-interference between terrestrial and satellite networks will be avoided.

Challenges ahead:

1. Airlines will have to bear the initial cost of installing antennae on aircraft. So, the additional cost could find a way into ticket prices.
2. Apart from the equipment, airlines will have to bear additional fuel costs, given the extra weight and drag aircraft will face due to the antenna.
3. Technology and laws allow calls to be made from aircraft, but many airlines do not want noisy cabins.

Benefits:

1. Globally, more than 30 airlines allow voice calls and internet access during flights. This facility will now help **Indian airlines compete with foreign carriers**.
2. **Business travellers greatly value these services** as they can continue their work commitments without any deterrence.
3. **Other** travellers can be in touch with their near and dear ones even during the flight.

Insta link:
Prelims link:
1. How WiFi works?
2. How internet works and is regulated?
3. How signals are transmitted from satellites to ground stations?
Mains link:
How in-flight internet connectivity works? What are its Pros and Cons?

Link: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/how-will-in-flight-wifi-work-6296168/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

3. National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber Physical Systems

What to study?

For Prelims: key features of NM- ICPS, targets.

For Mains: Need for and significance of the mission.

Context: Department of Science and Technology (DST) has sanctioned Rs 7.25 crore to **IIT Mandi** to establish a **Technology Innovation Hub (TIH)** at the Institute.

DST has sanctioned the funds under its **National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS)**.

Main tasks of the Technology Innovation Hub (TIH):

1. The TIH will develop tools, education material, hands-on experiments with specialised tool kits, connecting with existing innovation ecosystems.
2. It will inter-link with different stakeholders and connect with other initiatives of the Government of India by providing an innovation platform for schools, colleges and advanced technical training institutes in the targeted areas. The deliverables include:
3. **Technology Deliverables:** To develop technology interface for challenges concerning landslides, environment (including climate change), air pollution, agriculture, cybersecurity, defence forces, healthcare, and forensics.
4. **Human Resource and Skill Development Deliverables:** To generate skilled manpower in HCI area at graduate, post-graduate, doctoral, post-doctoral and faculty level by organising workshops and seminars.
5. **International Collaborations Deliverables:** To develop and sustain existing and new collaboration with universities and organisations in India and abroad.

6. **Entrepreneurship and Startup Deliverables:** To create a startup ecosystem by working with the technology-business incubator of IIT Mandi, Catalyst, with an approach of Knowledge Generation Technology Development Technology Translation Technology Commercialisation.

How the TIH will work on Cyber Physical Systems (CPS)?

The TIH will also work on the development and evaluation of interfaces of **IoT-based Cyber-Physical Systems (CPS)**, where CPS contains physical elements (sensors) for collecting data and cyber elements (analytics and visualization software) for alerting/ educating people for directed action.

What is it?

Cyber Physical Systems (CPS) are a new class of engineered systems that integrate computation and physical processes in a dynamic environment. CPS encompasses technology areas of Cybernetics, Mechatronics, Design and Embedded systems, Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data, Artificial Intelligence (AI) among others.

About National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS):

To harness the potential of this new wave of technology and make India a leading player in CPS, the Union Cabinet approved the launch of **National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS)** in 2018.

It had a total outlay of INR 3,660 crores **for a period of five years.**

The mission implementation would develop and bring:

1. Cyber Physical Systems (CPS) and associated technologies within reach in the country,
2. adoption of CPS technologies to address India specific National / Regional issues,
3. produce Next Generation skilled manpower in CPS,
4. catalyze Translational Research,
5. accelerate entrepreneurship and start-up ecosystem development in CPS,
6. give impetus to advanced research in CPS, Technology development and higher education in Science, Technology and Engineering disciplines, and
7. place India at par with other advanced countries and derive several direct and indirect benefits.

Implementation:

1. The Mission aims at establishment of 15 numbers of Technology Innovation Hubs (TIH), six numbers of Application Innovation Hubs (AIH) and four numbers of Technology Translation Research Parks (TTRP).
2. These Hubs & TTRPs will connect to Academics, Industry, Central Ministries and State Government in developing solutions at reputed academic, R&D and other organizations across the country in a hub and spoke model.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. What are Cyber-Physical Systems?
2. What is IoT?
3. What is Big Data?
4. Potential applications of CPS.

Mains Link:

Write a note on Cyber-Physical Systems and its associated technologies.

Link:

<https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/news/story/dst-sanctions-rs-7-25-cr-to-iit-mandi-to-establish-technology-innovation-hub-1654389-2020-03-11>.

Sources: the Hindu.

4. How does soap use help in tackling COVID-19?

What to study?

For Prelims: SARS-CoV-2 infection- spread, symptoms and prevention, use of soap in tackling infections.

For Mains: How does soap use help? How it works?

Context: Guidelines by the **World Health Organization**, to reduce the risk of **SARS-CoV-2 infection**, specify that one of the ways to reduce the risk of infection is by regularly and thoroughly cleaning one's hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or washing them with soap and water.

How does washing with soap help get rid of the coronavirus?

Using soap is more effective in removing microbes on our hands.

- **Viruses** such as coronavirus, influenza-causing viruses, Ebola, Zika have their genetic material encased in a layer of fat called the **lipid envelop**.
- **Soap molecules** are pin-shaped with a **head that is water-loving (hydrophilic) and a tail that is oil-loving (oleophilic)**. Being oleophilic, **the tail portion of the molecule tends to have an affinity for and 'competes' with the lipids in the virus envelope**.
- Since **the chemical bonds holding the virus together are not very strong**, the long oleophilic tail gets inserted into the envelope and tends to have a 'crowbar' effect that breaks the lipid envelope of the virus.
- The tail also competes with the bond that binds the RNA and the lipid envelop **thus dissolving the virus into its components which are then removed by water**.

Do all viruses have the lipid layer?

No, **certain viruses do not have the lipid envelop** and are called **the non-enveloped viruses**. **Rotavirus** which causes severe diarrhoea, poliovirus, adenovirus that cause pneumonia and even human **papillomavirus (HPV)** do not contain the lipid envelop.

The oil-loving tail of the soap molecule also disrupts the bond that binds dirt and non-enveloped viruses to the hand. The dirt and viruses are surrounded by several tails making them remain as suspended particles. Rinsing with water washes away the suspended particles leading to clean hands.

How do alcohol-based hand sanitisers help get rid of coronavirus?

Like soap, **the alcohol present in hand sanitisers dissolve the lipid envelop**, thus inactivating the virus.

In addition, the alcohol also tends to **change the shape or denature the mushroom-shaped protein structures that stick out of the lipid envelop**. The mushroom-shaped protein structures help the virus to bind to special structures found on human cells and enter the cells. To be effective, the sanitisers should contain at least 60% alcohol.

Unlike water, **alcohol run does not remove the dead viruses from the hand**. While a sanitiser can quickly reduce the number of microbes, **it does not get rid of all types of germs, and is "not as effective when hands are visibly dirty or greasy"**.

Primary precautions:

WHO cautions that using a mask alone will be insufficient to provide an "adequate level of protection". It should be combined with hand hygiene to prevent human-to-human transmission.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Virus vs Bacteria vs fungi- structure and other differences.
2. How does virus infect a host.
3. Aerobic vs anaerobic bacteria.
4. Hydrophilic vs Oleophilic.

Good old soap

As the number of SARS-CoV-2 cases continues to rise globally, washing hands thoroughly with soap or alcohol-based hand sanitisers has been advised as a preventive measure. A look at how a soap and water combination helps wash the virus away

- When an infected person coughs or sneezes without covering himself, droplets expelled end up on different surfaces. While the droplets dry out quickly, the virus remains active
- When a healthy person touches an infected surface, the virus latches onto the skin. When he or she touches the face, nose or mouth,

the virus can enter the body easily

- Water is not enough to cleanse the virus since the virus is sticky. Here is where soap comes into play
- When hands are washed with soap, the fat-like substances in soap 'compete' with the protective layer around the virus and the bond that holds

the virus together. They are stronger than the viral bonds

- Thus, soap and water together effectively 'dissolve' the viral bond and break the interaction between the virus and the skin surface
- Though alcohol-based hand-sanitisers are helpful, they are not as effective as soap and water

How soap washes dirt from the skin

Nonpolar "tails" adhere to dirt on the skin. Polar groups are soluble in water and help lift the dirt away from the skin



Sourced from Palli Thordarson, Professor, School of Chemistry, University of New South Wales

5. How sanitisers work?

Mains Link:

One of the ways to reduce the risk of infection is by regularly and thoroughly cleaning one's hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or washing them with soap and water. Discuss how this works?

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/how-does-soap-use-help-in-tackling-covid-19/article31070630.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

5. Potential Fishing Zone (PFZ)

What to study?

For Prelims: What are PFZs, Oceansat?

For Mains: Significance of PFZs.

Context: The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) has reported that **Oceansat Satellite data** are used to prepare the **Potential Fishing Zone (PFZ)** advisories on the potential rich fishing areas and provide to the sea faring fishermen in all states.

How are these zones identified?

This methodology utilizes data on **chlorophyll concentration (Chl)** obtained from ISRO's **Oceansat-2 satellite** and the **sea surface temperature from National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA / USA satellites)**.

About Oceansat-2:

- Launched in 2009, it is designed to provide service continuity for operational users of the **Ocean Colour Monitor (OCM) instrument on Oceansat-1**.
- **The main objectives of OceanSat-2** are to study surface winds and ocean surface strata, observation of chlorophyll concentrations, monitoring of phytoplankton blooms, study of atmospheric aerosols and suspended sediments in the water.

Gagan Enabled Mariner's Instrument for Navigation and Information (GEMINI) device:

For seamless and effective dissemination of emergency information and communication on disaster warnings, **Potential Fishing Zones (PFZ) and Ocean States Forecasts (OSF)** to fishermen, the Government today launched the **Gagan Enabled Mariner's Instrument for Navigation and Information (GEMINI) device**.

The GEMINI device receives and transfers the data received from GAGAN satellite/s to a mobile through Bluetooth communication. A mobile application developed by INCOIS decodes and displays the information in nine regional languages.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. GEMINI Device.
2. Samudra project- implementation and objectives.
3. How are PFZs identified?
4. Geosynchronous vs Geostationary satellites.
5. Where are earth observation satellites placed?

Mains Link:

Discuss what are potential fishing zones and how they are identified.

Sources: pib.

6. In News pib- Coalbed methane (CBM)

What to study?

For Prelims and mains: What is CBM? Potential, uses and challenges.

India's CBM potential:

1. India has the fifth-largest coal reserves in the world, and CBM has been looked at as a clean alternative fuel with significant prospects.
2. India's CBM resources are estimated at around 92 trillion cubic feet (TCF), or 2,600 billion cubic metres (BCM).
3. The country's coal and CBM reserves are found in 12 states of India, with the Gondwana sediments of eastern India holding the bulk.
4. The Damodar Koel valley and Son valley are prospective areas for CBM development.

What is coalbed methane (CBM)?

It is an **unconventional form of natural gas found in coal deposits or coal seams**.

CBM is **formed during the process of coalification**, the transformation of plant material into coal.

CBM can be used:

1. In Power generation.
2. As Compressed natural gas (CNG) auto fuel.
3. As feedstock for fertilisers.
4. Industrial uses such as in cement production, rolling mills, steel plants, and for methanol production.

Challenges and concerns:

1. Methane is a **greenhouse gas** emitted through CBM extraction. Global methane emissions from coal mines are projected to account for approximately 8 percent of total global methane emissions.
2. Disturbance of lands drilled and its effect on wildlife habitats results in **ecosystem damage**.
3. CBM production behaviour is complex and difficult to predict in the early stages of recovery.
4. Another concern is the effect **water discharges from CBM development could potentially have on downstream water sources**.
5. **Disposal of the highly salinized water that must be removed in order to release the methane creates a challenge**, as its introduction into freshwater ecosystems could have adverse effects.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. CBM vs Shale gas.
2. What is coalification?
3. Greenhouse gases emitted during CBM extraction?

Mains Link:

What is coalbed methane? How is it extracted and what is its significance? Discuss.

Sources: pib.

7. What is the 'rapid test'?

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: Rapid test- features, how is it carries out, significance and criticisms.

Context: To tackle suspicions of whether the novel coronavirus has spread into the community and if not prevent such a scenario, the Kerala government has announced '**rapid tests**' that will ensure speedy results within half an hour.

What is the 'rapid test' for Coronavirus?

A rapid test is **conducted to determine whether there has been any kind of recent viral infection in a person's body**.

- When a pathogen enters a human body, specific antibodies are released as a response to the virus.
- A rapid test can detect the presence of such antibodies in blood, serum or plasma samples quickly, indicating a viral infection. Rapid testing is conducted usually **to check for community transmission of a virus during an epidemic**.

- According to the health department, it is a simple test that can be done with a person's blood sample and will give out results within 10-30 minutes. It is also a low-cost test.

What does Kerala's health department plan to do?

- Rapid tests can be used to conduct screening within the community and identify those with suspected infection, put them under observation and if required, subject them to the PCR test for coronavirus confirmation.
- Kerala plans to acquire as many rapid antibody kits as possible from ICMR-NIV and begin to use them, especially on those under quarantine in areas like Kasaragod district which has reported 80 of the 181 active cases. The situation in Kasaragod is critical than in other districts and has been met with stricter lockdown measures by the administration.

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-what-is-the-rapid-test-kerala-is-rolling-out-for-covid-19-exposure/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

8. NIDHI program

What to study?

For Prelims: Overview of NIDHI program, how Scitech Airon ionizer machine works?

For Mains: Significance of this breakthrough, how it can help healthcare workers in India?

Context: A new technology has been adopted by the Maharashtra hospitals in the fight of COVID-19 fight. The technology was developed by a Pune based Start Up.

- The product is named "**Scitech Airon**". It is a **Negative Ion Generator**.
- The technology has been developed under **the NIDHI PRAYAS program** initiated by the Department of Science and Technology (DST).

How it works?

1. The Scitech Airon ionizer machine generates negatively charged ions at approximately hundred million per 8 seconds (10 ions per sec).
2. The negative ions generated by the ionizer form clusters around microparticles such as airborne mould, corona or influenza viruses, mite allergens, bacteria, pollens, dust and so on and render them inactive through a chemical reaction by creating highly reactive OH groups called hydroxyl radicals and H O which are highly reactive and known as atmospheric detergents.
3. The detergent property generated by the ion generator helps in the breakdown of the outer protein of the allergens, viruses, and bacteria, which helps in controlling airborne diseases.
4. It increases the body's resistance to infections and harmful environmental factors. This resistance could be helpful for the next 20-30 days outside the ion atmosphere.
5. It also decomposes gaseous pollutants like Carbon Monoxide (1000 times more harmful than Carbon dioxide), Nitrogen dioxide, and Volatile Organic Compounds.

Significance of the technology:

It helps to control the virus, bacteria, and other fungal infections in a closed environment and could help purify the air and disinfect areas around COVID-19 positive cases and suspects. Hence it could ensure the wellbeing of the staff, doctors, and nurses who are working round the clock in quarantine facilities by enhancing their disease-resistance power and ability to fight the virus.

What is NIDHI program?

Department of Science & Technology has launched a **NIDHI program (National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations)** under which programmes for setting up of incubators, seed fund, accelerators and 'Proof of concept' grant for innovators and entrepreneurs have been launched.

Under NIDHI, **PRAYAS (Promoting and Accelerating Young and Aspiring innovators & Startups)** programme has been initiated in which established Technology Business Incubators (TBI) are supported with PRAYAS grant to support innovators and entrepreneurs with grants for 'Proof of Concept' and developing prototypes. A maximum grant of Rs. 220 lakh is given to a TBI for establishing a PRAYAS Centre which includes Rs.100 lakh for PRAYAS SHALA, Rs. 20 lakh for operational cost of PRAYAS Centre and maximum of Rs. 10 lakh to one innovator for developing prototype. Funding for ten innovators is given to the TBI in a year.

Sources:pib.

Topics: Awareness in space.

1. GISAT-1 — Geo Imaging Satellite

Covered on:

<https://www.insightsonindia.com/2020/02/17/gisat-1-geo-imaging-satellite/>

2. What is ExoMars?

What to study?

For Prelims: Key features and components of the mission, objectives and the rover of the mission.

For Mains: Significance and relevance of the mission.

Context: Launch of ExoMars rover delayed to 2022.

About the rover:

- The European-built **Rosalind Franklin rover**, named for the famed British chemist and X-ray crystallographer whose work contributed to DNA research, recently passed final pre-launch thermal and vacuum tests at an Airbus facility in Toulouse, France.
- Rosalind Franklin is **the first European Mars rover**.

About ExoMars:

It is a **joint endeavour between ESA and the Russian space agency, Roscosmos.**

The primary goal of the ExoMars programme is **to address the question of whether life has ever existed on Mars.**

Is there Life on Mars? Europe's mission to land on the Red Planet by 2021

The second phase of the ExoMars mission involves drilling on the planet's surface for signs of life

1 ExoMars 2016 :

- ▶ Put the Euro-Russian Trace Gas Orbiter (TGO) in orbit around Mars
- ▶ **Success**
- ▶ Get the Schiaparelli Rover safely on the surface October 19, 2016
- ▶ **Contact lost during landing**

2 ExoMars 2020:

- ▶ Landing platform to be deployed as a vehicle on the surface of Mars
- ▶ Launch: July 2020
- ▶ Due to arrive: Mars 2021

Rover

- ▶ Weight: 310 kilos
- ▶ Instruments: 9, including...
- ▶ The Mars Organic Molecule Analyser (MOMA)
- ▶ A chromatograph targeting biological markers

Exomars mission:

To detect any trace of life now or in the past



Components of the mission:

www.insightsonindia.com

The programme comprises two missions.

- The first launched in March 2016 and consists of the **Trace Gas Orbiter (TGO)** and **Schiaparelli**, an entry, descent and landing demonstrator module.
- **TGO's main objectives are** to search for evidence of **methane and other trace atmospheric gases** that could be signatures of active biological or geological processes. The **Schiaparelli** probe crashed during its attempt to land on Mars.
- The second, **comprising a rover and surface platform**, is planned for 2022. Together they will address the question of whether life has ever existed on Mars.

Other Mars Missions:

Despite the delay in the second ExoMars launch until 2022, three other Mars missions remain scheduled for launch during this year's planetary launch window in July and August.

1. **NASA's Perseverance rover**, formerly known as Mars 2020, will take off in July from Cape Canaveral.
2. A **Chinese Mars rover** is also being prepared for launch later this year.
3. The **United Arab Emirates' Hope Mars orbiter** is slated to launch on a Japanese H-2A rocket this summer.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. InSight vs ExoMars vs Mangalyaan- objectives.
2. Environmental composition of Mars vs Earth.
3. Soft landing mission on Mars so far.
4. Marsquakes vs Earthquakes.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance and objectives of ExoMars mission.

Link:

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/science-technology/exomars-mission-delayed-rover-will-now-take-off-in-2022-69762>.

Sources: the Hindu.

Topics: Awareness in the fields of IT, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

1. Cord Blood Banking

What to study?

For Prelims: What is Cord blood, features and benefits.

For Mains: Significance of cord blood and the need for its banking.

Context: Poona Citizen Doctors' forum dispels beliefs on **commercial cord blood banking**.

It has warned to-be parents against falling prey to the emotional marketing tactics by stem cell banking companies.

What's the issue?

Over the past decade, stem cell banking has been aggressively marketed even as its use is still in experimental stages. But these companies charge enormous fees from parents to preserve cells.

- The concern here is that it is merely by emotional marketing that companies convince parents to bank the cells for several years promising future therapeutic use.
- Private companies who have forayed into this field offer packages anywhere between ₹50,000 and ₹1 lakh to store and preserve the cells in right conditions.
- So far there is no scientific basis for preservation of cord blood for future self use and this practice therefore raises ethical and social concerns.

Regulation in India:

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) does not recommend commercial stem cell banking.

What is Cord Blood?

Cord blood (short for **umbilical cord blood**) is the blood that remains in **the umbilical cord and placenta post-delivery**. It contains special cells called **hematopoietic stem cells** that can be used to treat some types of diseases.

What is Cord blood banking?

Cord blood banking is the process of collecting the cord blood and extracting and cryogenically freezing its stem cells and other cells of the immune system for potential future medical use.

Globally, **cord blood banking is recommended as a source of hematopoietic stem cell transplantation for haematological cancers and disorders where its use is recommended**. For all other conditions, the use of cord blood as a source of stem cells is not yet established.

What Can It Be Used For?

The umbilical cord fluid is **loaded with stem cells**. They can treat cancer, blood diseases like anemia, and some immune system disorders, which disrupt your body's ability to defend itself. The fluid is easy to collect and **has 10 times more stem cells than those collected from bone marrow**. Stem cells from cord blood **rarely carry any infectious diseases and are half as likely to be rejected as adult stem cells**.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. What are stem cells?
2. Types of stem cells?
3. Their benefits?
4. What is stem cell therapy?
5. Various projects in this regard.

Mains Link:

What is cord blood? How to- be parents are falling prey to the emotional marketing tactics by stem cell banking companies? Discuss.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GUE77IBNU.1&imageview=0>

Sources: the Hindu.

The infographic is titled "Cord Blood" and features a central illustration of a baby in a circle. It is divided into several sections:

- What is Cord Blood?**: Explains that cord blood is the blood found in a newborn's umbilical cord, made of stem cells, and is valuable because it is made of stem cells. It notes that stem cells are vital for repairing our bodies and that newborn stem cells are the best to have.
- SAVING CORD BLOOD**: A section with an illustration of a person collecting cord blood, stating that these stem cells are younger and more flexible, which is why more people are saving them.
- WHY SAVE CORD BLOOD?**: Lists several benefits: help treat chronic diseases like leukemia and sickle cell anemia; a less risk of complications when used for transplants; can be used for conditions that currently lack medical treatment options; and can decrease disease progression in early treatment. It also notes that preserving them "stops the clock" and protects the cells from aging and being exposed to environmental factors and common viruses that can decrease their function.
- YOUR OWN GENETIC MATCH**: A section with an illustration of a family, stating that if ever in need of a transplant, you are a perfect match for yourself and possibly your family. It includes a diagram showing "Your Body (100% Match to self)", "Parents (Partial Match)", and "Siblings (Potential Match)".

The infographic is credited to "healtheo.360®".

2. Basmati GI tag

What to study?

For Prelims: What is GI tag, GI tag for Basmati.

For Mains: Relevance and significance of GI tag.

Context: Madhya Pradesh government's struggle to join the elite 'basmati' league has failed once again as **the Madras high court** has dismissed the state's plea seeking **geographical indication (GI) tag for basmati rice grown in areas falling under the state**.

What has the Court said?

Two GI certificates of registration for a same produce cannot be issued.

The petitioners have an alternative and efficacious remedy available by filing **an application to the registrar of trademark seeking to cancel or vary the GI certificate issued to APEDA.**

What's the issue?

In May 2010, **GI status was given to basmati grown only in Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and parts of western Uttar Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.**

But, Madhya Pradesh demanded that its 13 districts be recognised as traditional Basmati growing regions. However, **GI registry had rejected Madhya Pradesh's claim** as being the original and unique basmati growing region. It had observed that the documents and evidence filed by Madhya Pradesh show the importance, special characters of rice cultivated in Madhya Pradesh but not the basmati cultivation in the traditional growing area.

What's the concern now?

Madhya Pradesh says non-inclusion of the state in the basmati growing areas would have an adverse effect on the lives of farmers who mainly depend upon basmati cultivation and it will also affect the export potential, which will indirectly reduce the country's turnover from the export of basmati.

About GI tag:

What is it?

A GI is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory.

Significance of a GI tag:

Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.

Security:

Once the GI protection is granted, no other producer can misuse the name to market similar products. It also provides comfort to customers about the authenticity of that product.

Who is a registered proprietor of a geographical indication?

Any association of persons, producers, organisation or authority established by or under the law can be a registered proprietor.

Their name should be entered in the Register of Geographical Indication as registered proprietor for the Geographical Indication applied for.

How long the registration of Geographical Indication is valid?

The registration of a geographical indication is valid for a period of 10 years.

It can be renewed from time to time for further period of 10 years each.

What is the difference between a geographical indication and a trademark?

A trademark is a sign used by an enterprise to distinguish its goods and services from those of other enterprises. It gives its owner the right to exclude others from using the trademark.

A geographical indication tells consumers that a product is produced in a certain place and has certain characteristics that are due to that place of production. It may be used by all producers who make their products in the place designated by a geographical indication and whose products share typical qualities.

Who accords and regulates Geographical Indications?

At the International level: Geographical Indications are covered as a component of intellectual property rights (IPRs) under **the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property**. GI is also governed by **the World Trade Organisation's (WTO's) Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)**.

In India, Geographical Indications registration is administered by **the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999** which came into force with effect from September 2003. The **first product in India** to be accorded with GI tag was **Darjeeling tea** in the year 2004-05.

Insta Link:

1. What is GI tag?
2. Who grants?
3. GI products in India and their geographical locations.
4. Other IPRs.

Mains Link:

What is a Geographical Indication (GI) tag? Discuss its significance.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/madras-high-court-dismisses-madhya-pradeshs-plea-on-gi-tag-for-basmati-rice/article31025985.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

3. In New PIB- National Supercomputing Mission (NSM)

What is National Supercomputing Mission (NSM)?

It is being implemented and steered jointly by the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** and **Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY)**.

Implemented by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Pune and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru.

Focus of the mission:

- The Mission envisages empowering national academic and R&D institutions spread over the country by installing a vast supercomputing grid comprising of more than 70 high-performance computing facilities.
- These supercomputers will also be networked on the National Supercomputing grid over **the National Knowledge Network (NKN)**. The NKN is another programme of the government which connects academic institutions and R&D labs over a high speed network.
- The Mission includes development of highly professional High Performance Computing (HPC) aware human resource for meeting challenges of development of these applications.

Achievements:

The first supercomputer assembled indigenously, called **Param Shivay**, was installed in IIT (BHU) and was inaugurated by the Prime Minister. Similar systems **Param Shakti** and **Param Brahma** were installed at IIT-Kharagpur and IISER, Pune. They are equipped with applications from domains like Weather and Climate, Computational Fluid Dynamics, Bioinformatics, and Material science.

Significance:

1. World-wide supercomputing facilities have enabled countries in their S&T capabilities in areas such as designing vehicles, aeroplanes, massive structures like high rise buildings and bridges, infrastructure, discovery of new life saving drugs, discovery and extraction of new energy sources including oil, natural gas etc.
2. Over the years, supercomputers have benefitted mankind in several ways. Weather prediction has reached accuracy of forecast as well as real time tracking of natural phenomenon. Timely warning of cyclones in the recent past have saved many lives and property. The Mission aims to further such capabilities beyond current levels.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Super computers in India and the world.
2. How do they perform faster?
3. About NKM.
4. Targets under NSM.

Mains Link:

Write a note on National Supercomputing Mission (NSM).

Sources: pib.

4. Bio fortified crops

Context: Scientists of ARI, Pune develop **biofortified, high protein wheat variety- MACS 4028.**

- It is a **semi-dwarf variety**. It has shown the superior and stable yielding ability.
- It is resistant to stem rust, leaf rust, foliar aphids, root aphids, and brown wheat mite.

What is biofortification?

Biofortification is the process of increasing nutritional value of food crops by increasing the density of vitamins and minerals in a crop through either conventional plant breeding; agronomic practices or biotechnology. Examples of these vitamins and minerals that can be increased through biofortification include provitamin A Carotenoids, zinc and iron.

How are crops fortified?

Conventional crop breeding techniques are used to identify varieties with particularly high concentration of desired nutrients. These are **cross-bred with varieties with other desirable traits from the target areas (such as virus resistance, drought tolerance, high yielding, taste) to develop biofortified varieties** that have high levels of micronutrients (for example, vitamin A, iron or zinc), in addition to other traits desired by farmers and consumers.

Agronomic biofortification entails application of minerals such as zinc or iron as foliar or soil applications, drawing on plant management, soil factors, and plant characteristics to get enhanced content of key micronutrients into the edible portion of the plant.

Why biofortification?

Biofortification is one solution among many interventions that are needed to solve the complex problem of micronutrient malnutrition. It is considered one of the most cost-effective interventions for countries to employ in combating micronutrient malnutrition.

- Biofortification reaches rural consumers who have limited access to industrially fortified foods, supplementation interventions, and diverse diets.
- Biofortification combines increased micronutrient content with preferred agronomic, quality, and market traits and therefore biofortified varieties will typically match or outperform the usual varieties that farmers grow and consume.

How does Biofortification differ from food fortification?

Biofortification has the increased nutritional micronutrient content imbedded in the crop being grown. Food fortification increases the nutritional value of foods by adding trace amounts of micronutrients to foods during processing.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Bio fortification vs Genetic modifications.
2. Micro vs Macronutrients.
3. Approval for Biofortified and GM crops in India.
4. GM crops allowed in India.

Mains Link:

What do you understand by fortification of foods? Discuss its advantages.

Sources: pib.

5. Convalescent plasma therapy

What to study?

For Prelims and Mains: Key features and overview of the therapy, its significance.

Context: As the proportion of patients infected with COVID-19 continues to rise in the United States, **the Food and Drug Administration** is facilitating access to COVID-19 **convalescent plasma** for use in patients with serious or immediately life-threatening COVID-19 infections.

Why was this necessary?

While clinical trials are underway to evaluate the safety and efficacy of administering convalescent plasma to patients with COVID-19, the FDA is granting clinicians permission for use of investigational convalescent plasma under single-patient emergency Investigational New Drug Applications (INDs), since no known cure exists and a vaccine is more than 1 year away from becoming available.

What is Convalescent plasma therapy? How it works?

It seeks to make use of the antibodies developed in the recovered patient against the coronavirus. The whole blood or plasma from such people is taken, and the plasma is then injected in critically ill patients so that the antibodies are transferred and boost their fight against the virus.

WHO guidelines in this regard:

WHO guidelines in 2014 mandate a donor's permission before extracting plasma. Plasma from only recovered patients must be taken, and donation must be done from people not infected with HIV, hepatitis, syphilis, or any infectious disease. If whole blood is collected, the plasma is separated by sedimentation or centrifugation, then injected in the patient. If plasma needs to be collected again from the same person, it must be done after 12 weeks of the first donation for males and 16 weeks for females, the WHO guidelines state.

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/recovered-covid-19-patients-plasma-what-is-this-experimental-therapy-6337764/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

Topics: Conservation related issues, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

1. Black carbon levels spike at Himalayan glaciers

What to study?

For Prelims: Key findings of the study, Black Carbon- generation, effects and concerns.

For Mains: Concerns raised on varying levels of black Carbon in India, measures needed.

Context: Researchers recently conducted a study on varying levels of **Black Carbon** in Himalayas.

Key findings:

1. Black carbon concentrations near the Gangotri glacier rose 400 times in summer due to forest fires and stubble burning from agricultural waste, and triggered glacial melt.
2. The monthly mean concentration of EBC (**equivalent black carbon**) was found to be minimum in August and maximum in the month of May. The observed seasonal mean concentrations of EBC indicated a pristine glacial source and an absence of EBC sources in the locality.
3. The concentration varied from a minimum of 0.01µg/cubic metre in winter to 4.62µg/cubic metre during summer. Being a pristine zone far from sources of pollution, the measurements are critical to establishing a baseline for pollution loads and estimating the contribution of various sources to pollution.

What is black Carbon? What are the concerns?

Black carbon **results from the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels and biomass.**

BC is **produced both naturally and by human activities** as a result of the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels, biofuels, and biomass.

Primary sources include emissions from diesel engines, cook stoves, wood burning and forest fires.

Concerns associated:

1. The fine particles absorb light and about a million times more energy than carbon dioxide.

- It is said to be **the second largest contributor to climate change after CO₂**. But unlike CO₂, which can stay in the atmosphere for years together, **black carbon is short-lived** and remains in the atmosphere only for days to weeks before it descends as rain or snow.
- Black carbon absorbs solar energy and warms the atmosphere. When it falls to earth with precipitation, it darkens the surface of snow and ice, reducing their albedo (the reflecting power of a surface), warming the snow, and hastening melting.
- India is the second largest emitter of black carbon in the world**, with emissions expected to increase dramatically in the coming decades, says an April 2019 study in the journal Atmospheric Research, with the Indo Gangetic plains said to be the largest contributor.

Facts for Prelims:

Complete combustion would turn all carbon in the fuel into carbon dioxide (CO₂), but **combustion is never complete** and CO₂, carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds, and organic carbon and black carbon particles are all formed in the process.

The complex mixture of particulate matter resulting from incomplete combustion is often referred to as **soot**.

Insta Link:

Prelims link:

- Other byproducts of combustion of fossil fuels.
- Other contributors to climate change.

Mains Link:

Write a note on black Carbon and it's effects on the environment.

Link:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/black-carbon-levels-spike-at-himalayan-glaciers/article30974301.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

2. International Conference on Nano Science and Nano Technology (ICONSAT)

What to study?

For Prelims: Overview and key features of the mission.

For Mains: Significance and relevance of the mission.

Context: The International Conference on Nano Science and Nano Technology (ICONSAT) under the aegis of **Nano Mission**, Department of Science and Technology (DST) is being held at Kolkata focusing on **the recent advances in this frontier research field**.

Mission on Nano Science and Technology (Nano Mission):

- Launched in 2007.
- It is as an "umbrella capacity-building programme".
- The Mission's programmes will target all scientists, institutions and industry in the country.
- It will also strengthen activities in nano science and technology by promoting basic research, human resource development, research infrastructure development, international collaborations, among others.
- It will be anchored in **the Department of Science and Technology** and steered by a **Nano Mission Council chaired by an eminent scientist**.

Outcomes and significance of the mission:

- As a result of the efforts led by the Nano Mission, today, India is amongst the top five nations in the world in terms of scientific publications in nano science and technology (moving from 4th to the 3rd position).
- The Nano Mission itself has resulted in about 5000 research papers and about 900 Ph.Ds and also some useful products like nano hydrogel based eye drops, pesticide removal technology for drinking water, water filters for arsenic and fluoride removal, nanosilver based antimicrobial textile coating, etc.

The Nano Mission has thus helped establish a good eco-system in the country to pursue front-ranking basic research and also to seed and nurture application-oriented R&D, focused on useful technologies and products.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. What is nano technology?
2. Recent breakthroughs in nanotechnology.

Mains Link:

What is nanotechnology? Why it has become significant these days? Discuss.

Link:

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1605449>.

Sources: pib.

3. What causes coral bleaching at the Great Barrier Reef?

What to study?

For Prelims: Coral bleaching- causes, effects, concerns and measures to prevent.

For Mains: Bleaching in Great Barrier Reef, measures to prevent bleach.

Context: Scientists have warned that **the Great Barrier Reef** will face a critical period of heat stress over the coming weeks, following the most widespread coral bleaching the natural world has ever endured.

About Great Barrier Reef:

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, which spreads across a length of over 2,300 km and is roughly the size of Italy, is home to about 3,000 coral reefs, 600 continental islands, 1,625 type of fish, 133 varieties of shark and rays and 600 types of soft and hard corals.

It is a **world heritage site**.

What are Coral reefs?

Coral reefs are important hotspots of biodiversity in the ocean. Corals are animals in the same class (Cnidaria) as jellyfish and anemones. They consist of individual polyps that get together and build reefs.

Significance:

Coral reefs support a wide range of species and maintain the quality of the coastal biosphere.

Corals control the level of carbon dioxide in the water by converting it into a limestone shell. If this process does not take place, the amount of carbon dioxide in the ocean water would increase significantly and affect ecological niches.

Threats:

- Coral reefs are threatened by climate change.
- When the sea surface temperature increases beyond a tolerable limit, they undergo a process of bleaching.

What is bleaching?

Basically bleaching is when the corals expel a certain algae known as **zooxanthellae**, which lives in the tissues of the coral in a symbiotic relationship. About 90% of the energy of the coral is provided by the zooxanthellae which are endowed with chlorophyll and other pigments. They are responsible for the yellow or reddish brown colours of the host coral. In addition the zooxanthellae can live as endosymbionts with jellyfish also. When a coral bleaches, it does not die but comes pretty close to it. Some of the corals may survive the experience and recover once the sea surface temperature returns to normal levels.



Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. About Great Barrier Reef, location and significance.
2. What is a World Heritage site?

Mains Link:

What is Coral bleaching? How it is affecting coral reefs across the world. Discuss.

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/great-barrier-reef-coral-bleaching-explained-6303755/>.

Sources: Indian Express.

4. Preservation of Eastern, Western Ghats

What to study?

For Prelims: Western Ghats- Key geographical and environmental facts.

For Mains: Issues related to the conservation of the region, overview of Gadgil and Kasturirangan committee reports.

Context: A public interest litigation petition has been filed in the **Madras High Court** seeking a direction to the Centre and State government to constitute a **permanent body** for taking serious steps to safeguard the flora, fauna and other natural resources in **the Eastern and Western Ghat areas in Tamil Nadu**.

- The petition is on the basis of the recommendations made by **the Madhav Gadgil and Kasturi Rangan committees**.

What's the issue? Why there is a need for protection?

- Petitioner contended that the natural resources abundantly available in this area are being properly utilised by other regions, except Tamil Nadu. They are being misutilised and mismanaged not only by the administrators but also by the public at large.
- Besides, large-scale plantations of coffee, tea and orchards have been raised in the hills of Western Ghats. Aromatic and valuable trees like sandal are removed illegally. Despite the Wildlife Protection Act, hunting takes place in some pockets. The forests are getting degraded because of illicit collection of firewood, illicit grazing and illicit felling of trees.

What did the Gadgil Committee say?

1. It **defined the boundaries of the Western Ghats** for the purposes of ecological management.
2. It proposed that this entire area be designated as **ecologically sensitive area (ESA)**.
3. Within this area, smaller regions were to be identified as **ecologically sensitive zones (ESZ) I, II or III** based on their existing condition and nature of threat.
4. It proposed to **divide the area into about 2,200 grids**, of which 75 per cent would fall under ESZ I or II or under already existing protected areas such as wildlife sanctuaries or natural parks.
5. The committee proposed a **Western Ghats Ecology Authority** to regulate these activities in the area.

Why was Kasturirangan Committee setup?

None of the six concerned states agreed with the recommendations of the Gadgil Committee, which submitted its report in August 2011.

- In August 2012, then Environment Minister constituted a High-Level Working Group on Western Ghats under Kasturirangan to **“examine” the Gadgil Committee report** in a “holistic and multidisciplinary fashion in the light of responses received” from states, central ministries and others.
- The Kasturirangan report seeks to bring just 37% of the Western Ghats under **the Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) zones** — down from the 64% suggested by the Gadgil report.

Recommendations of Kasturirangan Committee:

1. A ban on mining, quarrying and sand mining.
2. No new thermal power projects, but hydro power projects allowed with restrictions.
3. A ban on new polluting industries.

4. Building and construction projects up to 20,000 sq m was to be allowed but townships were to be banned.
5. Forest diversion could be allowed with extra safeguards.

Importance of western ghats:

- The Western Ghats is an extensive region spanning over six States. It is the home of many endangered plants and animals. It is a **UNESCO World Heritage site**.
- It is **one of the eight "hottest hot-spots" of biological diversity in the world**.
- According to UNESCO, **the Western Ghats are older than the Himalayas**. They influence **Indian monsoon weather patterns** by intercepting the rain-laden monsoon winds that sweep in from the south-west during late summer.

Eastern Ghats:

The Eastern Ghats **run from the northern Odisha through Andhra Pradesh to Tamil Nadu in the south passing some parts of Karnataka**.

They are eroded and cut through by **four major rivers of peninsular India, viz. Godavari, Mahanadi, Krishna, and Kaveri**.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Geographical extension of Eastern and Western ghats.
2. Imports plant and animal species found in this region.
3. Endemic species in the region.
4. What are ESAs?
5. What are ESZs?
6. Differences between recommendations of the two committees.
7. What is a World Heritage site?
8. What are "hottest hot-spots" of biological diversity?
9. Important rivers, passes and mountain ranges.
10. Tallest peaks.

Mains Link:

Various committees have been formed to give recommendations on preservation of Western Ghats, but not a lot has happened on that front. Examine.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GBM77Q4KP.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

5. 'United for Biodiversity'

What to study?

For Prelims: Composition and objectives of the coalition.

For Mains: Significance and the need for this group.

Context: The **European Commission (EC)** has launched the **'United for Biodiversity'** coalition.

It was launched on **World Wildlife Day 2020- 3rd March**.

What is it?

1. The coalition is made up of zoos, aquariums, botanical gardens, national parks, and natural history and science museums from around the world.
2. The coalition offers the opportunity for all such institutions to "join forces and boost public awareness about the nature crisis, ahead of the crucial **COP-15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Kunming, China in October 2020**.

A common pledge adopted:

The coalition adopted a **common pledge**, citing the **Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)** Global Assessment finding that one million species were already at risk of extinction, and appeals to visitors to each of their institutions to “raise their voice for nature.”

Need for this coalition:

These organisations are vital not only for cataloguing and preserving the natural world, but are indispensable and invaluable centres for education and mobilisation — particularly for young leaders and decision-makers of the future.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. What is IPBES?
2. Where the COP-15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity will be held?
3. World Wildlife Day 2020- theme, date.

Mains Link:

Write a note on ‘United for Biodiversity’ coalition and its objectives.

Link:

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/wildlife-biodiversity/global-coalition-for-biodiversity-launched-on-world-wildlife-day-69573>.

Sources: the Hindu.

6. National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)

What to study?

For Prelims: NCAP- features and targets.

For Mains: Significance, challenges in its implementation and measures needed to improve its outcomes.

Context: Union Environment Ministry has asked for city-level plans for **the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)** as these problems need to be dealt with at the local level.

What is the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)?

Launched in January 2019, it is the **first ever effort in the country to frame a national framework for air quality management with a time-bound reduction target.**

The programme will **not be notified under the Environment Protection Act or any other Act** to create a firm mandate with a strong legal back up for cities and regions to implement NCAP in a time bound manner for effective reduction.

The plan includes 102 non-attainment cities, across 23 states and Union territories, which were identified by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on the basis of their ambient air quality data between 2011 and 2015.

What are Non-attainment?

Non-attainment cities are those which have been consistently showing poorer air quality than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. These include Delhi, Varanasi, Bhopal, Kolkata, Noida, Muzaffarpur, and Mumbai.

Key features of the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP):

Target: Achieve a national-level target of 20-30% reduction of PM2.5 and PM10 concentration by between 2017 and 2024.

Implementation: Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) will execute this nation-wide programme in consonance with the section 162 (b) of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act.

As part of the programme, **the Centre also plans to scale up the air quality monitoring network across India.** At least 4,000 monitors are needed across the country, instead of the existing 101 real-time air quality (AQ) monitors, according to an analysis.

The plan proposes a **three-tier system**, including real-time physical data collection, data archiving, and an action trigger system in all 102 cities, besides extensive plantation plans, research on clean-technologies, landscaping of major arterial roads, and stringent industrial standards.

It also proposes **state-level plans of e-mobility** in the two-wheeler sector, rapid augmentation of charging infrastructure, stringent implementation of BS-VI norms, boosting public transportation system, and adoption of third-party audits for polluting industries.

Various committees proposed: The national plan has proposed setting up an apex committee under environment minister, a steering committee under secretary (environment) and a monitoring committee under a joint secretary. There would be project monitoring committees at the state-level with scientists and trained personnel.



Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Is NCAP notified under any existing act?
2. Attainment vs Non- attainment cities.
3. Role and functions of CPCB under NCAP.
4. PM 2.5 vs 5.

Mains Link:

There is a need for National Clean Air Programme to create room for tighter action and better fiscal strategy . Examine.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GSR78964B.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

7. What are Bharat Stage Emission Standards (BSES)?

What to study?

For Prelims: BS norms and components.

For Mains: Need for and significance of these norms.

Context: The Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers has said it has approached the Supreme Court seeking directions to ensure that sale and registration of **BS-IV** compliant is allowed till March 31, 2020.

- The move follows circulars from some State governments setting a cut-off date ranging between February 29 and March 25, 2020, for accepting registration applications for BS-IV-compliant vehicles.

About the Bharat Stage Emission Standards (BSES):

- **Introduced** in the year 2000.
- They are set by **the Central Pollution Control Board** under the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change.
- **Objective:** To keep air pollutants emitted by the internal combustion engine of vehicles under control.
- They are based on **European (EURO) emission standards**.
- Bharat Stage (BS) emission norms were first brought into effect in 2000 under the head **“India 2000”**. This was followed by BS2 in 2001 and BS3 in 2005.

- However, the emission norms were made more stringent only with the enforcement of Bharat Stage IV (BS4). Thereafter, **the Government of India skipped the implementation of BS5 in 2016 and decided to introduce Bharat Stage VI (BS6) in 2020 instead.**

How does BS6 emission norms differ from BS4?

The following are the key differences between BS4 and BS6 emission norms:

Diesel Particulate Filter (DPF) and Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) are being introduced with the roll-out of Bharat Stage VI norms, which were not a part of Bharat Stage IV.

Real Driving Emission (RDE) will be introduced in India for the first time with the implementation of Bharat Stage VI emission norms. It will measure a vehicle's emission in real-time conditions against laboratory conditions.

Onboard Diagnostics (OD) has been made mandatory for all vehicles.

Sulphur and Nitrogen Oxide content: Sulphur traces in BS6 fuel is five times lower (10 ppm) as compared to sulphur traces in BS4 fuel (50 ppm). Further, nitrogen oxide level for BS6-grade diesel engines and petrol engines will be brought down by 70% and 25%, respectively.

BS VI can bring **PM in diesel cars down by 80 per cent**. The new norms will bring down **nitrogen** oxides from diesel cars by 70 per cent and in petrol cars by 25 per cent.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. BS 1 vs 2 vs 3 vs 4 vs 6- key differences.
2. BS vs Euro norms.
3. Pollutants covered under these norms.
4. Sulphur vs NOx vs CO- which has the maximum impact on environment?
5. PM 2.5 vs 10.

Mains Link:

Examine the components of BS stage 6 norms and discuss implications of shifting from BS 4 to BS 6 stage on innovation in the automotive sector.

Sources: pib.

8. Uranium Contamination in Ground Water

What to study?

For Prelims: Uranium and contamination, affected states.

For Mains: Effects, concerns and ways to prevent.

Context: A report on **Uranium Contamination in ground water in Parliament.**

What is the acceptable limit?

The **Indian Standard IS 10500: 2012 for Drinking Water specification** has specified the maximum acceptable limits for radioactive residues as alpha and beta emitters, values in excess of which render the water not suitable.

These requirements take into account **all radioactive elements including uranium. No individual radioactive elements have been specifically identified.**

As per **Bureau of Indian Standard (BIS), maximum permissible limit of Uranium is 0.03 mg/l (as per WHO provisional guidelines)** in all drinking water standards after following due process.

Affected states:

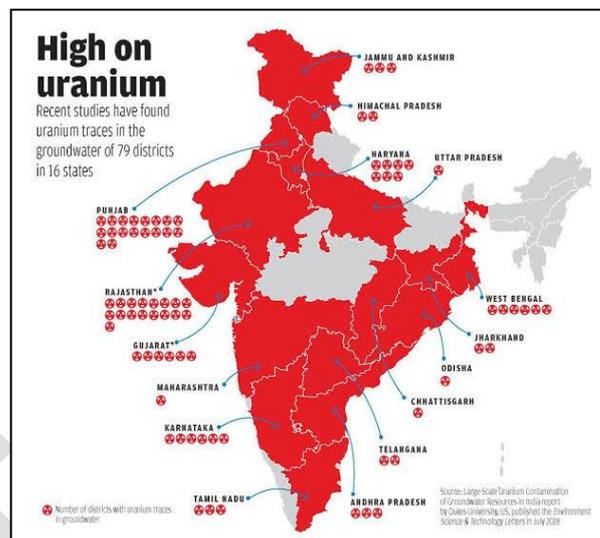
A report brought out by Duke University, USA in association with **Central Ground Water Board and State Ground Water departments** states that Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Jammu & Kashmir have localised occurrence of Uranium concentration.

Main factors responsible for uranium contamination:

1. Amount of uranium contained in an aquifer's rocks.
2. Water-rock interactions that cause the uranium to be extracted from those rocks.
3. Oxidation conditions that enhance the extracted uranium's solubility in water.
4. The interaction of the extracted uranium with other chemicals in the groundwater, such as bicarbonate, which can further enhance its solubility.
5. Human factors such as groundwater-table decline and nitrate pollution may be exacerbating the problem.

What needs to be done?

1. Revision of the current water quality monitoring program in India.
2. Evaluation of human health risks in areas of high uranium prevalence.
3. Development of adequate remediation technologies.
4. Implementation of preventive management practices to address this problem.
5. Including a uranium standard in the Bureau of Indian Standards' Drinking Water Specification based on uranium's kidney-harming effects.
6. Establishing monitoring systems to identify at-risk areas, and exploring new ways to prevent or treat uranium contamination.



What is Uranium?

1. Uranium is weakly radioactive and remains so because of its long physical half-life (4.468 billion years for uranium-238).
2. The biological half-life (the average time it takes for the human body to eliminate half the amount in the body) for uranium is about 15 days.
3. It is a naturally occurring element found in low levels within all rock, soil, and water.
4. This is **the highest-numbered element to be found naturally in significant quantities on earth.**
5. It is considered to be more plentiful than antimony, beryllium, cadmium, gold, mercury, silver, or tungsten.
6. It is about as abundant as tin, arsenic or molybdenum.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Radioactive vs non radioactive elements.
2. What is half life of an element? How is it measured?
3. Abundance of various elements in earth's crust.
4. How uranium contaminates ground water?
5. Uranium limits- BIS vs WHO.

Mains Link:

A recent report has highlighted uranium contamination in India's groundwater. Discuss the causes, its effects and ways to address the issue?

Sources: pib.

9. What is Earth Hour?

What to study?

For Prelims: Earth hour, Earth day and give up to give back.

For Mains: Climate change and its effects.

Context: Every year, **Earth Hour is observed on the last Saturday of March at 8:30 pm.** And while previously it brought the public out onto the roads to mark the hour, this year the famous environmental initiative went digital as many countries are in lockdown.

What is Earth Hour?

Dating back to 2007, Earth Hour is an annual event **organized by the World Wildlife Fund** that promotes conservation and sustainable energy. During this time, civilians are encouraged to switch off their lights for one hour to help reduce the effect of global warming and raise awareness for climate change and wildlife conservation.

Background:

It was famously started as a lights-off event in Sydney, Australia in 2007. Since then it has grown to engage more than 7000 cities and towns worldwide. Today, Earth Hour engages a massive mainstream community on a broad range of environmental issues. The one-hour event continues to remain the key driver of the now larger movement.

What's the difference between Earth Hour and Earth Day?

Whereas Earth Hour stands as a climate change initiative where people reduce their electricity usage, **Earth Day (April 22)** celebrates our natural environment by inspiring people to plant trees, recycle regularly and keep the planet tidy.

Why do we need earth hour?

- Global warming and climate change have dominated the scientific discourse in the past more than one decade. With ever rising population of the world, the climate change has put the humankind at a great risk along with other species.
- Global warming, rising levels of pollution due to ever increasing industrialisation, declining forest cover and rising sea levels are some of the dangers that drastically affect the workings of life on the earth.
- Though the largest polluters are big industries, the WWF tries to make the masses more and more aware about the impending dangers of adverse climate so that they could put pressure on the respective governments to frame environment-friendly policies and laws.
- With Earth Hour, the WWF aims to engage people across the globe to adopt more sustainable lifestyle. Turning off lights for an hour is just an annual reminder that if the world does not mend its ways, it will be heading to a dark age, literally.

Sources: AIR.

Topics: Disaster and management.

1. State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)

What to study?

For Prelims: Features of SDRF, notified disaster.

For Mains: Need for and significance of the fund.

Context: Ministry of Home Affairs decided to treat COVID-19 as a **notified disaster** for the purpose of providing assistance under **the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF).**

What is a disaster?

- According to **the Disaster Management Act**, a disaster is defined as the following, “a catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or man made causes, or by accident or negligence which results in substantial loss of life or human suffering or damage to, and destruction of, property, or damage to, or degradation of, environment, and is of such a nature or magnitude as to be beyond the coping capacity of the community of the affected area”.
- **Ministry of Home Affairs** has defined a disaster as an “extreme disruption of the functioning of a society that causes widespread human, material, or environmental losses that exceed the ability of the affected society to cope with its own resources.”

- **31 disaster categories are organised into five major sub-groups**, which are: water and climate related disasters, geological related disasters, chemical, industrial and nuclear related disasters and biological related disasters, which includes biological disasters and epidemics.

What is the State Disaster Response Fund?

Constituted under **the Disaster Management Act, 2005 by respective states** and it is the primary fund available with state governments for responses to **notified disasters**.

Composition: The Central government contributes 75 per cent towards the SDRF allocation for general category states and UTs, and over 90 per cent for special category states/UTs, which includes northeastern states, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand).

For SDRF, the Centre releases funds in two equal installments as per the **recommendation of the Finance Commission**.

Support from the National Disaster Response Fund: it supplements the SDRF of a state, in case of a disaster of severe nature, provided adequate funds are not available in the SDRF.

The disasters covered under the SDRF include cyclones, droughts, tsunamis, hailstorms, landslides, avalanches and pest attacks among others.

Deciding authority: The state executive committee headed by the Chief Secretary is authorized to decide on all matters relating to the financing of the relief expenditure from the SDRF.

Features of SDRF:

1. SDRF is located in the **'Public Account' under 'Reserve Fund'**. (But direct expenditures are not made from Public Account.)
2. **State Government has to pay interest on a half yearly basis** to the funds in SDRF, at the rate applicable to overdrafts.
3. The **aggregate size of the SDRF for each state, for each year, is as per the recommendations of the Finance Commission**.
4. The share of Govt to the SDRF is treated as a **'grant in aid'**.
5. The **financing of relief measures out of SDRF are decided by the State Executive Committee (SEC) constituted under Section 20 of the DM Act**. SEC is responsible for the overall administration of the SDRF. However, the administrative expenses of SEC are borne by the State Government from its normal budgetary provisions and not from the SDRF or NDRF.
6. **The norms regarding the amount to be incurred on each approved item of expenditure (type of disaster) are fixed by the Ministry of Home Affairs with the concurrence of Ministry of Finance**. Any excess expenditure has to be borne out of the budget of the state government.
7. **Ministry of Home Affairs is the nodal ministry for overseeing** the operation of the SDRF and monitors compliance with prescribed processes.
8. **Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) audit the SDRF every year**.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. What is a Public Account?
2. Powers of CAG to audit public accounts of centre vs states.
3. Loans vs Grant-in aid.
4. NDRF vs SDRF.
5. Offices under DM Act.
6. Notified disasters vs non-notified.

Mains Link:

Discuss the establishment and components of SDRF.

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-what-is-a-notified-disaster-and-how-is-the-sdrf-used-6315643/>.

Sources: the Hindu.

2. National Disaster Response Force

What to study?

For Prelims: NDRF- key facts.

For Mains: Significance and the role of NDRF in disaster management in the country.

Context: The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has trained more than 15,000 staff deployed at the air and land ports across the country on the protocols to be followed in view of the COVID-19 outbreak.

About NDRF:

The Disaster Management Act has made the statutory provisions for constitution of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) for the purpose of specialized response to natural and man-made disasters.

Why was it needed?

Two national calamities in quick succession in the form of Orissa Super Cyclone (1999) and Gujarat Earthquake (2001) brought about the realization of the need of having a specialist response mechanism at National Level to effectively respond to disasters. This realization led to the enactment of **the DM Act on 26 Dec 2005.**

ROLE AND MANDATE OF NDRF:

1. Specialized response during disasters.
2. Proactive deployment during impending disaster situations.
3. Acquire and continually upgrade its own training and skills.
4. Liaison, Reconnaissance, Rehearsals and Mock Drills.
5. Impart basic and operational level training to State Response Forces (Police, Civil Defence and Home Guards).
6. Community Capacity Building Programme.
7. Organize Public Awareness Campaigns.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. NDRF vs SDRF.
2. Who heads NRDF?
3. Bodies established under DM Act.

Mains Link:

Discuss the critical role played by National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) in providing a specialist response to a threatening disaster situation or disaster in the country.

Sources: pib.

3. Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF)

What to study?

For Prelims: Funding mechanism, contributions, administration and proceeds.

For Mains: Need for and significance of PMNRF.

Context: The Vice President of India and the Chairman Rajya Sabha, Shri M Venkaiah Naidu has contributed a sum equivalent to a month's salary to **the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF)** to strengthen the government's efforts in combating COVID-19 outbreak in the country.

What is PMNRF? When was it setup?

In pursuance of an appeal by the then Prime Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru in January, 1948, **the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF)** was established with public contributions to assist displaced persons from Pakistan.

- The resources of the PMNRF are now utilized primarily to render immediate relief to families of those killed in natural calamities like floods, cyclones and earthquakes, etc. and to the victims of the major accidents and riots.

- Assistance from PMNRF is also rendered, to partially defray the expenses for medical treatment like heart surgeries, kidney transplantation, cancer treatment, etc.

Key features:

1. Disbursements are made with the approval of the Prime Minister.
2. PMNRF has **not been constituted by the Parliament**.
3. The fund is **recognized as a Trust under the Income Tax Act** and the same is managed by Prime Minister or multiple delegates for national causes.
4. PMNRF is **exempt under Income Tax Act**.
5. **Prime Minister is the Chairman of PMNRF** and is assisted by Officers/ Staff on honorary basis.
6. These **contributions also qualify as CSR (corporate social responsibility) spend** for companies, making it more attractive in terms of tax exemptions.

How are the surplus funds of PMNRF deployed?

In general, funds are either disbursed immediately or they are committed for specific purposes. The balance of the funds invested in various forms with scheduled commercial banks and other agencies to ensure long term sustainability.

Type of contributions accepted in PMNRF:

1. PMNRF accepts only voluntary donations by individuals and institutions.
2. Contributions flowing out of budgetary sources of Government or from the balance sheets of the public sector undertakings are not accepted.
3. At the time of natural calamity of devastating scale, Prime Minister, makes an appeal for donation to the fund.

Sources: pib.

Topics: Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention

1. Amendments to the Information Technology (IT) Act

What to study?

For Prelims: Key features of the IT Act, amendments proposed.

For Mains: Significance and the need for amendments, concerns associated.

Context: The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology is in the process of amending the **Information Technology (Intermediaries Guidelines) Rules, 2011**, to make the social media platforms more responsive and accountable. The rules are being finalised.

The government had **first released the draft for proposed amendments to the IT Act in December 2018**, inviting public comments.

Background:

In December 2018, to crack down on spread of fake news and rumours circulated on online platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook and other online platforms, the central government has proposed stringent changes under **the draft of Section 79 of the Information Technology (IT)** that govern online content.

Implications:

The proposed amendments in the draft of the Information Technology [Intermediaries Guidelines (Amendment) Rules] 2018, Rule 3(9) is bound to **force social media platforms like Whatsapp, Facebook and Twitter to remain vigilant and keep users on their toes before posting or sharing anything that is deemed as "unlawful information or content"**.

The changes proposed by the central government is **aimed at curbing fake news or rumours being spread on social media and check mob violence ahead**.

What the new rules propose?

1. The changes will require online platforms to **break end-to-end encryption in order to ascertain the origin of messages.**
2. The social media platforms to **“deploy technology based automated tools or appropriate mechanisms,** with appropriate controls, for proactively identifying or removing or disabling access to unlawful information or content”.
3. As per the amendment, the social media platforms will need to **comply with the central government “within 72 hours” of a query.**
4. There should be a **‘Nodal person of Contact for 24X7 coordination** with law enforcement agencies and officers to ensure compliance.
5. The social media platforms will be keeping a **vigil on “unlawful activity” for a period of “180 days”.**

What necessitated this?

With concerns over “rising incidents of violence and lynching in the country due to misuse of social media platforms”, there is now need for online platforms to shoulder the “responsibility, accountability and larger commitment to ensure that its platform is not misused on a large scale to spread incorrect facts projected as news and designed to instigate people to commit crime”.

Criticisms:

The proposed changes have once again given rise to a debate on whether the government is intruding into the privacy of individuals, evoking sharp response from opposition parties. Similar apprehensions were raised with **the Section 66A of the IT Act** that enabled authorities to arrest users for posting content which was termed as offensive. However, the Supreme Court on March 24, 2015, struck down the law.

Need for stringent measures:

India has the second highest number of internet users in the world after China, an estimated 462.12 million. Among them, 258.27 million were likely to be social network users in the country in 2019.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:

1. Section 79 vs Section 66A of the IT Act.
2. UNCITRAL Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration.
3. Digital signatures.

Mains Link:

India is planning to frame rules to regulate social media citing unimaginable disruption to democracy and the growing menace of fake news. In this context discuss what are the concerns raised by Social Media intermediaries? And suggest way forward.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/ShareArticle?OrgId=GR2784CE4.1&imageview=0>.

Sources: the Hindu.

Topics: Security challenges and their management in border areas; linkages of organized crime with terrorism.

1. Inner Line Permit (ILP)

What to study?

For Prelims: What is ILP? Where it is in existence?

For Mains: Need for and significance of ILP, demand for ILP in other states, feasibility.

Context: Tribal organisations in Meghalaya have been demanding **the ILP system** for restricting the entry of outsiders into the State. These demands have turned into violent protests across the state in the past few days.

What is an ILP?

It is a document required by **non-natives** to visit or stay in a state that is protected under the ILP system.

- At present, four Northeastern states are covered, namely, **Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland.**
- **Both the duration of stay and the areas allowed to be accessed** for any non native are determined by the ILP.
- The ILP is **issued by the concerned state government** and can be availed both by applying online or in person.

HISTORY:

The Inner Line Permit is an extension of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act 1873. The Britishers framed regulations restricting entry in certain designated areas. This was done to protect the Crown's interest in certain states by preventing "British subjects" (Indians) from trading within these regions.

In 1950, **the term 'British subjects' was replaced with 'Citizens of India'**. Today, all non natives require the permit. This was done to protect the indigenous tribal communities of these states from exploitation.

What about foreigners?

An ILP is **only valid for domestic tourists.** For foreign tourists in:

Manipur: No permit is required. But, have to register themselves.

Mizoram: No permit is required. But, need to register.

Nagaland: No permit is required. However, they need to register.

Arunachal Pradesh: Tourists need a Protected Area Permit (PAP) or Restricted Area Permit (RAP) from the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.



Need for ILP:

- Preservation of indigenous culture and tradition.
- Prevents illegal migrants and encroachment by outsiders.

Should Meghalaya be brought under ILP?

The ILP is considered the only mechanism to contain influx in the state. Influx is perceived as dangerous because it could upset the fragile demographic balance of the tribals of Meghalaya.

Influx definitely is a matter of concern but **it requires better solutions than the ILP**, not instant solutions demanded by pressure groups. Indeed, how can such a far-reaching policy be decided by one or two groups?

Insta- Link:

Prelims link: Since ILP is frequently in News, concentrate on:

1. Map based questions involving North- Eastern states.
2. NE state and their international neighbours.

Mains link:

Analyse the issue of imposition of ILP system in India's northeastern states and the dilemma this system has posed to the Indian government.

Link: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/meghalaya-violence-toll-reaches-three-situation-remains-tense/article30956582.ece>.

Sources: the Hindu.

Statements in Hindu which can be used in Mains

1. On COVID- 19:

The world has entered uncharted territory in its battle against the deadly coronavirus, the UN health agency warned, as new infections dropped dramatically in China but surged elsewhere.

FACTS FOR PRELIMS

1. Scotland's proposed law to make sanitary products free for all:

The Scottish Parliament recently passed the **Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill** that aims to make **sanitary products free for women of all age groups**.

When passed, **Scotland may become the first country in the world to end 'period poverty'**.

What is 'period poverty'?

'Period poverty Scotland' website mentions some circumstances that make menstruation a "difficult experience" for women. These include homelessness, coercive, controlling and violent relationships and health conditions such as endometriosis. "Some trans people may also experience difficulties in accessing sanitary products," it says.

2. WHO raises global risk of coronavirus to 'very high', what does this mean?

WHO characterises risk of spread and impact of a disease on a scale that ranges from "low risk" to "very high" level of risk.

It defines the different characterisations of risk as follows:

Low Risk: "Managed according to standard response protocols, routine control programmes and regulation (e.g. monitoring through routine surveillance systems)".

Moderate Risk: "Roles and responsibility for the response must be specified. Specific monitoring or control measures required (e.g. enhanced surveillance, additional vaccination campaigns)".

High Risk: "Senior management attention needed: there may be a need to establish command and control structures; a range of additional control measures will be required some of which may have significant consequences".

Very High Risk: "Immediate response required even if the event is reported out of normal working hours. Immediate senior management attention needed (e.g. the command and control structure should be established within hours); the implementation of control measures with serious consequences is highly likely".

3. Ekam Fest:

Exhibition-cum-Fair "EKAM Fest" is being organised by **National Handicapped Finance Development Corporation (NHFDC)** under M/o Social Justice & Empowerment.

Aim: To promote craftsmanship & products of divyang (physically-challenged) artisans and entrepreneurs.

4. Eurasian Otter:

IUCN Red List: Near Threatened

Protection: **CITES: Appendix I**, Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: **Schedule II**.

Habitat: Found throughout Europe and in Asia. In India, the species is distributed in the Himalayan foothills, southern Western Ghats and the central Indian landscape.

Why in News? Spotted in Chilika lake.



5. Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT):

Context: PIB fact.

It is an attached office of the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, formed in 1991.

It is involved in the regulation and promotion of foreign trade through regulation.

It has been assigned the role of a "facilitator".

The DGFT also issues **scrips/authorization to exporters and monitors their corresponding obligations through its network of regional offices**.

6. National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT):

National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) was **constituted under Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013** for hearing appeals against the orders of **National Company Law Tribunal(s) (NCLT)**, with effect from 1st June, 2016.

It is also the appellate tribunal for hearing appeals against orders passed by NCLT(s) under Section 61 of **the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC), the Competition Commission of India (CCI)**.

Composition:

Chief Justice of India or his nominee- **Chairperson**.

- A senior judge of the Supreme Court or a Chief Justice of High Court.
- Secretary in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.
- Secretary in the Ministry of Law and Justice.
- Secretary in the Department of Financial Services.

Appeal:

NCLAT decisions can be challenged in the Supreme Court on a point of law.

7. Deccan Queen express:

Context: India's Deccan Queen Express will be upgraded to German design **Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB) coaches**. With the up gradation to LHB coaches, the train will have better safety features and improved travelling experience - better suspension system and better riding comfort.

Key facts:

1. Indian Railways' Deccan Queen, which has been running between Mumbai and Pune since 1930, is the country's first superfast train.
2. Deccan Queen is the first long-distance electric-hauled train, first vestibuled train, first train to have a 'ladies only' car and the first train to feature a dining car.
3. It is operated by **the Central Railway Zone of the Indian Railways**.

8. PIB facts- Schemes/policies for minorities in various States:

1. **Maulana Azad National Fellowship Scheme** - Provide fellowships in the form of financial assistance.
2. **Naya Savera** - Free Coaching and Allied Scheme - The Scheme aims to provide free coaching to students/candidates belonging to minority communities for qualifying in entrance examinations of technical/ professional courses and Competitive examinations.
3. **Padho Pardesh** - Scheme of interest subsidy to students of minority communities on educational loans for overseas higher studies.
4. **Nai Udaan** - Support for students clearing Prelims conducted by Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), State Public Service Commission (PSC) Staff Selection Commission (SSC) etc.
5. **Nai Roshni** - Leadership development of women belonging to minority communities.
6. **Seekho Aur Kamao** - Skill development scheme for youth of 14 - 35 years age group and aiming at improving the employability of existing workers, school dropouts etc.
7. **Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJKV)** restructured in May 2018 earlier known as MsDP – Implemented for the benefit of the people from all sections of the society in identified Minority Concentration Areas for creation of assets in education, skill and health sectors.
8. **Jiyo Parsi** - Scheme for containing population decline of Parsis in India.
9. **USTTAD (Upgrading the Skills and Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development)** launched in May 2015.
10. **Nai Manzil** - A scheme for formal school education & skilling of school dropouts launched in Aug. 2015.
11. **Hamari Dharohar**- A scheme to preserve rich heritage of minority communities of India under the overall concept of Indian culture implemented since 2014-15.

9. Pragyan Conclave 2020:

It is a two-day **Indian Army International Seminar**, organised recently by **Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS)** at New Delhi.

The seminar provided a platform for deliberations on emerging ideas, perspectives and narratives that define the 'New Age Warfare' which is increasingly witnessing a change in its character as well as battlespace with the usage of new 'means' to pursue the 'ends'.

10. What is Swap Ratio?

Swap ratio is the ratio at which an acquiring company will offer its own shares in exchange for the target company's shares during a merger or acquisition.

How is it calculated? To calculate the swap ratio, companies analyze financial ratios such as book value, earnings per share, profits after tax, and dividends paid, as well as other factors, such as the reasons for the merger or acquisition. The current market prices of the target and acquiring company's stock are compared along with their respective financial situations. A ratio is then configured which states the rate at which the target company's shareholders will receive acquiring company shares of stock for every one share of target company stock they currently hold.

Context: Eight state-owned banks have announced swap ratios for the proposed mergers.

11. What is 'mac-binding', the condition specified for Internet use in J&K?

Context: According to a recent order issued by the government, Internet has been restored in Jammu and Kashmir, but the connectivity will be made available "with mac-binding".

What is Mac-binding?

Every device has a **Media Access Control (MAC)** address, a hardware identification number that is unique to it. While accessing the Internet, every device is assigned an IP address.

- Mac-binding essentially means **binding together the MAC and IP addresses**, so that all requests from that IP address are served only by the computer having that particular MAC address.
- In effect, it means that if the IP address or the MAC address changes, the device can no longer access the Internet. Also, monitoring authorities can trace the specific system from which a particular online activity was carried out.

12. India-U.S. Military Cooperation Group (MCG):

Context: The India-U.S. **Military Cooperation Group (MCG)** dialogue, scheduled for later this month, has been cancelled in view of the COVID-9 outbreak.

What is MCG?

The MCG is a forum to review the progress of defence cooperation between **India's Integrated Defence Staff** and the **the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM)** at the strategic and operational levels.

The **Integrated Defence Staff** was responsible for coordination among the armed forces before the appointment of the Chief of Defence Staff.

13. Red Panda:

IUCN status- endangered.

State animal of Sikkim.

It is the only living member of **the genus Ailurus**.

Habitats in India: Sikkim, Meghalaya, West Bengal and Arunachal Pradesh. About 5,000-6,000 red pandas are estimated to be present in these four Indian states. This is the second-largest population after China (6,000-7,000). Nepal accounts for 580 animals, while Bhutan and Myanmar have no estimate of the animal's population.

Protection: CITES — Appendix I.

Protected areas:

1. Kanchendzonga National Park (NP) — Sikkim
2. Neora Valley NP – West Bengal
3. Namdapha National Park – Arunachal Pradesh
4. Singalila National Park – West Bengal

Why in News?

A new study recently conducted by **wildlife trade monitoring network TRAFFIC** found that Red Pandas are falling to traps laid for other animals, such as the musk deer and wild pigs.

14. Sahyadri Megha:

- It is a new variety of paddy resistant to blast disease and rich in nutrients.
- It was developed by **the University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences (UAHS)**, Shivamogga, as part of its initiative to prevent decline in the area under paddy cultivation.

15. 'Kishori shakti karyakram':

- It is a campaign started by 14 teenage girls from Odisha's Berhampur **to empower young girls living in slums of the city.**
- The campaign includes making adolescents and the community aware about menstrual hygiene, right age for marriage, motivating school and college drop-outs to restart studies, promoting gender equality, skill development and formation of adolescent groups.
- As part of the campaign, **'teen clubs'** are being established in the targeted slums. These clubs will have girls and boys as members.
- The activists will be coordinating with **Asha volunteers and Anganwadi workers.**

16. Women Transforming India Awards:

Context: NITI Aayog organizes the Fourth Edition of **the Women Transforming India Awards.**

WTI Awards are **NITI Aayog's initiative to highlight the commendable and ground-breaking endeavours of India's women leaders and changemakers.**

Since 2018, the Awards have been hosted under the aegis of **NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform** with a special focus on entrepreneurship.

What is Women Entrepreneurship Platform?

Launched in 8th March 2018, it is the first of its kind facilitation platform which is **mandated to work in collaboration with public as well as private sector organizations and bring them on a single platform** by listing their women focused entrepreneurship schemes, initiatives and programmes on WEP website.

It also enables sharing of best practices amongst women entrepreneurs and partner organizations and promote evidence based policy making.

17. WISTEMM program- pib:

Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (WISTEMM)"program is implemented by **the Department of Science and Technology(DST).**

Aim: To provide opportunities to Indian Women Scientists, Engineers & Technologists to undertake international collaborative research in premier institutions in U.S.A, to enhance their research capacities and capabilities.

The programme is run for two categories of women scientists: Women Overseas Student Internship (Module I) for women students pursuing PhD, and Women Overseas Fellowship (Module II) for women with PhD degree and holding regular position at any recognized institution/laboratory in India.

Eligibility: The fellowship is for bright Indian women Citizen within the age bracket of 21 to 45 years.

18. 'Attukal Pongala' fest:

'Attukal Pongala' is one of **the largest religious congregations of women.**

Preparing 'pongala' (a sweet offering) is considered an auspicious all-women ritual as part of the annual festival of the **Attukal Bhagavathy Temple, which is popularly known as the "Women's Sabarimala".**

As per local legend, **the Pongala festival commemorates the hospitality accorded by women in the locality to Kannagi**, the heroine of the Tamil epic **Silappadhikaram** while she was on her way to Kodungallur in Kerala, after destroying Madurai city to avenge the injustice to her husband Kovalan.

Attukal Temple is called the "Women's Sabarimala" as only women perform rituals, just as predominantly men undertake the pilgrimage to the shrine of Lord Ayyappa.

19. Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB):

- It is a **statutory organisation**.
- Constituted in September, 1974 under **the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**.
- It was also entrusted with the powers and functions under **the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981**.
- It is the apex organisation in country in the field of pollution control, as a **technical wing of MoEF**.
- The board is led by its **Chairperson, who is generally a career civil servant**.

Why in News?

CPCB has said that there are 128 sites in India contaminated by toxic and hazardous substances. **West Bengal led the list with 27 sites followed by Odisha at 23.**

20. What is Shared economy?

The **sharing economy, also known as collaborative consumption or peer-to-peer-based sharing**, is a concept that highlights the ability of individuals to rent or borrow goods rather than buy and own them.

The 'shared economy' includes segments such as co-working (Awfis, WeWork India), co-living (Stanza Living, OYO Life, Oxford Caps), shared mobility (Uber, Ola, Shuttl) and furniture rental (Furlenco, Rentomojo.)

Why in News?

The shared economy in India is estimated to be an about \$2 billion industry by the end of the current year, according to a recent report by Maple Capital Advisors.

21. India's coal imports rise:

1. India's **thermal coal** imports rose 12.6 percent to nearly 200 million tonnes in 2019. This is **the second straight year of growth in shipments of the fuel**.
2. Imports of **coking coal** - used mainly in the manufacturing of steel - **fell marginally, following two straight years of increase**.

Key facts:

Coal is among the top five commodities imported by India, the world's largest consumer, importer and producer of the fuel.

(Note: The topic is highly relevant for Prelims. Hence, it is advised to study in depth about Coal, various types, where they are found in India and other related facts.)

22. India and Bangladesh border:

Bangladesh and India share a **4,156-kilometre-long international border, the fifth-longest land border in the world**.

This includes 262 km in Assam, 856 km in Tripura, 180 km in Mizoram, 443 km in Meghalaya, and 2,217 km in West Bengal.

Why in News?

According to the recent government data, there has been no unusual increase in apprehension of illegal infiltrators along the Bangladesh border in 2019 compared to the trend observed in the past six years.



23. Gaur back in Valmiki Reserve:

Context: Gaur (*Bos Gaurus*) have not only returned to **Bihar's Valmiki Tiger Reserve (VTR)**, but are also breeding there due to an increase in grassland cover. They have been attracted to VTR due to the increase in grassland cover.

Key facts:

1. Gaur is **the largest extant bovine in the world**.

2. Gaur are **grassland specialists** and their main food is grass.
3. Native to south and southeast Asia.
4. The species is listed as **'vulnerable' on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species since 1986.**

About VTR:

VTR was set up in the early 1990s. It is spread over 899 square kilometres in Bihar's West Champaran district, bordering Nepal's Chitwan National Park to its north and Uttar Pradesh to its west.

24. YUva Vigyani KAryakram:

Launched by **Indian Space Research Organisation.**

It is a **special programme for School Children, in tune with the Government's vision "Jai Vigyan, Jai Anusandhan"**.

Aim: The Program is primarily aimed at imparting basic knowledge on Space Technology, Space Science and Space Applications to the younger ones with the intent of arousing their interest in the emerging areas of Space activities.

Participants: It is proposed to select 3 students each from each State/ Union Territory to participate in this programme covering CBSE, ICSE and State syllabus.

Eligibility: Those who have just completed 9th standard will be eligible for the online registration. The selection is based on the 8th Standard academic performance and extracurricular activities. Students belonging to the rural area have been given special weightage in the selection criteria. In case there is tie between the selected candidates, the younger candidates will be given priority.

Why in News?

ISRO has shortlisted 358 high school students from across the country to be part of this programme.

25. Forcible dispossession of a person's property is a human rights violation:

The Supreme Court has reiterated that **forcible dispossession of a person of his private property without due process of law is a violation of human rights.**

In a recent judgment, the court stressed that **right to property is both a human right and a constitutional right — the latter under Article 300A of the Constitution.**

26. Parliament passes amendment allowing Putin to stay in power:

- Constitutional changes allowing Vladimir Putin to run for President again in 2024 were passed recently in Russia's lower house of Parliament.
- New amendments make way for Putin to potentially stay in power until 2036.
- Mr. Putin is currently required by the Constitution to step down in 2024 when his second sequential and fourth presidential term ends. But the amendment would formally reset **his presidential term tally to zero.**

The **"reset to zero" proposal** would mean "removing the restriction for any person, any citizen, including the current president, and allowing them to take part in elections in the future, naturally in open and competitive elections".

27. CRIME MULTI AGENCY CENTRE (Cri-MAC):

Context: Union Home Minister launched **Crime Multi Agency Centre (Cri-MAC).**

- Cri-MAC aims to share information between various police forces on heinous crimes.
- It is meant to share information on heinous crimes and other issues related to inter-state coordination.

28. Only one white giraffe left in the world:

Context: Poachers have killed two extremely rare white giraffes in northeast Kenya, leaving just one such animal in the world.

Key facts:

- The **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** had classified **giraffes as vulnerable** in the Red List in December 2016.
- They are listed under **Appendix II of the CITES**.

Why is the white colour?

The white appearance of the giraffe is due to **leucism**, a genetic condition that causes skin cells to have no pigmentation.

Leucism is different from **albinism** where no melanin is produced at all.

29. India becomes first country to suspend visas of all foreign nationals:

- The Indian government has suspended visas for foreign nationals from all across the globe owing to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak. The decision will come into effect from March 13, 2020.
- India is the first among more than 120 countries affected by this outbreak to take such a drastic step.
- The visa-free travel facility granted to Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) card holders has also been kept in abeyance till April 15, 2020.

30. Oculudentavis khaungraae:

- It is the smallest dinosaur discovered yet.
- The scientists found the fossilised skull of a dinosaur — the size of a modern hummingbird — trapped in a 99-million-year-old amber in northern Myanmar.
- The fossil represented the smallest dinosaur from the Mesozoic era — about 250 million to 65 million years ago.



31. 'Restaurant' for vultures in HP wild life sanctuary:

- It is a **feeding station for vultures in the Pong Dam Lake Wild Life sanctuary** in Kangra district of **Himachal Pradesh**.
- It has been set up as a part of state wildlife wing's ongoing project to conserve the big scavenging bird in natural habitat, whose numbers showed a critical decline in the past decades in Indian sub-continent.
- Measuring 100 meters x 100 meters with seven feet high fencing at an open space in Suknara near Nagrota Surian in Pong wetland, **the 'Vulture Restaurant' provides deskinning carcasses to vultures**.
- There are seven species of vultures in the new world and 16 species in the old world that includes Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, etc. Out of 16 in the old world, eight species (including Himalayan Griffon, Eurasian Griffon) have been reported in Kangra district also.

32. What is Dearness Allowance?

- Dearness allowance is a **cost of living adjustment allowance** paid to government employees, public sector employees and pensioners and is calculated as a percentage of basic salary to mitigate the impact of inflation.
- It can be basically understood as a **component of salary which is some fixed percentage of the basic salary, aimed at hedging the impact of inflation**.

33. Bull and Bear Markets:

The terms bull and bear market are used to describe how stock markets are doing in general—that is, whether they are appreciating or depreciating in value.

A bull market is a market that is on the rise and is economically sound, while **a bear market** is a market that is receding, where most stocks are declining in value.

34. What are blue chip stocks?

- Blue chip stocks are shares of very large and well-recognised companies with a long history of sound financial performance.
- These stocks are known to have capabilities to endure tough market conditions and give high returns in good market conditions.
- Blue chip stocks generally cost high, as they have good reputation and are often market leaders in their respective industries.

35. Coronavirus strain isolated in India:

India is only the fifth country in the world besides Japan, Thailand, U.S. and China to have successfully isolated the COVID-19 virus strain, helping it take the first step towards expediting the development of drugs, vaccines and rapid diagnostic kits in the country.

36. What is sepsis, a common cause of death from coronavirus?

- Sepsis is a life-threatening organ dysfunction caused by the body's immune system overreacting in response to an infection. This overactive, toxic response can lead to tissue damage, multiple organ failure and death.
- Viruses, bacteria, fungi or parasites — sepsis can be triggered by a variety of pathogens.
- The causes of sepsis are usually pneumonia, wound infections, urinary tract infections or infections in the abdominal cavity.
- Ebola and yellow fever viruses, dengue, swine flu or bird flu viruses can also cause sepsis.

37. What is Pi Day?

MARCH 14 is Pi Day, a celebration of the beloved constant pi.

It is dedicated to pi, whose value up to five decimal places is 3.14159.

- The **idea originated in the United States**, where the convention is to write dates in a format that expresses **March 14 as 3/14**. **These three digits match the value of pi up to two decimal places, at 3.14.**
- Coincidentally, **March 14 is also Albert Einstein's birthday.**
- By definition, **pi is the ratio of the circumference of a circle — any circle — to its diameter. The ratio is always constant.**
- Pi is also **the area of a circle divided by the square of its radius — again a constant ratio for any circle.**

38. What is circuit breaker in stock market?

In June 2001, the **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) implemented index-based market-wide circuit breakers.**

- Circuit breakers are triggered to prevent markets from crashing, which happens when market participants start to panic induced by fears that their stocks are overvalued and decide to sell their stocks.
This index-based market-wide circuit breaker system **applies at three stages of the index movement, at 10, 15 and 20 per cent.**
- **Implications:** When triggered, these circuit breakers bring about a coordinated trading halt in all equity and equity derivative markets nationwide.

39. COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund:

The **United Nations Foundation and the Swiss Philanthropy Foundation** have created the solidarity fund to **support WHO and partners** in a massive effort to help countries prevent, detect, and manage the novel coronavirus – particularly those where the needs are the greatest.

40. What is Google subsidiary Verily?

Verily is a **subsidiary of Google's parent company Alphabet "focused on life sciences and healthcare".**

- Launched in 2015, Verily claims its mission is to “**make the world’s health data useful so that people enjoy healthier lives**”.
- So it “**develops tools and devices to collect, organise and activate health data**”, and “**creates interventions to prevent and manage disease**”.

Why in News?

It is helping the US government develop a website “to determine whether a test is warranted and to facilitate testing at a nearby convenient location”.

The site will be part of **Verily’s Project Baseline**. Project Baseline was launched by Verily in 2017 “**with the goal of bridging the gap between research and care**”.

41. Herd immunity:

Herd immunity is when a large number of people are vaccinated against a disease, lowering the chances of others being infected by it. **When a sufficient percentage of a population is vaccinated, it slows the spread of disease. It is also referred to as community immunity or herd protection.**

Key characteristics:

- Herd protection of the unvaccinated occurs when a sufficient proportion of the group is immune.
- The decline of disease incidence is greater than the proportion of individuals immunized because vaccination reduces the spread of an infectious agent by reducing the amount and/or duration of pathogen shedding by vaccines, retarding transmission.

Why in News? The UK's Chief Scientific Adviser has said a degree of herd immunity will help the UK population as Covid-19 spreads.

42. Stafford Act:

Context: US President Donald Trump has declared a national emergency in the country invoking **the Stafford Act**.

Key features:

- As per this act, the federal government contributes about 75% to the cost of relief for states.
- The Act authorises the President to provide financial and other assistance to local and state governments, certain private nonprofit organisations, and individuals following declaration as a **Stafford Act Emergency (limited) or Major Disaster (more severe)**.

43. What is excise duty?

Excise duty refers to **the taxes levied on the manufacture of goods within the country**, as opposed to **custom duty that is levied on goods coming from outside the country**.

Not covered under GST: In July 2017 the Centre introduced GST that subsumed a number of indirect taxes including excise duty. This means excise duty, technically, does not exist in India **except on a few items such as liquor and petroleum**.

Key facts:

- For the items and services outside the purview of GST, excise duty is a form of indirect tax which is generally collected by a retailer or an intermediary from its consumers and then paid to the government.
- The **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBEC)** is responsible for collecting excise duty.
- The rates of Central Excise Duty are defined by the Central Excise Tariff Act, 1985.

Why in News?

The government has raised excise duty on petrol and diesel by ₹3 each to boost revenue collections taking advantage of the declining global crude oil price.

44. Who will represent Delhi Police?

The Central government has decided that **the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi may, at his own discretion, appoint law officers to represent the Delhi Police and the NCR government before constitutional courts**. The order was passed by **the Union Home Ministry**.

45. Boko Haram:

Who are they? Boko Haram is a violent Islamist insurgent group that has spread from northeast Nigeria to neighbouring West African nations of Niger, Chad and Cameroon in the Lake Chad Basin.

Emergence: In the 2000s, Boko Haram emerged in Nigeria as a small Sunni Islamic sect advocating a strict interpretation and implementation of Islamic law. The group, officially called **Jama'a Ahl as-Sunna Li-da'wa wal Jihad**, is more commonly known as Boko Haram, a nickname given by the country's local Hausa-speaking population, because of the group's call for rejection of Western education and culture that it viewed as un-Islamic—haram or forbidden—guided by Salafism, a conservative interpretation of Islam.

46. Emergency covid-19 fund for Saarc nations:

Context: PM Modi proposes emergency covid-19 fund for Saarc nations.

- It will be an **emergency fund based on voluntary contributions from all SAARC members**.
- India has already pledged **\$10 million towards this fund**.

What is SAARC?

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established with the signing of the SAARC Charter in Dhaka on 8 December 1985.

- **The member states are** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
- It has a **permanent secretariat in Kathmandu, Nepal**.
- The organization was started to promote economic and cultural ties amongst its member states.

47. What is community transmission?

It is one of the levels of transmission defined by the World Health Organization (WHO). Simply put, community transmission means that a virus is circulating in the community and can affect people with no history of travel to affected areas or of contact with an infected person.

Why in News?

India's current emphasis on social distancing and discouragement of public gatherings is aimed at checking community transmission.

48. Categorisation of industries:

Industries are **categorised based on their pollution load by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.

Criteria: The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has developed the criteria of categorization of industrial sectors based on **the Pollution Index** which is a function of the emissions (air pollutants), effluents (water pollutants), hazardous wastes generated and consumption of resources.

Categories:

1. **Red category:** Includes Cement industry, Petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, sugar, paper and pulp, nuclear power plants, organic chemicals, fertilizers, fire crackers.
2. **Orange category:** Includes coal washeries, glass manufacturing, paints, stone crushers, and aluminium and copper extraction from scrap.
3. **Green category:** Includes aluminium utensils, steel furniture, soap manufacturing and tea processing.
4. **White category:** Includes the industries that are "practically non-polluting". These industries, like air cooler or air conditioning units, chalk factories, biscuit tray units, won't need a green clearance enabling easier financing.

Industries scoring 60 and above on a scale of 1 to 100 have been rated red. An index between 41 and 59 earns an orange category, while a score between 21 and 40 gets a green. Pollution index lower than 20 have been rated white.

49. Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD):

LOCATION: Benishangul-Gumuz region, Ethiopia.

Formerly known as **the Millennium Dam**, is under construction in **the Benishangul-Gumuz region of Ethiopia**, on **the Blue Nile River**, which is located about 40km east of Sudan.

Why in News?

As the July deadline draws closer for **the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the river Nile** to become functional, the dispute between Ethiopia and Egypt, with Sudan caught in between, has escalated into a diplomatic stand-off. Differences were laid bare recently when Ethiopia skipped the latest round of tripartite negotiations with Egypt and Sudan in Washington, being mediated by the U.S. and the World Bank.

50. Country's first women-only medical college to offer free medical education:

Context: Symbiosis to set up **country's first women-only medical college to offer free medical education.**

- It will be called **the Symbiosis Medical College for Women (SMCW).**
- It will be **the first medical college in the country to offer free medical education.**
- The college will be located at the campus of the Symbiosis International University at Lavale, Pune.

51. University for Peace (UPEACE):

- It is **an intergovernmental organization with university status.**
- Established by **treaty at the United Nations General Assembly in 1980** and having its **main campus in Costa Rica.**
- The University has the unique status of not only being **a dedicated institution for higher education in Peace and Conflict studies, but also an international treaty body organization mandated by the United Nations General Assembly.**

52. Article 80 of the Constitution of India:

In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-clause (a) of clause (1) of **Article 80 of the Constitution** of India, read with clause (3) of that article, President recently nominated Shri Ranjan Gogoi to Council of States to fill the vacancy.

53. Pakke tiger reserve:

Why in News? The Arunachal Pradesh government has decided to "keep in abeyance" the survey work for a road through **the Pakke Tiger Reserve (PTR).**

A 40-km stretch of **the East-West Industrial Corridor** road proposed to connect Seijosa in Pakke Kessang district and Bhalukpong in West Kameng district of the State passes through **PTR, a biodiversity hotspot of the eastern Himalayas.**

Key facts:

1. Pakke Tiger Reserve is also known as Pakhui Tiger Reserve.
2. This Tiger Reserve has won India Biodiversity Award 2016 in the category of 'Conservation of threatened species' for its Hornbill Nest Adoption Programme.
3. It is bounded by Bhareli or Kameng River in the west and north, and by Pakke River in the east.
4. **Neighbours:** Papum Reserve Forest in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam's Nameri National Park, Doimara Reserve Forest and Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary.
5. **The main perennial streams in the area** are the Nameri, Khari and Upper Dikorai. West of Kameng River is Sessa Orchid Sanctuary.

54. Safe Hands Challenge:

It is a campaign launched by **the World Health Organization** in the wake of 2019-20 coronavirus pandemic. The campaign urges everyone **to wash their hands regularly for 40 seconds to keep themselves safe and prevent the transmission of disease.**

55. Danube-Oder-Elbe Canal:

It intends to connect the Danube, Oder and Elbe rivers and thus provide another navigable link from the Black Sea to the North and Baltic Seas.

Why in News? Environmental organisations from across central and eastern Europe are criticising this project. They say, the project, if constructed, would destroy the region's river landscapes, in violation of EU environmental laws.

56. Open market operations (OMO):

- Open market operations is the sale and purchase of government securities and treasury bills by RBI or the central bank of the country.
- The objective of OMO is to regulate the money supply in the economy.
- RBI carries out the OMO through commercial banks and does not directly deal with the public.

57. Defence Acquisition Council (DAC):

What is it? To counter corruption and speed up decision-making in military procurement, the government of India in 2001 decided to set up an integrated DAC. It is headed by the Defence Minister.

Objective: The objective of the DAC is to ensure expeditious procurement of the approved requirements of the Armed Forces, in terms of capabilities sought, and time frame prescribed, by optimally utilizing the allocated budgetary resources.

Functions: The DAC is responsible to give policy guidelines to acquisitions, based on long-term procurement plans. It also clears all acquisitions, which includes both imported and those produced indigenously or under a foreign license.

58. Navroz:

- Navroz is a **3,000-year-old Zoroastrian tradition**, a ritual celebration that signals **the start of Spring and the Persian new year**.
- In 1079 AD, an Iranian king named **Jalaluddin Malekshah** introduced the Navroz (New Year) festival to **generate revenue and collect taxes from people**.
- In India, **the Parsi community**, who follow Zoroastrianism, celebrate Navroz with full fervour.

59. What is Quorum?

"**Quorum**"-The minimum number of members required to be present at a sitting of the House or a Committee for valid transaction of its business, which is one-tenth of the total number of members of the House, as provided under article 100(3) of the Constitution.

60. What is Devonian period?

It is a **geologic period and system of the Paleozoic**, spanning 60 million years from the end of the Silurian, 419.2 million years ago, to the beginning of the Carboniferous, 358.9 Mya.

Key features:

- It is named after **Devon, England, where rocks from this period** were first studied.
- The first significant **adaptive radiation of life on dry land** occurred during the Devonian.
- **Free-sporing vascular plants** began to spread across dry land, forming extensive forests which covered the continents.
- By the end of the period the **first seed-bearing plants appeared**.
- Various terrestrial arthropods also became well-established.
- Fish reached substantial diversity during this time, leading **the Devonian to often be dubbed the Age of Fishes**.
- The ancestors of **all four-limbed vertebrates (tetrapods)** began adapting to walking on land, as their strong pectoral and pelvic fins gradually evolved into legs.
- The **first ammonites**, species of molluscs, appeared.
- The **palaeogeography** was dominated by the supercontinent of Gondwana to the south, the continent of Siberia to the north, and the early formation of the small continent of Euramerica in between.

61. CARISSA KOPILII:

Why in News? The Carissa kopilii is threatened by the **very river it is named after — Kopili in central Assam. It is a distant cousin of multi- utility wild berry.**

Properties: It has medicinal and utilitarian properties.

Reasons: a hydroelectric project on the river and water turned acidic because of coal mining in Meghalaya upstream.

Distribution: The “sun-loving” plant is distributed sparsely, rooted in rocky crevices along the Kopili riverbed at altitudes ranging from 85-600 metres above sea level.

62. Places in News- Rushikulya rookery coast:

Gahirmatha marine sanctuary and Rushikulya rookery coast in Ganjam district are main **Olive Ridley** Nesting sites in Odisha. Of these sites, Gahirmatha marine sanctuary is largest rookery (mass nesting site) of Olive Ridley turtles.

Olive Ridley is listed as **Vulnerable under IUCN Red List.**

63. Places in News- Reunion Island:

Context: India and France, For the first time, have conducted **joint patrols from the Reunion Island.**

India has so far carried out **Coordinated Patrols (CORPAT)** only with maritime neighbours and had rejected a similar offer by the US.

Reunion is an overseas department and region of the French Republic and an island in the Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar and 175 km southwest of Mauritius.

64. What is Adjournment, Prorogation and Dissolution of the Lok Sabha?

1. An **adjournment** terminates the sitting of the House which meets again at the time appointed for the next sitting. An adjournment also signifies brief break of the sitting of the House which re-assembles at the appointed time on the same day.
2. **Prorogation** means the termination of a session of the House by an order made by the President under article 85(2)(a) of the Constitution. Usually, prorogation follows the adjournment of the sitting of the House sine die.
3. **Dissolution** of the House means the end of the life of the Lok Sabha either by an order made by the President under article 85 (2) (b) of the Constitution or on the expiration of the period of five years from the date appointed for its first meeting.

65. Yakshagana:

Context: More than 900 Yakshagana scripts, including the ones printed in 1905 and 1907, have now been digitised and made available online for free, thanks to the voluntary community effort by some Yakshagana lovers who did it under the banner Yakshavahini, a registered trust.

Key facts:

1. Yakshagana is a traditional theatre form of Karnataka.
2. It is a temple art form that depicts mythological stories and Puranas.
3. It is performed with massive headgears, elaborate facial make-up and vibrant costumes and ornaments.
4. Usually recited in Kannada, it is also **performed in Malayalam as well as Tulu (the dialect of south Karnataka).**
5. It is performed with percussion **instruments like chenda, maddalam, jagatta or chengila (cymbals) and chakratala or elathalam (small cymbals).**

66. What is Parole?

Parole is a system of releasing a prisoner with suspension of the sentence. The release is conditional, usually subject to behaviour, and requires periodic reporting to the authorities for a set period of time.

- **How is it different from Furlough?** Furlough is given in case of long-term imprisonment. While furlough is seen as a matter of right, to be granted periodically irrespective of any reason and merely to enable the prisoner to retain family and social ties, parole is not a matter of right and may be denied to a prisoner even when he makes out a sufficient case.
- **Granting authority:** Parole and furlough are covered under the Prison Act of 1894. Since prison is a subject of the state, the Prison Act of the particular state government defines the rules under which parole is granted. Parole is granted by the state executive. If parole is rejected, the convict can move the High Court challenging the order of the competent authority. Also, apart from regular parole, the superintendent of a jail can also grant parole up to a period of seven days in emergent cases.

Why in News? The Supreme Court has asked the State governments to consider giving parole to those facing up to seven-year jail term in a bid to decongest prisons on account of the COVID-19 outbreak.

67. Hindu New Year:

1. Andhra Pradesh and Telangana: Ugadi.
2. Karnataka: Yugadi /Ugadi.
3. Maharashtra: Gudi Padwa.
4. Sindhis: Cheti Chand.
5. Manipuris: Sajibu Cheiraoba.
6. Hindus of Bali and Indonesia also celebrate their new year on the same day as Nyepi.

68. What is hantavirus?

Context: Case of hantavirus in Yunnan province of China.

Key facts:

- The hantaviruses are a family of viruses spread mainly by rodents. A person can get infected if he/she comes in contact with a rodent that carries the virus.
- It remains unclear whether human-to-human transmission of the virus is possible.
- A person infected with the virus may show symptoms within the first to eighth week after they have been exposed to fresh urine, faeces or the saliva of infected rodents.
- Symptoms may include fever, fatigue, muscle aches, headaches, chills and abdominal problems. Four to ten after being infected, late symptoms of HPS may start to appear, which include coughing and shortness of breath.

69. About the National Centre for Disease Control:

- The NCDC is an institute under the Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- It was previously known as **the National Institute of Communicable Diseases**.
- The institute engages in research, and it has several sections and laboratories dealing with different communicable diseases.

70. Petroleum & Explosives Safety Organization:

- It is a department under Department for the Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade under Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- It is a regulatory authority with **autonomous status**.
- It was established during the British India in 1890s as **Department of Explosives** and later expanded to various other activities.
- As a statutory authority, PESO is entrusted with the responsibilities under the Explosives Act, 1884; Petroleum Act, 1934; Inflammable Substances Act, 1952, Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Why in News? Petroleum & Explosives Safety Organization takes various measures to address the problems faced by Petroleum, Explosives, Oxygen and Industrial Gas Industries.

71. Institutions in News- National Testing Agency:

In pursuance of the Budget Announcement 2017-18, the Union Cabinet, in November 2017, approved creation of the National Testing Agency (NTA) as an **autonomous and self-sustained premier testing organization** to conduct entrance examinations for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the country.

Constitution: NTA will be chaired by an eminent educationist appointed by MHRD.

The CEO will be the Director General to be appointed by the Government.

There will be a Board of Governors comprising members from user institutions.

The Director General will be assisted by 9 verticals headed by academicians/ experts.

Finances: NTA will be given a one-time grant of Rs.25 crore from the Government of India to start its operation in the first year. Thereafter, it will be financially self-sustainable.

72. What is a Cantonment Board?

A Cantonment Board is a **body corporate under the Cantonments Act, 2006** having perpetual succession.

As per **Section 10(2) of the Act**, every Cantonment Board is deemed to be a municipality under clause (e) of article 243P of the Constitution for the purpose of:

1. Receiving grants and allocations; or
2. Implementing the Central Government schemes of social sector, public health, hygiene, safety, water supply, sanitation, urban renewal and education.

How are they administered?

The overall municipal administration of the Cantt areas comes under Cantonment Boards which are democratic bodies.

Difference between Cantonments and Military Stations:

Cantonments are different from the Military Stations in that the Military Stations are purely meant for the use and accommodation of the armed forces and these are established under an executive order whereas the Cantonments are areas which comprise of both military and civil population.

73. What is Force Majeure?

Context: Indian Railways has decided that the period from 22.03.2020 to 14.04.2020 shall be treated under **"Force Majeure"**.

During this period no demurrage, wharfage, stacking, stabling, detention and ground usage charge shall be leviable.

What is it? A force majeure (FM) means extraordinary events or circumstance beyond human control such as an event described as an Act of God (like a natural calamity).

74. What is Ossification test?

It is the primary **test for age determination**.

Human bones are remodelled and new layer of bone material is laid by a process called ossification (or osteogenesis). Based upon this phenomenon, ossification test is carried out.

Under Indian law: Courts have held that medical opinion based upon **ossification test is merely an expert opinion under the Indian Evidence Act, 1872**. Therefore, it **cannot be binding upon courts**. In **State of Madhya Pradesh v. Anoop Singh**, court held that the ossification test is not sole criteria for determination of age.

Other key facts:

- This test only tells the 'estimated' age of a person and not the exact age.
- The test is not useful when a person has crossed 25-27 years of age. This is primarily because **nearly all the bones are completely ossified and the skeletal growth ceases by the age of 25 years**.

Why in News?

Over a month after a boy was charged with rioting and arrested by police during the communal violence in north-east Delhi and subsequently sent to Mandoli jail, a Delhi court granted him bail recently following results of the bone ossification test confirming he is a minor.

75. Indian Scientists' Response to CoViD-19 (ISRC):

- It is a **voluntary group of scientists** who regularly discuss the rapidly evolving situation with its dire need for science communication.
- With nearly 200 members, the group has scientists from institutions such as the NCBS, the IISc, the TIFR, the IITs, the IISERs and many others.
- The group aims to study existing and available data to bring out analyses that will support the Central, State and local governments in carrying out their tasks.
- This platform works through two channels — phone and WhatsApp to connect people in need with those who can provide help.

76. Arr-Rinam:

- It is a tribal lockdown ritual observed in Arunachal Pradesh.
- It is **the Galo equivalent of lockdown** imposed by consensus for 48 hours whenever an epidemic strikes.
- It has been imposed now on account of COVID- 19 spread.
- It was last performed almost four decades ago when a water-borne disease had affected many members of the community.
- **The Adi community** inhabiting East Siang and Lower Dibang Valley districts too performed a similar ritual called **Motor** that they believe lets shamans with legendary powers to locate wild herbs to combat an epidemic.

77. SOLIDARITY trial:

- World Health Organization (WHO) announced a **large global trial, called SOLIDARITY**, to find out whether any can treat infections with the new coronavirus for the dangerous respiratory disease.
- The study has been designed to generate the robust data needed to show which treatments are the most effective.
- India has volunteered to participate in this trial.
- Many countries, including Argentina, Bahrain, Canada, France, Iran, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, and Thailand, have already confirmed that they will join the solidarity trial.
- **The Solidarity Trial will test four different drugs or combinations** — remdesivir, a combination of two drugs, lopinavir and ritonavir, the two drugs plus interferon beta, and chloroquine — and will compare their effectiveness to what is called standard of care, the regular support hospitals treating COVID-19 patients use now.

WHO has also created a **Covid-19 Solidarity Response Fund**, to help provide protective equipment for front-line health workers, equip diagnostic laboratories, improve surveillance and data collection and take other critical steps to scale up the public health response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

78. “Operation Namaste”:

Indian Army launched “Operation Namaste” to contain the spread of Corona Virus in the country. Under the operation, the army will help the Government of India fight against the deadly disease. Under the operation, Indian Army has established 8 quarantine so far. Also, Command wise help line numbers have been established.

Facilities for the families of the army men have been arranged to visit nearest camps in case of emergency while they are away serving the country.

79. Mo Jiban:

It is a new programme launched by Odisha Government, under which people of the State have to take a resolute vow to stay home and not to go outside during the lockdown period to remain safe from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

80. Fight Corona IDEathon: It is a 2-day online event.

- It was organized to search for accessible and affordable technological solutions that can contain the rapid spread of infection, ease the mounting pressure and ensure a quick return to normalcy.
- The initiative was jointly organised by MHRD Innovation Cell, AICTE, MEITY Startup Hub, InnovatioCuris and other institutions of global and national prominence.

The focus area of the IDEathon was:

1. designing reusable/washable masks.
2. system to disinfect currency notes/coins.
3. a non-invasive diagnostic kit.
4. Storage Kits to collect test samples from homes.

81. Himalayan Ibex:

Why in News?

A recent study by scientists of **the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)** has proved that **Himalayan Ibex**, distributed in the trans-Himalayan ranges of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh, is a distinct species from **the Siberian Ibex**.

- To unravel the complexity in species recognition of Indian Ibex, the researchers, under a project funded through the **National Mission on Himalayan Studies** implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, undertook field surveys and collected faecal samples from Lahaul and Spiti, Himachal Pradesh.

Key findings:

- The latest genetic analysis provided first evidence to claim that Himalayan Ibex is genetically different from all other ranges of Siberian Ibex.
- The results of the genetic analysis surprisingly revealed that I-T clade (referred to as Siberian Ibex) was estimated to have diverged from Alpine Ibex during the Pleistocene epoch (2.4 million years ago) than the Siberian Ibex during the Miocene-Pliocene boundary (6.6 million years ago).

About Siberian Ibex:

- It is a species of wild goat and is distributed in diverse habitats, ranging from cold deserts, rocky outcrops, steep terrain, high-land flats and mountain ridges to low mountains and foothills.
- Siberian ibex is a polytypic species, plausibly formed by lumping of at least 2 species and or 3 to 4 sub-species.
- IUCN status: Least concern.

Distribution:

- From Mongolia, its distribution extends towards Altai, Hangai, Gobi-Altai, the Huruq mountain ranges as well as Sayan Mountains near Russia and scattered populations in the small mountains of Trans-Altai Gobi.
- In Asia, Ibex is distributed in the Montane habitats, ranging in elevations from 500 m to 6,700 m in countries like India, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Southern Siberia and China.
- In India, the Ibex is distributed mainly in the trans-Himalayan ranges of the Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh up to the river Sutlej.

82. National Executive Committee:

The Disaster Management Act, 2005, under Section 8 enjoins the Central Government to Constitute a **National Executive Committee (NEC)** to assist the National Disaster Management Authority.

Composition: **The Home secretary serving as the Chairperson, ex officio.** The Chief of the Integrated Defence Staff of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, is an ex officio member.

Functions: The NEC under section of the Act is responsible for the preparation of **the National Disaster Management Plan** for the whole country and to ensure that it is "reviewed and updated annually".

83. Exercise Red Flag:

Why in News?

- The U.S. Air Force has cancelled Phase-I of its flagship multilateral air exercise, Red Flag, scheduled in Alaska from April 30.
- The Indian Air Force (IAF) was to take part in the exercise with its Sukhoi Su-30 fighter jets.

Key facts:

- Exercise Red Flag is a two-week advanced aerial combat training exercise held several times a year by the United States Air Force. It aims to offer realistic air-combat training for military pilots and other flight crew members from the United States and allied countries.
- Only countries considered friendly towards the United States take part in Red Flag exercises.

84. PM- CARES fund:

Context: PM Narendra Modi announces PM-CARES fund to fight coronavirus outbreak.

PM- CARES fund stands for **Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund**.

- It is a **public charitable trust**.
- Contributions by corporates to this fund will be considered as **social welfare spending under the companies law**.
- It will be an **emergency situation fund**. This Fund will also cater to similar distressing situations, if they occur in the times ahead.

How will the fund be administered?

The prime minister is the chairman of the new public charitable trust, its members include the defence minister, home minister and the finance minister.

85. What is Community Reserves?

Conservation reserves and community reserves in India are terms denoting **protected areas of India** which typically act as **buffer zones to or connectors and migration corridors between established national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and reserved and protected forests of India**.

- Such areas are designated as conservation areas if they are uninhabited and completely owned by the Government of India but used for subsistence by communities and community areas if part of the lands are privately owned.
- These protected area categories were **first introduced in the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act of 2002 – the amendment to the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972**.
- These categories were added because of reduced protection in and around existing or proposed protected areas due to private ownership of land, and land use.

86. Sections 269 and 270 of the IPC:

Context: Sections 269 & 270 IPC invoked are being invoked against persons who malignantly do any act which is likely to spread the infection of any disease dangerous to life.

- Sections 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and 270 (malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) come under Chapter XIV of the IPC.
- While Section 269 provides for a jail term of six months and/or fine, Section 270 provides for a jail term of two years and/or fine.
- In Section 270, the word 'malignantly' indicates a deliberate intention on the part of the accused.

PIB one-line facts

1. As per the recent report of **National Family Health Survey (NFHS) – 4** conducted by **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** in 2015-16, **22.9% women (15-49 years of age) are underweight** (BMI less than 18.5 kg/m²). **The top States having highest percentage of malnutrition among women are Jharkhand (31.5%) and Bihar (30.4%).**
2. The **Ministry of Women and Child Development** is implementing a **centrally sponsored Child Protection Services (CPS) Scheme** (erstwhile **Integrated Child Protection Scheme**) for supporting **the children in difficult circumstances**. CPS also provides for **“After care” services after the age of 18 years** to help sustain them during the transition from institutional to independent life.
3. **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)** has various **components** viz. Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP), PMKSY –Har Khet Ko Pani (HKKP) including Command Area Development and Water Management (CADWM), Surface-Minor Irrigation (SMI) and Repair, Renovation and Restoration (RRR) of Water Bodies [Implemented by DoWR, RD & GR, MoJS], PMKSY-Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) [Implemented by Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare] and PMKSY- Watershed Development Component(WDC) [Implemented by Department of Land Resources].
4. **Water being a State subject**, initiatives on sustainable water management including conservation and water harvesting in the Country is primarily States’ responsibility.
5. **Schemes by various States in the field of water conservation/harvesting:** ‘Mukhyamantri Jal Swavlamban Abhiyan’ in Rajasthan, ‘Jalyukt Shibir’ in Maharashtra, ‘Sujalam Sufalam Abhiyan’ in Gujarat, ‘Mission Kakatiya’ in Telangana, Neeru Chettu’ in Andhra Pradesh, Jal Jeevan Hariyali in Bihar, ‘Jal Hi Jeevan’ in Haryana among others.
6. **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** supports the proposals for construction of vocational training centres received from State Governments through Grants under **Article 275(1) of the Constitution** and under **the scheme of Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Scheme (SCA to TSS)**. These centres are **managed by concerned State Governments only**.
7. **Athena SWAN (Scientific Women’s Academic Network)** is a **charter established and managed by the UK Equality Challenge Unit** in 2005 that recognises and celebrates good practices in higher education and research institutions towards the advancement of gender equality: representation, progression and success for all.
8. **Under Nidhi Rules, 2014**, ‘Nidhi’ is a company which has been incorporated as a Nidhi with the object of **cultivating the habit of thrift and saving amongst its members, receiving deposits from, and lending to, its members only**, for their mutual benefit. **Nidhi Company is a type of Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC)**.
9. **Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)**, a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** is being implemented for holistic growth of the horticulture sector covering **fruits, vegetables, root and tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew, cocoa and bamboo**.
10. **National Food Security Mission (NFSM)** is being implemented in identified districts of 28 States and 2 UTs viz. Ladakh and J&K of the country **to increase the production and productivity of rice, wheat, pulses, coarse cereals and nutri- cereals (millets)** through area expansion and productivity enhancement.
11. Under, **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)**, assistance of Rs. 50,000 per hectare for 3 years is provided, out of which Rs. 31,000 (62%) is given to the farmers directly through DBT, for inputs (bio-fertilizers, bio-pesticides, vermicompost, botanical extracts, etc.) production/ procurement, post-harvest management etc.
12. The **Indian Pharmaceutical industry is 3rd largest in the world in terms of volume and 14th largest in terms of value**.
13. **Wings India 2020**, the **biennial civil aviation and aerospace event** was launched recently at Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad. **The event is being organised by** Ministry of Civil Aviation along with Airports Authority of India and FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry).
14. The government has invoked **the Disaster Management Act, 2005**, since it provides for an exhaustive administrative set up for disaster preparedness. Accordingly, the **Union Home Secretary**, who is the **chairperson of the National Executive Committee** under the Act delegated his powers to the Secretary, Ministry of Health and Welfare.

15. **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakaram (JSSK)** has been launched with the objective **to eliminate out of pocket expenses for both pregnant women and sick infants accessing public health institution for treatment.**
16. As per the report titled **SRS Based Life Table 2013-17 published by the Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Government of India, the average life expectancy at birth has increased from 49.7 during 1970-75 to 69.0 in 2013-17, registering an increase of 19.3 years during this period. The life expectancy at birth for male and female during 2013-17 were 67.8 and 70.4 years respectively.**
17. **Yatri Mitra Sewa** has been introduced at major railway stations for enabling passengers to book wheel chairs services cum porter services free of cost through NGOs, Charitable Trust, PSUs etc under CSR and **responsibility of providing this facility has been entrusted with IRCTC.**
18. At present, **Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail Corridor is the only sanctioned High Speed Rail Project,** which is under execution with **technical and financial assistance from Govt. of Japan.**
19. **The BhoomiRashi Portal** lunched on 01.04.2018 as a major e-Governance initiative of **the Ministry of the Road Transport & Highways,** has expedited significantly the process of land acquisition for National Highways, making it error-free & more transparent with notifications at every stage being processed on real time basis.
20. The **National Biopharma Mission (NBM),** implemented by **Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC),** is an industry-Academia Collaborative Mission for accelerating biopharmaceutical development in the country. Under this Mission the Government has launched **Innovate in India (i3) programme** to create an enabling ecosystem to promote entrepreneurship and indigenous manufacturing in the sector.
21. Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship promotes establishment of model and aspirational skill centres known as **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra (PMKK)** in every district in the country for imparting skill training in the districts. For establishment of PMKK, Capital Expenditure upto 75% of the project investment as well as operational support is provided through the implementing agency - **the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).**
22. **National Creche Scheme** (earlier named as Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme) is being implemented as **a Centrally Sponsored Scheme** to provide **day care facilities to children (age group of 6 months to 6 years) of working mothers.**
23. Under the **Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897,** the States may take, or require or empower any person to take some measures and by public notice prescribe such temporary regulations to be observed by the public **for infectious disease management.**
24. Under **the Disaster Management Act,** the States/UTs can draw funds from **the State Disaster Response Fund,** in addition to the funds from the state government and the NHM.
25. The scheme of **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs)** was introduced in the year 1997-98 with an objective **to provide quality middle and high-level education to Scheduled Tribe (ST) students.** As per budget announcement 2018-19, **every block having 50% or more ST population and at least 20,000 ST persons is to have an EMRS by the year 2022.**
26. **Ministry of Tourism** has sanctioned following two projects under **Wildlife Theme Circuit** under **Swadesh Darshan Scheme:** (i) Development of Wildlife Circuit at Panna-Mukundpur-Sanjay-Dubri-Bandhavgarh-Kanha-Mukki-Pench in Madhya Pradesh during 2015-16 & (ii) Development of Manas – Probitora – Nameri – Kaziranga – Dibru – Saikhowa as Wildlife Circuit in Assam during 2015-16.
27. Under **Stand-up India,** assistance to Startups includes setting up **Fund of Funds for Startups' (FFS) at SIDBI** for providing fund support for Startups, Legal Support and Fast-tracking Patent examination at Lower costs, Self-Certification based Compliance Regime, Setting up of Incubators and Tinkering Labs, etc.
28. **National Waterway-1 (river Ganga), NW-2 (river Brahmaputra) and NW-3 (West Coast Canal from Kottapuram to Kollam along with Udyogmandal and Champakara Canals)** are operational and vessels are plying on them.
29. **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)** is implementing the **Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP)** at an estimated cost of Rs.5369.18 crore for capacity augmentation of navigation on **the Haldia-Varanasi stretch of Ganga** with **technical and financial assistance of the World Bank.**
30. **Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve Limited (ISPRL),** a Government of India Special Purpose Vehicle, has established Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) facilities with total capacity of 5.33 Million Metric Tonnes (MMT) (under Phase 1) at 3 locations, namely (i) Vishakhapatnam, (ii) Mangaluru and (iii) Padur. Government has given 'in principle' approval for establishing two additional SPR facilities with total storage

capacity of 6.5 MMT at two locations namely (i) Chandikhol in Odisha (4 MMT) and (ii) Padur in Karnataka (2.5 MMT) (under Phase 2).

31. Ministry of MSME has launched **MSME SAMADHAAN portal** to facilitate online registration of references related to delayed payments.
32. The **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)** has launched the **Mission Solar Charkha** in 2018-19 for implementation of 50 Solar Charkha Clusters across the country.
33. **As per AISHE 2018-19**, females constitute 48.6% of the total enrolment in higher education and the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for females in higher education at 26.4% is higher than the national GER of boys at 26.3%. Also, the **Gender Parity Index (GPI) has increased during the last 5 years, from 0.92 in 2014-15 to 1 in 2018-19.**
34. **Samagra Shiksha** - an Integrated Scheme for School Education has been launched throughout the country as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with effect from the year 2018-19. This programme subsumes the three erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).
35. In May, 2001, the Defence Industry sector, which was hitherto reserved for the public sector, was **opened upto 100% for Indian private sector participation, with Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) upto 26% both subject to licensing.**
36. **iDEX: Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) framework**, was launched with the aim to achieve self-reliance and to foster innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace Sector by engaging Industries including MSMEs, startups, individual innovators, R&D institutes and academia.
37. **Defence Corridors:** Government has decided to establish **two defence industrial corridors** to serve as engines of economic development and growth of defence industrial base in the country. They span across Chennai, Hosur, Coimbatore, Salem and Tiruchirappalli in Tamil Nadu and Aligarh, Agra, Jhansi, Kanpur, Chitrakoot and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh.
38. India has **38 World Heritage Sites at present.**
39. India, one of the major fish producing nations in the world **stands 2nd in aquaculture production in the world.**
40. Scientists from the **Institute of Nano Science and Technology (INST)**, an autonomous institute under the Department of Science & Technology, have developed a **starch-based 'hemostat' material** that concentrates the natural clotting factors in blood by physically absorbing excess fluid.
41. **Electricity is a concurrent subject**, and the distribution of electricity is handled by the states and state distribution utilities.
42. **Mission Parivar Vikas** was launched in November 2016 for substantially **increasing access to contraceptives and family planning services** in 146 high fertility districts with **Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 3 and above in seven high focus states.**
43. **Revised Mother and Child Protection Card** is the joint initiative of the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and the Ministry of Woman and Child Development.**
44. Components of **Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram:** Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics (AFHCs), Weekly Iron Folic Acid Supplementation (WIFS) Programme and Peer Educator Programme.
45. Under the **Umbrella Scheme of Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi**, a component of rare diseases has been included w.e.f. 01.01.2019 for providing one-time financial assistance upto Rs.15 lakh to patients belonging to families living below threshold poverty line for treatment of specified Rare Diseases amenable to one-time treatment in Government hospitals.
46. The Indian Pharmaceutical industry is **3rd largest in the world in terms of volume and 14th largest in terms of value.**
47. **National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)** fixes the ceiling price of scheduled formulations adopted from **National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)** and new drugs as per the provisions of the **Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013 (DPCO, 2013).**
48. Government fixes **MSPs of 22 mandated crops** including wheat, pulses and oilseeds on the basis of recommendations of **Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP)**, after considering the views of State Governments and Central Ministries/Departments concerned & other relevant factors. In addition, **MSP for Toria and De-Husked coconut** is also fixed on the basis of MSPs of Rapeseed & Mustard and Copra respectively.
49. **Nilavembu Kudineer**, a Siddha medicine has proven effect in the prevention and management of Dengue and Chikungunya in epidemic out breaks.

50. **Railway Projects are sanctioned Zone-wise** and not State-wise, as, Indian Railway's network is straddled across various State boundaries.
51. Till 22nd August, 2014, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Railway Sector was restricted only to **"Mass Rapid Transport System"**. However, FDI has now been opened up/permitted in the following activities/areas of Railway Infrastructure (100% on automatic route) under the extant FDI Policy of Government since 22 August, 2014.
52. By virtue of **Entry 9 and 41 of State List in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India**, the respective States are required to implement the provisions relating to reservation for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in their establishments.
53. **Five projects have been taken up for execution are:** Polavaram Irrigation Project (Andhra Pradesh), Saryu Nahar Pariyojana (Uttar Pradesh), Gosikhurd Irrigation Project (Maharashtra), Teesta Barrage Project (West Bengal) & Shahpurkandi Dam Project (Punjab).
54. **National Aquifer Mapping and Management program (NAQUIM):** Implemented by **Central Ground Water Board (CGWB)**. It envisages mapping of aquifers and development of Aquifer Management Plans to facilitate sustainable management of Ground Water Resources.
55. **Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA)** has been constituted under **Section 3(3) of the 'Environment (Protection) Act, 1986'** for the purpose of regulation and control of ground water development and management in the Country. CGWA grants **'No Objection Certificates' (NOC)** for ground water abstraction in 23 States/UTs.
56. **National Water Informatics Centre** has been established under **National Hydrology Project**.
57. **Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG)**, a sub-scheme under Umbrella **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)** Scheme, has been universalized from 1.4.2018 for the out-of-school girls **age group of 11-14 years** for their self-development and empowerment to improve their nutrition and health status.
58. **The Ministry of Minority Affairs implements Naya Savera – Free Coaching and Allied Scheme** under which free coaching is provided to students of six centrally notified minority communities namely Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and Zoroastrians (Parsis). So as to enable them to qualify in entrance examinations for admission in technical/ professional courses, and various Competitive examinations.
59. **Maulana Azad National Fellowship Scheme** provides financial assistance to students from notified minority communities, to pursue higher education such as M. Phil and Ph. D.
60. **Padho Pardes** - A scheme for providing interest subsidy on educational loans for overseas studies to enable students from minority communities to pursue higher education.
61. **Ministry of Human Resources Development and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** have jointly developed comprehensive **School Health Programme (SHP) under Ayushman Bharat** to foster the growth, development and educational achievement of school going children by promoting their health and wellbeing.
62. As per the latest key world energy statistics published by the IEA in 2019, **India is the 3rd largest producer of electricity in the world and it ranks 106th in terms of per capita consumption in 2017.**
63. **The National Crisis Management Committee** is headed by **the Cabinet Secretary**.
64. The **NDMA's National Executive Committee (NEC)** ensures implementation of the policies on disaster management. It is headed by **the Union Home Secretary**. It comprises Secretary-level officials in all the key Ministries or Departments, and the Chief of the Integrated Defence Staff of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.
65. **ICAR** has launched a flagship network project **National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA)**.
66. Under the provisions of **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**, Central Govt. is empowered to frame **rules to prevent unfair trade practices in e-commerce.**
67. A scheme on **"Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM-PDS)"** is being implemented w.e.f. April 2018 in all States/UTs. The main objective of the scheme is to introduce nation-wide portability of ration card holders under **National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA)**, through **'One Nation One Ration Card' system.**
68. The **Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)** is governed under the provisions of **the National Food security Act, 2013 (NFSA)**; which is implemented in all States/ UTs.
69. Under **POSHAN Abhiyaan**, there is also a provision of **AAAA&LS (Anganwadi Workers, Anganwadi Helpers, Accredited Social Health Activist, Auxiliary Nurse and Midwives & Lady Supervisors) convergence award** under which the field functionaries at ground level AAAA&LS are given award of Rs. 50,000 each.

70. **The Ministry of Textiles** is implementing converged **Mahatma Gandhi Bunkar Bima Yojana (MGBBY)** for providing social security benefits like life, accidental & disability insurance coverage to handloom weavers/workers in the age group of 18-59 years across the country.
71. **India's share in global electronics manufacturing** grew from 1.3% (2012) to 3.0% (2018). It accounts for 2.3% of India's GDP at present.
72. **SWAYAM** is the national online education platform hosting 1900 courses covering both school (class IX to XII) And Higher Education (under graduate, post graduate programs) in all subjects including engineering, humanities and social sciences, law and management courses.
73. **Mission Raksha Gyanshakti** was launched in 2018-19, with the objective of creating greater Intellectual Property in Defence Production Ecosystem.
74. **The per capita income of Delhi** is estimated to be ₹3,89,143 in 2019-20, which is **about three times the national average**, which is estimated to be ₹1,34,432 in 2019-20, according to the Economic Survey of Delhi 2019-20 tabled in the Delhi Assembly on Monday.



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