

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Month of
AUGUST-2020



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CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYST

WEEK- 1 (AUGUST, 2020)

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CURRENT AFFAIRS



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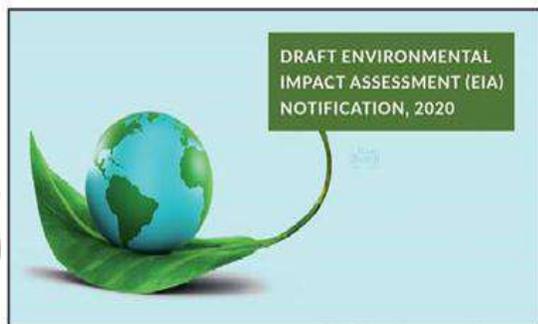
EIA NOTIFICATION 2020

CONTEXT

Environmental activist censored for encouraging public participation in consultation process of Drafting of Environment Impact Assessment Notification 2020.

◎ BACKGROUND

- œ The Union Ministry of Environment has been in the spotlight on more than one occasion during the pandemic, as it worked to push through retrograde environmental decisions in an atmosphere of general paralysis.
- œ In April, Environment Minister ensures that the National Board for Wildlife's Standing Committee stamped its approval on several projects, with serious implications for conservation.
- œ Now the Minister wants to make some fundamental change to the process of project approvals, by introducing a new Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification.



◎ ANALYSIS

What is Environment Impact Assessment (EIA)?

- œ **Environmental Impact Assessment or EIA** is the process or study which predicts the effect of a proposed industrial/infrastructural project on the environment.
- œ It prevents the **proposed activity/project** from being approved without proper oversight or taking adverse consequences into account.
- œ **Under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**, India notified **its first EIA norms in 1994**, setting in place a legal framework for regulating activities that access, utilise, and affect (pollute) natural resources.
- œ The **1994 EIA notification was replaced with a modified draft in 2006**. Earlier this year, the government redrafted it again to incorporate the amendments and relevant court orders issued

since 2006, and to make the EIA "**process more transparent and expedient.**"

How much Important EIA is?

- EIA links environment with development for environmentally safe and sustainable development.
- EIA provides a cost-effective method to eliminate or minimize the adverse impact of developmental projects.
- EIA enables the decision makers to analyse the effect of developmental activities on the environment well before the developmental project is implemented.
- EIA encourages the adaptation of mitigation strategies in the developmental plan.
- EIA makes sure that the developmental plan is environmentally sound and within the limits of the capacity of assimilation and regeneration of the ecosystem.
- EIA does not give decisions but its findings should be considered in policy- and decision-making and should be reflected in final choices. Thus it should be part of the decision-making process.
- The findings of EIA should be focused on the significant and essential issues. It is also required to provide a sufficient explanation on why they are important, and study its validity in order to facilitate a basis for policy decisions.
- Government has time and again appointed committees to look into environmental protection. Example- Gadgil and Kasturirangan Committees on Western Ghats ecology.

Why this new draft of EIA is being criticized?

- œ India's new EIA draft has been widely criticised for its several provisions due to which the **new draft of EIA prove to be a regressive departure from its earlier version.**
- œ The 2020 draft **offers no remedy for the political and bureaucratic stronghold on the EIA process**, and thereby on industries.
- œ Instead, it proposes to **bolster the government's discretionary power while limiting public engagement** in safeguarding the environment.

- œ While projects concerning national defence and security are naturally considered strategic, the **government gets to decide on the “strategic” tag** for other projects.
- œ The 2020 draft says **no information on “such projects shall be placed in the public domain”**. This opens a window for summary clearance for any project deemed strategic without having to explain why.
- œ Additionally, the new draft **exempts a long list of projects from public consultation**.
- œ For example, linear projects such as roads and pipelines in border areas will not require any public hearing. The **‘border area’ is defined as “area falling within 100 kilometres aerial distance from the Line of Actual Control with bordering countries of India.”**
- œ That would cover much of the Northeast, the repository of the country’s richest biodiversity.

What are the Main issues in this new draft of EIA?

- œ The most devastating blow to the **EIA regime is the creation of an ex-post-facto clearance route**.

Ex-post-facto clearance route

- . It applies to on-going or completed project for which an EIA clearance was **never sought or granted**, and the construction of the project took place regardless.
- . The project now can be slapped with **minor fines** for the violations and get cleared.
- . Where such ex-post-facto clearances were being granted previously, the **courts cracked down on them as illegal**.
- . Therefore, what could not be **ratified will now find itself notified**.
- . The legality of **sidestepping the courts** is questionable and will have to be tested.

- œ The proposed provisions show that the Ministry has gone to great lengths to reduce or even remove public participation, and by extension independent expert opinion, from the process of granting environmental clearances; public reporting of violations may also not be taken cognisance of.
- œ **According to Section 26** there are projects that would not attract environmental clearance or permission, including coal mining and seismic

surveys for oil, methane and shale gas on some lands.

- œ **Section 14 provides exemption and also limiting the scope of public involvement** to the districts concerned, in the case of national parks and sanctuaries where pipeline infrastructure will pass. Roads and highways get liberal concessions.
- œ If a public agency or authority considers the local situation not conducive to participation by citizens, the public consultation need not include a public hearing.
- œ In spite of the far-reaching nature of its proposed actions, the Centre has displayed unseemly haste to get them in place and government has not aided credibility by trying to shut down public responses to the draft early. It took a Delhi High Court order to extend the deadline to August 11.
- œ The exercise has been further muddled by the **mysterious blocking of some activist websites calling for the EIA proposal to be dropped**, and demanding a new approach towards conserving natural resources for future generations.

What should be the Way Forward in this case?

- œ **The 2020 draft notification** may be beneficial in the sense that it **consolidates the EIA rules and has the potential of alleviating some ambiguity in the present law**.
- œ The ministry **should focus on ensuring access to information as well as awareness** about the public hearing and its impact upon the whole EIA process.
- œ In order to improve ease of doing business, the government **should bring down the average delay of 238 days in granting environmental clearance** that emanates from bureaucratic delays and complex laws.
- œ Grow now, sustain later should not be the policy, as the notion is dangerously tilted against the concept of sustainable development.
- œ COVID-19 has powerfully demonstrated the value of nature for well-being: of lost forests and captured wildlife bringing virus reservoirs closer to humans and foul air destroying their health.
- œ While there might be a case for some changes, much of the proposed EIA system can only make things worse, and should not be pushed through.

However Environmental regulation must balance damage to the environment with sustainable development and possible benefits but the new notification lays more emphasis on the benefits and so must be reconsidered.

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

CONTEXT

In the backdrop of setbacks, especially in the neighbourhood, India has to reconsider its diplomacy's trajectory.

◎ BACKGROUND

- œ The foreign policy of India or any country is shaped by two factors i.e. domestic and international factors.
- œ Domestically, India's history, culture, geography, and economy have played an important role in determining the objectives and principles of India's foreign policy whereas international factor is characterized by cold war in which there was the rivalry between NATO and the Warsaw Pact.
- œ Thus the establishment of the United Nations, arms race, particularly nuclear arms race, anti-colonialism, and anti-imperialism, etc. have also influenced the priorities and objectives of our foreign policy.
- œ The first Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, gave due consideration to these factors and played a leading role in shaping the country's foreign policy.

◎ ANALYSIS

Where India stands to date as the outcome of his foreign policies?

- œ India was seen as a natural rising power in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region. It was the de-facto leader of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).
- œ It has historical and cultural ties with Nepal. It enjoyed traditional goodwill and influence in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.
- œ It had made investments worth billions of dollars in Afghanistan and cultivated vibrant ties with the post-Taliban stakeholders in Kabul.
- œ It had committed itself to multilateralism and the Central Asian connectivity project, with Iran being its gateway.
- œ It was competing and cooperating with China at the same time, while the long border between the two countries remained largely peaceful.

What is the Present scenario?

- œ India is perhaps facing its gravest national security crisis in 20 years, with China having changed the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the western sector in its favour.

- œ SAARC is out of the joint. Nepal has turned hostile having adopted a new map and revived border disputes with India.
- œ Sri Lanka has tilted towards China, which is undertaking massive infrastructure projects in the Indian Ocean island.
- œ Bangladesh is miffed at the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.
- œ When Afghanistan is undergoing a major transition, India is out of the multiparty talks.
- œ Iran has inaugurated a railway link project connecting the Chabahar port, on the Gulf of Oman, to Zahedan (which India was to have constructed) without India.
- œ There is a relative decline in India's smart power, especially in the neighbourhood and the extended neighbourhood, which demands a deeper perusal of the foreign policy trajectory itself.
- œ Three problems can be found which are more or less linked to this decline a **closer alignment of policy with the U.S. line, coupling of foreign policy with domestic politics and hubris.**

Is there any India- US Closer alignment in India's foreign policy?

- œ There has been steady erosion in India's strategic autonomy, which pre-dates the current government. When India started deepening its partnership with the United States, India began steadily aligning its policies with U.S. interests.
- œ The case of Iran is the best example. The agreement to develop the Chabahar port was signed in 2003. But India, under pressure from the U.S., was moving slowly, even though the project offered India an alternative route to Central Asia bypassing Pakistan.
- œ India voted against Iran at the United Nations; scuttled an ambitious gas pipeline project and cut down trade ties drastically.
- œ When U.S. pulled out of the Iran deal in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions on Iran, India toed the U.S. line, bringing down its oil imports to zero.
- œ These policy changes coexisted with India's deepening defense and military ties with the U.S. U.S. wants India to play a bigger role in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific region to contain China's rise. While India has steadily deepened military-military cooperation in the recent past — the

Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) is one example.

- œ These developments probably altered Beijing's assessment of India. The border aggression at different points on the LAC could not be a localized conflict; it is part of a larger strategic move.
 - > One of the reasons for the shift could be Beijing's assessment that India has already become a de-facto ally of the U.S.

What is the status of India's domestic politics?

- œ At least two decisions taken by the government mainly keeping its citizens in mind have had foreign policy consequences.
 - > First, the passing of the CAA. The official narrative has been that India is offering citizenship to the persecuted minorities of select countries in its neighbourhood. There were two problems.
 - . One, this is regionalisation of the domestic problems of the countries in India's neighbourhood.
 - . Two, Muslims, including those subjects persecuted in neighbouring countries, were by design excluded from the citizenship programme.
 - > Second, the abrogation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. It led to the suspension of fundamental rights in the Kashmir Valley for a prolonged period that damaged India's reputation as a responsible democratic power.
 - . The change of status quo in Jammu and Kashmir, including the bifurcation and

reduction of the erstwhile State into Union Territories, could be another factor that prompted the Chinese to move aggressively towards the border in Ladakh.

The perils of hubris

- œ Great powers wait to establish their standing before declaring that they have arrived. The Soviet Union started acting like a superpower after it won (with allies), the Second World War. China bided its time for four decades before it started taking on the mighty U.S. Since the 1970s, its focus has almost entirely been on its economic rise. India should learn from at least these modern examples.

What India should learn from past experiences?

- œ **Need for greater realism in policy:** India needs to change the image of a reluctant power. India should realize that soft power diplomacy is not sufficient for protecting the country.
- œ **Need for Strong economy:** An expansionary foreign policy cannot be built on the margins of the global economy. There is a need for India to build a strong economic foundation to fulfill the aspiration of global power.
- œ In the backdrop of setbacks, especially in the neighbourhood, India has to reconsider its diplomacy's trajectory as India's official policy is that it is committed to multilateralism. Even after India started moving away from non-alignment, which it calls irrelevant in the post-Cold War world order, India should maintain the strategic autonomy as the bedrock of its policy thinking.

CONTEMPT OF COURT

CONTEXT

The initiation of proceedings for criminal contempt of court against lawyer-activist Prashant Bhushan has once again brought under focus the necessity for retaining the law of contempt as it stands today.

◎ BACKGROUND

- œ Prashant Bhushan, senior lawyer, an indefatigable campaigner for the public had tweeted a photograph where he criticized Mr. Justice S.A. Bobde, the current Chief Justice of India (CJI), for riding an expensive motorcycle at a time when the Court is under lockdown.
- œ A three-Judge Bench, headed by Justice Arun Mishra, took suo motu notice of it and issued a notice of contempt of Court to Mr. Bhushan "for undermining the dignity and authority of the Institution of Supreme Court in general, and the office of the Chief Justice of India in particular".
- œ The Bench coupled to another tweet of Mr.

Bhushan in which he says that in the last 6 years, democracy has been destroyed in India and that historians will mark the role of the Supreme Court in this, especially the last 4 CJIs.

- œ It followed it up by listing yet another citation of contempt against Mr. Bhushan, this time in an 11-year-old case where he allegedly said in 2009 that half of India's last 16 Chief Justices were corrupt.

◎ ANALYSIS

Provisions in India regarding Contempt of Court

- œ The expression 'contempt of court' has **not been defined by the Constitution.**
- œ As per the **Contempt of Courts Act 1971**, contempt refers to the offense of showing disrespect to the dignity or authority of a court. The act divides contempt into:
 - > **Civil contempt:** It is 'wilful disobedience to any judgment, decree, direction, order, writ or other processes of a Court or willful breach of an undertaking given to the court'.
 - > **Criminal contempt:** It 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.'

- œ According to the **Indian Penal Code Section 12 of Contempt of Court Act, 1971**, contempt of court can be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to two thousand rupees, or with both.

œ Bar Association vs. Union of India case, the

Supreme Court dwelled into the constitutional powers vested in it under Article 129 read with Article 142(2) of the Constitution of India and the power of the High Court under Article 215 of the Constitution to punish for contempt.

- > **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.

- œ According to Supreme Court, no act of Parliament can take away the inherent jurisdiction of the Court of Record to punish for contempt and the Parliament's power of legislation on the subject cannot, therefore, be so exercised as to stultify the status and dignity of the Supreme Court.

- œ The Contempt of Court Act, 1971 was amended in 2006 to **include the defense of truth under Section 13 of the original legislation.** Implying that the court must permit justification by truth as a valid defense if it is satisfied that it is in the public interest.

Contempt of Court Scenario in other countries

- œ In England, from where India has inherited the legacy of contempt law, the legal position has evolved, as adjudicatory role now having been handed over to judges; showing extreme deference to judges does not sit well with the idea of a democracy.

- œ The U.K. Law Commission in a 2012 report recommended the abolition of the law of contempt.
- œ "Contempt" has practically become obsolete in foreign democracies, with jurisdictions recognizing that it is an archaic law, designed for use in a bygone era, whose utility and necessity has long vanished.
- œ Canada ties its test for contempt to real, substantial, and immediate dangers to the administration, whereas American courts also no longer use the law of contempt in response to comments on judges or legal matters.

The broad perspective of the concept in India

- œ The objective for contempt is stated to be to safeguard the interests of the public if the authority of the Court is denigrated and public confidence in the administration of justice is weakened or eroded.
- œ But the definition of criminal contempt in India is extremely wide and can be easily invoked. SuoMotu powers of the Court to initiate such proceedings only serve to complicate matters. And truth and good faith were not recognized as valid defenses until 2006 when the Contempt of Courts Act was amended.
- œ A law for criminal contempt is completely asynchronous with our democratic system which recognizes freedom of speech and expression as a

fundamental right.

- œ The excessively loose use of the test of 'loss of public confidence combined with a liberal exercise of suo motu powers, can be dangerous, for it can amount to the Court signaling that it will not suffer any kind of critical commentary about the institution at all, regardless of how problematic its actions may be.
- œ Judges believe that silencing criticism will harbour respect for the judiciary. On the contrary, surely, any efforts to artificially prevent free speech will only exacerbate the situation further.

© WAY FORWARD

- œ In an era in which social media are full of critics, commentators and observers who deem it necessary to air their views in many unrestrained and uninhibited ways, the higher judiciary should not be expending its time and energy invoking its power to punish for contempt of itself.
- œ The judiciary should identify priorities on constitutional cases that need to be desperately addressed, such as the constitutionality of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the electoral bonds matter, or the issue of habeas corpus petitions from Jammu and Kashmir.
- œ There is a need to revisit the need for a law on criminal contempt, also the test for contempt needs to be evaluated.

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020

CONTEXT

Union Cabinet approved the National Education Policy 2020, paving way for transformational reforms in the school and higher education sector in the country.

◎ BACKGROUND

- œ The National Education Policy was framed in 1986 and modified in 1992. More than three decades have passed since previous Policy.
- œ During this period significant changes have taken place in our country, society economy, and the world at large.
- œ The Government had initiated the process of formulating a New Education Policy through the consultation process for an inclusive, participatory and holistic approach, which takes into consideration expert opinions, field experiences, empirical research, stakeholder feedback, as well as lessons learned from best practices.

◎ ANALYSIS

Need for new education policy in India

- œ Despite the stated priority and the launch of a plethora of programs, the state of education in the country remains a weak spot in society. Most objectives and goals have not been realised, even partially, largely due to the absence of a workable roadmap and continuing operational guidance.
- œ More significantly, heavy politicisation at every level of operation from the village/block level, accompanied by ever-increasing corruption, permeating every aspect of educational administration, has been the prominent developments in the past three decades or so.
- œ While gross enrolment in schools as also in higher education institutions has gone up sharply, these have been accompanied by many undesirable new factors.
- œ The failure of government schools to provide education of minimal quality has triggered the large-scale entry of private or 'aided' schools, even in rural areas, but even these have not produced significantly better outcomes.
- œ While the Right to Education (RTE) Act has led to a significant increase in enrolment, as also emphasis on infrastructure, new issues in the implementation phase have now arisen, which need to be addressed. In particular, the 'No Detention Policy' needs to be revisited, to ensure that it is optimally and judiciously implemented.

- œ There is no clearly laid out policy in respect of private participation in the education system, both at the school and higher education levels. The exponential growth of higher education institutions in the past two decades has been fuelled by the 'capitation fee' phenomenon, which thrives on black money and shadowy financial transactions.
- œ In an aspirational society, parents naturally desire that their children get a 'good education'. However, formally linking the development of skills in vocational fields, and bringing in an academic equivalence to vocational accomplishments, has not been seriously attempted.
- œ A major new dimension is the advent of information and communication technology. New technologies are now available for information dissemination, enhancement of skills and so many other end-uses, but they are not yet suitably adopted or adapted to the needs of the education sector.
- œ There is immense scope for harnessing technology to improve quality, teacher preparation, aid to teachers in classrooms, remedial coaching-possibilities that have not yet been seriously addressed.

Objectives of NEP 2020:

• Equitable and Inclusive Education:

- > NEP 2020 aims to ensure that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of the circumstances of birth or background. Special emphasis will be given on Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) which include gender, socio-cultural, and geographical identities, and disabilities.
- > This includes setting up of **Gender Inclusion Fund** and also **Special Education Zones** for disadvantaged regions and groups. Children with disabilities will be enabled to fully participate in the regular schooling process from the foundational stage to higher education, with support of educators with cross-disability training, resource centers, accommodations, assistive devices, appropriate technology-based tools, and other support mechanisms tailored to suit their needs.

Learning plan

A look at the key features of the new education policy: • R.V.S. PRASAD



- Public spending on education by States, Centre to be raised to 6% of GDP
- Ministry of Human Resource Development to be renamed Ministry of Education
- Separate technology unit to develop digital education resources

SCHOOL EDUCATION

- Universalisation from age 3 to Class 10 by 2030
- Mission to ensure literacy and numeracy skills by 2025
- Mother tongue as medium of instruction till Class 5 wherever possible
- New curriculum to include 21st century skills like coding and vocational integration from Class 6
- Board exams to be easier, redesigned

HIGHER EDUCATION

- New umbrella regulator for all higher education except medical, legal courses
- Flexible, holistic, multi-disciplinary UG degrees of 3-4 years' duration
- 1 to 2 year PG programmes, no M.Phil
- College affiliation system to be phased out in 15 years

- > Every state/district will be encouraged to establish "**BalBhavans**" as a special daytime boarding school, to participate in art-related, career-related, and play-related activities. Free school infrastructure can be used as **SamajikChetnaKendras**

• Robust Teacher Recruitment and Career Path:

- > Teachers will be recruited through robust, transparent processes. Promotions will be merit-based, with a mechanism for multi-source periodic performance appraisals and available progression paths to becoming educational administrators or teacher educators.
- > A common **National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST)** will be developed by the National Council for Teacher Education by 2022, in consultation with NCERT, SCERTs, teachers and expert organizations from across levels and regions.

• School Governance:

- > Schools can be organized into complexes or clusters which will be the basic unit of governance and ensure availability of all resources including infrastructure, academic libraries, and a strong professional teacher community.

Standard-setting and Accreditation for School Education:

- œ NEP 2020 envisages clear, separate systems for policymaking, regulation, operations, and academic matters. States/UTs will set up an independent **State School Standards Authority (SSSA)**.
- œ Transparent public self-disclosure of all the basic regulatory information, as laid down by the SSSA, will be used extensively for public oversight and accountability. The SCERT will develop a **School Quality Assessment and Accreditation Framework (SQAAF)** through consultations with all stakeholders.

• Increase GER to 50 % by 2035:

- > NEP 2020 aims to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education including vocational education from 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035. 3.5 Crore new seats will be added to Higher education institutions.

• Holistic Multidisciplinary Education:

- > The policy envisages broad-based, multi-disciplinary, holistic Under Graduate education with **flexible curricula, creative combinations of subjects, integration of vocational education**, and multiple **entries and exit points with appropriate certification**.

- > UG education can be of 3 or 4 years with multiple exit options and appropriate certification within this period. For example, a Certificate after 1 year, Advanced Diploma after 2 years, Bachelor's Degree after 3 years and Bachelor's with Research after 4 years.

Criticism

- œ While the NEP 2020 has been hailed by most as a progressive shift in the government's approach to school education, certain changes regarding the three-language formula have been criticized as the new policy states the regional mother tongue to be the medium of instruction till 5th grade.
- œ The document also emphasises on mathematics and computational thinking, besides mainstreaming Sanskrit to increase "knowledge on ancient India and its contributions to modern India".
- œ The policy brings in major changes in the governance and academic structure of school and higher education. The Delhi University Teachers Association (DUTA) has criticized the concentration of powers within a board of governors in universities.

- œ The DUTA's opposition to the draft NEP rested, among other things, on its proposal to dismember universities and handover every higher educational institution to a Board of Governors, which is to enjoy all powers hitherto vested in the governing authorities of colleges and universities as well as the UGC and other regulating bodies.
- œ Some other groups criticized the government's passing of NEP without "extensive discussion" despite protests against the policy.

CONCLUSION:

Education and public health are possibly the two most important development vectors in a democracy. The reality over the past decades is that these have not received a fraction of the importance and focus they deserve. The ground reality today, depressingly, is quite different from what was envisaged in the policy pronouncement. It is hoped that the ministry's move will give a new direction to the education sector, halt the precipitous decline in standards, and pave the way for much better quality standards.



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EU CYBER SANCTIONS

CONTEXT

The European Union has imposed ‘first-ever’ cyber sanctions to protect itself from increasing cyber-attacks.

More on news

- œ Taking a firm geopolitical stand, the European Union imposed sanctions on targeted individuals and entities from Russia, China, and North Korea in a sign that it was tackling cyber warfare head-on.
- œ The European Union has imposed today its first-ever cyber-sanctions against six individuals and three entities involved in significant cyber-attacks or attempted cyber-attacks against the EU or its Member States.
- œ The sanctions include travel bans and the freezing of assets. It is also forbidden for EU persons and entities to make funds available to those individuals and entities listed.

© BACKGROUND

- œ Since 2017, the EU has put in place a comprehensive cyber diplomacy toolbox, including an autonomous horizontal cyber sanctions regime adopted in May 2019, to prevent, deter and respond to malicious behavior in cyberspace.
- œ This regime allows the EU to impose sanctions on persons or entities involved in cyber-attacks threatening the EU or its member states, or attempted cyber-attacks, regardless of the nationality or location of the perpetrator. Sanctions are also possible for cyber-attacks against third States or international organisations.
- œ The EU and its Member States are concerned by the rise of malicious behaviour in cyberspace by both state and non-state actors, including the abuse of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for malicious purposes, including cyber-enabled theft of intellectual property.
- œ Malicious cyber activities threaten the integrity, security, and economic competitiveness of the EU and undermine international security and stability potentially leading to destabilising and cascading effects with enhanced risks of conflict.

Cyberattacks by and against countries:

- œ Within cyberwarfare, the individual must recognize the state actors involved in committing these cyber-attacks against one another.

- œ There are many other state and non-state actors involved in cyberwarfare, such as Russia, Iran, Iraq, and Al Qaeda.

- œ **China:** China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has developed a strategy called "**Integrated Network Electronic Warfare**" which guides computer network operations and cyberwarfare tools. This strategy helps link together network warfare tools and electronic warfare weapons against an opponent's information systems during the conflict.

- œ **Ethiopia:** In an extension of a bilateral dispute between Ethiopia and Egypt over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, Ethiopian government websites have been hacked by the Egypt-based hackers in June 2020.

- œ **Iran:** In February 2020, the telecommunication network of Iran witnessed extensive disruptions. The Ministry of Information and Communications Technology of Iran confirmed it as a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack. The Iranian authorities activated the "Digital Fortress" cyber-defense mechanism to repel. Also known as DZHAFSA, it led to a drop of 75 percent in the national internet connectivity.

- œ **Israel:** In April 2020, there were attempts to hack into Israel's water infrastructure of the Sharon central region by Iran, which was thwarted by Israeli cyber defenses. The cyberattack intended to introduce dangerous levels of chlorine into the Israeli water supply. In June 2010, Iran was the victim of a cyber-attack when its nuclear facility in Natanz was infiltrated by the cyber-worm '**Stuxnet**'. Reportedly a combined effort by the United States and Israel

- œ **India:** Recently, there were cyber-attacks on Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP), India. This spyware identified as '**Dtrack**' is programmed to steal data and give the hacker or the 'threat actor' complete control over all the infected devices by exposing its credentials and passwords.

The Need for Cyber Security in India's context

- œ **For Individuals:** Photos, videos, and other personal information shared by an individual on social networking sites can be inappropriately used by others, leading to serious and even life-threatening incidents.

- œ **For Business Organizations:** Companies have a lot of data and information on their systems. A cyber attack may lead to loss of competitive information (such as patents or original work), loss of employees/customers' private data resulting in complete loss of public trust on the integrity of the organization.
- œ **For Government:** A local, state or central government maintains a huge amount of confidential data related to country (geographical, military-strategic assets, etc.) and citizens. Unauthorized access to the data can lead to serious threats to a country.
- œ Various programs of government such as Aadhaar, MyGov, Government eMarket, DigiLocker, Bharat Net, etc. are promoting a larger number of citizens, companies, and government agencies to transact online.
- œ India is the third-largest hub for technology-driven startups in the world and its ICT sector is estimated to reach \$225 billion landmark by 2020.
- œ **Increasing vulnerability:** India the fifth-most vulnerable country in the world in terms of cybersecurity breaches. India saw at least one cybercrime every 10 minutes during the first half of 2017, including more sophisticated cyber threats, such as the WannaCry and Petyransomware.
- œ **Increasing internet users:** India ranks 3rd in terms of the number of internet users after USA and China. By 2020, India is expected to have 730 million internet users with 75% of new users from rural areas.
- œ **Increasing online transactions:** E.g., by 2020, 50% of travel transactions will be online, and 70% of e-commerce transactions will be via mobile.
- œ **Government's digital push:** Various programs of government such as Aadhaar, MyGov, Government

e-Market, DigiLocker, Bharat Net, etc. are promoting a larger number of citizens, companies, and government agencies to transact online.

- œ **vhjStart-ups digital push:** India is the third-largest hub for technology-driven startups in the world and its ICT sector is estimated to reach \$225 billion landmark by 2020.
- œ India accounted for 5.09 percent of all cyber-attacks such as malware, spam, and phishing attacks detected globally in 2017.
- œ **Prevent economic loss:** The estimated cost of cyber-attacks in India stands at four billion dollars which are expected to reach \$20 billion in the next 10 years.

The need of Digital Armed Force

- To safeguard against Digital enemies, India needs to put in place a high-level Artificial Intelligence security system along with other digital security mechanisms to protect the digital borders.
- **Digital enemies** are very powerful and to safeguard our systems, we need to put in place a high-level Artificial Intelligence system along with other digital security mechanisms. We may be sitting at a time bomb and we must take every measure to defuse it.

© CONCLUSION:

India is among the top few countries facing cyber-attacks. Globally, it is estimated that the cost of cyber-attacks for 2017 added up to around \$600 Billion. The number mounts up every year, and by 2021 experts are suggesting a figure of \$6 Trillion per year. Hence, proper coordination is needed between the countries, coordinators and respective regulators to negate this menace.

SOUTH ASIAN MIGRANT CRISIS

CONTEXT

Recent, a petition filed in the Kerala High Court to set up a mechanism to assist NRIs who had lost their jobs abroad and had returned to India, to seek due compensation, exposes the precarious conditions of migrant workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

◎ BACKGROUND

- œ In early July, the Kerala High Court had issued notice to the Central and State governments on a petition seeking to set up a mechanism to assist NRIs who had lost their jobs abroad and had returned to India, to seek due compensation. The petition exposes the precarious conditions of migrant workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.
- œ Employers, particularly construction companies, have used the crisis as an opportunity to retrench masses of migrant labourers without paying them wages or allowances.

Insights on the situation

- œ The South Asia-Gulf migration corridor is among the largest in the world. South Asians account for nearly 15 million in the Gulf. The South Asian labour force forms the backbone of the Gulf economies.
- œ Indians constitute the largest segment of the South Asian workforce. Gulf migration is predominantly a maledriven phenomenon.
- œ The pandemic, the shutdown of companies, the tightening of borders, and the exploitative nature of the Kafala sponsorship system have all aggravated the miseries of South Asian migrant workers. They have no safety net, social security protection, welfare mechanisms, or labour rights.

Kafala System

- . The Kafala (Sponsorship) System emerged in the 1950's to regulate the relationship between employers and migrant workers in many countries in West Asia.
- . Under the Kafala system a migrant worker's immigration status is legally bound to an individual employer or sponsor (kafeel) for their contract period.
- . The migrant worker cannot enter the country, transfer employment nor leave the country for any reason without first obtaining explicit written permission from the kafeel.

- . Often the kafeel exerts further control over the migrant worker by confiscating their passport and travel documents, despite legislation in some destination countries that declares this practice illegal.
- . The power that the Kafala system delegates to the sponsor over the migrant worker, has been likened to a contemporary form of slavery.

Impact of CoVID-19

- œ In the initial days of the lockdown, the Kerala government was requested to send regular medicines for lifestyle diseases. Since medicines are expensive in the GCC countries. However, the suspension of flights caused an acute shortage of medicines and exposed the frail medical insurance system in the GCC for these workers.
- œ A majority of the migrants are single men living in congested labour camps. The COVID19 spike in these labour camps has mainly been due to overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions.
- œ However, as the COVID19 crisis and response unfolded in the Gulf countries, the most neglected segment turned out to be the migrant women domestic workers, whose untold miseries have increased in the present volatile situation.
- œ The Indian missions, with their inadequate administrative personnel, could not adequately cater to the needs of the migrants. The situation forced the Indian government to repatriate the NRIs through the Vande Bharat Mission. The Indian government has repatriated over 7.88 lakh NRIs from various destinations.

Challenges and Steps taken by various countries

- œ The countries of origin are now faced with the challenge of rehabilitating, reintegrating, and resettling these migrant workers.
- œ To facilitate this, the Indian government has announced 'SWADES' for skill mapping of citizens returning from abroad, but the implementation seems uncertain. Kerala the largest beneficiary of international migration has announced 'Dream Kerala' to utilise the multifaceted resources of the migrants.
- œ Bangladesh has announced a special package

- for the resettlement of return migrants which includes money on arrival, money to launch self-employment projects, and compensation for the families of those who died abroad from COVID19.
- œ The Overseas Employment Corporation in Pakistan has come out with special programs to upgrade the skills of returnees.
 - œ Meanwhile, in the GCC countries, the movements for the nationalisation of labour and the anti-migrant sentiment have peaked.
 - œ Countries like Oman and Saudi Arabia have provided subsidies to private companies to prevent native layoffs. However, the nationalisation process is not going to be smooth given the stigma attached to certain jobs and the influence of 'royal sheikh culture'.

œ Paradoxically, countries that are sending migrant workers abroad are caught between the promotion of migration, on the one hand, and the protection of migrant rights in increasingly hostile countries receiving migrants, on the other.

© **WAY FORWARD**

The need of the hour is a comprehensive migration management system for countries that send workers as well as those that receive them. No South Asian country except Sri Lanka has an adequate migration policy. The pandemic has given the countries an opportunity to voice the rights of South Asian migrants and to bring the South AsiaGulf migration corridor within the ambit of SAARC, the ILO, and UN conventions.



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SECTION: B

(PRELIMS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS



MATA CHINTPURNI TEMPLE

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** With temples closed amid the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, the Mata Chintpurni temple in Himachal Pradesh's Una has started the facility of home delivery of 'prasad' to its devotees through online request.
- ◎ **ABOUT:**
 - According to Hindu mythology, **Chintpurni temple is one of the five Shakti Peeths in Himachal Pradesh** (HP) and 51 Shakti Peethas in India.
 - The other four Shakti Peeths in HP are Jwalamukhi, Vajreshwari and Chamunda Devi temples in Kangra district, and Naina Devi temple in Bilaspur district.
 - A huge number of devotees pay their obeisance at Chintpurni temple during fairs held thrice a year in the month of Chait (March-April), Sawan (July-August) and Asanj (September-October).
 - œ In Chait and Asanj, the fair is held in Navratras, whereas in Sawan, it takes place during the first 10 days of shuklapaksha that is the bright half of the lunar month.
 - œ The fair lasts for nine days during the navratras and 10 days in Sawan. It gets maximum visitors on the eighth day.

WORLD TIGER DAY

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** The government has released a detailed report of Tiger Census on the eve of Global Tiger Day.
- ◎ **ABOUT:**
 - Global Tiger Day is an annual celebration to raise awareness for tiger conservation, held annually on 29 July. It was created in 2010 at the Saint Petersburg Tiger Summit.
 - **Name of the report:** 'Status of Tigers, Co-predators and Prey in India Report'.
 - The detailed report assesses the status of tigers in terms of spatial occupancy and density of individual populations across India.
 - In addition to the summary report released by the Prime Minister of India on the "Status of Tigers in India" in July 2019, this detailed report compares information obtained from the earlier three surveys (2006, 2010, and 2014) with data obtained from the 2018-19 survey to estimate population trends at country and landscape scales, patch colonization and extinction rates along with information on likely factors responsible for changes in tiger status at the fine spatial resolution of 100 km.
 - The report evaluates the status of habitat corridors connecting major tiger populations and highlights vulnerable areas that require conservation attention for each landscape.

St. Petersburg Declaration on Tiger Conservation

- The Heads of the Governments of Tiger Range countries at St. Petersburg, Russia, had resolved to double tiger numbers across their global range by 2022 by signing the St. Petersburg declaration on tiger conservation.
- It was also decided to celebrate July 29 as Global Tiger Day across the world, which is since, being celebrated to spread and generate awareness on tiger conservation.

13 tiger range countries

- India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam.

- . The report provides information on major carnivores and ungulates regarding their distribution and relative abundance.
- . The detailed report of the 4th All India Tiger Estimation is unique in the following ways;
 - œ Abundance index of co-predators and other species has been carried out which hitherto was restricted only to occupancy
 - œ Sex ratio of tigers in all camera trap sites has been carried out for the first time.
 - œ Anthropogenic effects on tiger population have been elaborated in a detailed manner.
 - œ Tiger abundance within pockets in tiger reserves has been demonstrated for the first time.
- . India's tiger population now stands at 2967 which is 70 percent of the global tiger population.
- . Efforts are been made to provide water and fodder to animals in the forest itself to deal with the challenge of human-animal conflict which is causing deaths of animals.
 - œ For this LIDAR based survey technology will be used for the first time. (Lidar is a method for measuring distances by illuminating the target with laser light and measuring the reflection with a sensor.)

SEISMICITY STUDY OF ARUNACHAL HIMALAYA

● **CONTEXT:**

Seismicity study of Arunachal Himalaya reveals low to moderate earthquakes at 2 crustal depths

● **ABOUT:**

- A study by the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology (WIHG) an autonomous institute of the Department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India, exploring the elastic properties of rocks and seismicity in this easternmost part of India revealed that the area is generating moderate earthquakes at two different depths.
- . The team of scientists installed 11 broadband seismic stations along the Lohit River Valley of Arunachal Himalaya to understand the elastic properties of rocks and seismicity in this easternmost part of India, a study that has been published in the 'Journal of Asian Earth Sciences'.
- . In the present study, the WIHG team used both teleseismic (earthquakes that occur more than 1000 km from the measurement site) and local earthquake data with the help of seismometers having a flat velocity response for the frequency range of 0.004-35 Hz.
- . Data were continuously recorded at 20 samples per second, and the Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers were used for time synchronization.
- . The study which used teleseismic and local earthquake data procured during January 2007-June 2008 has helped map under-thrusting in this easternmost part of the country and can not only help plan construction but also improve earthquake preparedness in the area.

Latest Findings and its significance

- . Low magnitude earthquakes are concentrated at 1-15 km depth, and slightly higher greater than 4.0 magnitude earthquakes are mostly generated from 25-35 km depth. The intermediate-depth is devoid of seismicity and coincides with the zone of fluid/partial melts.
- . The Tuting-Tidding Suture Zone (TTSZ) is a major part of the Eastern Himalaya, where the Himalaya takes a sharp southward bend and connects with the Indo-Burma Range.



- . This part of the Arunachal Himalaya has gained significant importance in recent times due to the growing need of constructing roads and hydropower projects, making the need for understanding the pattern of seismicity in this region critical.
- . The crustal thickness in this area varies from 46.7 km beneath the Brahmaputra Valley to about 55 km in the higher elevations of Arunachal, with a marginal uplift of the contact that defines the boundary between crust and the mantle technically called the Moho discontinuity.
- . This, in turn, reveals the under-thrusting mechanism of Indian plate in the Tuting-Tidding Suture Zone.
- . Extremely high Poisson's ratio was also obtained in the higher parts of the Lohit Valley, indicating the presence of fluid or partial melt at crustal depths.
- . This detailed assessment of seismicity in this region will be helpful for planning any large-scale construction in this region in the future.

AFFORDABILITY OF BALANCED DIET

◎ CONTEXT:

New analysis from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) shows that hundreds of millions of people in India above the international poverty line of \$1.90 purchasing power parity (PPP) per person per day cannot afford a 'healthy or nutritious diet'.

◎ ABOUT:

- Every year, the FAO, in partnership with other United Nations organisations, publishes a report on food security across the world.
- . This year, the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020 (SOFI 2020) had a new feature of detailed analysis of the "cost and affordability of healthy diets around the world".
- . The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World is an annual flagship report jointly prepared by:
 - œ Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
 - œ International Fund for Agricultural Development
 - œ United Nations Children's Fund
 - œ World Food Programme
 - œ World Health Organization (WHO)

Insights of the Analysis

- . **Unaffordability of good diets:** The analysis confirms the fact that the problem of poor nutrition in India is largely on account of the unaffordability of good diets, and not on account of lack of information on nutrition or tastes or cultural preferences.
- . The SOFI Report estimates that 18% of South Asians (numbering 586 million people) cannot afford the nutrient adequate diet and 58% of South Asians (1,337 million people) cannot afford the healthy diet.
- . The study defined three types of diets:
 - œ **Basic energy sufficient diet:** This takes into consideration only the basic calorie requirements of a person and the required calorie intake is met by consuming only the cheapest starchy cereal available. 2,329 Kcal for a healthy young woman of 30 years is taken as the standard reference.
 - œ **Nutrient adequate diet:** This involves meeting the required calorie norms and also the stipulated requirement of **23 macro- and micro-nutrients**. This diet includes the least-cost items from different food groups.

œ **Healthy diet:** This type of diet, apart from meeting the calorie norm and the macro- and micro-nutrient norm, also allows for the **consumption of a diverse diet**, from several food groups.

- > The Indian recommendation for a healthy diet includes consumption of items from six groups: starchy staples, protein-rich food (legumes, meat and eggs), dairy, vegetables, fruits, and fats.

Indian Scenario

. The Indian poverty line of 201112, as defined by the Tendulkar Committee, amounted to `33 per day in urban areas and `27 per day in rural areas, and corresponded roughly to \$1 a day at international PPP prices. The Indian poverty line is thus lower than the international poverty line used in the SOFI Report.

. As per the SOFI report:

œ Firstly, those people who are officially counted as poor in India – with a cutoff that is lower than the international norm of \$1.9 a day – cannot afford a nutrientadequate diet let alone a healthy diet. This result is completely contrary to the view of scholars such as ArvindPanagariya that the poverty line in India.

œ Second, even those with incomes of twice the international poverty line cannot afford a healthy diet.

© WAY FORWARD

- The government has to address the problem of affordability of healthy diets in order to reduce malnutrition and food insecurity. The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana is a welcome step in this direction but inadequate to address the massive and growing problem of malnutrition. Hence the government has to take more initiatives to overcome the problem.

100% FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI) IN AIR INDIA

© CONTEXT:

Recently, the government has notified amendments to Foreign Exchange Management rules and allowed NRIs 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) in Air India. The new rules is known as Foreign Exchange Management (Non-debt Instruments) (Third Amendment) Rules, 2020.

© ABOUT:

- Earlier in March, the Union Cabinet approved a proposal to permit foreign investment up to 100% by those NRIs, who are Indian Nationals, in case of Air India through the automatic route.
- . Foreign investments in Air India Limited, including that of foreign airlines shall not exceed 49% either directly or indirectly except in case of those NRIs, who are Indian nationals.
- . The amendment removes the exception which permitted Overseas Citizens of India 100% FDI in air transport, but not Air India. This category of citizens has been replaced with NRIs, now allowed to commit 100% FDI in air transport, including Air India, through automatic route.
- . Substantial ownership and effective control of Air India Limited shall continue to be vested in Indian Nationals as stipulated in Aircraft Rules, 1937.
- . As per the present FDI Policy, 100% FDI is permitted in scheduled Air Transport Service/ Domestic Scheduled Passenger Airline (Automatic up to 49% and Government route beyond 49%).
- . However, for NRIs 100% FDI is permitted under automatic route in Scheduled Air Transport Service/Domestic Scheduled Passenger Airline.

- . The government permits 100% FDI under automatic route in helicopter services/ seaplane services requiring Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) approval.
- . Foreign airlines are allowed to invest in the capital of Indian companies, operating scheduled and non-scheduled air transport services, up to the limit of 49% of their paid-up capital, subject to certain conditions.
- . The conditions includes that inflow must be made under the government approval route and the 49% limit will subsume FDI and FII/FPI investment.
- . The investments made would need to comply with the relevant regulations of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

CONFEDERATION OF INDIAN INDUSTRIES (CII)

◎ **CONTEXT:**

Confederation of Indian Industries recently said that rural lending reviving, agri given hope of recovery.

◎ **ABOUT:**

- According to the Confederation of Indian Industries there are early signs of a V-shaped recovery in the economy in the immediate aftermath of the lockdown, driven mostly by agriculture and rural lending, as well as positive trends in FMCG, pharma and even construction.
- . However, the uncertainty of mini lockdowns and unnecessarily wide containment zones continue to affect business operations.
- . Terming the agriculture sector a “beacon of hope”, CII noted that rural lending by non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) is at about 80% of the usual levels.
- . Stressed sectors include aviation, hotels and commercial vehicles, which show no signs of recovery yet.
- . However, the information technology and health sectors are likely to hold steady even if they do not show much growth.
- . An increase in people eating at home and a greater demand for sanitation and hygiene products is likely to drive 15-20% growth in the FMCG sector.
- . With most construction sites resuming operations, CII is predicting a bounce-back in the sector which employs the largest number of people outside farming.
- . CII also added that commercial real estate is holding up on lease renewals, though new leases are not being signed.

Reasons for the recovery

- . Positive indicators include GST collections, railway freight traffic, petrol consumption, peak power demand and electronic toll collections, as well as expectations of a bumper harvest in the wake of a normal monsoon.

Suggestions

- . In order to nurture the nascent signs of recovery, it is important to mitigate the uncertainties that are currently prevailing regarding restrictions. Corporates are unable to plan beyond a horizon of a few weeks, which is in turn affecting all operations.
- . Given that it was not possible to predict the course of the pandemic, it recommended a dashboard approach, where the progression of infections would trigger predictable responses in a way that would reduce uncertainty and boost consumer and industry confidence.
- . Containment zones need to be limited to micro areas to ensure that supply chains function seamlessly; and business activities must be allowed to function by removing the uncertainty associated with imposing mini lockdowns.



Confederation of Indian Industries (CII)

- . It is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led and industry-managed organization.
- . It was founded in 1895, its headquarters is in New Delhi.
- . It works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India, partnering industry, Government and civil society, through advisory and consultative processes.

DIVESTMENT OF 23 PSUS

◎ CONTEXT:

Recently, the Ministry of Finance announced that the government is working on completing the stake sale process of about 23 public sector companies whose divestment had already been cleared by the Cabinet.

◎ ABOUT:**What is disinvestment?**

- . Disinvestment means sale or liquidation of assets by the government, usually Central and state public sector enterprises, projects, or other fixed assets.
- . The government undertakes disinvestment to reduce the fiscal burden on the exchequer, or to raise money for meeting specific needs, such as to bridge the revenue shortfall from other regular sources.
- . In some cases, disinvestment may be done to privatise assets. However, not all disinvestment is privatisation.

Key-highlights

- . The government, as part of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat package, had announced opening up of all sectors for private participation.
- . The final call as to the sectors which are going to be called 'strategic' has not been made yet, that has to be announced yet.
- . This would lead to a consolidation of public sector undertakings (PSUs).
- . About disinvestment plans, the Minister said the government wanted to sell stakes in PSUs when they fetch the right price.
- . There are already nearly 2223 such PSUs which have been cleared by the Cabinet for disinvestment. The intent is clear that at least for those which had already been cleared by the Cabinet, we will have to disinvest.
- . For the 2020-21 fiscal, the Union government has set a disinvestment target of ` 2.10 lakh crore.

Main objectives of Disinvestment in India:

- . Reducing the fiscal burden on the exchequer
- . Improving public finances
- . Encouraging private ownership
- . Funding growth and development programmes
- . Maintaining and promoting competition in the market

Benefits of Disinvestment

- . It can be helpful in the long-term growth of the country
- . It allows the government and even the company to reduce debt.

- Disinvestment allows a larger share of PSU ownership in the open market, which in turn allows for the development of a strong capital market in India.

INDIA REPORT ON DIGITAL EDUCATION, 2020

◎ **CONTEXT:**

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has launched India Report on Digital Education, 2020.

◎ **ABOUT:**

- The report has been prepared by **Digital Education Division of MHRD in consultation with Education Departments of States and UTs.**
- The report elaborates on the innovative methods adopted by Ministry of HRD, Education Departments of States and Union Territories for ensuring accessible and inclusive education to children at home and reducing learning gaps.
- The report will serve the purpose of cross-learning, adapting and adopting best practices across the country.
- Ministry of Human Resource Development has initiated many projects to assist teachers, scholars and students in their pursuit of learning like DIKSHA platform, SwayamPrabha TV Channel, Online MOOC courses, On Air – ShikshaVani, DAISY by NIOS for differently-abled, e-PathShala, National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER) to develop e-content and energized books, telecast through TV channels, E-learning portals, webinars, chat groups, distribution of books and other digital initiatives along with State/ UT Governments.

Digital initiatives by States governments

- Some of the major digital initiatives by State Governments are:
 - œ SMILE (Social Media Interface for Learning Engagement) in Rajasthan
 - œ Project Home Classes in Jammu
 - œ PadhaiTunharduvaar (Education at your doorstep) in Chhattisgarh
 - œ Unnayan Initiatives in Bihar through portal and mobile application
 - œ Mission Buniyaad in NCT of Delhi
 - œ Kerala's own educational TV channel (Hi-Tech school programme)
 - œ E-scholar portal as well as free online courses for teachers in Meghalaya.
 - œ Telangana has online certificate programs for teachers on 'Management of mental well-being during COVID'.
- Some states have launched innovative mobile apps and portals as means to facilitate remote learning.
 - œ Madhya Pradesh has launched Top Parent App, a free mobile app that empowers parents of young children (3-8 years) with knowledge and strategies around child development to help them meaningfully engage with their children.
 - œ KHEL(Knowledge Hub for Electronic Learning), a Game Based Application has also been started, that covers class 1-3.
 - œ Uttarakhand is making use of SamparkBaithak App through which primary school students can access animated videos, audios, worksheet, puzzles, etc.
 - œ Assam has launched the BiswaVidya Assam Mobile Application for class 6 to 10.
 - œ Bihar has launched Vidyavahini App with e-books for class 1 to 12.
 - œ Under Unnayan Bihar Initiative, Bihar has also launched Mera Mobile MeraVidyalaya for students, and Unnayan Bihar Teacher App.



- œ Chandigarh has launched Phoenix Mobile application to assess the learning outcome for the students of class 1 to 8.
 - œ Maharashtra has launched the Learning Outcomes Smart Q Mobile App to facilitate learning for students in the state.
 - œ Punjab has launched iScuela Learn Mobile Application for class 1 to 10.
 - œ Sikkim Edutech App connects all the schools of Sikkim under the State Education Department; Parents also have login access along with students, teachers and administrative units.
 - œ Tripura has an application titled 'EmpowerUShikshaDarpan' in order to facilitate student's appraisal.
 - œ Uttar Pradesh launches 'Top Parent' app targeting children from 3-8years age. The application currently houses three high-quality EdTech apps for children – Chimple, Maths Masti and Google Bolo.
- . Digital education initiatives are also enabling enhanced support for students preparing for competitive exams. Goa has partnered with Embibe, an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered online platform for learning, practicing, and testing, for students preparing for entrance exams in the State. Karnataka has launched ParikshaVani, an exam preparation program through Doordarshan, and an SSLC Exam Readiness Program. Online Practice tests with detailed analysis are available for Government and Government Aided Students of Tamil Nadu preparing for NEET exam.

AJO-NEO

◎ CONTEXT:

Recently, the device called "AJO-Neo" is developed by researchers from S.N. Bose National Centre For Basic Sciences (SNBNCBS), Kolkata for non-invasive screening of bilirubin level in new-borns.

◎ ABOUT:

- SNBNCBS developed a "No-touch" & "Painless" device for non-invasive screening of bilirubin level in new-borns.
- . The operation of the device is based on **non-contact and non-invasive spectrometry-based techniques for measurement of neonatal bilirubin level as an alternative of total serum bilirubin (TSB) test** without limitations of other available bilirubin meters.
- . The newly developed device (AJO-Neo) is reliable in measuring bilirubin levels in preterm, and term neonates irrespective of gestational or postnatal age, sex, risk factors, feeding behavior or skin color.
- . The device is found to deliver an almost instantaneous report (about 10 seconds) to a concerned doctor, who is sitting 10000 km away from the point of care.

Significance of the achievement

- . This is a significant achievement compared to the conventional "blood test" method, which may take more than 4 hours to generate the report.
- . It has to be noted that detection of neonatal blood bilirubin (Hyperbilirubinemia) faster is extremely important for therapeutic management in order to avoid Kernicterus leading to Neuro-psychiatry problems in neonatal subjects.
- . Careful screening of bilirubin level in new-borns is mandatory as per American Academy of Paediatrics (2004), to reduce incidents of a type of brain damage called kernicterus that can result from high levels of bilirubin in a baby's blood.
- . Although invasive capillary collection of blood and the subsequent biochemical test is considered a gold standard for jaundice detection in neonates, transcutaneous bilirubin measurement using non-invasive instruments has obvious added advantages.

- . AJO-Neo also shows several advantages compared to other similar imported devices in the market.

Bilirubin

- . It is a yellowish substance in the blood. It forms after red blood cells break down, and it travels through liver, gallbladder, and digestive tract before being excreted. It is a necessary process in the body's clearance of waste products that arise from the destruction of aged or abnormal red blood cells.

S.N. Bose National Centre For Basic Sciences (SNBNCBS)

- . It is an autonomous research Institute under the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India.
- . The institute is also hosting one of the Technical Research Centres (TRC) funded by DST and in scientific collaboration with Nil-RatanSircar (NRS) Medical College and Hospital, Kolkata.

SPYWARE, STALKERWARE APPS GAINING TRACTION DURING LOCKDOWN

◎ **CONTEXT:**

Global Cyber-security leader Avast has warned in a note that there was a 51-percent increase in the use of spy- and stalkerware since the lockdown in March until June.

◎ **ABOUT:**

What are spy and stalkerware apps?

- . Spyware or stalkerware refers to tools - apps, software programs, and devices - that let another person (such as an abuser) secretly monitor and record information about your phone activity.
- . Spy and stalkerware apps, like viruses and other malware, infect devices that are connected to the internet.
- . While viruses and malware can be detected by antivirus software, spyware and stalkerware apps disguise themselves as useful and send-out stolen data to central servers without the users' knowledge.
- . A spyware app can also be installed remotely while a stalkerware app can be installed only when someone has physical access to the digitally connected device.

How do such apps work?

- . **Spyware:** For spyware apps, the easiest method is to disguise the spying code inside the unauthorised versions of other apps and then try and market such premium apps.
- . **Stalkerware:** Stalkerware apps on the other hand, seek explicit permissions at the time of their installation.
 - œ Once the app is installed in the phone, it can be hidden from the apps menu into the background, from where they continue functioning.

Reason for increased usage

- œ Increased usage of internet by everyone due to various lockdown measures in place. This provides enough opportunities for cyber criminals.



SECTION: C
(GOOD GOVERNANCE)
CURRENT AFFAIRS



E-UPARJAN: RE-INVENTING THE PROCUREMENT SYSTEM THROUGH DIGITISATION IN MADHYA PRADESH.

The e-Uparjan initiative strengthens procurement operations, develops a near real-time reporting mechanism and a decision support system for enhancing the forecasting, monitoring and tracking capabilities of the Madhya Pradesh Government.

Need for this initiative

- œ Madhya Pradesh has seen significant improvement in the production of wheat and paddy since 2009. This has had a direct impact on the procurement mechanism in the state.
- œ The increase in production also led to an increase in the number of farmers who want to sell their produce at the MSP offered by the Government of Madhya Pradesh (GoMP). This increase in service seekers has adversely impacted the quality of service delivery of the Department of Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Protection (DFCS & CP).
- œ Inefficient monitoring and management of procurement processes made it difficult for the authorities to check and curb malpractices. Finally, manual payments to farmers through cheques led to delays, losses, and corruption.

Objectives

- œ The primary objective was to enable a smooth, regulated, and efficient process of procurement at the centers.
- œ The initiative also sought to enable better planning, monitoring, and management. A significant objective of this initiative was to protect small and vulnerable farmers from being shortchanged by middlemen.

Key Stakeholders

- œ The main stakeholders of the programme include DFCS & CP, Madhya Pradesh State Civil Supply Corporation (MPSCSC), Madhya Pradesh Warehouse and Logistics Corporation (MPWLC), Madhya Pradesh State Cooperative Marketing Federation Limited (MARKFED), Mandi Board, District Central Co-operative Banks, Food Corporation of India (FCI), National Informatics Centre (NIC), cooperative societies and farmers.

Implementation Strategy

- œ e-Uparjandigitises the entire process of procurement. NIC conceptualised, designed, and developed applications, both online and offline, in Hindi for MPSCSC. The offline application included eight features:
 - > Processes related to the buying and selling of crops

- > Corrections in the farmer's registration details
- > SMS scheduling according to the daily storage capacity and daily wheat procurement status
- > Payment report generation for direct money transfer to the farmer's account
- > Gunny bag management
- > Transport management
- > Storage management
- > Agriculture loans recovery option

- œ Similarly, an online application was developed to register farmers, and subsequent MIS reports fed into the offline module.

- œ Apart from the above-mentioned features, the second phase included verification of details provided by farmers, making online changes after verification, SMS scheduling for procurement date area-wise, approving new procurement centers, entering farmer data for crop loss due to natural disasters

Key Challenges

- œ The sheer extent of the operation was a major challenge with Rabi procurement undertaken in 40 districts and Kharif procurement undertaken in all the 50 districts of the state.
- œ Apart from this, the implementation was hampered by challenges such as difficult terrain in some regions, limited train connectivity, limited internet connectivity, deployment of IT operators in interior areas, and limited power supply in many areas.

CONCLUSION

The impact of real-time data that it has generated has helped in making more informed decisions. With an efficient database of information on procurement, the DFCS & CP is now able to plan for silo storage bags and steel silos in advance. Robust planning and the mechanism for real-time data reporting enhance the forecasting, monitoring, and tracking capabilities of the Madhya Pradesh Government and these are the qualities that make this initiative unique and significant.

CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYST

WEEK- 2 (AUGUST, 2020)

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SECTION: A
(MAINS)
CURRENT AFFAIRS



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A QUARTER OF BANGLADESH HAS BEEN INUNDATED WITH FLOODWATERS: NASA'

CONTEXT

Nearly a quarter of Bangladesh has been inundated with floodwaters, according to latest satellite images of the country captured by NASA recently.

◎ BACKGROUND

- œ Bangladesh has been a vulnerable state for much of its short existence.
- œ People in this flood-prone country have coped with rising water levels with a combination of innovation, flexibility and resilience – but the extremes the environment is now throwing at them might be beyond anyone's endurance.
- œ As climate change accelerates, the pressures on rural Bangladeshis mount.
- œ Historically, people in Bangladesh had worked around seasonal flooding; farming for part of the year and retreating when water levels rose, or seeking work in the cities as land became unusable.
- œ By the end of the century, however, sea levels are expected to rise along the Bangladesh coastline by up to 1.5m.
- œ And that will come with more extreme seasonal fluctuations in sea levels. Disastrous storms and unusually high tides currently occur once each decade, but could become as regular as three to 15 times each year by 2100.

œ As a result, rural Bangladeshis face a stark choice; change their way or life or seek employment and a home elsewhere.

What NASA has found?

- œ Images acquired by NASA show the scale of flooding, and were recorded over more than a month between June 2 and July 25.
- œ The image captured on July 25, 2020, shows an enormous patch of blue on the map, where floodwaters have inundated.
- œ In the June 2 photo, the blue patch is much smaller as flooding had only just begun then.
- œ More than four million people have been affected and at least 100 had died in Bangladesh as of July 28.
- œ Most of Bangladesh is low-lying and is drained by the Ganga (Padma), Brahmaputra (Jamuna) and Meghna rivers and their tributaries.
- œ It is the longest-lasting flooding in Bangladesh in 1988, and has been termed the worst flooding in a decade.



**Water appears navy blue and black; clouds are white or cyan; and vegetation is bright green.*

- œ The Bangladesh Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre reported water levels along the Jamuna River were at or above “danger level” as of July 31.
- œ Almost a million homes were inundated and more than 1,500 square kilometres (600 square miles) of farmland were damaged across the country. Several areas are also isolated due flooded roads, it added.
- œ The country has not been able to prepare well for the monsoon this year as much of the flood-prevention infrastructure like embankments and dykes destroyed in earlier monsoons has not recovered yet.

The current situation in Bangladesh

- œ The physiography of Bangladesh is characterized by two distinctive features: a broad deltaic plain subject to frequent flooding, and a small hilly region crossed by swiftly flowing rivers.
- œ Bangladesh is crisscrossed by 230 rivers, including 53 shared with India.
- œ A four-month monsoon season, from June through September, routinely inundates this riverine country.
- œ Meanwhile, a quarter of Bangladesh’s landmass, bound on the south by the northern Indian Ocean, hovers less than seven feet above sea level.
- œ And as floods grow increasingly frequent and severe, the 163 million who make their home in Bangladesh, the world’s most populous delta, know little escape from water.
- œ Often referred to as “ground zero for climate change,” Bangladesh ranked sixth on the 2018 Global Climate Risk Index, and for many Bangladeshis, particularly the rural communities in low-lying coastal areas, those risks are already unmanageable.
- œ Riverbank erosion displaces 50,000 to 200,000 people here each year. Thousands more flee every time a major cyclone hits the coast.

Neighbouring countries

- . Northeastern parts of India too, that lie close to the neighbouring Bangladesh are also currently experiencing a lot of floods, especially Assam.

Is monsoon the reason behind the situation?

- œ Monsoons in Bangladesh are intense, with over 80 per cent rain taking place during the season between June and October.
- œ The country receives most of its rainfall during the summer — June to October.
- œ Even though flooding is common during these months, this year’s water damage has been particularly devastating.
- œ Downpours during monsoon season are nothing new. Rains beat down across much of South and East Asia every year from late spring through early fall, when the region sees temperatures and moisture levels increase and a seasonal change in the direction of prevailing winds.
- œ The wet period has historically provided an important relief from the relentless dry heat of summer, cooling the air and quenching thirsty crops and wildlife.
- œ But in recent years, amid the climate crisis, monsoon season has gotten far worse. Last year was the first monsoon season in recorded history to not begin its withdrawal by October 1, and the severity and length of this year’s floods are also remarkable.
- œ The United Nations has estimated that this year’s flooding could be the most prolonged since 1988.

What is the reason behind this?

- œ **Riverbank erosion is the primary cause of climate displacement inland.** Up to 50% of those now living in Bangladesh’s urban slums may be there because they were forced to flee their rural homes as a result of riverbank erosion.
- œ Those who live on Bangladesh’s river islands, known as **chars**, are especially at risk. Located within some of the world’s most powerful river systems, chars can be formed or completely eroded over weeks or even days.
- œ River flooding is also a cause of displacement inland, and along with erosion is likely to become more significant under climate change, as rainfall both increases and becomes more erratic, and the melting Himalayan glaciers alter river flows.

- . China, too is reeling from major flooding near Wuhan, the original epicentre of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.C

- œ As rainfall patterns change, the drier north-western regions of Bangladesh are **at risk of drought**, which drives people away through **destruction of crops and disruption of livelihoods**. While not currently a major factor in displacement, this risk is expected to rise as climate change progresses.
- œ **Landslides**, also induced by increasingly erratic rainfall, affect the hilly north-eastern and south-eastern regions of Bangladesh and can cause displacement by destroying homes and property, and disrupting agriculture.

Rivers, the midwives of Bangladesh

- . Rivers are the midwives of Bangladesh.
- . The Ganges and Brahmaputra pour from the Himalayas and converge with the Meghna River to form the world's fourth largest drainage, which flows into the Bay of Bengal.
- . Monsoon rains routinely put a quarter of the country underwater. The flooding brings hardship, but it also nurtures the rice that feeds one of the most densely populated nations on Earth.

© CONCLUSION

Bangladesh, a vast river delta that barely rises above the sea at the best of times, is buffeted by natural forces including flooding rivers and cyclones blowing in from the bay. Over decades, the country has developed defenses: warning systems, storm shelters, salt-resistant crops, and 139 polders near the coast—a 5700-kilometer network of walls to protect farmland from inundation. But humanmade infrastructure is not infallible and can cause problems of its own. As climate change becomes a reality with rising seas and stronger storms, there is need of strong measures.

- . The country itself is born from those rivers. An estimated 1 billion tons of sand and silt flow downstream every year and settles in the delta, counteracting relentless erosion.
- . Geologically, Bangladesh is a giant sandbox, 90 meters deep in places.

DEFENCE MANUFACTURING

CONTEXT

Domestic defence production continues to lag

Key-Highlights

- œ When it was first talked of Make-in-India, it seemed quite possible since a big component of this was to be equipment for the armed forces; so with the demand completely in the government's control, it was just the supply side that needed to be fixed and, for that, the government was liberalising FDI rules to allow more strategic partnerships with top global suppliers.
- œ In reality, however, little changed and defence orders for private Indian firms have been few and far between.
- œ Manufacturer like L&T have talked of shutting down a gun factory they had opened to meet a 100-field-gun order; L&T supplied the guns, but the order was curtailed as there was no more money. Part of this has to do with the economy slowing, and, within this, the share for capital expenditure has been dwindling.
- œ While defence expenditure rose from Rs 285,005 crore in FY15 to a budgeted Rs 471,378 crore in FY21, capex rose at a slower pace, from Rs 73,531 crore to Rs 113,602 crore in FY21.
- œ when the latest Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy talks of doubling the size of the domestic industry to Rs 175,000 crore in five years—of this, the export target is Rs 35,000 crore—it seems more than a bit of a stretch.
- œ While former defence Minister cleared several large-ticket purchases, but the actual placement of orders can take decades. So while there is talk, as there is now, of increasing FDI limits to make India a more friendly investment destination, this is missing the point.

Defence industry of India

- œ The Defence industry of India is a strategically important sector in India. With strength of over 1.44 million active personnel, it is the world's largest military force. India has the world's largest volunteer military of over 5.1 million personnel.
- œ The total budget sanctioned for the Indian military for the financial year 2019 is \$60.9 billion. In 2020, India with third largest annual defence budget (US\$70 b) behind USA (US\$732 b) and China (US\$261 b), and second largest defence imports behind Saudi Arabia.

- œ The military budget of India is about 1.49% for year 2018–19 of the total GDP. However, it spends nearly an equal amount in importing arms from other countries.

Arms Exports

- œ India's track record as an arms exporter has been modest due to export restrictions on the manufacturing organisations like Ordnance Factory Board (OFB). OFB exports Arms and Ammunition, Weapon Spares, Chemicals & Explosives, Parachutes, Leather and Clothing items to more than 30 countries worldwide.
- œ However, due to liberal policies adopted by the government in recent times, there has been a substantial increase in India's defence exports. According to the latest official data given in the upper house of Indian Parliament - the Rajya Sabha, India's defence export has jumped by 700% in just two years.

Indigenization of military hardware

- œ India has been pushing for greater indigenisation of military hardware as India imports around 70 percent (by value) of its high-tech defence hardware such as aircraft, ships, submarines, missiles etc. mainly from Russia, Japan, Israel and United States.
- œ FDI policy: Upto 100% FDI in the Defence industry: Up to 49% under the automatic route and FDI above 49%: through Government route, where it is likely to result in access to modern technology.

Reasons to invest:

- œ India's requirements on defence are catered largely by imports. The opening of the Defence sector for private sector participation will help foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) to enter into strategic partnerships with Indian companies. This will enable them to leverage the domestic markets as well as aim at global markets. Besides helping in building domestic capabilities, it will also bolster exports in the long term.
- œ Since 2014 the Ministry of Defence has signed more than 180 contracts with the Indian Industry, as of December 2019. These contracts were valued over USD 25.8 Bn approximately.
- œ Favourable government policy which promotes self-reliance, indigenisation, and technology

upgradation. The policies also aim at achieving economies of scale, including the development of capabilities, for exports in the defence sector.

- œ India’s extensive modernisation plans with an increased focus on homeland security and growing attractiveness as a defence sourcing hub.

Growth drivers in defense manufacturing:

- œ Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) has been revised in 2016 and special provisions for simulating growth of domestic defence industry have been introduced:
 1. DPP focuses on institutionalising, streamlining and simplifying defence procurement procedure to give a boost to “Make in India” initiative. It aims to promote indigenous design, development and manufacturing of defence equipment, platforms, systems and sub-systems. It also aims to enhance the role of MSMEs in the Defence industry.
 2. A new category of capital procurement: Buy Indian - Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured (IDDM) has been introduced to encourage indigenous design, development and manufacturing of defence equipment.
 3. Preference has been given to ‘Buy (Indian)’, ‘Buy and Make (Indian)’ and ‘Make’ categories over ‘Buy (Global)’ and ‘Buy and Make (Global)’ categories. A clear and unambiguous definition of indigenous content is provided.
 4. The ‘Make’ Procedure has been simplified with provisions for funding of 90% of development cost by the Government to Indian industry.
 5. Separate procedure for ‘Make-II’ category has been notified under DPP to encourage indigenous development and manufacture of defence equipment. Number of industry friendly provisions such as relaxation of eligibility criterion, minimal documentation, provision for considering proposals suggested by industry/

individual etc. have been introduced in this procedure.

Challenges

- œ Major weapon platforms have a normal service life of about 40-50 years. Therefore, what we manufacture today must remain combat-relevant in the decades ahead. But with technology advancing at an exponential rate and warfare evolving, many major platforms run the risk of becoming obsolete in just 2-3 decades.
- œ We still do not have an entire Military Industrial Complex (MIC) ecosystem that combines government agencies, R&D, suppliers, component manufacturers, and technology adoption firms that integrate sub-systems into a working whole.
- œ China’s R&D expenditure (USD 275 billion in 2018) is about 2.2 percent of its GDP, that is, more than Japan, Germany and South Korea together. India’s spending on R&D has been stagnant at 0.6-0.7 percent of its GDP.
- œ Insofar as foreign firms relocating to India is concerned, they will go where it makes economic sense. And currently, given the economic ravages wrought globally by the pandemic, cash-starved companies are unwilling to abandon existing supply chains and invest in new operations.
- œ Foreign firms from major defence hardware exporting countries find difficulty as there are literally no incentives, because of a lack of proper monitoring mechanism and issues related to intellectual property rights.

⦿ **CONCLUSION:**

Indigenisation is a potential game changing solution for India. It is, therefore, in GoI’s best interest to seriously invest in the strengthening of our indigenous defence industry, and to re-orient policy and research in a manner that stimulates growth in the sector.

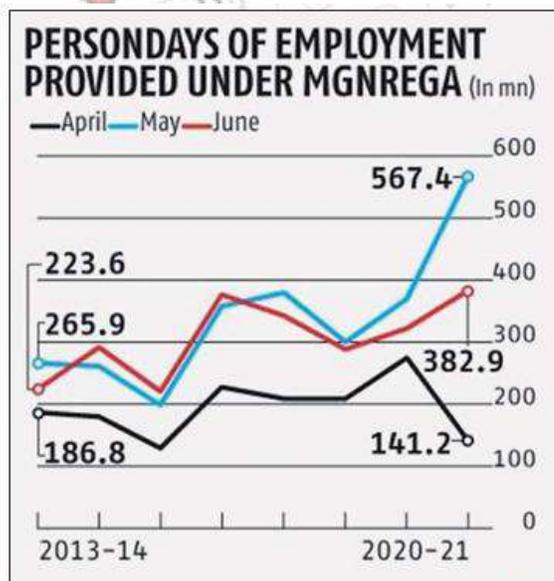
MGNREGA INTIMES OF COVID-19

CONTEXT

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has been one of the main avenues for the Centre to provide employment to returning migrants and others in rural areas who have been rendered jobless due to the lockdown..

What is the current situation?

- œ MGNREGA continues to attract rural labourers pushed into distress due to the Covid-19 crisis triggering calls for increasing the mandatory workdays to 200 and raising the minimum wages under the scheme to Rs 600 per day.
- œ Data sourced from the MGNREGA website shows that in June 2020 around 43.7 million households sought work under the scheme that was the highest in last seven years, maintaining a trend seen in May as well.
- œ The surge in work demanded under the scheme comes after more than 20 million migrants returned to villages from the cities to avoid COVID-19 lockdown announced in March.
- œ To provide more work to the migrant laborers, the Central government in May raised the budget under the scheme by Rs 40,000 crore for 2020-21, taking the full year allocation for the scheme to over Rs 100,000 crore for the first time ever.
- œ The additional funds is meant to generate additional 0.2 billion person-days of work in 2020-21 over and above the budgeted 2.8 billion person-days.



Mandate of Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (MGNREGA)

- œ The mandate of the MGNREGA is to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

Problems facing MGNREGA

- œ **Low wage rate:** The low wage rates have resulted in lack of interest among workers in working for MGNREGA schemes, making way for contractors and middle men to take control, locally.
- œ **Insufficient budget allocation:** MGNREGA's success at the ground level is subject to proper and uninterrupted fund flow to the states. But the fund allocation is insufficient to ensure proper implementation on the ground.
- œ **Regular payment delays:** Despite the order of the Supreme Court and initiatives and GO (Government Order) by the Union Ministry of Finance, no provision has yet been worked out in the MIS for calculation of full wage delays and payment of compensation for the same.
- œ **Workers penalised for administrative lapses:** The ministry withholds wage payments for workers of states that do not meet administrative requirements within the stipulated time period. It is beyond any logic as to why workers would be penalised for administrative lapses.
- œ **The banking puzzle:** Due to great rush and poor infrastructure, the bank passbooks are not updated in many cases. Often, the workers do not get their wages during times of need due to the hassle and the cost involved in getting wages from the bank.
- œ **Faulty MIS data:** There is a growing pile of evidence on how real-time MIS has made MGNREGA less transparent for workers, reduced accountability of frontline functionaries and aided in centralisation of the programme.
- œ **Non-payment of unemployment allowance:** There are a huge number of unemployment allowances being shown in the MIS currently.

œ **Genuine job cards being deleted to meet 100% DBT targets:** While the government has been boasting about Aadhar-based savings, the reality is that a huge number of genuine job cards and ration cards are getting deleted and genuine people have been deprived of their due entitlements.

Suggestions:

- œ **Creation of awareness:** The awareness programmes should be organized at war footing in the rural areas for educating people about these special provisions, which can go a long way in bringing further improvements in the implementation of the programme.
- œ **Training of Gram Sabha & Panchayat members:** The specialised training programmes be organised in the rural areas preferably in the village panchayats so that these functionaries get proper training for the better execution of the works.
- œ **Exposure visits:** It is recommended that Gram Sabha and panchayat members should be sent for exposure visits to other states like Andhra Pradesh, Kerala where NREGA has done wonderful work.
- œ **Effective supervision:** To curb corruption & malpractices, it is a requirement that MGNREGA works are properly monitored and supervised.
- œ **Increase in wages:** The wage rates to be paid under NREGA should be revised on one hand and subsequently every year there should be enhancement in the existing wage rates by a reasonable percentage say around 10-15% or so.
- œ **Availability of worksite facilities:** Women workers, particularly those with children, face major inconvenience due to lack of Creche facility and toilets. So the steps should be taken to provide adequate worksite facilities.

œ **Increase in employment (man working days):** The programme has the provision for 100 days employment per household. As such if a household who has more than one adult member, the mandays should be increased suitably however with some ceiling.

- œ **Skill generating work** -The MGNREGS should develop a relevant instrument to provide skill generating work and activities for literate beneficiaries instead of engaging them completely in manual work.
- œ **Participation of Women:** Women participation can be enhanced by appointing female supervisors on MGNREGS works. Women should be involved in the selection of works, which can create further mainstream employment in the village.
- œ **Action against Corruption:** Strict actions should be taken against the officers and other employees who are found involved in misguiding the persons who make their approaches to them to know about the Government Schemes for employment opportunities.

CONCLUSION:

The government has done the right thing by stepping up allocations both for MGNREGA and PDS grains. But in the end, MGNREGA cannot be any more than a scheme that provides employment during the agricultural lean season for landless labourers and marginal cultivators. Now, the focus has to be on getting people, including the migrant labourers, back to normal work. Also, it may be inferred that above suggestions, if taken care of, will definitely make MGNREGA a real instrument for overall rural upliftment, in general & improve the lot of the rural poor s, in particular.

REVIVING THE INDIAN ECONOMY POST COVID-19'

CONTEXT

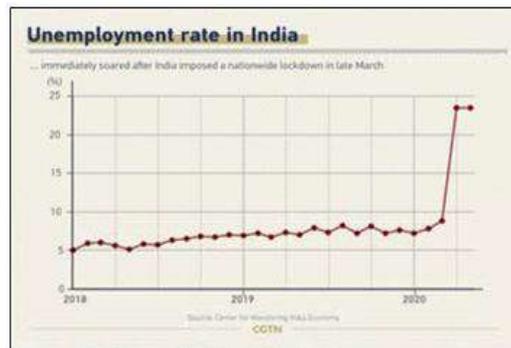
The economic impact of COVID-19 has been much discussed. There is unanimity among economists that the global economy will experience one of its worst years in history. India is no exception and its economy is expected to contract significantly.

The current economic situation

- œ The Pandemic has caused a shock for the Indian economy as well. The four legs on which the Indian economy had been growing have all been impacted adversely.
 - > Consumption: because of the Demand shock caused by Lockdown and Social distancing.
 - > Manufacturing: hit by large scale Supply chain disruptions: Even in case of essential services for which there is a demand, no one is able to produce due to this disruption in the last 60 days
 - > Exports: on a pause mode as global consumers pause
 - > Capital flows: Pandemic causes risk aversion and Emerging markets have felt the impact of capital outflows or slowdowns in Capital Inflows.
- œ All this and general psychological fear about the Pandemic have impacted our economy. Some have tried to compare the 2020 Economic shock to the 2008 Financial crisis, but that is completely inaccurate.
- œ The 2008 crisis was restricted to liquidity for the banking sector. This current shock is deeper and broader and impacts almost the entire real economy.
- œ It is a larger stop sign across areas like consumption, demand, manufacturing, supply chain and capital.

Understanding the 'true' impact on economy

- œ **Reversal of economic progress:** Economic contraction is not merely a GDP number for economists to analyse and debate. It means a reversal of many years of progress.
- œ **Slipping back into poverty:** A significant number among the weaker sections of society may slip back into poverty, a rare occurrence for a developing nation.
- œ **Severe unemployment:** Many enterprises may shut down. An entire generation may be lost due to severe unemployment. A contracting economy can adversely impact the ability to feed and educate our children owing to a shortage of financial resources.



- > There is extreme duress among India's poor. At a time when agriculture activity has been robust, data show that just in the month of June, 62 million people demanded work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) programme at minimum wages.
- > This is thrice the usual number and 10 times more than the total number employed by the entire listed corporate sector.
- > It is evident that most of them are displaced non-agricultural workers, struggling to make ends meet.
- > Such is the scale and enormity of despair in our labour force. Fortunately, the MGNREGA programme has proved to be a bedrock of support in such times but it is not enough.
- œ **More liquidity:** A meaningful cash transfer can restore confidence in these families. Money in the hands of people can provide an immediate sense of security and confidence, which is the cornerstone to restoring economic normalcy.

Economic Projections

- The previous growth estimate of 5.8% made by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for FY21 was slashed down to a paltry 1.9%. The International Monetary Fund called it the worst downturn in the global economy since the Great Depression.
- The World Bank has estimated India's growth for the same fiscal at a mere 1.5%-2.8% - the lowest since the 1991 economic reforms.

◎ **CHALLENGES**

- œ **Lack of revenues:** The government requires significant financial resources. However, finances are already stretched with a major shortfall in revenues. New avenues for tax revenues are not feasible in the short term. Higher borrowing by the government is inevitable. India cannot afford to be too fiscally restrained in these distressing times.
- œ **Low demands:** India is facing a structural demand problem, one that predates the COVID-19 shock. This challenge has been exacerbated over the past few months as jobs have been lost and incomes have collapsed.
- œ **Lack of investment:** Investment shrank by almost 3% over the year. Until then, India hadn't seen investment shrink for almost two decades, according to World Bank data. (It grew about 10% in 2018-19.) And this shrinkage began well before the pandemic — in April 2019. In India, the virus struck an economy with pre-existing conditions.

Steps taken by the Government

- œ The Government announced ` 20Lcr (\$c. \$281bn) Atma Nirbhar Bharat COVID-19 Economic stimulus package.
- œ Though a number of economists believe that the actual stimulus package amounts only 2% of the GDP in reality, as opposed to the 10% claimed by the Government.
- œ Most critics affirm that it fails to provide the stimulus that the economy needs.
- œ The salient features of the package include
 - > a stimulus to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) through a `3Lcr (\$40bn) loan scheme
 - > helping other stressed business sectors such as Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), power distribution companies and the real estate sector
 - > provisioning of free food grains to migrant workers for the next two months
 - > provisioning of a ` 1Lcr (\$13bn) subsidy to agricultural cooperative societies
 - > hiking the allocation for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) by ` 40,000cr (\$5.3bn)

extension of credit facilities to street vendors, interest subvention for small businesses, etc.

What needs to be done to 'flatten the Corona curve'?

- œ **Instant action:** The deleterious impact of an economic contraction is long and deep, especially on the poor. It is thus imperative to act with utmost urgency to nurse the economy back to good health.
- œ **Injecting confidence:** The slowdown in economic activity is both a function of external factors such as the lockdown and behavioural changes of people and enterprises, driven by fear. The foundation for reviving our economy is to inject confidence back in the entire ecosystem. People must feel confident about their lives and livelihoods. Entrepreneurs must feel confident of reopening and making investments. Bankers must feel confident about providing capital. Multilateral organisations must feel confident enough to provide funding to India. Sovereign ratings agencies must feel confident about India's ability to fulfil its financial obligations and restore economic growth.
- œ **Reviving the banking sector:** There is urgent need to revive the banking sector. Reviving the sector is not merely about capital infusion or disinvestment of public sector banks. Allowing institutions such as the RBI, public sector banks, bankruptcy boards, securities and insurance regulators to function freely and professionally is the foundational step to restoring confidence in the financial system. It is critical to allow processes such as the insolvency process to function smoothly without intervention.
- œ **More borrowings:** India must make full use of loan programmes of international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

◎ **CONCLUSION**

Recovery needs reform. India has postponed competitiveness-enhancing measures long enough. In a crisis of this magnitude, there are no excuses left.

PAKISTAN’S NEW POLITICAL MAP

CONTEXT

Pakistan released a new political map that claimed all of Jammu and Kashmir as Pakistan territories, on the eve of the first anniversary of revocation of Article 370. It also includes Ladakh, Sir Creek and Junagadh.

◎ BACKGROUND

- œ India faces territorial issues with many of its neighbors. Over the past 70 years, it has succeeded to resolve its boundary issues only with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.
- œ The un-demarcated boundaries with Myanmar, Bhutan and lately with China, Pakistan and Nepal have often flared up into tensions.
- œ However there seems no end to boundary disputes with China and Pakistan, which often turn into a major military and diplomatic standoffs.

◎ ANALYSIS

The new political map

- œ On paper, the map links Pakistan with Chinese-administered territory via the Shaksgam Valley, a

part of the Gilgit-Baltistan region ceded to China by Pakistan under their 1963 border settlement.

- œ To the east is the Aksai Chin region – the limit of China’s claims in Kashmir which it has controlled since a 1962 war with India.
- œ Between the two lies the Siachen Glacier, an undefined area at the northern extreme of the de facto border between Pakistani- and Indian-administered Kashmir known as the Line of Control – not to be confused with the Line of Actual Control, which separates Indian- and Chinese-controlled territory in the region.
- œ The new map showed Pakistan frontier clearly marked with India with the entire Kashmir as its territory.
- œ However, the part of Kashmir and Ladakh border with China was not marked and described as Frontier Undecided.



- œ Similarly, the Line of Control had been extended to the Karakoram Pass, clearing showing Siachen as part of Pakistan. The LoC had been marked by a red dotted line.
- œ The J&K had been described as Disputed Territory Final status to be decided in line with relevant UNSC resolutions.
- œ Another change in the map showed that the international border lines lies along the eastern bank of Sir Creek, which was previously along the western bank.

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.
- . 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.

The other inclusion is that of Junagadh, also in coastal Gujarat.

Junagarh

- . Junagarh is situated in the western state of Gujarat at the foothills of the Girnar Hills.
- . The city of Junagarh takes its name from the fort that encloses the old city.
- . Junagarh was an important trade center as testified by the Ashokan edicts dating from 250 BC.
- . At the time of partition, the Nawab of Junagarh opted to take his tiny state into Pakistan. However, the predominantly Hindu population forced the Nawab to leave the country instead.

Is it a copy?

- œ Such maps were published in 1947-48 when Mohammed Ali Jinnah was Pakistan's first governor general.
- œ But the Islamic Republic had to rework the map that then had also included East Pakistan or the present day Bangladesh.

A 'tit-for-tat'?

- œ The move is timed with the first anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370, which granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir.
- œ Pakistan's inclusion of J&K and Ladakh appears to be a tit-for-tat for India's inclusion of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir as part of the union territory of Jammu & Kashmir, and of Gilgit Baltistan as part of Ladakh in the new map the government released on November 2 after the re-organisation of J&K came into effect on October 31 last year.

Major border dispute with Pakistan

- œ **Jammu and Kashmir:** It is the center of the major dispute between Pakistan and India. Three wars have been fought between the two countries over Jammu and Kashmir.
- œ **Siachen Glacier:** The Siachen Glacier is located in the eastern Karakoram in the Himalayas just east of the Actual Ground Position Line between India-Pakistan. India controls all of the Siachen Glacier itself, including all tributary glaciers. At 70 km (43 mi) long, it is the longest glacier in the Karakoram and second-longest in the world's non-polar areas.
- œ **Saltoro Ridge:** The Saltoro Mountains is a subrange of the Karakoram Heights or of Saltoro Ridge. They are located in the heart of the Karakoram, on the southwest side of the Siachen Glacier.
- œ They are claimed as part of Ladakh union territory by India and as part of Gilgit-Baltistan by Pakistan.
- œ In 1984, India assumed military control of the main peaks and passes of the range, with Pakistani forces into the glacial valleys just to the west.
- œ **Sir Creek:** The Sir Creek is a 96 km (60 mi) strip of water disputed between India and Pakistan in the Rann of Kutch marshlands. Pakistan claims the line to follow the eastern shore of the estuary while India claims a center line

How would it impact?

- œ The impact of PM Khan's cartographic hallucination on India-Pakistan ties is very significant.
- œ By reopening the **1947-48** maps, Pakistan has given up on bilateralism of **1972 Shimla Agreement** and **1999 Lahore Declaration** - the two agreements that committed both nations to resolving bilateral disputes bilaterally - and paved a way for unilateralism.

Is Pakistan working in collusion?

- œ But the map is also telling commentary about Pakistan's relationship with its 'iron brother' China that has been engaged in a standoff with India for the last three months in East Ladakh.

œ PM Khan, who is often accused of reducing Pakistan as a client-state of Xi Jinping's China, has not only kept Shaksgam Valley and Aksai Chin out of its cartographic expansion but also left this frontier undefined to let China draw the line on the map.

Boundary disputes with China

- . **Aksai Chin:** Located in the northwestern part of the Tibetan Plateau, it is approximately 35,241 sq km in size, administered by China and part of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. India considers it a part of its union territory of Ladakh.
- . **Depsang Plains:** The Depsang Plains are located on the border of the union territory of Ladakh and disputed zone of Aksai Chin. The Chinese Army controlled most of the plains during its 1962 war with India, while India controls the western portion of the plains.
- . **Demchok, Chumar:** Both in the Leh district of Ladakh, controlled by India.
- . **Kaurik, Shipki La:** In the Kinnour district of Himachal Pradesh.
- . **Nelang, Pulam Sumda, Sang, Jadhag and Lapthal:** In the Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand.
- . **Barahoti:** In the Chamoli district of Uttarakhand whose grazing fields are disputed by China, which is also in the state of Uttarakhand and is controlled by India.
- . **Trans-Karakoram Tract:** An area of nearly 5,800 square kilometers (2,239 sq mi) along both sides of the Shaksgam River, is entirely administered by China as a part of Kargilik County in the Kashgar Prefecture of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

- . **Arunachal Pradesh:** Arunachal Pradesh is a state of India created on Jan. 20, 1972, and located in the far northeast. The majority of the territory is claimed by China as part of South Tibet.

- œ It is quite evident that Pakistan has followed Nepal. Kathmandu had issued a map to emphasise its illegal claims on Lipulekh, Limiyadhura and Kalapani in India's Uttarakhand on 21 May 2020.
- œ It is not mere coincidence that both Pakistan and Nepal are close allies of Beijing with the latter pumping in money in form of infrastructure aid to prop up both regimes.

India's take on the issue

- œ India, like Pakistan, claims Kashmir in its entirety and has no interest in pursuing a United Nations-supervised plebiscite, supported by Islamabad, for the region's residents to decide which country they should join.
- œ While the Indian government has dismissed the new Pakistan map as a "political absurdity", the map opens up the route for unilateralism by India should it choose to invoke it in future as Islamabad has indulged in unilateralism by issuing a new map that depicts territories firmly under Indian control as Pakistani territory.

© CONCLUSION

Perhaps, the move to redraw the Pakistani map stemmed from the need to satisfy the jingoistic domestic constituency. Diplomatically, the redrawing of the map will have no impact whatsoever on India.

WAR OVER THREE LANGUAGE FORMULA

CONTEXT

After the release of the New Education Policy 2020, the Dravidian parties in Tamil Nadu protested against the policy accusing it of imposing Hindi and Sanskrit.

◎ BACKGROUND

- œ The Union Government had constituted Education Commission in 1964 under the Chairmanship of **Prof. D.S. Kothari** to review the 'entire educational setup and recommend changes'.
- œ The report touched upon every aspect of education — aims, objectives, structure, syllabus, teaching methods, pay structure, language in education, science, strength of the class, etc.
- œ M.C. Chagla, the then Union Education Minister, hailed the report as the '**Teachers' Magna Carta.**'
- œ Addressing the issue of language in education, the Commission recommended 'Three Language Formula' as a means to Social and National Integration.
- œ A different 'Three Language Formula' had already been recommended by the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1956 and a simplified version of the same was recommended by the Conference of Chief Ministers in 1961.
- œ The National Policy on Education (1964) that came after the Kothari Commission Report made 'Three Language Formula' a policy.
- œ Accordingly, all students would study in mother tongue from Class I-IV. In Class V-VIII, the student would study two languages — regional language and English and Hindi depending on the region.
- œ The non-Hindi States would make Hindi mandatory and the Hindi States were expected to offer a Southern language.
- œ The implementation of these recommendations, however, was not uniform across the country.

◎ ANALYSIS

What is the 'three language formula'?

The National Education Policy 2020 has 'emphasised' on the use of mother tongue or local language as the medium of instruction till Class 5 while, recommending its continuance till Class 8 and beyond.

- . In India, the 'three-language formula' has its roots back in the year 1961.
- . The formula means that students in Hindi-speaking states should learn a modern Indian language, apart from Hindi and English and, in non-Hindi-speaking

states, Hindi along with the regional language and English.

- > **First language:** The First Language that students should study is the 'Mother tongue' or the regional language
- > **Second language:** In Hindi-speaking states, the second-language would be English or some other language belonging to Modern India. In Non-Hindi states, the second language will be English or Hindi.
- > **Third language:** In Hindi-speaking states, the third language would be English or some other language belonging to Modern India, but the one that is not chosen as the second language. In Non-Hindi states, the third language will be English or some other language belonging to Modern India, but the one which is not chosen as the second language.

Hindi imposition

- œ The Dr.K. Kasturirangan Committee Draft Report of 2019 made a subtle change in the 'Three Language Formula.'
- œ It made Hindi mandatory in non- Hindi speaking States. (Later the Hindi mandatory rule was withdrawn after Southern States raised objection)
- œ The Draft Report removed the necessity to study a Southern language for the Hindi speaking States.
- œ Instead, it inserted the term 'modern Indian language.' Modern Indian Languages are the ones listed under the VIII Schedule of the Constitution of India.
- œ Thus a student in a Hindi speaking area could study Hindi as First language, Second language and English.

How Constitution of India deals with language?

- . Currently, the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution contains 22 official languages- Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri.

- . Article 346 of the Indian Constitution recognizes 'Hindi' in 'Devanagari' script as the **official language** of Union government India.
- . However, the Constitution did not declare Hindi as the National language, it rather accorded Hindi the status of 'official language' along with English.

Article 350A:

- . Article 350A of the Constitution deals with the facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at the primary stage.
- . It shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the 'mother-tongue' at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups; and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities.

Article 351:

- . Article 351 provides a directive for development of the Hindi language.
- . It shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without

interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule, and by drawing, wherever necessary or desirable, for its vocabulary, primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages.

Why Tamil Nadu is opposing?

- œ Tamil Nadu felt that the 'Three Language Formula' was a ploy to introduce Hindi into Non-Hindi States and resisted the implementation.
- œ Tamil Nadu adopted a two language formula — Tamil and English. Hindi speaking States did not adopt a South Indian language.
- œ They too went for a two language formula. Hindi speaking States don't have a need for a South Indian language same as the Southern States do not have a need for Hindi.

CONCLUSION

Today, India needs the acceptance of 'multilingualism' for the diversity to continue in all domains. It needs to concentrate on the effective teaching/ learning of languages — regional language and English in South, regional language and English in the Hindi belt, regional language and English in the North East. Knowing only one language is a handicap. It's time to pay attention to increasing the language proficiency level of students.



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HIROSHIMA MARKS 75TH A-BOMB ANNIVERSARY

CONTEXT

The city of Hiroshima in western Japan marks the 75th anniversary of the world's first nuclear attack

◎ BACKGROUND

- œ The United States dropped the first atomic bomb (*the uranium bomb known as "Little Boy"*) on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, destroying the city.
- œ By the end of 1945, about 140,000 people — mostly civilians, and around 40% of the city's population prior to the attack — had died either in the blast or as a result of aftereffects.
- œ The US dropped a second bomb (*"Fat Man," a plutonium bomb*) three days later on the southern city of Nagasaki, which is estimated to have claimed a further 74,000 lives in 1945 alone.
- œ Japan declared its surrender days later, on August 15, 1945, ending World War II and, more broadly, its aggression toward Asian neighbors that had lasted nearly half a century.
- œ The device that exploded over Hiroshima destroyed about two-third of the city's structures.
- œ The atomic bombing of Japan was a hugely significant final act of the most destructive global conflict in human history.
- œ Simultaneously, it signalled the dawn of the atomic age, the arms race between the US and the Soviet Union and - before too long - the cold war.

◎ ANALYSIS

Why did the US drop the bomb?

- œ Japan was a fierce enemy of the US and its allies, Britain, China and the Soviet Union during World War II.
- œ By 1945, the allies had turned the tide of the war and pushed the Japanese forces back from many locations.
- œ The decision to take nuclear action against Japan is widely justified as a measure designed to end World War Two and thus save countless lives that might otherwise have been lost in battle.
- œ The atomic assaults were viewed by the US as a swift alternative to an ongoing Allied attempt to invade Japan, a plan that had so far proved unnervingly messy.
- œ The Japanese had publicly stated their intent to fight to the bitter end, and were using tactics such as kamikaze attacks, suicide attacks by Japanese fighter pilots against US warships.

- œ In July 1945, US President Harry Truman and allies demanded the "immediate and unconditional" surrender of Japan, but Japan did not issue a clear response.
- œ Shortly after, the US attacked Hiroshima, chosen because it was seen as a "strategically sound" target based on calculations around weather conditions, aircraft range, military impact and the impact on "enemy morale"

Why was Hiroshima chosen as a target?

- œ Hiroshima was a major Japanese military hub with factories, military bases and ammunition facilities.
- œ Historians say the United States picked it as a suitable target because of its size and landscape, and carefully avoided fire bombing the city ahead of time so American officials could accurately assess the impact of the atomic attack.
- œ The United States said the bombings hastened Japan's surrender and prevented the need for a U.S. invasion of Japan.
- œ Some historians today say Japan was already close to surrendering, but there is still debate in the U.S.

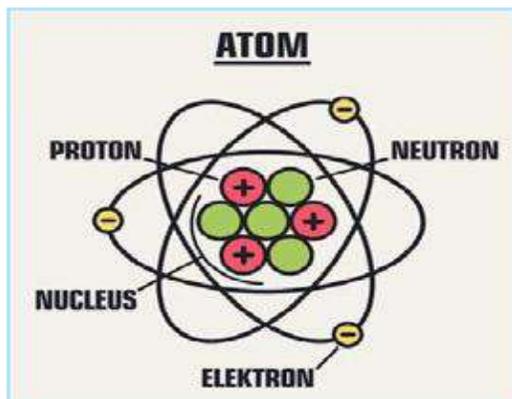
What effect did radiation have?

- œ Many people exposed to radiation developed symptoms such as vomiting and hair loss. Most of those with severe radiation symptoms died within three to six weeks.
- œ Others who lived beyond that developed health problems related to burns and radiation-induced cancers and other illnesses.
- œ The impact of the bomb was so terrific that practically all living things - human and animal - were literally seared to death by the tremendous heat and pressure set up by the blast.
- œ Thousands more died from their injuries, radiation sickness and cancer in the years that followed, bringing the toll closer to 200,000.
- œ But the damage did not end there. The radiation released from the explosion kept causing suffering.
- œ Five to six years after the bombings, the incidence of leukaemia increased noticeably among survivors. After about a decade, survivors began suffering from thyroid, breast, lung and other cancers at higher than normal rates.

- œ Survivors have a higher risk of developing cataracts and cancer. About 136,700 people certified as “hibakusha,” as victims are called, under a government support program are still alive and entitled to regular free health checkups and treatment.
- œ Health monitoring of second-generation hibakusha began recently.
- œ Japan’s government provided no support for victims until a law was finally enacted in 1957 under pressure from them.

What is an atomic bomb?

- . An atom is the basic unit of matter. The nucleus of an atom is made of smaller particles called protons and neutrons. Other atomic particles called electrons surround the nucleus.
- . Elements are the simplest chemical substances and consist of atoms that all have the same number of protons.
- . In the 1930s, scientists showed that nuclear energy could be released from an atom, either by splitting the nucleus (fission) or fusing two smaller atoms to form a larger one (fusion).
- . As the second world war erupted, intense research focused on how to artificially induce nuclear fission by firing a free neutron into an atom of radioactive uranium or plutonium.
- . Through their efforts, scientists found a way to induce a chain reaction within a bomb that would generate an unprecedented amount of energy.
- . An atomic bomb causes massive destruction through intense heat, pressure, radiation and radioactive fallout. At the hypocentre (centre of the blast), the heat is so intense, it vaporises people and buildings.



How the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki Changed the World?

- œ Whether or not the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki should be viewed as a horrific necessity or an ethically indefensible aberration, it’s impossible to deny the powerful historic precedent that they set.
- œ By granting the world a terrifying vision of the apocalyptic horror that nuclear warfare can inflict, the strikes on Japan have cast a long shadow over the last seven decades.
- œ The bombing was only a small part of the overall coverage of World War II (or barely mentioned at all).
- œ It was the start of the Cold War.

Can the world afford any future nuclear war?

- œ If a nuclear weapon were to be detonated over a city today, first responders - hospitals, firemen, aid organisations - would simply be unable to help.
- œ Nuclear weapons are depicted as so inhumane as to justify global prohibition of their production, retention or use.
- œ Any future nuclear warfare is predicted to have far more severe humanitarian and environmental consequences than the 1945 strikes on Japan.

The ‘World’ 75 years later

- œ There are growing tensions between global powers.
 - > Relations between Russia and the US, the two nuclear superpowers, are under significant strain and both are modernising their nuclear arsenals.
 - > Meanwhile, strategic competition between the US and China has sparked fears of a new cold war. There are a range of disputes between the two countries which could lead to a further deterioration in relations.
- œ At the same time, international arms control and disarmament mechanisms have begun to unravel.
- œ In 2019, the US withdrew from the **Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty**, which had banned nuclear-capable, land-launched missiles with a range between 500km and 5,500km, accusing Russia of non-compliance.
- œ The US also withdrew from the **Open Skies Treaty**, which allowed mutual surveillance of each country’s territories.
- œ The **New Start agreement**, the last remaining limit on US and Russia arsenals, is set to expire in February 2021. While it’s positive that negotiations have begun, it is not at all clear the treaty will be extended.

- œ There has been little progress on other arms control and global disarmament initiatives.
- œ There have also been challenges to nuclear **non-proliferation**. The withdrawal of the US from the nuclear accord with Iran was a step backwards that has undermined efforts to avert nuclear proliferation in the region.
- œ Efforts to dissuade North Korea from pursuing nuclear weapons have failed, with the country having conducted **six nuclear warhead tests since 2006**.

Is the world ready for ‘Denuclearisation’?

- œ Seventy-five years later, the long-term goal of a nuclear weapon-free world remains a distant aspiration and there are several reasons to think that the level of nuclear weapons-related risk is rising.
- œ Though, denuclearisation advocacy has also been taken up globally in recent years.
- œ In 2017, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to **ICAN - the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons** – which successfully lobbied the UN General Assembly to hold a conference to negotiate a treaty banning nuclear weapons.
- œ The text of the **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons** was adopted by 122 states in 2017.
- œ States that wish to become parties to the treaty must commit to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. As of today, 60 states have signed the treaty, and of those, 13 have ratified it. Thirty-seven more ratifications are needed to make the treaty binding.
- œ However, none of the nine nuclear powers (United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea) support the ban.
- œ Australia’s refusal to endorse the ban is tied to this political reality. It is one of 30 “nuclear-weapon-endorsing-states” who rely on the nuclear “protection” of allies.
- œ The government argues for a “building blocks” approach instead, favouring incremental steps towards nuclear disarmament.

Counting the nuclear warheads

- œ The number of nuclear warheads has dropped from a peak of around 70,000 in the mid-1980s to about 14,000 today.
- œ But in the past 25 years, India, Pakistan and North Korea have established themselves as nuclear states

- œ China has expanded its modest arsenal.
- œ The United States and Russia — far and away the largest nuclear powers — have begun extricating themselves from treaties that have bound them since the end of the Cold War. 92% of these weapons are held by the US and Russia.

The people of Japan, very recently, have had legitimate cause to fear the nuclear threat posed by North Korea.

What the world needs to do?

- œ **Re-energising the agenda:** Given the rising tensions and uncertainty, there is an urgent need to re-energise the global nuclear non-proliferation agenda and reduce the risk of the use of nuclear weapons. This is why Labour will place arms control and non-proliferation efforts at the heart of its foreign policy commitment to peace-building.
- œ **Similar political commitments:** Addressing rising nuclear risk requires the same political commitment and statecraft that achieved disarmament breakthroughs in the past.
- œ **Completing commitments:** Members must look to finally complete the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Any testing of nuclear weapons has the potential to undo much of the progress we have seen on arms control over the last 60 years. Under a Labour government, the UK ratified the CTBT but currently France and Russia are the only other nuclear-armed states to have ratified it. Britain should become a renewed advocate for the treaty.
- œ **Strengthening the NPT:** In the same vein, the global powers must look to strengthen the NPT.
 - > Turning 50 this year, the NPT is the most important treaty in the history of nuclear disarmament, but there are important non-signatories outside the agreement.
 - > The 2020 review conference for the treaty, which has been postponed due to Covid-19 to 2021, is an important opportunity to reinvigorate the multilateral disarmament agenda and address the lack of progress on the commitments made in 2010.

© **CONCLUSION**

Today, after 75 years, the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki continue to work hard to ensure that the consequences of the atomic bombings are not lost to history. It reminds the world that nuclear weapons could unleash if used again. The responsible world demands and needs a ‘denuclearised future’.

SECTION: B
(PRELIMS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS



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AYODHYA'S RAM TEMPLE, A 3-STOREY STRUCTURE WITH NAGARA STYLE ARCHITECTURE

◎ **CONTEXT:** The Ram Temple in Ayodhya will be built in the Nagara style of architecture and on the lines of North Indian temple architecture. It will comprise three stories with pillars and domes. It will be double the size of the previous planned design.

◎ **ABOUT:** **The Nagara or North Indian Temple Architecture:**

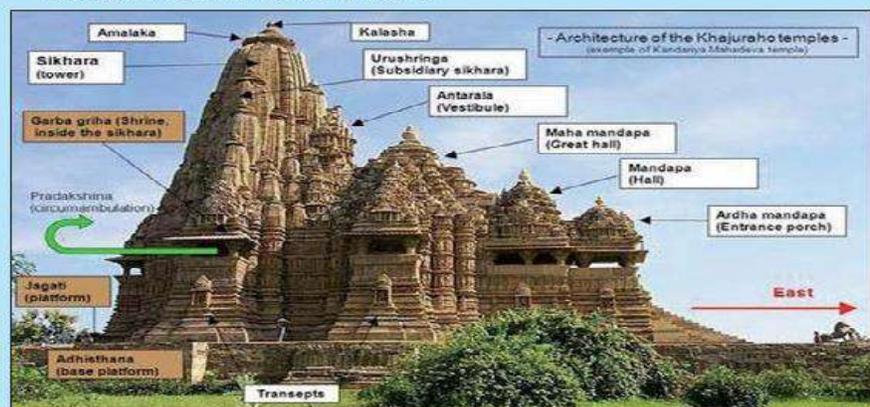
- The Nagara style is mainly associated with the land between the Himalayas and Vindhyas.
- The basic plan of Nagara temple is square, with a number of graduated projections (rathakas) in the middle of each face which gives it a **cruciform shape** in the exterior.
- A temple tower or a conical or convex shikhara marks the elevation of the temples.
- The shikhara consists of several layers of carved courses usually crowned by an amalaka (notched ring stone).
- The two basic factors of the style- the cruciform plan and the curvilinear shikhara are visible in northern temples from the 6th century CE, in the late Gupta period.
- Earlier temples began with a single projection on each face and the plan came to be known as triratha. Later in the course of time, the number of projection was increased. The Dashavatara temple at Deogarh, UP, and the brick temple at Bhitargaon, UP are examples of early Nagara style of temples.

Basic components of a temple:

- **Garbhagriha or Sanctum:** Earlier, it was just a small cubicle with a small entrance but as time passed, it grew into a large chamber. It houses the idol or image of the deity.
- **Mandapa:** The entrance to the temple and it features space for a large number of worshippers to gather at this place. It can be described as a hall which has a roof supported by a number of pillars.

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Shikhar or Vimana: It is a mountain-like spire which is generally seen in the temples that were constructed after fifth century AD. In North India style, it is called Shikhar while in South India it is called Vimana. Shikhar has a curved shape while Vimana has a pyramidal tower-like shape.

- . **Antrala or vestibule:**The mandapa in front of garbhagriha is called as Antrala or vestibule.
- . **Mahamandapa or Gudhamandapa:** The large wall in front of Antarala is called Mahamandapa or Gudhamandapa.
- . **Ardhamandapa or half porch:** There is also a smaller mandapa in front of Mahamandapa which is called as Ardhmandapa or half porch. This is followed by Dwara or doorways.
- . **Pradakshinapath:**The garbhagriha is surrounded by a corridor or circulatory path called Pradakshinapath.

- ◎ **BACKGROUND:**
 - The design was revamped after the Supreme Court in 2019 paved the way for the construction of a temple at a spot in Ayodhya where devotees believe Lord Ram was born.
 - The court directed the Centre to allot an alternative five-acre plot for building a new mosque in Ayodhya.
 - The mosque in Ayodhya was demolished in December 1992 by 'karsevaks' who claimed an ancient Ram temple had stood on the same site.

RBI ANNOUNCES ECONOMIC MEASURES TO COUNTER THE CORONAVIRUS IMPACT ON ECONOMY

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a slew of measures in order to provide relief for the ongoing Coronavirus outbreak in India, following a three-day meeting of its six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

Key-Highlights of the measures

- . Repo rate unchanged at 4%
- . Reverse repo rates unchanged at 3.35%
- . Accommodative stance maintained
- . Allows one-time restructuring of corporate loans
- . LTV ratio for gold loans relaxed to 90% from 75%
- . Introduces mechanism of Positive Pay for all cheques of value Rs 50,000 and above
- . Additional special liquidity facility of Rs 10,000 crore to be provided to NABARD & NHB

On Forex

- . Ratio of forex reserves to external debt has increased from 76% to 85.5%
- . Forex reserves rose by USD 56.8 billion in FY21 so far from April to July
- . Forex reserves now stand at USD 534.6 bn or 13.4 months of import

On inflation

- . MPC expects headline inflation to remain elevated in Q2FY21

- . MPC expects headline inflation to ease in the second half of FY
- . Inflation pressures evident across all sub-groups
- . More favourable food inflation may emerge on bumper rabi crop
- . High pump prices of fuel could impart cost pressure
- . Inflation base effect favourable in H2
- . External demand expected to remain anaemic due to pandemic

Outlook on the current scenario

- . For 2021, real GDP growth is expected to be negative
- . Space for further monetary action is available but advisable to be judicious
- . MPC will remain watchful w.r.t. inflation dynamics to further use space available on monetary side when appropriate
- . 250 bps rate cut is working through the system
- . Portfolio inflows to EMs have resumed and EM currencies have appreciated
- . Early signs of revival in May/June subdued in July due to renewed surge in Covid-19 cases
- . High frequency indicators have leveled off after resumption of local lockdowns
- . Producer sentiment on input prices remains muted
- . Supply chain disruptions persist with implications on prices of food & non-food items
- . Protein based food items could be a pressure point
- . OMOs, Twist, LTRO & TLTRO measures being sterilised via reverse repo ops

Additional Measures to Address COVID-19-Triggered Disruptions

The rise of COVID-19 cases under fragile macroeconomic and financial conditions has forced the central bank to come out with additional measures. The objective of these measures is to:

- . enhance liquidity support for financial markets, other stakeholders
- . further ease financial stress due to COVID-19 disruptions, strengthen credit discipline
- . improve credit flow
- . deepen digital payment systems
- . augment customer safety in cheque payments
- . facilitate innovations across financial sector

The Monetary Policy Process

Monetary policy refers to the policy of the central bank with regard to the use of monetary instruments under its control to achieve the goals specified in the Act. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is vested with the responsibility of conducting monetary policy. This responsibility is explicitly mandated under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.

- . The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) constituted by the Central Government under Section 45ZB determines the policy interest rate required to achieve the inflation target.
- . The Reserve Bank's Monetary Policy Department (MPD) assists the MPC in formulating the monetary policy.
- . This is the first scheduled policy review since February.

- . The RBI's six-member Monetary Policy Committee has already met twice outside its bi-monthly cycle, first in March and then in May, on account of the fast-changing macroeconomic situation arising from the coronavirus pandemic.

RBI SETS UP PANEL FOR STRESSED LOANS RESOLUTION NORMS'

◎ **CONTEXT:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) constituted the proposed expert committee under the chairmanship of veteran banker K.V. Kamath to make recommendations on norms for the resolution of COVID-19 related stressed loans.

- ◎ **ABOUT:**
- The Committee will be headed by K.V. Kamath.
 - œ K V Kamath, a career banker, was till 2009 the MD & CEO of ICICI Bank.
 - œ Kamath in his last stint was associated with the **BRICS led New Development Bank (NDB)** as Chairman and Director, a position he had assumed in 2015.
 - . The other members of the Committee are as follow:
 - œ Diwakar Gupta (effective September 1, 2020, after the completion of his term as Vice President, ADB)
 - œ T.N. Manoharan (effective August 14, 2020, after the completion of his term as Chairman, Canara Bank)
 - œ Ashvin Parekh, Strategy Advisor (CEO, Indian Banks' Association, as the Member Secretary)
 - . The **Indian Banks' Association (IBA)** will function as the secretariat to the committee and the committee will be fully empowered to consult or invite any person it deems fit.

Indian Banks' Association (IBA)

- . Indian Banks' Association (IBA) is an association of Indian banks and financial institutions.
- . It was formed on 26 September 1946 in Mumbai as a representative body of management of banking operating in India.

- . The committee will submit its recommendations to the apex bank, which will notify them along with modifications, if any, in 30 days.

◎ **BACKGROUND**

- As part of the statement on **Developmental and Regulatory Policies** released along with the **Monetary Policy Statement**, the Reserve Bank has announced a 'Resolution Framework for Covid19-related Stress', as a special window under the **Prudential Framework on Resolution of Stressed Assets** issued in 2019.
- . The resolution framework envisages constitution of an expert committee by the RBI to make recommendations on the required financial parameters to be factored in into the resolution plans, with sector-specific benchmark ranges for such parameters.
- . The Expert Committee shall also undertake the process validation for the resolution plans to be implemented under this framework, without going into the commercial aspects, in respect of all accounts with aggregate exposure of Rs 1500 crore and above at the time of invocation

Impact of COVID-19 on new and existing stressed assets:

- . COVID 19 and consequent lockdowns have caused economic disruptions across the world, on account of disrupted supply chains and altered consumption patterns.
- . In India, this disruption has been aggravated by the migrant labour crisis, and the prevalence of slow growth and high unemployment even prior to the lockdown.
- . This is likely to exacerbate the existing twin balance sheet problem.

Stressed assets

- . Stressed assets = NPAs + Restructured loans + Written off assets
 - > **Non-Performing Assets:** A loan whose interest and/or installment of principal have remained 'overdue ' (not paid) for a period of 90 days is considered as NPA
 - > **Restructured asset:** Restructured asset or loan are that assets which got an extended repayment period, reduced interest rate, converting a part of the loan into equity, providing additional financing, or some combination of these measures.
 - > **Written off assets:** Written off assets are those the bank or lender doesn't count the money borrower owes to it.

RBI TO BROUGHT STARTUPS UNDER PRIORITY SECTOR LENDING (PSL)'

◎ **CONTEXT:**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) brought startups under the purview of priority sector lending (PSL), a move that will make it easier for startups to raise funds from banks.

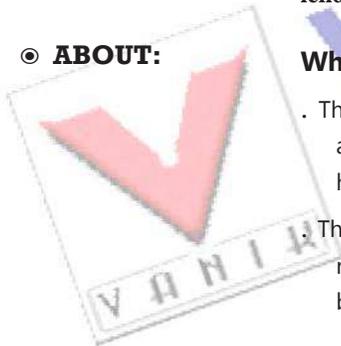
◎ **ABOUT:**

What is Priority Sector Lending?

- . The RBI mandates banks to lend a certain portion of their funds to specified sectors-- agriculture, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), export credit, education, housing, social infrastructure, renewable energy and others.
- . The idea behind this is to ensure that adequate institutional credit reaches some of the rather vulnerable sectors of the economy, which otherwise may not be attractive for banks from the profitability point of view.

The existing guidelines:

- . Under existing guidelines, bank loans up to a limit of Rs 150 million for purposes like solar power generators, biomass power generators, wind mills, micro-hydel plants and for non-conventional energy based public utilities like street lighting systems and remote village electrification are currently eligible to be classified under priority sector loans under the '**Renewable Energy**' category.
- . For individual households, the loan limit is Rs 1 million per borrower.
- . The PSL guidelines were last reviewed by the RBI in April 2015.
- . The revised guidelines also aim to encourage and support environment friendly lending policies to help achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Startups

- Startups are companies or ventures that are focused around a single product or service that the founders want to bring to market.
- These companies typically don't have a fully developed business model and, more importantly, lack adequate capital to move on to the next phase of business.
- Most of these companies are initially funded by their founders.
- Startups were considered under the MSME category and were required to show three years of profitability.

Significance of the step

- **Low cost debts:** This move will help startups free up their equity and raise low cost debt. Banks will now see startups more seriously while providing them loans.
- **Reducing dependency:** The inclusion of startups in the PSL category is expected to add value by reducing dependence on equity capital.
- **More liquidity:** It will enhance the liquidity options available to startups.

UNESCO-IOC TSUNAMI-READY RECOGNITION TO ODISHA COMMUNITIES'

◎ CONTEXT:

Odisha has achieved another milestone in disaster management. Venkatraipur in Ganjam and Noliyasi in Jagatsinghpur have been recognised by UNESCO-IOC as Tsunami-Ready Communities.

◎ ABOUT:

- The Indian Ocean Tsunami Ready Programme of IOC-UNESCO is a community performance-based programme.
- It facilitates tsunami preparedness as an active collaboration of the community, community leaders, and national and local emergency management agencies.
- The main objective of this programme is-
 - œ to improve coastal community preparedness for tsunami emergencies
 - œ to minimize the loss of life and property
 - œ to ensure structural and systematic approach in building community preparedness.
- The Tsunami Ready program is implemented by the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA).



Tsunami

- A tsunami is a series of great sea waves caused by an underwater earthquake, landslide, or volcanic eruption.
- More rarely, a tsunami can be generated by a giant meteor impact with the ocean.
- A tsunami is not a single wave but a series of waves, also known as a wave train. The first wave in a tsunami is not necessarily the most destructive. Tsunamis are not tidal waves.

How Odisha is emerging as a role model?

- . The UNESCO recognition to Odisha is an outcome of the efforts of the government to promote tsunami preparedness through active collaboration of public, community leaders, and national and local emergency management agencies.
- . Odisha has emerged as a role model in disaster preparedness with decades of positive intervention by the government, civil society groups, and NGOs.
- . The state has won praise from numerous national and international organisations, including the United Nations, for its deft handling of cyclones Phailin and Fani.
- . **Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA)** won the IT Excellence Award, 2019, for its innovative conception by using information technology in the field of disaster management.
 - œ The OSDMA was established in 1999, much before the Disaster Management Act was passed in 2005, and the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) was constituted in 2001.

Significance of the recognition

- œ **Emerging as a role model:** The recognition by the UNESCO is a great achievement for Odisha for their Tsunami preparedness. It would make Odisha a role model for tsunami preparedness. With this award, the state is motivated to make the balance 326 villages and urban local bodies Tsunami ready in a time period of one year.
- œ **International recognition:** With this recognition, India becomes the first country to implement Tsunami Ready in the Indian Ocean Region and Odisha, the first state to achieve this feat.

TRUMP SIGNS ORDER AGAINST HIRING H-1B VISA HOLDERS FOR FEDERAL CONTRACTS'

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** In a huge blow to Indian IT professionals eyeing the US job market, President Donald Trump signed an executive order preventing federal agencies from contracting or subcontracting foreign workers -- mainly those on H-1B visa -- from hiring.
- ◎ **ABOUT:** **What is H-1B visa?**
 - . The H-1B is a visa in the United States under the Immigration and Nationality Act, which allows US employers to temporarily employ foreign workers in speciality occupations.
 - . A speciality occupation requires the application of a specialised knowledge and a bachelor's degree or equivalent of work experience.
 - œ The duration of a stay is three years and can be extended up to six years.
 - œ Once this period is over, the visa holder will need to re-apply.
 - . The law says that employers must generally withhold Social Security and Medicare taxes from the wages paid to employees in H1B visa status.
 - . A person in the H-1B visa status must continue to be employed by the employer in order to stay in the H-1B status.
 - . In case the employment ends for any reason, the employee must be leave the United States, unless the person applies for and is granted change in status or finds another employer with the H-1B status.
 - . Apart from the H-1B visas, the US government also issues L1 visas which allow companies to transfer highly skilled workers to US for a period of up to seven years.
 - . H-2B visas allow food and agricultural workers to seek employment in the US.

◎ **BACKGROUND**

- The move came over a month after the Trump administration in June 23 suspended the H-1B visas along with other types of foreign work visas until the end of 2020 to protect American workers in a crucial election year.
- The new restrictions took effect from June 24.

The impact on Indians:

- The proclamation issued will immediately affect the processing of all new H-1B, H-2B, J and L visa categories.
- This would mean that those who do not have a valid non-immigrant visa as of June 23 and those who are outside the US, will not be allowed to enter the country until December 31 2020.
- While about 70% of the H-1B and L-1 visas are granted to Indian nationals, this June Ban is unlikely to have a major, immediate impact on Indian IT/ITeS companies as only a relatively small number of H-1B employees will be affected.
- However, those workers in essential services in the food sector have been given a reprieve and their entry shall be decided by the consular officer of the immigration services.
- Suspension of the H1-B visas by the US will cost domestic IT firms Rs 1,200 crore and have a marginal 0.25-0.30 per cent impact on their profitability.

The new order however will not impact H-1B, H2B, J and L visa holders and their spouses or children who are already in the US.

US VOTES AGAINST CUBA ON UNHRC'

◎ **CONTEXT:**

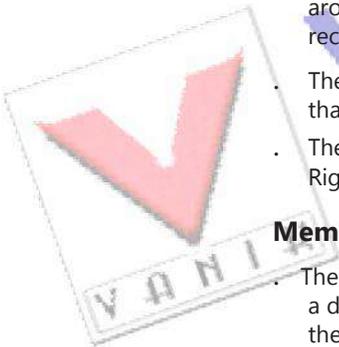
The United States has urged UN members not to support Cuba's bid to join the organisation's Human Rights Council.

◎ **ABOUT:**

- The UN Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them.
- The UNHRC has "the ability to discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations that require its attention throughout the year".
- The Human Rights Council replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR).

Membership

- The Council is made up of 47 UN Member States, which are elected by the UNGA through a direct and secret ballot. The General Assembly takes into account the contribution of the candidate states to the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as their voluntary pledges and commitments in this regard.
- The seats are distributed geographically and are awarded for a period of three years. Members are not eligible for immediate re-election after serving two consecutive terms.
- Seats on the Council are distributed as follows:
 - œ **African States:** 13 seats
 - œ **Asia-Pacific States:** 13 seats
 - œ **Latin American and Caribbean States:** 8 seats
 - œ **Western European and other States:** 7 seats
 - œ **Eastern European States:** 6 seats



The upcoming elections

- As the UN Human Rights Council is set to elect 15 new members this fall, Russia and China are both vying for seats at the 47-nation group.
- Cuba, which sat on the UNHRC in 2014-2016 and 2017-2019, has applied to fill one of the regional vacancies for 2021-2023.

India and UNHRC

- India has been elected eight times to the UN Security Council.
- India was elected to the United Nations' top human rights body for a period of three years beginning January 1, 2019.
- India has been seeking a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council as a member of the G4, an organization composed of Brazil, Germany, Japan, and India, all who are currently seeking permanent representation.

LOKMANYA BAL GANGADHAR TILAK'S 100TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY'

◎ CONTEXT:

One of the firebrand freedom fighters and the strongest proponent of 'purnaswaraj' or 'total self-rule', Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak's 100th death anniversary was observed on August 1, 2020.

◎ ABOUT:

- Bal Gangadhar Tilak was a scholar, a writer, mathematician and a philosopher. He was given the title, 'Lokmanya', which means 'beloved leader' by his followers.
- Lokmanya Tilak received his education at the Deccan College in Pune and he earned his Bachelor's degree in 1876, in mathematics and Sanskrit. Later he also studied law at the University of Bombay.
- He founded the Deccan Education Society in 1884 with an aim to educate common people in English.
- Lokmanya Tilak founded and edited two newspapers - Kesari in Marathi and The Mahratta in English. He used his pen as a weapon to criticise the colonial rulers.
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak tirelessly contributed to help the country break free from the British rule.
- Part of the Lal-Bal-Pal (Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal) troika, Bal Gangadhar Tilak was called 'father of the Indian unrest' by British colonial rulers.
- He was imprisoned a number of times including a long stint at Mandalay in Myanmar. During his years in prison, he spent his time reading and writing. He wrote the famous 'Gita Rahasya' - an analysis of the Karma Yoga which finds its source in The Bhagavad Gita.
- While Jawaharlal Nehru called him the 'father of Indian revolution', Mahatma Gandhi described Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak as 'the maker of modern India'.

Poorna Swaraj

- Bal Gangadhar Tilak, often referred to as the 'father of the Indian unrest', was one of the first revolutionists who not only raised their voice against the British Raj in India but also channelised the patriotism and anguish of the general public towards the unsettling oppression, tyranny and injustice inflicted on Indians under the colonial rule, to the attainment of **poornaswaraj** (complete independence).
- On 26 January 1930, the Indian National Congress, in an electrifying resolution, declared Purna Swaraj - complete freedom from the British Raj.



- . The Indian National Congress met in Lahore in December 1929. In December 1929, after Jawaharlal Nehru was elected the party president, the Indian National Congress passed a resolution for 'purnaswaraj' or complete independence from the British.
- . One option before the Congress was to demand Dominion Status, under which India would have still remained at least nominally under British rule.
- . The Congress rejected this option, and instead asked for Purna Swaraj, which means Full Independence.

Swaraj is my birth right and I shall have it -LokmanyaTilak

EWS QUOTA PROBLEM REFERRED TO CONSTITUTION BENCH'

◎ **CONTEXT:** The Supreme Court referred to a five-judge Bench the “substantial question of law” whether or not grant of 10% reservation to economically weaker sections of the society is ‘unconstitutional’ and violates the 50% ceiling cap on quota declared by the courtroom itself.

◎ **ABOUT:**

The EWS Quota

- . It provides for 10% reservation in government jobs and educational institutions for EWS, by amending Articles 15 and 16 that deal with the fundamental right to equality.
- . While Article 15 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, Article 16 guarantees equal opportunity in matters of public employment.
- . An additional clause was added to both provisions, giving Parliament the power to make special laws for EWS like it does for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Castes.
- . The states are to notify who constitute EWS to be eligible for reservation.

Key-Highlights of the development

- . A 3-judge Bench led by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde mentioned the first query for the Constitution Bench to determine is whether or not “economic backwardness” might be the only criterion for granting quota in authorities jobs and academic establishments for individuals who would in any other case should compete within the basic class.
- . The three-judge Bench had refused to remain the implementation of the Constitution (103rd Amendment) Act, which offers the 10% quota, when it had reserved for orders a year in the past.
- . Several petitioners had challenged the validity of the Constitutional Amendment, saying the 50% quota restrict was a part of the Basic Structure of the Constitution.
- . The financial reservation was launched within the Constitution by amending Articles 15 and 16 and including clauses empowering the State governments to supply reservation on the premise of financial backwardness.

What’s the need to refer to a larger bench?

- . A reference to a larger Bench means that the legal challenge is an important one.
- . As per Article 145(3) of the Constitution, “**the minimum number of Judges who are to sit for the purpose of deciding any case involving a substantial question of law as to the interpretation of this Constitution” shall be five.**
- . The Supreme Court rules of 2013 also say that writ petitions that allege a violation of fundamental rights will generally be heard by a bench of two judges unless it raises substantial questions of law. In that case, a five-judge bench would hear the case.
- . Laws made by Parliament are presumed to be constitutional until proven otherwise in court. The SC had refused to stay the 103rd Amendment.

- . A reference will make no difference to the operation of the EWS quota.

Why is the quota challenged?

- . The law was challenged primarily on two grounds.
 - œ **Violating the Basic Structure of the Constitution:** This argument stems from the view that the special protections guaranteed to socially disadvantaged groups is part of the Basic Structure and that the 103rd Amendment departs from this by promising special protections on the sole basis of economic status.
 - œ **Violating the fundamental right to practise a trade/profession:** Another challenge has been made on behalf of private, unaided educational institutions. They have argued that their fundamental right to practise a trade/profession is violated when the state compels them to implement its reservation policy and admit students on any criteria other than merit.

AMMONIUM NITRATE LINKED TO CATASTROPHIC BEIRUT EXPLOSION'

◎ **CONTEXT:**

Beirut was declared a “disaster city”, in the wake of a huge explosion in the port of the Lebanese capital that left at least 135 people dead and 5,000 injured, caused by over 2,700 tonnes of ammonium nitrate kept in storage for over six years.

◎ **ABOUT:**

Ammonium nitrate, the substance

- . NO3) is a white, crystalline chemical which is soluble in water.
 - . It is the main ingredient in the manufacture of commercial explosives used in mining and construction.
 - . In India, The Ammonium Nitrate Rules, 2012, under The Explosives Act, 1884, define ammonium nitrate as the-
 “compound with formula NH4NO3 including any mixture or compound having more than 45 per cent ammonium nitrate by weight including emulsions, suspensions, melts or gels but excluding emulsion or slurry explosives and non explosives emulsion matrix and fertilizers from which the ammonium nitrate cannot be separated”.

Regulation of Ammonium Nitrate in India

The manufacture, conversion, bagging, import, export, transport, possession for sale or use of ammonium nitrate is covered under **The Ammonium Nitrate Rules, 2012.**

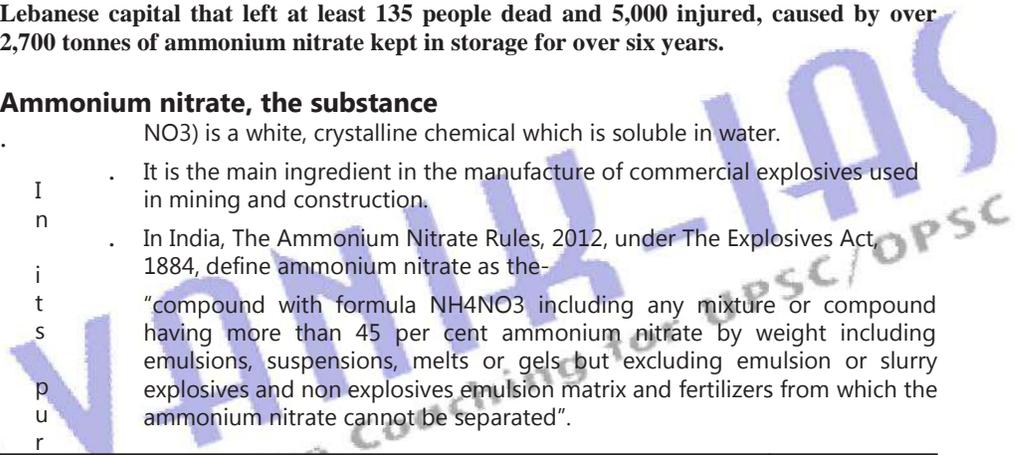
The rules also make storage of ammonium nitrate in large quantities in populated areas **illegal in India.**

For the manufacture of ammonium nitrate, an Industrial licence is required under the **Industrial Development and Regulation Act, 1951.**

A license under the Ammonium Nitrate Rules, 2012 is also required for any activity related to ammonium nitrate.

Is it explosive?

- . Pure ammonium nitrate is not an explosive on its own. It is classified as an **oxidiser (Grade 5.1)** under the **United Nations classification of dangerous goods.**
- . If mixed with ingredients like fuel or some other contaminants, or because of some other external factors, it can be very explosive.



. However, for combinations to explode, triggers like detonators are required. Many Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) used by terrorists around the world have ANFO as the main explosive, triggered by primary explosives like RDX or TNT.

Is stored ammonium nitrate a major fire hazard?

. Large quantities of stored ammonium nitrate are regarded as a major fire hazard.

. The explosion of large storage can happen primarily in two ways.

- œ **Contact with explosive mixture:** One is by some type detonation or initiation because the storage comes in contact with explosive mixture.
- œ **Fire or heat generation:** Second, the blast can result due to a fire which starts in the ammonium nitrate store because of the heat generated due to the oxidation process at large scale.

There are several documented examples of deadly ammonium nitrate fire and explosion incidents in the past, some with large numbers of fatalities like in China in 2015 and in Texas in 1947.



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CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYST
WEEK- 3 (AUGUST, 2020)

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SECTION: A **(MAINS)**

CURRENT AFFAIRS

TRANSPARENT TAXATION

CONTEXT

In a latest development, the government has launched drive to make taxation fairer and taxpayers fearless in the country.

ABOUT:

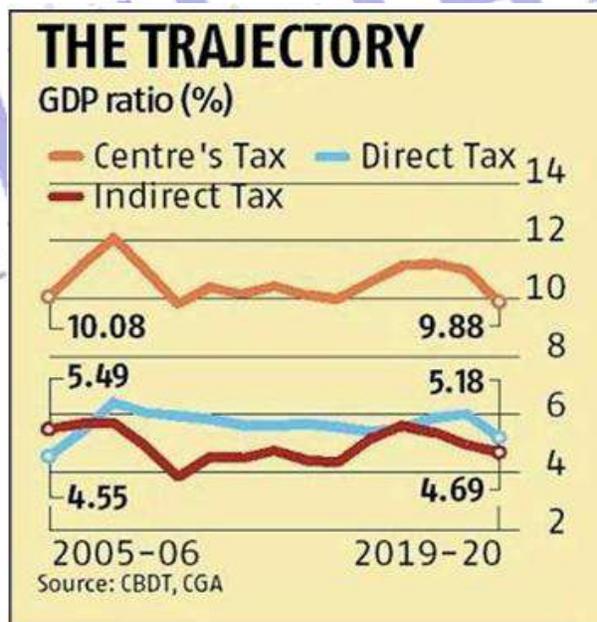
- œ The programme involves faceless assessment, faceless appeal and a tax payer charter. It seeks to improve tax payer experience and ease of doing business.
- œ The Faceless Assessment Scheme aims to eliminate the human interface between the taxpayer and the income tax department.
- œ Under the Faceless Appeals system introduced by the government, appeals will be randomly allotted to any officer across the country and the identity of the officer deciding the appeal will remain unknown. Further, decisions will be team-based.
- œ The aim of the tax payer *Charter* is that of nurturing the relationship between the Revenue departments and the community that they serve, a relationship of mutual trust and respect.
- œ The drive to honour honest tax payers comes after a series of steps in recent months aimed at making the administration more accountable for its dealings with tax payers, reduce tax litigation and for making compliance easy.
- œ The emphasis is on making every rule-law, policy people-centric and public friendly
- œ The initiative reflects India's vision towards 'minimum government, maximum governance.

Issues of tax evasion in India

- œ Even though India's income tax was instituted in 1922 by the British, our tax history explains the high degree of tax delinquency today.
- œ The government's deficiency in governmental expenditures is most notably attributed to wide spread tax evasion.
- œ Relative to other developing countries, the fact that India's income tax comprises 5% of its GDP is due to the fact nearly 1-3% of the population is exposed to income taxation. According income tax department, out of population of 130 crore people, only 1.5 crore pay income tax.
- œ Although India has improved its tax-to-GDP ratio in the last few years, it is still far lower than the average OECD ratio which is 34 per cent. India's tax-to-GDP ratio is lower than some of its peers in the developing world. Developed countries tend

to have higher tax-to-GDP ratio.

- œ India faces more difficulties in proliferating its income tax than a country like China, who subjects 20% of its population, because there is an emphatically low amount of formal wage earners.
- œ The exorbitant levels of tax evasion has inspired the creation of a black money parallel economy. Black money inherently causes inflation and hinders the government's ability to bring down the prices of commodities.
- œ In fact, the large volume of black money actually diverts governmental resources from national welfare and encourages the continuation of illegal activity.



Initiative taken by the government to improve tax collection

- œ The focus of the tax reforms in recent times has been on reduction in tax rates and on simplification of direct tax laws.
- œ Several initiatives have been taken by the CBDT for bringing in efficiency and transparency in the functioning of the IT Department. This includes bringing more transparency in official communication through the newly introduced Document Identification Number (DIN) wherein every communication of the Department would

- carry a computer generated unique document identification number.
- œ Similarly, to increase the ease of compliance for taxpayers, IT Department has moved forward with prefilling of income tax returns to make compliance more convenient for individual taxpayers. Compliance norms for startups have also been simplified.
 - œ The government had in 2019 offered businesses the option of a lower corporate tax rate to those not availing of any incentives and to new manufacturers.
 - œ Also steps have been taken to rationalize personal income tax rates to make the slabs more progressive so that tax payers' transition from lower slab to higher one is more smooth.
 - œ The government has also created Voluntary Disclosure of Income Schemes, whereby black income and assets can actually be declared without penalty or prosecution.
 - œ The Corporate Tax rates were reduced from 30 percent to 22 percent and for new manufacturing units the rates were reduced to 15 percent. Dividend distribution Tax was also abolished.
 - œ With a view to provide for resolution of pending tax disputes the IT Department also brought out the Direct Tax "Vivad se Vishwas Act, 2020" under which declarations for settling disputes are being filed currently.
 - œ IT Department has also made efforts to ease compliances for taxpayers during the Covid times by extending statutory timeliness for filing returns as also releasing refunds expeditiously to increase liquidity in the hands of taxpayers.

Suggestions to improve tax collections

- œ There is a reasonable opportunity to raise revenue since our tax-to-GDP ratio is about 16%. Following steps can be taken in this direction:
- œ **Cap on tax-free long-term capital gains:** Long-term capital gains on listed securities were exempt from income-tax to increase participation by retail investors in capital markets. But ultra high

networth individuals (HNIs) have benefited from tax-free capital gains more than retail investors. A reasonable cap on exemption for capital gains will protect retail investors' interest and at the same time increase tax collection.

- œ **Link transactions to filed taxes:** 1.2 million transactions couldn't be linked to tax returns filed. Significant tax collection can happen if this information is used to detect undisclosed income. A sustained campaign to highlight the ability of tax department to detect undisclosed income will improve tax compliance.
- œ **Curtailling unaccounted money:** Real estate provides a major avenue for deployment of cash/parallel economy proceeds. Trading hubs, party contractors, big-ticket purchases and cash couriers are all worth tracking for bringing the parallel economy under the tax net and increasing tax collection.
- œ **Increase service tax:** While service tax net has been widened, there may be more opportunities, especially in the unorganized sector. A nominal tax on a presumptive basis may incentivize the unorganised sector to come under the service tax net.
- œ **Need for effective dispute settlement mechanism:** Huge tax arrears suggest the need for launching an effective dispute settlement mechanism. A consent system can save considerable time and effort and convert arrears to actual tax collection.

CONCLUSION:

To foster economic growth and development India needs sustainable sources of funding for social programs and public investments. Programs providing health, education, infrastructure and other services are important to achieve the common goal of a prosperous, functional and orderly society. And they require that government raise revenues. While the recent initiatives taken by the government are significant step towards raising the revenue, more such efforts are needed in this direction.

KERALA STARES AT FLOOD HAVOC FOR THIRD STRAIGHT YEAR

CONTEXT

Incessant rain and strong winds swept across several parts of Kerala amid predictions of heavy or very heavy rain in many others, as the coastal state faces its third consecutive year of floods.

◎ BACKGROUND

- œ Due to the incessant rains in the State, all the dams have been filled with water. This is the third consecutive year when Kerala is facing a flood disaster.
- œ On the west, the coastal areas are being battered by a rough sea. On the east, along the fragile high ranges, sustained heavy rainfall in the last two days has set off innumerable high- and low-intensity landslides.
- œ And the midlands have been flooded by the rivers that have been bloated far beyond their banks by both the intense spells and the high-velocity waters dumped on them by the landslides.
- œ The state was bound to receive heavy rainfall due to the low pressure formed in the Bay of Bengal.
- œ But even the experts could not forecast this much rainfall during a short period.
- œ The extremely heavy rainfall in the Western Ghats led to floods and triggered landslides.

◎ ANALYSIS

The worsening floods in India

- œ India's summer monsoon has always been variable and has often precipitated floods, especially in the basins of the great Himalayan rivers.
- œ But a combination of global warming, unplanned urban growth, and environmental degradation is increasing flood risk in India.
- œ The extreme precipitation events are on the rise in large parts of India, especially multi-day deluges that lead to large-scale floods.
- œ Warmer temperatures are also speeding up glacier melt in the Himalayas, which is projected to increase flow rates in the Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers.
- œ As importantly, destruction of mountains and hills, as well as development on floodplains and marshes, are exacerbating risk, as seen in historic floods in the southern state of Kerala.
- œ Those floods were caused by extreme rainfall and mismanagement of dam reservoirs, but mining and construction in the Western Ghats, a major hill range, contributed to damaging landslides.

Floods

- . A flood happens when water overflows or soaks land that is normally dry. Flooding is caused by the inadequate capacity within the banks of the rivers to contain the high flows brought down from the upper catchments due to heavy rainfall.
- . Floods during monsoons are as common in the centre of India as much as they are in coastal states.
- . Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are prone to bad monsoons and saw the worst of it in the catastrophic floods last year that affected an estimated 40 million people.
- . Flooding is accentuated by erosion and silting of the river beds, resulting in a reduction of the carrying capacity of river channels
 - > earthquakes and landslides leading to changes in river courses and obstructions to flow
 - > synchronization of floods in the main and tributary rivers
 - > retardation due to tidal effects
 - > encroachment of floodplains
 - > haphazard and unplanned growth of urban areas.
- . Some parts of the country, mainly coastal areas of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, experience cyclones, which are often accompanied by heavy rainfall leading to flooding.

A look at numbers

- . The number of floods in India rose to 90 in the 10-year period from 2006 to 2015, up from 67 in the 10 years between 1996 to 2005, according to the **UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction**.
- . Globally, floods made up 47 percent of all climate-related disasters from 2006 to 2015, up from 40 percent in the 1996-2005 period, says the agency's 2015 report.

- . Overall flood mortality fell in those two decades, except in a handful of countries, including India, where death tolls continued to rise, from 13,660 from 1996 to 2005, to 15,860 from 2006 to 2015.
- . A 2017 global analysis by the **World Resources Institute** said that India has the most GDP exposed to river flooding (\$14.3 billion), a number that could rise 10-fold by 2030 as the economy continues to grow.

The special case of Kerala

- œ Kerala is a state on the southwestern, Malabar Coast of India. Kerala, which lies in the tropic region, is mostly subject to the type of humid tropical wet climate experienced by most of Earth's rainforests.
- œ The Indian state of Kerala receives some of India's highest rainfall during the monsoon season.
- œ Kerala is ecologically sensitive owing to the geography and topography of the region.
- œ Kerala has a total 5,924 quarries, an average of six quarries per panchayat, of which 3,332 are in the ecologically sensitive zones identified by Gadgil.
- œ In sum, 56% of the quarries are on fragile spots in the Western Ghats, making them prone to landslides.
- œ Practically, the entire state is drainage medium for run-off from the Western Ghats towards the Arabian Sea.
- œ As a result, the state has a dense network of rivers linking the hills to the sea.
- œ While rain is abundant across the state, the coastal regions, especially in northern Kerala, rather than the Western Ghats that receive the bulk of the rainfall during the monsoons.
- œ Because of this, Kerala's rivers are spared the flooding risks associated with rivers swollen with heavy volumes of run-off.

Why Kerala is prone to floods?

- œ **Massive construction:** Massive constructions have destroyed the slope of the hills and changed the course of rivers (Panamaram, in Wayanad). All of its tributaries are reclaimed now, and the water has nowhere to go.
- œ **Soil-piping:** Soil-piping is a major cause for the landslides witnessed in these places and the high ranges of Kerala will likely be worst hit if this continues.
 - > Also known as 'tunnel erosion', soil piping is the subsurface erosion of soil caused by percolating

waters to produce pipe-like conduits below the ground, especially in non-lithified earth materials.

- œ **Fragmentation of forests:** The fragmentation of forests is also reflected in human-animal conflict, that has been on a rise.
- œ **Unrestricted mining:** Unrestricted mining operations in both places have contributed to environmental degradation.
- œ **Rise in temperature:** The district has also witnessed a change in temperature of 2-3 degrees, that otherwise happens over centuries, over a short span of years.

How the floods brought to light the existence of illegal stone quarries?

- œ In 2011, the **Gadgil Committee** put together a bunch of **recommendations** to the central government about **ecologically-fragile regions** in the Western Ghats.
- œ They found the highest number of vulnerable zones in Kerala and cited several reasons for them being classified as such.
 - > Some reasons for its vulnerability were geographical, a challenge posed by its position amidst the Ghats.
- œ Many other causes – quarrying, mining, illegal repurposing of forests, and high-rise building constructions – were man-made, controllable factors that the state chose to **brush aside**.
- œ The flooding has definitely brought to light the existence of illegal stone quarries or a large number of unauthorised constructions on river beds.
- œ In this sense, it is definitely a man-made calamity where intense rainfall and human intervention have made it a serious disaster.
- œ The quarrying Prof Gadgil refers to, along with deforestation in the region, has intensified the horrific landslides the state is witnessing.

Is it a result of poor planning of disaster management authority?

- œ One of the most severely affected areas is **Ernakulum** in Kochi, along the **Periyar river**, into which excess water from the **Idamalayar dam** was drained.
- œ It is claimed that authorities waited till the water level in the **Idamalayar reservoir** reached its capacity of 169 feet, and had it been opened sooner, would likely have spared the massive evacuation efforts in the vicinity.
- œ **The authorities made a mistake** by opening all four gates of the dam at once, flooding the underlying regions at a much faster rate than expected.

œ It is clearly the result of poor planning by the disaster management authority.

What about weather predictions?

- œ Time and again, data and statistics on weather events have been used to fuel many arguments linking **freak weather** events, like the floods in Kerala, and climate change.
- œ Leading experts are wary about drawing the same conclusions; they state that weather data is complex, and particularly so in a tropical country like India.
- œ A climate **study** spanning 1950-2015 looks at extreme rain events in central India, which the researchers say happens three times as frequently in recent times as it did in 1950.
- œ These have also intensified, because **westerly winds** that move over an increasingly-warmer Arabian Sea carry surges in moisture with them as they move into the subcontinent during monsoons.
- œ Predicting such events can be done two-to-three weeks ahead, at best.

What's adding to the challenges?

- œ Unplanned urbanization is already increasing flooding. India added 90 million people to its urban population between 2001 and 2011, and will add 416 million more by 2050.
- œ In addition, sprawling Indian cities have been building on wetlands and expanding into floodplains. And urbanization itself may be affecting rainfall patterns.
- œ Urban heat islands could be intensifying thunderstorms over Mumbai.

What can India do to reduce its flood risk?

- œ **Eco-system flood management approach:** New ecosystem-based flood management approaches being promoted by international agencies have yet

to catch on in India. That includes planning cities with ponds and permeable surfaces, restoring wetlands and forests, and regulating development in floodplains and hills.

- œ **Strict policies:** The future remains bleak for Kerala with the villages adjoining the Western Ghats being located at a slope of +30 degree angle, no scientific mining policies in place and massive mining operations going on in the high ranges. The state needs strict policies and rules in place.
- œ **Eco-friendly living:** The state needs to embrace eco-friendly living and ensure minimum exploitation of our land.
- œ **Better management:** Better preparedness and quick response is the need of the hour. Dam management needs to be more scientific during monsoons
- œ **Community involvement:** A strong bond within the community is essential in emergency situations
- œ **Protection of wetlands:** There is need to protect wetlands and water channels to avoid floods
- œ **Ban on mining:** Mining operations should be banned in ecologically fragile areas.
- œ **Responsible construction model:** There's a need to develop responsible house construction modules.

● CONCLUSION

Tropical countries like India evolve differently than countries in the West, which have larger land area and time periods over which to observe and predict a given weather event. Average temperatures throughout Southeast Asia were seen rising, and rainfall growing more erratic, particularly in India. These weather changes will continue to shadow us over coming decades. States such as Kerala are at a substantial risk of flood-related damage in the century to follow. The time for change is now but the question is, will Kerala learn from its mistakes?

INDIA ANNOUNCES \$500 MILLION FOR MALDIVES

CONTEXT

Even as the Covid-19 crisis strained its own economy, India has loosened its purse strings and pledged a new financial package of \$ 500 million to support an infrastructure project in the Maldives – ostensibly to counter China’s attempts to spread its geo-strategic influence over the Indian Ocean nation.

● ABOUT:

- œ The amount announced to help Maldives connect the capital Male to three nearby islands, stepping up New Delhi’s diplomatic efforts in a region China has also been focusing recently.
- œ The Greater Malé Connectivity Project (GMCP) will get a financial package consisting of a grant of \$ 100 million and a new Line of Credit of \$ 400 million from New Delhi.
- œ Besides this mega project, Delhi also announced the launch of cargo ferry services and air travel bubble between the two nations.
- œ Given the financial challenges faced by Maldives due to the Covid-19 situation and India’s commitment to assist Maldives in its economic recovery, Delhi also extended in-principle urgent financial assistance to Male by way of a soft loan arrangement.
- œ This is the first financial assistance announced by GoI to any country to deal with Covid-19 pandemic. This assistance will help the Maldives government tide over the financial crisis till their main revenue earners like tourism and fisheries exports return to normal.
- œ These announcements were made by Foreign Minister S Jaishankar during a virtual meet with his Maldivian counterpart Abdulla Shahid.

Other development in relations

- œ The bilateral engagement confronted numerous challenges after the first democratically elected government of the Maldives led by Mohamed Nasheed collapsed in 2012. Since then the country’s political instability has challenged overall security of the Indian Ocean by increasing radicalisation —over 200 Maldivians reportedly joined the Islamic State —and by the granting of non-transparent permissions for foreign investment.
- œ **Relations after Yameen government:** Bilateral ties improved after the September 2018 elections ended the Abdulla Yameen government. Ibrahim Mohammed Solih, leader of the Maldives Democratic Party (MDP), was elected President with the support of a coalition.
- œ The change of government in the Maldives allowed both countries to positively redefine

bilateral relationships, as indicated by high level visits. Modi visited the Maldives in September 2018 while Solih made a state visit to India in December 2018. Statements made during the visits underscore the importance of enhancing bilateral relations in trade, energy, security, connectivity, socio-economic developments and cooperation in regional and multilateral forums.

- œ **Financial assistance:** US\$4 billion of financial assistance was announced by India for socio-economic development programs in Maldives in an attempt to improve relations. India also announced a US\$800 million line of credit to finance infrastructure projects during the visit of External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj to the Maldives in March 2019. India’s aid to the Maldives increased from Rs 125 crore (US\$18.1 million) in 2018–19 budget to Rs 575 crore (US\$83.3 million) in 2019–20.
- œ **Visa facilitation agreement:** came into force in March 2019 to boost people to people contacts. Other important agreements include implementation of high-impact community development projects through local bodies and collaboration in energy efficiency, renewable energy, information and communications technology, and electronics.
- œ **India first policy:** Solih is speaking of an ‘India first’ policy while India is promoting a ‘neighbourhood first’ policy. While these appear mutually agreeable, the challenge lies in implementing them, understanding each other’s security and strategic concerns and providing room for dialogue to address those concerns.
- œ India’s assistance in setting up a Coastal Surveillance Radar System and participating in the second Defence Cooperation Dialogue in January 2019 aims at cooperation on maritime security and counter terrorism.
- œ The Trilateral Maritime Agreement between India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives is in place and trilateral military exercises are held on a regular basis.
- œ But to achieve greater results, both countries need to enhance regional cooperation by using common platforms such as the Indian Ocean RIM Association and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium. Collaboration through the South

Asian Association for Regional Cooperation is stalled due to India–Pakistan tensions.

Significance of Maldives for India

- œ Strategically located in the Indian Ocean, Maldives archipelago comprising 1,200 coral islands lies next to key shipping lanes which ensure uninterrupted energy supplies to countries like China, Japan and India.
- œ Since China started to send naval ships to Indian Ocean roughly 10 years ago — and right up to Gulf of Aden in the name of antipiracy operations — Maldives' significance has steadily grown and now it's at the heart of international geopolitics.
- œ As the pre-eminent South Asian power and a 'net security provider' in the Indian Ocean region, India needs to cooperate with Maldives in security and defence sectors.
- œ Maldives is also a member of SAARC. It is important for India to have Maldives on board to maintain its leadership in the region. Maldives was the only SAARC country which seemed reluctant to follow India's call for boycott of SAARC summit in Pakistan after the Uri attack.
- œ Under Yameen, radicalisation grew rapidly and it was often said that archipelago accounted for one of the highest numbers of foreign fighters in Syria in terms of per capita. India can ill-afford a neighbour which fails to check religious radicalisation.
- œ India and Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and commercial links. India was among the first to recognise Maldives after its independence in 1965 and later established its mission at Malé in 1972.
- œ There are 25,000 Indian nationals living in Maldives (second largest expatriate community). Indian tourists also account for close to 6% of tourists Maldives receives every year.
- œ India is also a preferred destination for Maldivians for education, medical treatment, recreation and

business. According to MEA, more and more Maldivians are seeking long term visa for pursuing higher studies/medical treatment in India.

China and India exerting influence

- œ The Maldives' reliance on China to develop more than US\$2.5 billion in infrastructure projects and the resulting accumulation of foreign debt— 40 per cent of the country's GDP of US\$4.866 billion in 2017— is a concern for India.
- œ The Maldives supports the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its debt payment to China alone is close to US\$3.4 billion. India is also concerned about any possible future use of civilian facilities for military purposes by China.
- œ The popular tourist destination has become a focal point for the world's two most populous nations, particularly in the wake of China's Belt and Road Initiative aimed at improving trade and transport links.
- œ India and the West accused China of saddling countries, such as the Maldives, with unsustainable debts while tightening its grip in the region.
- œ New Delhi has sought to regain influence in the Maldives since President Ibrahim Solih assumed power after defeating pro-China strongman Yameen in nationwide elections two years ago.
- œ Yameen was subsequently convicted of money laundering and sentenced to five years in prison, with his jail-term beginning in February of this year. He was found guilty of awarding construction contracts to Chinese companies at inflated prices.

● CONCLUSION:

India–Maldives relations under Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohammed Solih started well. But sustaining the positive momentum will require hard work given complicated domestic politics, external relations and strategic interests.

30 YEARS SINCE MANDAL COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

CONTEXT

On this day, 30 years ago – 7 August 1990 – the VP Singh government accepted the Mandal Commission's recommendations and announced that it would implement the reservation scheme – under which 27 percent jobs would be given to members of Other Backward Classes.

Let's analyse and look back through the decades to see how the recommendations of the Mandal Commission or the second backward class communication were received and the current status of reservation of OBCs in the country.

◎ BACKGROUND

- œ Thirty years ago, on 7 August 1990, Vishwanath Pratap Singh, the prime minister at the time, announced that Other Backward Classes (OBCs) would get 27 per cent reservation in jobs in central government services and public sector units.
- œ The announcement was made before both Houses of Parliament.
- œ The decision was based on a report submitted on 31 December 1980 that recommended reservations for OBCs not just in government jobs but also central education institutions.
- œ The recommendation was made by the **Mandal Commission**, which was set up in 1979 under the **Morarji Desai government** and chaired by **B.P. Mandal**.

- Today, reservation is provided in central government posts and services to-
 - > Scheduled Castes- 15%
 - > Scheduled Tribes- 7.5%
 - > Other Backward Classes- 27%
 - > Economically Weaker Sections- 10%
- The Government recently introduced EWS Reservation. 10% quota is provided for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) among General Category candidates in government jobs and educational institutions.
- This is done by adding clauses for the same in the Indian Constitution (103rd Constitution Amendment Act, 2019).

Quick history of 'Reservation' in India

- The history of reservation for the backward castes goes back to 1902 when **Shahu Maharaj**, the ruler of the princely state of Kolhapur, reserved 50% jobs for backward castes (all communities except forward groups such as Brahmins, Prabhus, Shenvis and Parsis).
- When India's Constitution came into force in 1950, the question of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was already settled.
- But what is meant by backward classes and who should be included in this category were questions that remained mired in controversy for decades.
- The Jawaharlal Nehru government set up a backward classes commission in 1953, which drew up a list of 2,399 communities listing them as backward.
- But the government did not act on this report.

◎ ANALYSIS

What happened back then?

- œ In 1979, it was the Morarji Desai government which set up the Mandal Commission to identify socially or educationally backward classes to address caste discrimination.
- œ It was chaired by B.P. Mandal, who was once the Bihar chief minister.
- œ The Commission recommended that members of OBCs be given 27 per cent reservations for jobs under the Central government and public sector undertakings.
- œ This would take the total number of reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to 49 per cent.
- œ Therecommendationfor OBCreservations in central government institutions was finally implemented in 1992 while the education quota came into force in 2006.

First Backward Class Commission

- . In January 1953, the government had set up the First Backward Class Commission under the chairman of social reformer Kaka Kalelkar.
- . The commission submitted its report in March 1955, listing 2,399 backward castes or communities, with 837 of them classified as 'most backwards'.
- . The report was never implemented.

Major recommendations of the Mandal Commission

- œ Using 11 indicators – social, educational and economic – the commission identified 3,743 different castes and communities as members of Other Backward Classes.
- œ The OBC Category, it estimated, comprised 52 percent of the total population.
- œ Among its key recommendations were a 27 percent reservation in government jobs, schools and colleges – a quota also applicable to promotions at all levels.
- œ Meanwhile, the reserved quota that remained vacant was to be carried forward for a period of three years and de-reserved thereafter.
- œ Many of the OBCs mentioned in the list were the 'occupation' castes – Dhobi, Lohar, Teli, etc. The OBC status also varied from region to region.
- œ While the Banias were on the OBC list in Bihar, they were left off the list in other states; Similarly, Jats were marked OBC only in Rajasthan.
- œ The Mandal Commission had also recommended land redistribution and change in relations of production.

What turned into anti-Mandal?

- œ Soon after announcement of the recommendations, protests rocked the country.
- œ Many students took to the streets, holding dharnas and blocking roads. These evolved into anti-Mandal protests, which took an ugly turn in September 1990 when Delhi University student from Deshbandhu College, Rajeev Goswami, self-immolated.
- œ Goswami became the face of the anti-Mandal movement at that point.

Criticism of the Report

- œ **Outdated base year:** One of the biggest criticisms of the Mandal Commission report was that it was based on a 1931 census – which was carried out when India was still under British rule.

- œ **Ignored socio-political transformation:** The report was also criticised for failing to take into account the socio-political transformation that had taken place among many of these communities.
- œ **Opportunistic:** VP Singh was accused of indulging in opportunism and was criticised for picking only reservation – the most populist of all measures in the Mandal commission report – over other important recommendations, like the one aimed at altering the land-tenurial system, among other economic and educational reforms.

Mandal Challenged in Supreme Court

- . The Mandal Commission report also battled several legal cases.
- . The Court, in its judgment in the case of **Indira Sawhney vs Union of India**, delivered in 1992, upheld the 27 percent reservation for OBCs subject to the exclusion of **socially-advanced persons/sections (creamy layer)** from amongst the OBCs and directed the government to evolve a criteria for the identification of this creamy layer.
- . A committee was appointed to address the issue.
 - > The recommendations were accepted and circulated among all ministries/ departments of the Central and state governments in September 1993, bringing reservations for the OBC community into force.

When the OBC 'creamy layer' came into being?

- œ To ensure that benefits of the recommendations of the Mandal Commission percolated down to the most backward communities, the creamy layer criteria was invoked in the popularly known Supreme Court ruling called the 'Indira Sawhney Judgment'.
- œ It was delivered by the nine-judge bench on the Mandal Commission report in November 1992.
 - > Under the present rules, a household with an **annual income of Rs 8 lakh** or above would be classified as belonging to the 'creamy layer' among OBCs and therefore, would not be eligible for reservations.

What are the impacts of the recommendations today?

- œ After year, there pertains gross inequity in how the benefits of the reservations are enjoyed by different communities within the OBC.

œ **Unfilled vacancies:** A parliamentary panel on the Welfare of OBCs had in its February 2019 report noted that in spite of four revisions of the income criteria since 1997, the 27 per cent vacancies reserved in favour of OBCs were not being filled up.

œ **Poor occupancy level in central govt ministries:**

The committee said the data received from 78 ministries and departments regarding representation of OBCs in the posts and services of the central government as on 1 March 2016 reflected poor OBC occupancy levels in central government ministries.

œ **Maximum number are in Group C jobs:**

According to this government data, of the 32.58 lakh government employees (which includes Group A, B, C), the number of those from OBCs are 7 lakh — 21 per cent of the quota as against 27 per cent. The maximum number of OBCs — 6.4 lakh or 22.65 per cent — are employed in Group C, which comprises mainly the *safai karamcharis*, i.e., the sanitation department staff.

Rohini Commission

- . To address these anomalies, the government constituted a four-member commission headed by retired Delhi High Court Chief Justice G. Rohini in 2017. The committee's mandate was to look into the issue of sub categorisation within OBCs.

- . Their mandate also included looking into how the 27 per cent reservation for OBCs in jobs and education was being implemented and if all categories of OBCs were benefitting from it.
- . The Commission found that out of almost 6,000 castes and communities in the OBCs, only 40 such communities had gotten 50 per cent of reservation benefits for admission in central educational institutions and recruitment to the civil services.
- . The panel further found that close to 20 per cent of OBC communities did not get a quota benefit from 2014 to 2018.
- . The commission's tenure was recently extended until January 2021 to complete its study.

◎ **CONCLUSION**

The last few lost decades did immense harm to OBCs. They remain severely under-represented in government jobs and the corridors of power, and, after the promising start of the 1990s, their political representation, too, has weakened. On the 30th anniversary of the Mandal movement, it is hoped that it will give a positive fillip to the deteriorating situation.



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DAUGHTER'S EQUAL RIGHT TO ANCESTRAL PROPERTY: SC

CONTEXT

In a significant development, the Supreme Court expanded on a Hindu woman's right to be a joint legal heir and inherit ancestral property on terms equal to male heirs.

◎ BACKGROUND

- œ While the **Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005** granted equal rights to women, questions were raised in multiple cases on whether the law applied retrospectively, and if the rights of women depended on the living status of the father through whom they would inherit.
- œ Different benches of the Supreme Court had taken conflicting views on the issue. Different High Courts had also followed different views of the top court as binding precedents.
 - > In **Prakash v Phulwati (2015)**, a two-judge Bench headed by Justice A K Goel held that the benefit of the 2005 amendment could be granted only to "living daughters of living coparceners" as on September 9, 2005 (the date when the amendment came into force).
 - > In February 2018, contrary to the 2015 ruling, a two-judge Bench headed by Justice A K Sikri held that the share of a father who died in 2001 will also pass to his daughters as coparceners during the partition of the property as per the 2005 law.
 - > Then in April that year, yet another two-judge bench, headed by Justice R K Agrawal, reiterated the position taken in 2015.
- œ These conflicting views by Benches of equal strength led to a reference to a three-judge Bench in the current case.
- œ The present ruling overrules the verdicts from 2015 and April 2018. It settles the law and expands on the intention of the 2005 legislation "to remove the discrimination as contained in section 6 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 by giving equal rights to daughters in the Hindu Mitakshara coparcenary property as the sons have".

◎ ANALYSIS

The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005

- œ The Mitakshara school of Hindu law codified as the **Hindu Succession Act, 1956** governed succession and inheritance of property but only recognised males as legal heirs.
- œ **Applicability:** The law applied to everyone who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion.

Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains and followers of Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj are also considered Hindus for the purposes of this law.

- œ In a Hindu Undivided Family, several legal heirs through generations can exist jointly. Traditionally, only male descendants of a common ancestor along with their mothers, wives and unmarried daughters are considered a joint Hindu family. The legal heirs hold the family property jointly.
- œ Women were recognised as coparceners or joint legal heirs for partition arising from 2005.
- œ Section 6 of the Act was amended that year to make a daughter of a coparcener also a coparcener by birth "in her own right in the same manner as the son".
- œ The law also gave the daughter the same rights and liabilities "in the coparcenary property as she would have had if she had been a son".
- œ The law applies to ancestral property and to intestate succession in personal property — where succession happens as per law and not through a will.
- œ The 174th Law Commission Report had also recommended this reform in Hindu succession law.
- œ Even before the 2005 amendment, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu had made this change in the law, and Kerala had abolished the Hindu Joint Family System in 1975.

Key-highlights of the ruling

The Court has held:

- œ The provisions contained in substituted Section 6 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 confer status of coparcener on the daughter born before or after amendment in the same manner as son with same rights and liabilities.
- œ The rights can be claimed by the daughter born earlier with effect from 9.9.2005 with savings as provided in Section 6(1) as to the disposition or alienation, partition or testamentary disposition which had taken place before 20th day of December, 2004.
- œ Since the right in coparcenary is by birth, it is not necessary that father coparcener should be living as on 9.9.2005.

The traditional way

- œ Traditionally, the Hindu law allows only males to be legal heirs of ancestral property and the law applies to everyone who is not a Muslim, Parsi, Jew or a Christian.
- œ The law includes Sikhs, members of Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Jains into the ambit of the scope of applicability of the law.
- œ Women only came to be recognised as joint legal heirs for partition of property from 2005 onwards.

What about liabilities?

- œ Daughters as coparceners include married daughters. Coparcenary right is an undefined liability and any liability of father including family debt will be extended to daughters as well.

What is coparcenary?

- œ A joint Hindu family means all people lineally descending from a common ancestor, including wives and unmarried daughters.
- œ But a Hindu coparcenary is a much narrower group. It consists of the 'propositus' (the person from whom a line of descent is traced) and three of his descendants.
- œ Coparcenary property is the one which is inherited by a Hindu man from his father, grandfather, or great grandfather.
 - > The property in coparcenary is held as joint owners, and only a coparcener has a right to demand a partition of this property.
- œ Before 2005, the coparceners included only sons, grandsons, and great grandsons who are holders of a joint property.

- œ But the 2005 amendment to Section 6 of the Hindu Succession Act essentially gave equal rights to daughters in ancestral property.
- œ So the amendment allowed daughters to be recognised as coparceners by birth in the family, similar to sons.

Significance of the Judgement

- œ **Women empowerment:** It will help in empowering Hindu women and expanding their right to familial/ancestral property.
- œ **Equal terms:** The decision is extremely important because it will now give Hindu women the rights to become legal heirs and inherit their ancestral property on equal terms with their male counterparts.
- œ **Reassertion of constitutional value of equality:** The judgment is a reassertion of the constitutional value of equality to women in personal law without any preconditions. The judgment factors all aspects.

CONCLUSION

Now, daughters from Hindu families will be given equal rights in terms of ancestral property as their male counterparts. The Supreme Court has also appealed to the High Courts to dispose all the cases in this context which have been lying with them for months within the next six months. The government has welcomed the expansion of the reading of the law and the allowing of equal rights to Hindu women in terms of inhering ancestral property.

FINALLY NSCN PUTS ‘THE 2015 FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT’ IN PUBLIC DOMAIN

CONTEXT

The NSCN-IM, one of the largest Naga groups, signed a framework agreement on August 3, 2015 to end the decades old issue.

● BACKGROUND

- œ The Naga quest for independence is one of the longest-running struggles in the Indian subcontinent.
- œ Despite numerous attempts made in the past towards resolving the conflict, it continues to remain elusive on account of various fault lines.
- œ The signing of a ‘Framework Agreement’ between the National Socialist Council of Nagalim–Issak and Muivah (NSCN-IM) and the Government of India in August 2015 was one such attempt.
- œ However, the views of various stakeholders remain fragmented as the details of the agreement have not been disclosed in the public domain.
- œ Though peace talks with NSCN-IM and other pro-talks rebel outfits (Naga National Political Groups-NNPGs) concluded in October, 2019 a formal deal to end the decades old Naga political problem is still awaited.

- . This region was ruled by Myanmar (Burma) from 1819-1826, when the British began annexing its hill areas.
- . Nagaland had attained statehood in 1963. The moderates signed the Shillong Accord in 1975, seen as the first peace agreement, but the hardliners had rejected it outright and continued with the armed movement for Naga sovereignty.

Role of NSCN-IM

- œ On November 11, 1975, the **Shillong Accord** was signed between the government and a section of the Naga Council (NNC), under which this NNC faction and the underground Naga Federal Government (NFG) laid down arms.
- œ A 140-strong group led by **Thuingaleng Muivah** refused to accept the Accord and, in 1980, formed the **National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)**.

● ANALYSIS

Who are Nagas?

- œ The Nagas are a tribal **Indo-Mongoloid people** who live in the Northeast region of India, the Himalayas, and Burma (Myanmar).
- œ These hill people are estimated to number about 2.5 million (1.8 million in Nagaland, 0.6 million in Manipur and 0.1 9million in Arunachal states) and living in the remote and mountainous country between the Indian state of Assam and Burma.
- œ There are also Naga groups in Burma. Nagas traditionally are tribally organized, with a strong warrior tradition.

Nagaland

- . Nagaland is the strategic Eastern Frontier State of India. This mountainous region is the home of a multitude of tribal population of mongoloid race.

- œ With Muivah were his comrades Isak Chishi Swu and S S Khaplang.
- œ In 1988, the NSCN split into two groups, led by Isak and Muivah, and Khaplang.
- œ After NNC leader Angami Zapu Phizo died in London in 1991, the NSCN-IM came to be seen as the predominant Naga rebel outfit.

How did the peace efforts start?

- œ The efforts for peace started soon after the NNC declared Nagaland an independent state on August 14, 1947.
- œ It took until August 1997, however, for the first ceasefire agreement to be signed between the government and the NSCN-IM.
- œ The security situation in Nagaland and neighbouring states, however, remained grim, and the ceasefire was violated by both the NSCN-IM and NSCN-K.
- œ The NSCN-K unilaterally broke the agreement in March 2015, and was subsequently declared an unlawful association under The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

- œ The NSCN-IM dropped its demand of sovereignty after several rounds of negotiations with the government.

The key-players

- . The three main players involved in the ethnic conflict of Nagaland are:
 - > The Ethnic Nagas
 - > The Government of India
 - > The Government of Myanmar
- . The Nagas were historically represented first by the Naga National Council (NNC), which in the late 50s took up arms and formed an underground Naga army.
- . The NNC split in 1975, the breakaway faction being the NSCN, which split further in later years, most prominently into the NSCN(IM) and NSCN (Khaplang) in 1988.

Current demands of Naga people

- œ Naga people mainly have three demands:
 - > Naga Yezabo (Naga Constitution)
 - > Naga national flag
 - > Greater Nagalim

Greater Nagalim'

- . In the NSCN's conception, "Greater Nagalim" consisted of Nagaland and "all contiguous Naga-inhabited areas", which included several districts of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, and a part of Myanmar.
- . While the area of Nagaland is 16,527 sq km, Greater Nagalim sprawled over 1,20,000 sq km.
- . The demand for Nagalim has always agitated Assam, Manipur and Arunachal.

What Does the 'Framework Accord of 2015' Say?

- œ After the Shillong Accord signed between NNC and Government of India in 1975 where NNC agreed

to give up arms and the Ceasefire agreement between NSCN (IM) and the Centre in 1997, the Modi government signed a framework agreement with the NSCN(IM) On 3 August 2015.

- œ The move was described as historic and unprecedented and was believed to have opened the doors for further talks.
- œ The agreement was signed nearly 18 years after the government's ceasefire 1997 deal with Naga armed groups.
- œ While neither the Centre nor the Naga groups have been forthcoming with details, the framework agreement did accept **special status** for the Nagas.
- œ There was an understanding on a settlement within the Indian federation, with due regard to the uniqueness of Naga history.

The revealed agreement

- œ The framework agreement shared as part of a detailed press statement issued by the NSCN-IM said,
- œ "Both sides have understood each other's respective positions and are cognizant of the universal principle that in a democracy, sovereignty lies with the people.
- œ Accordingly, the Govt. of India and the NSCN, respecting people's wishes for sharing the sovereign power as defined in the competencies reached an agreement on the 3rd August, 2015 as an honorable solution."
- œ The agreement stated "sharing the sovereign power" and provide for an "enduring inclusive new relationship of peaceful co-existence of the two entities".

◎ CONCLUSION

For more than 70 years, Nagas have stood unwavering for the Naga cause, undeterred by the mountains of hurdles and suffering keeping the aspirations of nagas alive. It's high time to resolve the peace talks. Any attempt to expedite the peace process without understanding the Naga sentiments could backfire, and lead to a dangerous situation.

ROLE OF ISRO IN DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

CONTEXT

ISRO is fast enlarging its role into development activities.

ISRO and its continuously expanding role:

- œ Indian Space Research Organisation is no longer confined mainly to the launching of satellites, but it has been constantly enlarging its role in development activities, thus contributing to Prime Minister's mission of Transforming India.
- œ In agriculture the ISRO technology is now also being used to carry out crop production forecast for at least eight major crops including wheat, kharif and rabi rice, mustard, jute, cotton, sugarcane, rabi sorghum and rabi pulses.
- œ In the Railway sector, it was in the recent years that the applications of space technology were realised in guarding unmanned railway crossings, detecting obstructive objects on rail tracks to avoid train accidents and other such activities.
- œ Satellite imaging is now being utilised for supervising Indian borders and to check foreign infiltrations.
- œ ISRO and the Department of Space have already overtaken several other countries in their space endeavours and the images procured by missions like Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) are now being utilised even by premier space centres.

Role of ISRO in rural development

- œ **Village resource centre:** ISRO has embarked upon VRC programme to disseminate the portfolio of services emanating from the space systems as well as other Information Technology (IT) tools, directly down-the-line to the rural communities.
 - > With the involvement of stakeholders, VRCs will catalyse rural entrepreneurship; and facilitate e-Governance and other services of social relevance.
 - > ISRO is implementing VRC programme in partnership with reputed NGOs, Trusts and other agencies including the Governmental ones.

VRC Services – Portfolio:

- œ **Tele-education:** Focus is on imparting vocational training at local level - aimed at skill development and capacity building to catalyse livelihood support in rural areas; supplementary teaching to rural children; and non-formal and adult education.
- œ **Tele-healthcare:** Thrust is on both preventive and curative healthcare at primary level. The Telemedicine system at VRCs consists of

customised medical software, with certain medical diagnostic instruments. With the help of local doctor/ paramedic, expert medical consultation and counseling are provided to the villagers from specialty hospitals. Healthcare awareness is also a major activity of VRCs.

- œ **Land and Water Resources Management:**

Information on land and water resources extracted from satellite images is organised in Geographical Information System (GIS), and provided to the villagers through the VRC. The local farmers, availing the support of the skilled/ trained personnel managing VRCs, utilise this information for better management of their land resources.

- œ **Interactive Advisory Services:** VRCs facilitate

interactions between the local people and experts at knowledge centers - Agricultural Universities, Technical Institutions, etc - on a wide range of subjects such as alternative cropping systems, optimisation of agricultural inputs-like seeds, water, fertilizer, insecticides, pesticides, producer oriented marketing opportunities, crop insurance, etc.

- œ **Tele-fishery:** VRCs located at coastal tracts are

being provided with near real time information on satellite derived Potential Fishing Zones (PFZ). Information pertaining to inland fisheries, aquaculture, etc., is also provided through VRCs as relevant.

- œ **E-Governance services:** The services include

information and guidance to local people on village oriented governmental schemes on agriculture, poverty alleviation, rural employment, social safety nets and other basic entitlements, animal husbandry and livestock related, micro-finance related, etc.

- œ **Weather Services:** Short, medium and long-

term weather forecasts, at local level; and agro meteorology advisory services are being enabled.

- œ **Disaster Management Support:** The Disaster

Management Support (DMS) Programme of ISRO, provides timely support and services from aerospace systems, both imaging and communications, towards efficient management of disasters in the country.

- œ **Remote sensing applications:** Remote sensing

has enabled mapping, studying, monitoring and management of various resources like agriculture, forestry, geology, water, ocean etc.

Role of ISRO in Urban Development

- œ Various factors such as the rate of population increase, urban sprawl etc. pose the challenge to the urban environment of cities. These change forces policy makers to plan the city in accordance. High resolution satellite data provides a tool by which these changes can be managed and planned for broad expansion of urban environments.
- œ The increased spatial accuracy and frequent revisit periods allows planners to construct action scenarios and compile accurate database of spatial environments.
- œ Satellite-based remote sensing holds certain advantages in monitoring the dynamics of urban land use because of the large spatial coverage for mapping applications, more frequent revisit periods and wide availability.
- œ Government of India has launched Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme for Urban Development. ISRO works closely with Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) for the "Creation of geo-spatial databases for the formulation of GIS Based Master Plan for AMRUT cities.
- œ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has tied up with the Union Urban Development Ministry for mapping around 500 towns and cities, to make a base plan for better planning and management. The space agency will also map and provide management plans for heritage sites and monuments of national importance.

Challenges, Opportunities, and Strategic Concerns of India's space programme

- œ As an emerging nation with both vast developmental needs and profound security concerns, India has had to balance many requirements in its rapid advance as a new space power.
- œ Beijing's activities in recent years have been driven by competition with the United States, so the capabilities it is developing are much more advanced than what are necessary to deter India. Nonetheless, India has to be mindful of Chinese advances.
- œ Beyond the maritime domain, India has been relying on foreign partners for many other satellite-based communications and data services. For instance, it continues to rely on NASA for deep space communications. India also works a great deal with France to launch its heavy satellites.

- œ The ISRO's problems are likely to confront it in two forms. The first is simply the fact that it has deficit issues both in technical capacity and manpower placing constraints on its production strength.
- œ The second challenge confronting ISRO is foreign competition particularly for the launch of small satellites, which is an expanding market. The Elon Musk owned SpaceX Falcon 9 is widely considered a serious potential threat to ISRO's workhorse the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).
- œ The PSLV a highly reliable launch vehicle has provided cost effective rideshare launches to small satellite makers. However, with the emergence of a highly reliable Space Launch Vehicle (SLV) in the form Falcon 9, it is in ISRO's best interest, albeit demanding, to divest control of Research and Development (R&D), production and pave the way for commercialization of small satellites by the private sector.
- œ India does not have an explicit space policy to guide private sector participation. India does have some sector-specific policies, such as for satellite communications and remote sensing data. But these have not been fleshed out well. Industry is unsatisfied, complaining that the policies do not detail how the government will partner with commercial actors.
- œ There have been increasing calls for allowing private sector firms to manage some of the tried and tested programs, which would allow ISRO to refocus on the larger, more ambitious interplanetary missions, as well as purely research-oriented programs.
- œ Privatization may also allow India to increase its launch capacity, which is currently at four to five per year and compares poorly with the twenty or so launches China does on average. Increasing the number of launches is partly an infrastructural problem tied to the number of launch facilities in India, but ISRO also has internal constraints on its capacity to deliver.

© CONCLUSION:

India's economic progress has made its space program more visible and active as the country aims for greater self-reliance in space technology. In the last half century, there have been significant advances in space applications for development, and ISRO now needs new goals. However, these goals have to be unique and should put ISRO in a lead position – the way its use of space applications for development did.

SECTION: B
(PRELIMS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS



VANIK-IAS
Exclusive Coaching for UPSC/OPSC

DEMAND OF ORGANIC FARMING SHOWING UPWARD TREND

◎ **CONTEXT:** The growth story of organic farming is unfolding with increasing demand not only in India but also globally. In a world battered by the Coronavirus pandemic, the demand is already showing an upward trend and hence this is an opportune moment to be captured for a win-win situation for our farmers, consumers and the environment.

◎ **ABOUT:** **What is Organic Farming?**

- . Natural farming is not a new concept in India, with farmers having tilled their land without the use of chemicals - largely relying on organic residues, cow dung, composts, etc since time immemorial.
- . The primary aim of organic farming is to help soil stay in good health through the use of biological wastes, organic wastes and bio-fertilizers.
- . Using organic manures help in sustainable crop production along with a pollution-free environment.
- . The philosophy underlying organic farming of integration of the elements – soil, water, microbes, and 'waste' products, forestry, and agriculture is the correct recipe for sustainable use of natural resources, which are coming under severe stress due to ever-increasing requirement of food and feedstock for agri-based industry.
- . This method avoids or excludes use of synthetic inputs like pesticides, fertilizers, hormones, etc.

How 'organic' is India's farming?

- . India ranks first in the number of organic farmers and ninth in terms of area under organic farming.
- . Sikkim became the first state in the world to become fully organic and other States including Tripura and Uttarakhand have set similar targets.
- . North East India has traditionally been organic and the consumption of chemicals is far less than the rest of the country.
- . Similarly, the tribal and island territories are being nurtured to continue their organic story.

Recent government initiatives to promote organic farming

- . With the aim of assisting farmers to adopt organic farming and improve remunerations due to premium prices, two dedicated programs namely **Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North East Region (MOVCD)** and **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)** were launched in 2015 to encourage chemical-free farming, said Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare.
- . With the simultaneous thrust given by the **Agri-export Policy 2018**, India can emerge as a major player in global organic markets.
 - œ The major organic exports from India have been flax seeds, sesame, soybean, tea, medicinal plants, rice, and pulses, which were instrumental in driving an increase of nearly 50% in organic exports in 2018-19, touching Rs 5151 crore.

Infusion of digital technology: The organic e-commerce platform www.jaivikkheti.in is being strengthened for directly linking farmers with retail as well as bulk buyers.

CANADA'S MILNE ICE SHELF COLLAPSED

- > **CONTEXT:** The collapse of Canada's Milne ice shelf — the country's last one — in a corner of the country's Ellesmere Island, has increased fears of the Arctic region being under severe stress due to global warming.
- > **ABOUT:**
- Located on the northwestern coast of Ellesmere Island in Nunavut, the Milne Ice Shelf is about 4,000 years old.
 - . The Milne ice shelf lost more than 40 percent of its ice over two days end of July 2020.
 - . The shelf's sudden collapse was a close call for scientists studying ice loss in that precarious location, said Arctic ice researcher Derek Mueller.
 - . The Milne ice shelf lost more than 40 percent of its ice over two days end of July 2020.
 - . This has increased concerns over the rapid melting of ice and the breaking of old ice shelves — large floating pieces of ice that form when a glacier or ice sheet flows into the sea surface.
 - . This also meant the last known **epishelf lake** — a water body dammed by the ice shelf and floating on the ocean surface — in the northern hemisphere and on the Milne ice shelf, no longer exists.

What are Ice shelves?

- . An ice shelf is a thick, floating slab of ice that forms where a glacier or ice flows down a coastline. Ice shelves are found only in Antarctica, Greenland, and Canada. Thicknesses of floating ice shelves range from 100-1,000 meters.
- . Ice shelves are formed by forces of gravity from ice along the shore. Gravity constantly pressures the movement of ice from the land to the shelf. Ice shelves lose mass when chunks break off and slide into the ocean water. Shelves gain mass by snow accumulation on the upper surface.
- . Ice shelves can date as back as far as hundreds to thousands of years. They are thicker than long-term sea ice, but not as large as glaciers.
- . The world's largest ice shelves are the Ross ice shelf and the Filchner-Ronne ice shelf in Antarctica.

Ellesmere Island

- . Canadian ice shelves are attached to Ellesmere Island. The Ayles ice shelf broke up in 2005, the M'Clintock ice shelf broke from 1963 to 1966, and the Markham ice shelf broke up in 2008.
- . The only Canadian shelves still existing was the Milne ice shelves.
- . Ellesmere Island has been losing ice for more than a century.
- . About 100 years ago, a vast, single ice shelf extended along the island's northern coast, spanning more than 3,300 square miles (8,600 square km).

By 2000, the shelf was reduced to around 405 square miles (1,050 square km) divided among six large ice shelves — including Milne Ice Shelf — as well as a few smaller ones, Carleton University representatives said.

Since 2003, there have been five major calving events on the Ellesmere Island coast, and there's no question that climate change is driving the drastic ice loss.

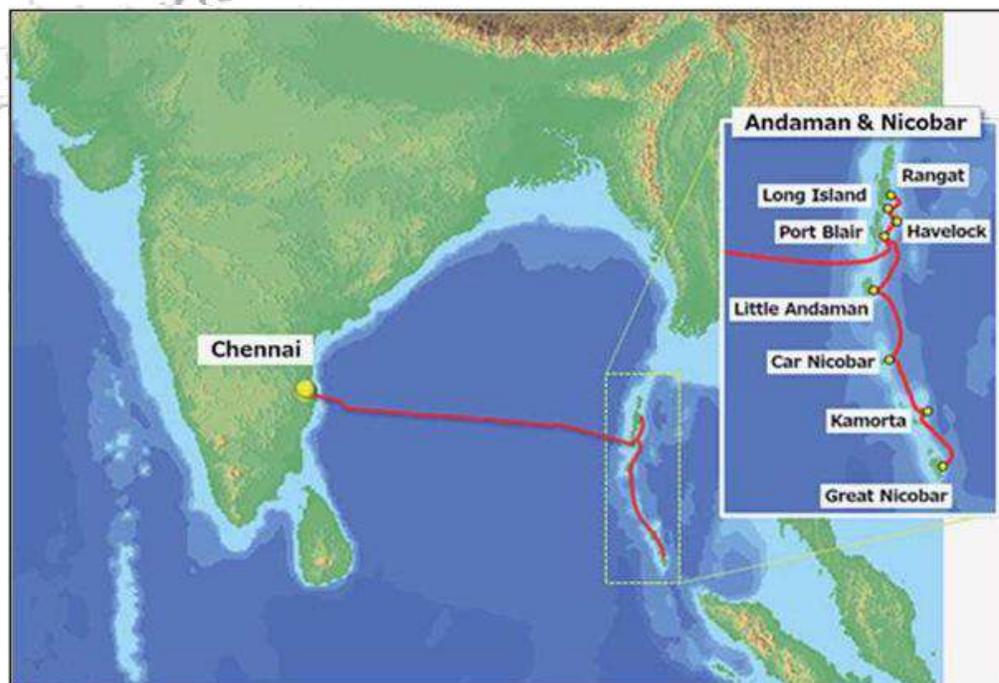
The recipe for ice shelf break up

- Temperatures from May to early August in the region have been 5 degrees Celsius warmer than the 1980 to 2010 average, University of Ottawa glaciology professor Luke Copland said.
- The high temperatures combined with a warming pattern that is much faster than the rest of globe are to blame for the disintegration of the ice shelves.
- Above-normal air temperatures, offshore winds and open water in front of the ice shelf are all part of the recipe for ice shelf break up.

CHENNAI-ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLAND SUBMARINE CABLE SYSTEM

◎ **CONTEXT:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the first ever undersea optical fibre cable project for Andaman and Nicobar Islands which will provide high speed broadband connections in the union territory at par with services in the mainland.

- ◎ **ABOUT:**
- The project envisages better connectivity from Chennai to Port Blair and seven other Islands -- Swaraj Deep (Havelock), Long Island, Rangat, Hutbay (Little Andaman), Kamorta, Car Nicobar and Campbell Bay (Great Nicobar).
 - The project has been implemented at a cost of ₹ 1,224 crore. It is funded by the government through the Universal Service Obligation Fund under the ministry of communications.
 - According to official data, internet with speed of 400 gigabyte (Gb) per second will be provided at Port Blair and for other islands it will be 200 Gb per second.
 - The foundation for 2,312-kilometer Chennai - Andaman and Nicobar Islands (CANI) connecting submarine optical fibre cable project was laid in 2018.



What is Submarine Communication cable?

- . A submarine communications cable is a cable laid on the seabed between land-based stations to transmit telecommunication signals across stretches of ocean and sea.
- . The optical fiber elements are typically individually coated with plastic layers and contained in a protective tube suitable for the environment where the cable will be deployed.
- . Compared to satellites, using internet connection through submarine cables is more reliable, cost efficient and of large capacity.

Why Andaman and Nicobar islands?

- . The Indian Ocean has been the centre of India's trade and strategic prowess for thousands of years.
- . Now that India is following the new policy and practice of trade and cooperation in Indo-Pacific, the importance of our islands including Andaman and Nicobar has increased further.
- . Under the Act-East policy, Andaman and Nicobar's role in India's strong relations with East Asian countries and other countries associated with the sea is crucial and it is going to increase.

Significance of the development

- . **Digital connectivity:** The project - said to be first-of-its-kind in the country, is expected to give tourism, business, e-commerce and digital education a boost in the union territory, which is also a strategically important frontier in the Bay of Bengal.
- . **Digital connectivity plus tourism:** 2,300-km cable will not just boost digital connectivity of Andaman Islands with the mainland but also boost tourism. Tourists going to Andaman will get a huge benefit of this facility because better net connectivity has become the first priority of any tourist destination.
- . **Ease of living:** The project is a commitment towards ease of living. Be it online classes, tourism, banking, shopping or telemedicine, thousands of families in Andaman-Nicobar will now get its access.

INDONESIA'S MOUNT SINABUNG ERUPTED

◎ CONTEXT:

Indonesia's Mount Sinabung erupted recently, belching a massive column of ash and smoke 5,000 metres (16,400 feet) into the air and plunging local communities into darkness with a thick layer of debris.

◎ ABOUT:

What is Mount Sinabung?

- . Mount Sinabung is one of more than 120 active volcanoes in Indonesia, which is prone to seismic activity on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," a ring of volcanoes and moving fault lines that surround the ocean.
- . Mount Sinabung had been inactive for centuries until it erupted again in 2010. It has been active ever since, occasionally erupting.
- . An eruption in 2014 killed 16 people, while seven died in a 2016 eruption. Tens of thousands of people have been forced to leave their homes around the active volcano over the past few years.

Indonesia and Volcanoes

- . Indonesia is home to many active volcanoes, due to its position on the "Ring of Fire", or the Circum-Pacific Belt, which is an area along the Pacific Ocean characterised by active volcanoes and frequent earthquakes.

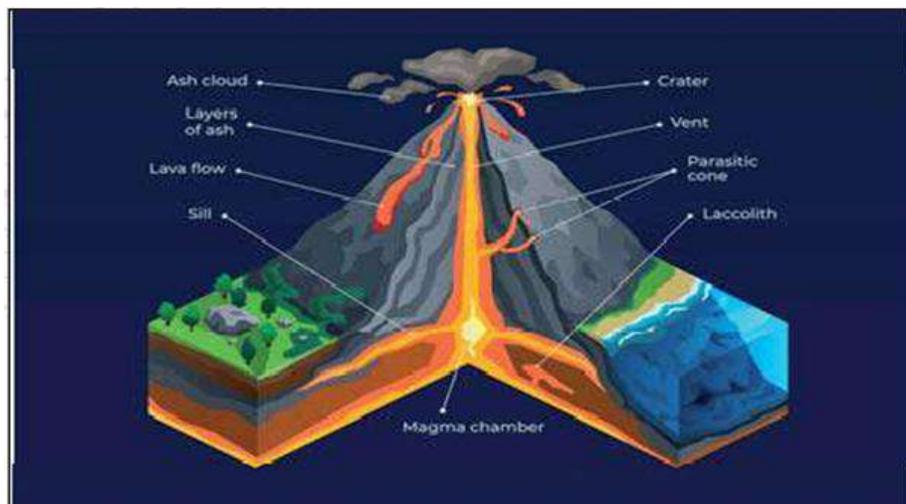
- The Ring of Fire is home to about 75 per cent of the world’s volcanoes and about 90 per cent of its earthquakes.

What is Ring of Fire?

- Also known as the Circum-Pacific Belt, the Ring of Fire traces the meeting points of many tectonic plates, including the Eurasian, North American, Juan de Fuca, Cocos, Caribbean, Nazca, Antarctic, Indian, Australian, Philippine, and other smaller plates, which all encircle the large Pacific Plate.
- The Ring of Fire is home to 75% of the world's volcanoes and 90% of its earthquakes.
- The Ring of Fire is home to the deepest ocean trench, called the Mariana Trench.
 - > Located east of Guam, the 7-mile-deep Mariana Trench formed when one tectonic place was pushed under another.



The geography of Volcano



- A volcano can be active, dormant or extinct. An eruption takes place when magma (a thick flowing substance), formed when the earth’s mantle melts, rises to the surface.
- Because magma is lighter than solid rock, it is able to rise through vents and fissures on the surface of the earth.

- . After it has erupted, it is called lava.
- . Not all volcanic eruptions are explosive, since explosivity depends on the composition of the magma.
 - œ When the magma is runny and thin, gases can easily escape it, in which case, the magma will flow out towards the surface.
- . On the other hand, if the magma is thick and dense, gases cannot escape it, which builds up pressure inside until the gases escape in a violent explosion

Looking at numbers

- . According to the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), USA, generally, there are about 20 volcanoes actively erupting every day.
- . As per the weekly volcanic activity report prepared by The Smithsonian and US Geological Survey's (USGS) Volcano Hazards program, for the week ending August 4, 2020, there were 17 volcanoes across the world with continuing eruptions.
- . As per USGS, there are about 1,500 potentially active volcanoes worldwide.

INCOIS FOUND A METHOD OF IMPROVING WAVE FORECAST

◎ CONTEXT:

Researchers at the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Hyderabad, have found a method of improving wave forecasts. They have ascertained that certain phases of boreal summer intra seasonal oscillation or BSISO induce high-wave activity in the northern Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea.

How they did it?

- . The team worked with data on Indian ocean waves such as their height, period, and surface winds over a span of 38 years from 1979-2017.
- . By using mathematical data analysis models, the research team studied the relationship between various phases of BSISO and the height of waves in the Indian Ocean.
- . They found that waves induced by active phases of BSISO are nearly 0.5 meters higher than those which occur during other phases of BSISO.
- . The active phases of BSISO occur between June to August which are the monsoon summer months.

What is Boreal Summer Intra-Seasonal Oscillation (BSISO)?

- . **Boreal Summer Intra-Seasonal Oscillation (BSISO)** is the movement of convection (heat) from the Indian Ocean to the western Pacific in roughly every 10–50 days of the monsoon season from June to September.
- . BSISOs represent monsoon's 'active' and 'break' periods, in which weeks of heavy rainfall give way to brilliant sunshine before starting all over again.
- . The active phase also enhances monsoon winds and hence the surface waves.

What are waves?

- . Waves are actually energy passing through the water, causing it to move in a circular motion.

- . When a wave encounters a surface object, the object appears to lurch forward and upward with the wave, but then falls down and back in an orbital rotation as the wave continues by, ending up in the same position as before the wave came by.
- . If one imagines wave water itself following this same pattern, it is easier to understand ocean waves as simply the outward manifestation of kinetic energy propagating through seawater.
- . In reality, the water in waves doesn't travel much at all. The only thing waves do transmit across the sea is energy.

Significance of the findings

- . **Better forecast:** The finding will help to improve wave forecasts in the Indian coastal region and help mitigate the adverse impacts of high waves such as coastal flooding and erosion. This finding has a great significance in developing seasonal and climate forecast service for waves and coastal erosion for India.
- . **Effective planning:** It will also aid better planning of sea navigation routes in the northern Indian Ocean waters.
- . **Efficient coastal and marine management:** Wave forecast advisories based on the BSISO would be more useful for efficient coastal and marine management

CITIZENSHIP OF BUDDHA: BEYOND INDIA AND NEPAL WAR OF WORDS

◎ **CONTEXT:**

As though the bickering over the birthplace of Lord Ram and his nationality was not enough, statements were flying about Gautam Buddha and his nationality. This time, Buddha was drawn into Nepal-India politics by S Jaishankar, the Indian minister for external affairs.

◎ **ABOUT:**

Who was Buddha?

- . "Buddha" means "one who is awake." Gautama Buddha was a contemporary of Mahavira. Gautama Buddha's royal name was Siddhartha.
- . He was the son of Suddhodhana, the Chief of Sakya clan of Kapilvastu in the Nepal Tarai area. He was born in 566 B.C. in the village of Lumbini a few miles from Kapilvastu.
- . The Buddha who lived 2,600 years ago was not a god. He was an ordinary person.
- . Facts also suggest that a young Siddhartha Gautam left his father's palace before settling at a site where he attained enlightenment. The place is now in present-day India, and is known as Bodh Gaya.
- . He discovered four noble truths and the Eightfold Path to Nirvana, or ultimate bliss.
- . **Noble Truths:** The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism:
 - œ existence is suffering
 - œ the cause of suffering is craving and attachment
 - œ suffering ceases at some point and turns to Nirvana (liberation or total bliss)
 - œ there is a path to Nirvana which is made up of eight steps, sometimes called the Eightfold Path.
 - œ The Eightfold Path to Nirvana is to be "right" in all these areas: concentration, views, speech, resolve, action, livelihood, effort, and mindfulness.

- **Major Schools:** There are two major schools of Buddhism: Mahayana and Theravada or Hinayana. There is a third school, the Vajrayana, but it only has a small following.

A war of words

- Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Sunday evening issued a statement to assert that Buddha was born in Nepal. He stated-
 - œ It is a well-established and undeniable fact proven by historical and archaeological evidence that Gautam Buddha was born in Lumbini, Nepal.
 - œ Lumbini, the Birthplace of Buddha and the fountain of Buddhism, is one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
- Meanwhile, in a damage-control exercise, India's Ministry of External Affairs also issued a statement.
 - œ He referred to the shared Buddhist heritage [between Nepal and India].
 - œ There is no doubt that Gautam Buddha was born in Lumbini, which is in Nepal'.

India and Nepal

- India and Nepal enjoy shared history, culture and heritage. And, naturally, they share some irritants that raise their ugly heads once in a while.
- The relationship between the two countries has hit a low lately over territories on the north-western ridge of Nepal.
- Even though both Kathmandu and New Delhi have expressed their willingness to hold diplomatic dialogue to resolve the issue, talks have failed to materialise. Amid this, a controversy over Gautam Buddha certainly does not help.

Can India claim legitimacy?

- Despite the fact that it is host to a relatively small population of Buddhists, India can claim legitimacy in its promotion of Buddhist diplomacy for a number of reasons.
 - œ First, the Buddhist faith originated in India, therefore granting it singular historical legitimacy.
 - œ Second, India has numerous sites of importance to the Buddhist faith, such as Bodhi Gaya, Sarnath, and Nalanda.
 - œ Third, India has nurtured an image of being a protector of the persecuted through the presence of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan parliament-in-exile in Dharamshala.
- Deepening ties with Asian nations on the basis of Buddhism could potentially feed into the government's larger policy objectives, for example, the 'Neighbourhood First' policy, and the 'Act East' policy.

CALL TO BRING ARUNACHAL PRADESH UNDER THE AMBIT OF THE SIXTH SCHEDULE

- **CONTEXT:** The revival of the demand for two autonomous councils has made political parties and community-based groups call for bringing the entire Arunachal Pradesh under the ambit of the Sixth Schedule or Article 371 (A) of the Constitution.
- **ABOUT:** **What is the Sixth Schedule?**
 - According to **Article 244** of the Indian Constitution, the Sixth Schedule consists of provisions for the administration of tribal areas in-

- œ Assam
- œ Meghalaya
- œ Tripura
- œ Mizoram
- . Passed by the Constituent Assembly in 1949, it seeks to safeguard the rights of tribal population through the formation of **Autonomous District Councils (ADC)**.
- . ADCs are bodies representing a district to which the Constitution has given varying degrees of autonomy within the state legislature.
- . The governors of these states can-
 - œ He/she is empowered to reorganise boundaries of the tribal areas.
 - œ He/she can choose to include or exclude any area, increase or decrease the boundaries and unite two or more autonomous districts into one.
 - œ He/she can also alter or change the names of autonomous regions without a separate legislation.

Autonomous districts and regional councils

- . Along with ADCs, the Sixth Schedule also provides for separate **Regional Councils** for each area constituted as an autonomous region.
- . In all, there are 10 areas in the Northeast that are registered as autonomous districts –
 - > three in Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram
 - > one in Tripura
- . These regions are named as district council of (name of district) and regional council of (name of region).
- . Each autonomous district and regional council consists of not more than 30 members, of which four are nominated by the governor and the rest via elections. All of them remain in power for a term of five years.

Bodoland Territorial Council

- . The Bodoland Territorial Council, however, is an exception as it can constitute up to 46 members out of which 40 are elected.
 - > Of these 40 seats, 35 are reserved for the Scheduled Tribes and non-tribal communities, five are unreserved and the rest six are nominated by the governor from unrepresented communities of the Bodoland Territorial Areas District (BTAD).

What are the demands?

- . The demand is to bring entire Arunachal Pradesh under the ambit of the Sixth Schedule or under Article 371(A) or 371(G).
- . These articles would provide special rights to all Arunachalees on matters of religious and social practices, customary law, land (ownership, transfer and control) etc under the India Constitution.

The current governing structure

- . **Fifth Schedule:** The Frontier State bordering Bhutan, China and Myanmar is under the **Fifth Schedule** that “does not provide special rights for the indigenous communities” unlike the Sixth Schedule.
- . **Sixth Schedule:** The Sixth Schedule currently includes 10 autonomous district councils in four northeastern States — Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura.

- . **Article 371 (A):** Nagaland, on the other hand, is governed by Article 371 (A), which says that no Act of Parliament shall apply in the State in several areas unless the Nagaland Assembly so decides by a resolution.
 - œ These include administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law and ownership and transfer of land and its resources.

UNION PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION GETS A NEW CHAIRMAN

- ⦿ **CONTEXT:** Educationist Professor Pradeep Kumar Joshi is appointed as the chairman of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) that conducts the civil services examination to select India's bureaucrats and diplomats among others.
- ⦿ **ABOUT:**
 - The Constitution of India provides for four watchdogs to keep a check on different functions of the State.
 - œ **The Supreme Court:** SC keeps a check on the judicial functions of the state.
 - œ **The Election Commission of India:** ECI ensures free and fair elections.
 - œ **The Comptroller and Auditor General of India:** The Comptroller and Auditor General keep in check the finances of the country.
 - œ **The Union Public Service Commission:** UPSC is a watchdog to ensure fair recruitment on the basis of merit.
 - . The Constitution visualises the UPSC to be the 'watch-dog of merit system' in India.

Constitutional Provisions

Article 315 to 323 of Part XIV of the Indian Constitution deals with provisions relating to the Union Public Service Commission as well as the State Public Service Commission.

Constitutional Provisions	
Article-315	Public Service Commissions for the Union and for the States.
Article-316	Appointment and term of office of members
Article-317	Removal and suspension of a member of a Public Service Commission.
Article-318	Power to make regulations as to conditions of service of members and staff of the Commission
Article-319	Prohibition as to the holding of offices by members of Commission on ceasing to be such members
Article-320	Functions of Public Service Commissions
Article-321	Power to extend functions of Public Service Commissions
Article-322	Expenses of Public Service Commissions
Article-323	Reports of Public Service Commissions



Functions of the Commissions

- . Under Article 320 of the Constitution of India, the Commission is, inter-alia, required to be consulted on all matters relating to recruitment to civil services and posts. The functions of the Commission under Article 320 of the Constitution are:
 - œ Conduct examinations for appointment to the services of the Union.
 - œ Direct recruitment by selection through interviews.
 - œ Appointment of officers on promotion / deputation / absorption.
 - œ Framing and amendment of Recruitment Rules for various services and posts under the Government.
 - œ Disciplinary cases relating to different Civil Services.
 - œ Advising the Government on any matter referred to the Commission by the President of India.

Composition of UPSC

- . The Commission consists of a chairman and other members appointed by the President of India.
- . Usually, the Commission consists of 9 to 11 members including the chairman.
- . Every member holds office for a term of six years or until he attains the age of sixty-five years, whichever is earlier.

NEW TICK-BORNE VIRUS IN CHINA

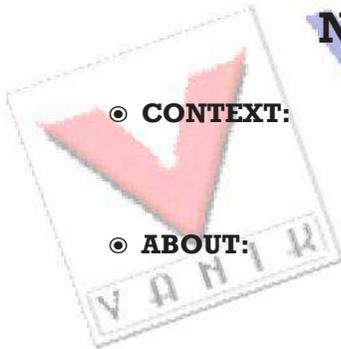
◎ CONTEXT:

A new infection disease called Severe Fever with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (SFTS), caused by a tick-borne virus, has killed seven and infected at least 60 in China, setting off alarm bells among health officials in the country.

◎ ABOUT:

What is SFTS Virus?

- . Severe fever with thrombocytopenia syndrome virus (SFTSV) belongs to the **Bunyavirus family** and is transmitted to humans through **tick bites**.
- . The virus was first identified in China over a decade ago. The first few cases were reported in rural areas of Hubei and Henan provinces in 2009.
- . **Prime vector:** Virologists believe an Asian tick called **Haemaphysalis longicornis** is the primary vector, or carrier, of the virus.
- . **Peak time:** The disease is known to spread between March and November. The total number of infections generally peaks between April and July.
- . **Who are vulnerable?** Farmers, hunters and pet owners are particularly vulnerable to the disease as they regularly come in contact with animals that may carry the Haemaphysalis longicornis tick.
- . **Transmission:** Scientists have found that the virus is often transmitted to humans from animals like goats, cattle, deer and sheep.
 - œ Despite being infected by the virus, animals generally do not show any symptoms associated with SFTSV.



What are Ticks?

- . Ticks are blood-sucking bugs, living by feeding on the blood of mammals, birds, and sometimes reptiles and amphibians.
- . They are mostly found in bushes, grass and shrubs. The eight-legged bugs are arachnids -- related to spiders.
- . According to the **WHO**, ticks are vectors of a large number of diseases including
 - > relapsing fever
 - > Rocky Mountain spotted fever
 - > Q fever
- . Lyme disease

Fatality rate

- . The current case fatality rate rests between approximately 16 and 30 per cent.
- . Due to the rate at which it spreads and its high fatality rate, SFTS has been listed among the top 10 priority diseases blue print by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

What are the symptoms?

- . **Incubation period:** The incubation period is anywhere between seven and 13 days after the onset of the illness.
- . Patients suffering from the disease usually experience a whole range of symptoms, including, fever, fatigue, chill, headache, lymphadenopathy, anorexia, nausea, myalgia, diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain, gingival hemorrhage, conjunctival congestion, and so on.
- . Some of the early warning signs of the disease include severe fever, thrombocytopenia or low platelet count and leukocytopenia, which is low white blood cell count.
- . The risk factors observed in more serious cases include multi-organ failure, hemorrhagic manifestation and the appearance of central nervous system (CNS) symptoms.

Is it treatable?

- . While a vaccine to treat the disease is yet to be successfully developed, the antiviral drug **Ribavirin** is known to be effective in treating the illness.
- . In order to avoid contracting the illness, various government authorities, including China's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), urges the general public to avoid wearing shorts while walking through tall grass, the woods, and any other environment where ticks are likely to thrive.

STARSHIP SPACECRAFT

◎ CONTEXT:

Just two days after SpaceX's Crew Dragon capsule landed in the Gulf of Mexico, a prototype of the company's uncrewed "Mars ship", a stainless steel test vehicle called SN5, and which is a part of the Starship spacecraft, successfully flew to an altitude of over 500 feet for a little less than 60 seconds.

◎ ABOUT:

What is Starship?

- . Designed by SpaceX, Starship is a spacecraft and super-heavy booster rocket meant to act as a **reusable transportation system** for crew and cargo to the Earth's orbit, Moon and Mars.

- . SpaceX has described Starship as “the world’s most powerful launch vehicle” with an ability to carry over 100 metric tonnes to the Earth’s orbit.
- . Starship has been under development since 2012 and is a part of Space X’s central mission to make interplanetary travel accessible and affordable and to become the first private company to do so.
- . Therefore, the company is working on building a fleet of reusable launch vehicles, capable of carrying humans to Mars and other destinations in the solar system.

Why the focus is on ‘reusable transportation system’?

- . Reusability is at the heart of making interplanetary travel accessible.
- . Since a majority of the launch cost is attributed to the expense of building a rocket which is ultimately designed to burn up during re-entry.
- . Following the commercial model, a rapidly reusable space launch vehicle could reduce the cost of traveling to space by a hundredfold.

Significance of the Starship

- . **Functional at lower cost:** Starship can deliver satellites further and at lower marginal costs than SpaceX’s Falcon vehicles and it can ferry both cargo and crew to the International Space Station (ISS).
- . **Ability to carry large amounts of cargo:** Once developed, Starship is also expected to help carry large amounts of cargo to the Moon, for human spaceflight development and research.
- . **Interplanetary missions:** Beyond the Moon, the spacecraft is being designed for carrying crew and cargo for interplanetary missions as well.



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CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYST

WEEK- 4 (AUGUST, 2020)

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SECTION: A
(MAINS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS



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AT LEAST 23 MILLION MIGRANTS ARE RETURNING TO INDIA'S VILLAGES. CAN THE RURAL ECONOMY KEEP UP?

CONTEXT

Covid-19 and the response to it in India has forced daily wagers and low-wage workers in urban slums to return to their villages, orchestrating an unprecedented U-turn in migration trends..

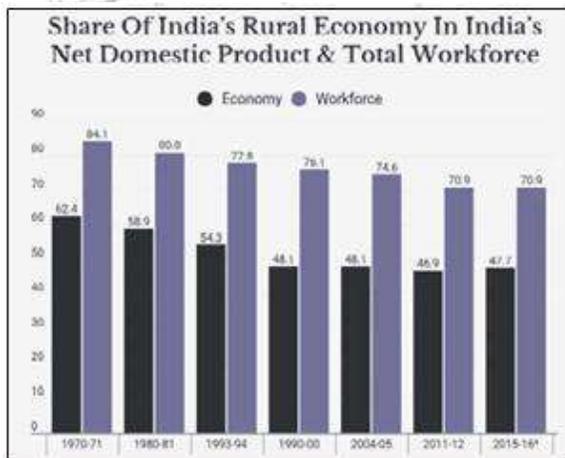
Assessing the challenges in absorbing migrant labour returning from urban areas

Rural India is incapable of absorbing the estimated 23 million interstate and intrastate migrant labour who might return home from urban areas due to the Covid-19 lockdown. This is because the rural economy is already overburdened, excessively dependent on agriculture, and has widespread hidden underemployment. The challenges are as follow:

Hidden unemployment

Contributing less than half – 48% – of India's net domestic product in 2015-'16, the rural economy supports 70% of India's population, according to National Account Statistics from 2017 and the government's latest labour survey from 2017-'18. This creates substandard living conditions in rural areas, with an annual per capita income of Rs 40,928 in 2015-'16, less than half the urban per capita income of Rs 98,435.

The productivity of each person in rural India is low. About 71% of India's total workforce is in the rural economy but as the contribution to the economy is 48%, the productivity of the rural workforce is lower than that of the workforce in urban areas.



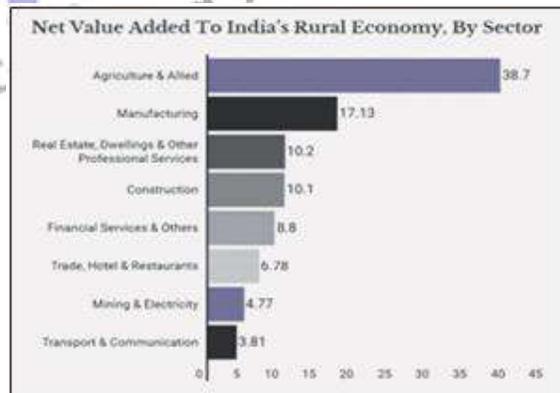
The introduction of more capital and technology should improve labour productivity. But in rural

areas, labour productivity has instead slightly reduced over the years.

The productivity gap in 1970-'71 was below 12%, which rose to about 13% in 2017-'18, data from the 2015-'16 national accounts and the 2017-'18 labour survey show. Despite the increase, this gap remains small, implying hidden underemployment. In such a situation, the rural economy cannot gainfully employ returning migrants.

Over-dependence on agriculture

The rural economy is also over-reliant on agriculture and lacks diversification, due to which it will be unable to create more employment in rural areas. Agriculture is the predominant sector in India's rural economy, making up the largest part – 38.7% – of the 2015-'16 net domestic product.

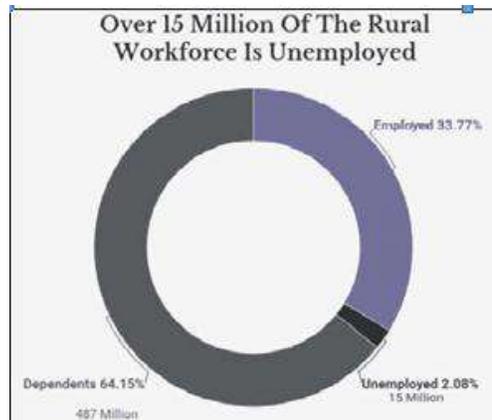


Ordinarily, manufacturing, comprising 17% of the net domestic product, and construction, comprising 10%, could help absorb the additional labour in rural areas. But in India, although the share of manufacturing in the rural economy has grown to 17% in 2015-'16 from 5.9% in 1970-'71, and the sector itself has grown at an average rate of 15% between 2005 and 2012, it is not large enough to absorb returning migrants.

Stressed economy

Just over a third, or 36%, of the rural population was working or available for work in 2017-'18, according to calculations from the Periodic Labour

Force Survey, based on the 365 days preceding the survey. The remaining 64% of the population—mostly children below the age of 14 years and the elderly—is dependent on them.



- œ Of those who are part of the labour force, 5.8% – 15.8 million – were unemployed for the major part, according to calculations based on data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey.
- œ Of those who were employed, only about 4.6% had regular salaries while about 90% did not even have a job contract. Most of the rural workforce does not have social security benefits that are available to organised sector workers.

Poorer states

- œ Those states that have higher out-migration also have higher unemployment, so that their economies will find it even more difficult to absorb returning migrants. Of all interstate migrants in India, 23% are from Uttar Pradesh and 14% from Bihar, according to data from Census 2011. The rural unemployment rate in these two states – 7% in Bihar and 6% in UP – is higher than the Indian average of 5.8%, according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey.
- œ Uttar Pradesh makes up about 15% of India's total rural unemployment and Bihar 10%. These two states are also marred by a high rate of rural poverty – 37% of India's poor live in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
- œ Besides Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, rural labour from other states such as West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha migrates to Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab and other states for employment. Most of these source states are poor: 35% of the rural population lives below the poverty line in Odisha, 35.7% in Madhya Pradesh, and 22% in West Bengal.

Stimulus package to absorb surplus workforce in rural market

- œ The stimulus package under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative and allocations under other programmes for infrastructure development is expected to absorb a good part of regular and surplus (including returnee migrants) workforce in the rural market.
- œ The MSME sector, with a high capacity to accommodate labour, and having received a special government package, should take care of the skilled and semi-skilled workforce.
- œ Restarting the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, more commonly known as MGNREGS- measure announced for Covid-19 relief – could help bring the rural economy back on track, but will not be enough to solve the reverse migration problem.
- œ There is also a continued need for social safety net programmes, such as the PDS to focus on the vulnerable sections of rural society. In this context, the “One Nation, One Ration card” policy can particularly be effective in enhancing food security of the most vulnerable migrants.

How rural growth can reverse migration?

- œ Rising urban demand for diverse foods can be tapped by smallholders to fuel rural employment growth.
- œ Demand for high-quality food is rising, and a small farm's income growth potential in producing diverse crops is higher than that of primary staples. Also, bringing post-harvest processing and value addition operations closer to food production centres can enhance employment opportunities.
- œ ICT and e-markets can further enhance farmer participation in high-value markets, where educated rural youth can manage smart technologies and management practices. Agri-tech start-ups may be incentivised to strengthen e-commerce and delivery linkages in rural landscapes.
- œ One nation, one market” policies, could pave the way for enhancing the market size and ensuring more stable food prices.
- œ MGNREGA is a demand-driven scheme that guarantees wage employment to volunteers prepared to do unskilled manual work. That notwithstanding, there is a provision for “unemployment allowance” in case employment cannot be provided. Awareness campaigns and civil society engagements may prove helpful in informing migrants.
- œ If productive assets like improved land, water harvesting structures, etc, are created in mission mode, it would, directly and indirectly, help rebuild the rural economy.

œ A transparent land-lease market, backed by an institutional framework, would boost investments in the rural economy and increase the access of lessees to government entitlements like PM-KISAN, insurance/credit, etc.

© **CONCLUSION:**

Unlike many other sectors, agriculture has potential to revive the pandemic-hit economy. Spurring the

rural economic growth can become the saviour for the situation and taking care of the most vulnerable. Critical data on the migrant workforce would facilitate effective policymaking. The state of Madhya Pradesh has shown the way ahead by surveying returnee migrants and mapping their skillsets. Hence, creation of such databases across the country while linking to the Aadhaar stack to facilitate inclusive and affirmative government actions.



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CONCERN ABOUT DEMOCRACY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

CONTEXT

In the times of digital age, information asymmetry has become so skewed that it has eroded the very spirit of democracy by limiting the unbiased communication of ideas.

◎ BACKGROUND

- œ At a time when the Internet is the new jazz and a tool as also a venue for all political hues, it is important to understand how government, political parties and citizens are responding to this new triangular interplay between data protection, privacy and a flow of information.
- œ When the Government of India banned 59 Chinese apps on the ground of transgressing Indian security, the question as to-
 - > Why in the first instance were they allowed into India?
 - > Was there no security or privacy audit?
 - > While Facebook and Amazon are facing scrutiny on their own soil for their data mining policies, how did we allow so many apps without any check?
- œ Government policy on national security should be based on advance strategic assessment rather than on a reactive basis.

◎ ANALYSIS

The Changing Nature of Information

- œ Today, the way in which the internet allows data to be produced, collected, combined, shared, stored, and analyzed is constantly changing.
- œ This change is also re-defining personal data and what type of protections personal data deserves and can be given.
- œ From information shared on social media sites, to cookies collecting user browser history, to individuals transacting online, to mobile phones registering location data – information about an individual is generated through each use of the internet.
- œ In some cases the individual is aware that they are generating information and that it is being collected, but in many cases, the individual is unaware of the information trail that they are leaving online, do not know who is accessing the information, and do not have control over how their information is being handled, and for what purposes it is being used.

Segregating the Data

Data can be broadly classified into public data and personal data.

- **Public data:** Public data is that which is accessible to the public at large, such as, Court records, birth records, death records, basic company details.
- **Private data:** On the other hand, private data is personal to an individual/ organization and cannot freely be disseminated by anybody without the prior permission of the subject.
 - > It includes financial details, family details, browsing details, preferences, psychological characteristics, locations and travel history, behavior, abilities, photographs, aptitudes, and the like.
 - > It could also be a combination of these features or even inferences drawn from the refined data.

The Blurry Line between the Public and Private Sphere

- œ In India, the “sphere” of information on the internet is unclear.
- œ The information posted on social media
 - > is public information – free for use by any individual or entity including law enforcement, employees, data mining companies etc.
 - > or is private information, and thus requires authorization for further use.
- œ Authorization is not required for the lab to monitor individuals and their behavior, and individuals are not made aware of the same, as the project claims to analyze only publicly available information.

What's take of India's courts?

- œ The borderless nature of information flows over the Internet complicates online privacy, as individual's data is subjected to different levels of protection depending on which jurisdiction it is residing in.
- œ Indian Courts have yet to deal directly with the question of social media content being public or private information.

How private firms are exploiting the election process?

- œ Private data analytics companies have emerged to exploit the electoral process with the sole objective of customising political messaging.
- œ While the customisation of political messaging is not *per se* illegal, it certainly is unlawful to indulge in unauthorised data mining and collection by the industry.
- œ Many private enterprises routinely share the personal data of individuals with third parties including political organisations.
- œ The fact that there are dedicated IT cells which carry out a digital form of warfare with propaganda and fake news being two powerful weapons is making things more complicated.
- œ The present legal framework leaves these menaces outside the ambit of election laws as they were framed in a time and space that was primitive when compared to contemporary technological advancements.

Isn't "privacy" a fundamental right?

- œ On the privacy front, even after the Supreme Court of India had declared privacy as a fundamental right, the government insisted on affidavit in the top court that informational privacy or data privacy cannot be a fundamental right.
- œ Though the protection of personal data has been recognised as a fundamental right, there is an absence of law to effectively outline the state purpose in collecting such data and enforce, limit and balance the rights of citizens against the larger public interests.
- œ The Aadhar Act diluted the notion of 'privacy' and the standard of proportionality test set up by the Supreme Court.
- œ In an ongoing dilemma, even the 'Aarogya Setu' app is battling to satisfy the conscience of privacy overseers.
- œ The clear impression is that the government is more interested in 'control' than 'protection' of data.
- œ A national policy on data privacy of individuals is still a non-starter. People continue to suffer because of the regular incidents of data theft.
- œ India's cybersecurity watchdog, CERT-In, last year reported huge data theft of Facebook and Twitter users by malicious third party apps. Reportedly, more than 1.3 million credit and debit card details from Indian banks and the data of 6.8 million users from an Indian health-care website were stolen in the same year.

Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India

- . The notion of informational privacy has become salient in the past decade but, India has privacy jurisprudence going back several decades.
- . Most of it focuses on privacy in the context of harms caused due to a violation of privacy.
- . This jurisprudence changed in 2017, when the Supreme Court in **Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India** held that the Indian Constitution included a **fundamental right to privacy**.
- . While deciding the case, though the court listed a long line of jurisprudence, the central deficiency in the existing jurisprudence in the court's opinion was the lack of a "doctrinal formulation" that could help decide whether privacy is constitutionally protected.
- . The jurisprudence on privacy therefore changed—from being valued as a right that protected other ends to being an end in itself. Along with holding that privacy is a fundamental right, the judgment also declared informational privacy to be a subset of the right to privacy.

Principle data protection legislation in India

- œ Currently, India does not have comprehensive and dedicated data protection legislation. Some provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000 as amended from time to time and the Information Technology (Reasonable Security Practices and Procedure and Sensitive Personal Data or Information) Rules, 2011 (SPDI Rules).
- œ In December 2019, the government introduced the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, in parliament, which would create the first cross-sectoral legal framework for data protection in India.
- œ In addition to this, personal data is also protected under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution which guarantees to every citizen, the Right to Privacy as a fundamental right. The Supreme Court has held in a number of cases that information about a person and the right to access that information by that person is also covered within the ambit of right to privacy.

What's worsening the situation?

- œ **More focus on control than protection:** The Personal Data Protection Bill, struggling to be born in Parliament despite conception in 2018, is more about control and surveillance than about promoting privacy and protection of data.
 - > Far-reaching exemptions, in large measure swallowing the rule, have been carved out where personal data can be processed.

- > Section 35, which provides the government with unfettered access to personal data, negates the three tests of legality, necessity and proportionality given by the Supreme Court in **Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) vs Union Of India**.
- > The Bill also allows State and private parties to process personal data without obtaining consent and such broad exemptions would not only open the floodgates for misuse but also reduce India's prospects of entering into bilateral arrangements for law enforcement access.
- œ **Wholly government controlled system:** Selection committees, terms of appointment and of removal establish beyond doubt that the Authority is likely to be like a rehabilitation centre for retired bureaucrats, yet a sinecure wholly controlled by the government. It is a classic case of rolling up judge, jury and executioner.

Assessing the impacts:

- œ **Re-tribalisation of politics:** Resultantly, "Information Superhighways" (coined by the U.S.'s "almost" President Al Gore) in democracy are leading to "re-tribalisation" of politics in cabals and cocoons while deliberations are fast transforming into 'consultations among computer systems' where trust and security are illusions.
- œ **Easy spread of fake news:** For citizens, digital media are carriers of images and sounds, rather than words and thoughts, and the system where images run faster than thoughts is suitable for the spread of fake news.
- œ **Disinformation:** Times of fear and uncertainty also provide a fertile ground for disinformation to grow. The fake WhatsApp forwards that triggered the primitive "Us v/s Them" group mentality and is manifested in Delhi riots reports, and the forwards on the novel coronavirus which declare COVID-19 a bacteria and the World Health Organization stating that vegetarians cannot be infected with COVID-19, are all reminders of the potency of data, true or false, in a democracy.

What needs to be done?

- œ **A balanced approach:** There need to be a gatekeeper to balance appetites for technology, security and privacy. So long as the gate keeper is for regulation, not surveillance, and so long as it is completely and genuinely independent.
- œ **Internet Ombudsman:** An Internet ombudsman with experts on cyber and Internet laws, IT,

data management, data science, data security, public administration and national security, and consciously involving eminent sections of civil society, can be an effective antidote to unregulated technological disruptions.

The need for constitutional entrenchment

- . Any data protection body must be abundantly independent, especially in the manner of appointment of its members, conditions of their service and the manner of their removal.
 - > They must not be appointees of the executive alone but must be appointed on the recommendation of a committee having bipartisan legislative representation and representatives from the judiciary – as is the case with the information commissions, the Central Vigilance Commission and the NHRC.
 - > Their removal from office must only be allowed in the same manner as a judge of the Supreme Court and their salary must also be fixed similar to the CAG or an election commissioner.
- . Only a constitutionally entrenched body will be sufficiently protected from executive aggrandizement, political control and institutional capture, leading to a robust fourth branch institution – one which can act as an effective guardrail against violation of the right to privacy.
- . Incorporation of a full-fledged Data Protection Commission through a constitutional amendment must be envisaged by the legislature as a replacement for the DPA in its current form.

- œ **Usage of data with consent:** Data should not be collected and processed without consent. Businesses that violate this principle would also violate Indian constitutional norms of informational privacy, as well as the property interests of users.

CONCLUSION

A country like India—with low levels of access to credit, insurance, and other financial services—may potentially make very different trade-offs between the need for such access on the one hand and the need for informational privacy on the other. Therefore, a law sanctioning collection of data and requiring the government to follow crucial data protection and surveillance principles is the need of the hour.

NATIONAL DIGITAL HEALTH MISSION, INDIA'S FIRST STEP TOWARDS UHC

CONTEXT

On the occasion of 74th Independence Day, the Government announced a national health ID for every India. The development is envisioned as India's first step towards 'Universal Health Coverage'.

◎ BACKGROUND

- œ The ambitious National Digital Health Mission finds its roots in a 2018 Niti Aayog proposal to create a centralised mechanism to uniquely identify every participating user in the National Health Stack.
 - œ The blueprint of the programme was launched last year. It seeks to provide an efficient and affordable health coverage through a wide-range of data and infrastructure services.
 - œ According to its strategy document, the NDHM's vision is:
 - œ "To create a national digital health ecosystem that supports universal health coverage in an efficient, accessible, inclusive, affordable, timely and safe manner, that provides a wide-range of data, information and infrastructure services, duly leveraging open, interoperable, standards-based digital systems, and ensures the security, confidentiality and privacy of health-related personal information."
 - œ In 2015, efforts to augment digital health infrastructure were initiated with the 'Digital India' movement.
 - œ Yet, it was the COVID-19 pandemic that necessitated rapid adoption.
- been given the mandate by the Government of India to design, build, roll-out and implement the NDHM in the country.
 - œ It is an ambitious plan to create a digital infrastructure for health care delivery, which will include personal health IDs and e-records for citizens.
 - œ **Building blocks:** The NDHM comprises six key building blocks or digital systems to enable access to timely, safe and affordable healthcare through a 'citizen-centric' approach, namely-
 - > HealthID
 - > DigiDoctor
 - > Health Facility Registry
 - > Personal Health Records
 - > e-Pharmacy
 - > Telemedicine
 - œ The key feature of this mission is the technology part - it will leverage open digital systems to provide high-quality healthcare for all.
 - œ It will integrate various digital health services to create an ecosystem which can assimilate existing health information systems.

◎ ANALYSIS

What is the National Digital Health Mission?

- œ The National Digital Health Mission is a digital health ecosystem under which every Indian citizen will now have **unique health IDs**, digitised health records with identifiers for doctors and health facilities.
- œ The mission comes under the **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)**.
- œ **National Health Authority (NHA)**, the attached office of the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare** and the apex Central Government agency responsible for the implementation of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, has

Governance structure

- . The mission will keep two separate arms, according to the National Digital Health blueprint.
 - > One arm will be for regulation
 - > One for implementation and operational management.
- . The Group will oversee and guide the NDHM. Its members will include ministers of women and child development, social justice and empowerment, AYUSH and information technology, the principal scientific advisor, Member Health (NITI Aayog), secretaries of health, expenditure and information technology, the National Health Authority (NHA) CEO and others.

- **Empowered Committee:** An Empowered Committee will be set up under the chairpersonship of the health secretary, that will take necessary policy-level decisions, help the mission with coordination with different stakeholders and engagement with different ministries and departments to ensure their participation.
 - > Its members will include NITI Aayog CEO, secretaries of women and child development, social justice & empowerment, MeitY, AYUSH, and expenditure as well as NHA CEO and directors general of health services and the National Informatics Centre.

- **Electronic Health Records (EHR)** — EHRs contain records for a patient across multiple doctors and providers and is used within a Healthcare system (like say across a state government) to provide better care for patients.
- **Personal Health Records (PHR)** — PHRs enable patients to compile, update and keep a copy of their own records that can help them better manage their care and are person focussed.
- It will not be possible to have access to digital health records without creation of a health ID.

What is a Health ID?

- œ As per the National Health Authority (NHA), every patient who wishes to have their health records available digitally must start by creating a unique Health ID.
- œ The health ID will contain information about medical data, prescriptions and diagnostic reports, and summaries of previous discharge from hospitals for ailments.
- œ Each Health ID will be linked to a health data consent manager — such as **National Digital Health Mission (NDHM)** — which will be used to seek the patient's consent and allow for seamless flow of health information from the Personal Health Records module.
- œ This ID is to be created by using a person's basic details and mobile number or Aadhaar number.
- œ The health ID will reportedly be in the form of a mobile application.
- œ Will the Health ID be mandatory?
- œ The health ID will not be mandatory.
- œ Although the government hopes that the feature will attract more users to it since it allows a person online access to all their health records right from birth.

Categorisation of Health Data

The document categorises health data into three distinct layers.

- **Electronic Medical Records (EMR)** — This refers to systems that are used within a hospital or a clinic to support patient diagnosis and treatment and are transaction focused. NDHM requires these systems to be updated to support standards and provide access to patients' data.

Where will the Health ID be applicable?

- œ The ID will reportedly be applicable across states, hospitals, diagnostic laboratories, and pharmacies.
- œ According to its strategy document, the NDHM will pilot the mission in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Lakshadweep, Ladakh, and Puducherry.

What about data privacy?

- Personal data, especially health data, is sensitive, and its privacy must be protected.
- The government has assured that the data provided will be protected and health records will only be shared after authorisation by an individual.
- The NDHM's document also states that health records will be accessible and shareable by the patient with appropriate consent and complete control of the records will remain with the patient.
- The mission will also require doctors/hospitals to upload a digital copy of any health reports being physically shared with the patient to enable the creation of health records.
- An appropriate digital consent framework as per standards specified by NDHM (leveraging DigiLocker consent management framework to the extent possible) will be adopted for consent management.

India and its health sector

- œ India is a large, growing country and its health care needs are immense. Advanced health care expertise is concentrated in large cities whereas a large population with health care needs is geographically distant from such expertise and facilities.
- œ Not everyone can get admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences at short notice not only because such capacity is limited but also because costs and time constraints prevent most from being able to access such care.

- œ Tele-medicine can alleviate these limitations to a great extent. If the patient cannot reach the right doctor or the right facilities, the doctor can reach the patient through tele-medicine and test-results can be communicated electronically with speed.
- œ Only a fraction of the patients would need to be moved to facilities far away from home, and while the patient travels, the diagnosis, some palliative care and tests can continue seamlessly without interruption.

Key-roadblocks for India’s healthcare industry:

- œ **Population:** India has the world’s second-largest population, rising from 760 million in 1985 to an estimated 1.3 billion in 2015.
- œ **Infrastructure:** The existing healthcare infrastructure is just not enough to meet the needs of the population. The central and state governments do offer universal healthcare services and free treatment and essential drugs at government hospitals. However, the hospitals are, as we said, understaffed and under-financed, forcing patients to visit private medical practitioners and hospitals.
- œ **Insurance:** India has one of the lowest per capita healthcare expenditures in the world. Government contribution to insurance stands at roughly 32 percent, as opposed to 83.5 percent in the UK. The high out-of-pocket expenses in India stem from the fact that 76 percent of Indians do not have health insurance.
- œ **Rural-urban disparity:** The rural healthcare infrastructure is three-tiered and includes a sub-center, primary health centre (PHC) and CHC. PHCs are short of more than 3,000 doctors, with the shortage up by 200 per cent over the last 10 years to 27,421.

There are, however, potential catalysts to improve the quality of healthcare in India.

Significance of the NDHM

- œ **More efficient, effective and transparent system:** The National Digital Health Mission (NDHM), which comes under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY), is expected to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency of health services in the country.
- œ **A big revolution in health sector:** The health ID will store every individual’s medical records and the Mission will herald a new revolution in the health sector.
- œ **Facilitation of health data:** This will greatly facilitate tele-medicine, e-pharmacy, and collection, consolidation and inter-operability of health data.
- œ **Achieving the SDGs:** It will be a major stride towards achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3.8 of Universal Health Coverage, including financial risk protection.

⦿ **CONCLUSION:**

Universal Healthcare (UHC) by 2030 is a pivotal commitment for India, as it impacts achievement of all other SDGs. In this regard, the National Digital Health Mission is a holistic, voluntary healthcare programme that will effectively reduce the existing gap between various stakeholders such as doctors, hospitals and other healthcare providers, pharmacies, insurance companies, and citizens by bringing them together and connecting them in an integrated digital health infrastructure.

TOBACCO BEHIND MORE THAN A QUARTER OF INDIA'S CANCER CASES

CONTEXT

Tobacco-related cancers constitute the highest burden among all types of the disease in India. As many as 27 per cent of cancer cases were caused due to tobacco consumption, according to a new report released by the National Cancer Registry of India (NCRI).

● BACKGROUND

- œ Cancer is the second leading cause of death globally. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), cancer accounted for an estimated 9.6 million deaths, or one in six deaths, in 2018.
- œ The most common types of cancer in men are lung, prostate, colorectal, stomach and liver cancer while breast, colorectal, lung, cervical and thyroid cancer are the most common types among women.
- œ In a recent report, WHO warned that the world may witness a 60% increase in cancer cases over the next two decades if the current trend continues.
- œ The latest estimates of the **National Cancer Registry Programme Report 2020** are released by the ICMR in association with National Centre for Disease Informatics & Research (NCDIR) Bengaluru.
- œ The report released the cancer prevalence landscape by taking into account cases registered from 2012-2016.
 - > The report estimates that tobacco-related cancers will contribute 3.7 lakh (27.1 per cent) of the total cancer burden in 2020.
 - > Cancers related to use of any form of tobacco were highest in the northeastern region of the country and in higher proportion in men.
- œ Earlier this year, a WHO report had also revealed a high burden of tobacco-related head and neck cancers in India, particularly oral cancer in men and of cervical cancer in women.
- œ Both of these cancer types are associated with lower socioeconomic status, the WHO report stated.

- œ Cancer is when the cells start to grow out of control.
- œ The cancer cells keep on growing and making new cells. They crowd out normal cells. This causes problems in the part of the body where the cancer started.
- œ Simply put, Cancer is the uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells anywhere in a body.
- œ Cells become cancerous due to the accumulation of defects, or mutations, in their DNA. Certain:
 - > inherited genetic defects (for example, BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutations),
 - > infections,
 - > environmental factors (for example, air pollution), and
 - > poor lifestyle choices -- such as smoking and heavy alcohol use -- can also damage DNA and lead to cancer.

Tumor

- . Most cancers form a lump called a tumor or a growth. But not all lumps are cancer. Doctors take out a piece of the lump and look at it to find out if it's cancer.
- . Lumps that are not cancer are called benign (be-NINE). Lumps that are cancer are called malignant (muh-LIG-nunt).
- . There are some cancers, like leukemia (cancer of the blood), that don't form tumors. They grow in the blood cells or other cells of the body.

Types of Cancer

- œ **Carcinoma** is a cancer that starts in the skin or the tissues that line other organs.
 - > **Lung cancer:** A cancer that begins in the lungs and most often occurs in people who smoke.
 - > **Breast Cancer:** A cancer that forms in the cells of the breasts.
 - > **Prostate cancer:** A cancer in a man's prostate, a small walnut sized gland that produce seminal fluid.

● ANALYSIS

Cancer Basics

- œ The cells in our bodies all have certain jobs to do. Normal cells divide in an orderly way. They die when they are worn out or damaged, and new cells take their place.

- œ **Sarcoma** is a cancer of connective tissues such as bones, muscles, cartilage, and blood vessels.
- œ **Leukemia** is a cancer of bone marrow, which creates blood cells.
- œ **Lymphoma** and **myeloma** are cancers of the immune system.
- œ **Brain and spinal cord cancers** – these are known as central nervous system cancers

Key-Highlights of the Report

- œ The estimates of the National Cancer Registry Programme Report 2020 projected that cancers will rise by 12 per cent to 1,569,793 cases in 2025, from 1,392,179 in 2020.
- œ The report has included data from 28 **population-based cancer registries (PBCRs)** and 58 **hospital-based cancer registries (HBCRs)** in India.
- œ The PBCR takes into account, the number of cancer cases in a given geographical unit, for instance, Delhi. It can be a district or even a state.
- œ The HBCR takes into account, the number of cases that go to a particular hospital irrespective of their geographical background.
- œ The PBCR in Delhi registered the maximum number of cases (60,097), followed by Mumbai (53,714), Chennai (31,271), Bengaluru (29,049) and Thiruvananthapuram (27,833).

National Cancer Registry of India

- The Indian Council of Medical Research set up the National Cancer Registry Programme (NCRP) in 1982.
- The programme is overseen by the ICMR National Centre for Disease Informatics & Research (NCDIR), Bengaluru.
- A network of population and hospital-based cancer registries (PBCR, HBCR) systematically collect data related to cancer incidence, mortality and clinical aspects to estimate burden, trends, survival and management.

The most common cancer types

- œ Gastro-intestinal tract cancers (19.7 per cent) and breast cancer (14.8 per cent) are the other most prevalent cancers in India.
- œ Lymphoid and haematopoietic malignancies (immune system and blood cancers), cervix cancers and ovarian cancers are the other common cancers in India.
- œ **Most common among male:** The cancers of the lungs, mouth, stomach and oesophagus.
 - > Mizoram's Aizawl district topped in terms of cancer incidence per 100,000 population in males, followed by the districts of East Khasi

Hills in Meghalaya and Kamrup in Assam, the state of Mizoram, Papum Pare district in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya state, Delhi, Thiruvnanthapuram district in Kerala and Cachar district in Assam.

- œ **Most common among female:** Cancers of the breast and cervix uteri.
 - > Papum Pare had the worst cancer rate for females, followed by followed by Aizawl, Mizoram, Kamrup, Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad and Chennai.
- œ Mouth cancers were the leading cancers in eight sites: The districts of Ahmedabad Urban, Aurangabad, Osmanabad & Beed, Barshi Rural, Pune, Wardha, Bhopal and Nagpur.
- œ Lung cancer was the leading cancer in eight other sites including the state of Delhi and the districts of Kollam, Thiruvananthapuram, Bengaluru, Chennai and Kolkata.
 - œ The former is believed to be mostly caused by **chewable tobacco** and the latter by **smoked tobacco**. Thus, 16 out of 28 sites were affected directly because of tobacco in one or the other form.
 - œ Overall, lung and head and neck cancers were on the rise while stomach cancers were on the decline.
 - œ Breast cancers were leading female cancers in 19 out of 28 sites. In the remaining sites, cervix cancer was leading. Overall, while breast cancers witnessed a significant upward trend, cervix cancer cases declined.
 - œ Childhood cancers are also on the rise. The Delhi PBCR recorded the highest proportion of childhood cancers in both the 0-14 years (3.7 per cent) and the 0-19 years age group (4.9 per cent).
 - œ From the HBCR data, leukaemia was the most common diagnosis of cancer, both in the 0-14 (boys, 46.4 per cent; girls, 44.3 per cent) and in the 0-19 age group (boys, 43.2 per cent; girls, 39.2 per cent).

Is Cancer a notifiable disease?

- œ Majority of states in India have not declared cancer as a notifiable disease.
- œ So far, only nine States in India have cancer as a notifiable disease so far either as administrative order or Gazette notification, including Karnataka.
 - > A notifiable disease is any disease that is required by law to be reported to government authorities. The collation of information allows the authorities to monitor the disease, and provides early warning of possible outbreaks.

How Tobacco is killing people?

- œ Tobacco use, including smokeless tobacco products, are linked to various types of cancer, including cancer of the lung, larynx (voice box), mouth, esophagus, throat, bladder, kidney, liver, stomach, pancreas, colon and rectum, and cervix, as well as acute myeloid leukemia.
- œ Tobacco has been described by WHO as “the single greatest cause of preventable disease in the developed world”.
- œ It has been universally regarded that Tobacco is one of the major health hazards and is responsible directly or indirectly for an estimated 8 lakh deaths annually in the country.
- œ There are 4000 chemicals, 200 of which are poison and 69 certified carcinogens in tobacco.
- œ When one smokes, these toxic chemicals pass through lungs and are absorbed into bloodstream and carried around body.
- œ Every cigarette is an elaborate chemical factory, designed to cause damage and affect every organ in body.
- œ Poisons in cigarette smoke can weaken the body’s immune system, making it harder to kill cancer cells. When this happens, cancer cells keep growing without being stopped.
- œ Poisons in tobacco smoke can damage or change a cell’s DNA.
 - > DNA is the cell’s “instruction manual” that controls a cell’s normal growth and function.
- œ When DNA is damaged, a cell can begin growing out of control and create a cancer tumor.
- œ Toxic gases damage the cilia, while Tar, the solid particle in tobacco smoke coats lungs like soot in a chimney. Some chemicals in your cigarette are:

- > Ammonia – commonly used in toilet cleaners
- > Cyanide – used as rat poison
- > Formal de hyde – used in laboratories for preservation of dead specimens
- > Nicotine – “the Hook”, habit forming, addictive drug

Interventions to prevent cancer

- œ Controlling tobacco use (responsible for 25% of cancer deaths)
- œ Vaccinating against hepatitis B to prevent liver cancer
- œ Eliminating cervical cancer by vaccinating against HPV
- œ Screening and treatment
- œ Implementing high-impact cancer management interventions that bring value for money
- œ Ensuring access to palliative care including pain relief.

CONCLUSION

In order to change the current cancer landscape in India, cancer care needs to be embedded in the community through a distributed care delivery system. In order to achieve these goals, innovation in a model of distributed cancer care, intensive efforts towards cancer prevention and early detection, and radical new policies on procurement and pricing of medical consumables and drugs are just a few measures that are necessary to make cancer care accessible and affordable in India and other LMICs.

TIME FOR INDIA AND NEPAL TO MAKE UP

CONTEXT

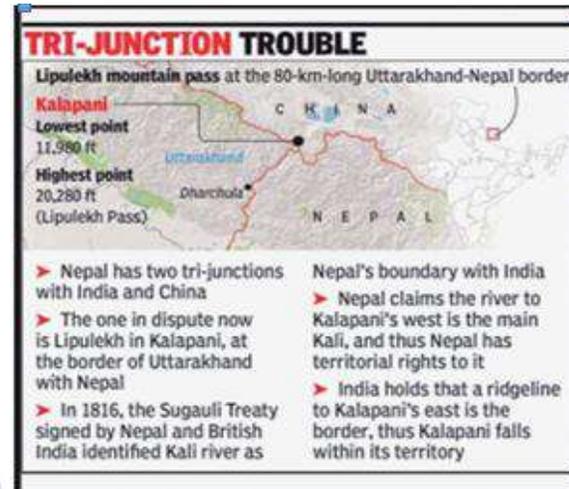
Delhi has begun a long-overdue outreach to Nepal with whom relations have been uneven in recent months.

● ABOUT:

- œ Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepal counterpart Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli spoke with each other in a prelude to meeting between officials of both sides to discuss the territorial spat over the Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura-Kalapani trijunction.
- œ India and Nepal agreed to speed up work on bilateral projects, including infrastructure schemes and cross-border rail links, as senior officials of the two sides held a meeting for the first time since a border row strained ties.
- œ In that connection, they agreed to undertake necessary measures to timely address problems and obstacles in the course of implementation.
- œ This was the eighth meeting of the mechanism, set up in 2016 to monitor the progress of India-funded projects, and it carried out a comprehensive review of economic and development cooperation schemes since the last meeting in July 2019.

What went wrong in relation?

- œ **Madhesi Issue:** Nepal promulgated its new Constitution in 2015 but the Madheshis, the Janajatis and the Tharus, who is considered as the marginalized groups felt they were being left out in the new constitution. These groups, Madhesi in particular, then blocked the border points. The Nepalese government accused India of deliberately worsening the embargo by not allowing vehicles to pass from check-points where no protests were held. Indian government however denied all allegations of any involvement in the blockade.
- œ **Political map issue:** 2019 After the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, India released its updated political map in which Kalapani, close to Lipulekh pass was shown in Indian Territory as it always was, suddenly Nepal protested officially and stated it's a disputed territory and New Delhi has no right to include the area in India.
- œ 2020 May 8, India's defence minister virtually inaugurated a new 80 km-long road in the Himalayas, connecting to the border with China, at the Lipulekh pass. The Nepali government protested immediately, contending that the road crosses territory that it claims and accusing India of changing the status quo without diplomatic consultations.



- œ June 13th and 14th, 2020 The Lower House of Nepal's Parliament unanimously passed the historic Second Constitution Amendment Bill guaranteeing legal status for the updated political map of Nepal which includes Limpiyadhura, Kalapani and strategically important Lipulekh Pass which were India's territories in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district.

Growing Chinese Influence in Nepal: Threats and Challenges

- œ While India has its roots in Nepal through cultural ties and soft power, China has been ambitiously establishing relations with the landlocked nation through economic diplomacy.
- œ It is felt in India that the Chinese inroads into Nepal are necessarily to counterbalance the Indian influence in Nepal. However, Nepal has asserted that its relationship with China is purely economic and will not be hurting the Indian strategic interests in any way.
- œ Further, it is believed by India that the rising Nepal and China cooperation would undermine Nepal's distinction of buffer state between India and China.
- œ As a result of the economic blockade between India and Nepal in 2015, the latter turned to China to seek help in meeting its energy demands. Quick to grab the opportunity, China provided 33 per cent of the country's fuel requirements, also allowing Nepal to use four of its seaports and three land ports.

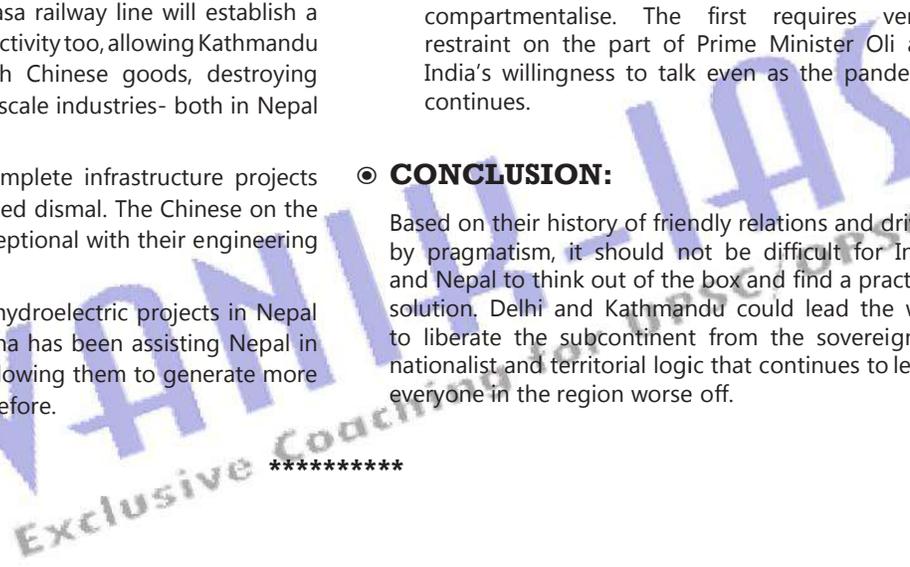
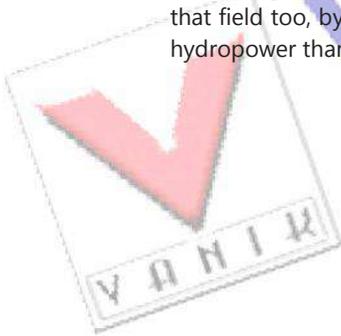
- œ In recent times, to cope up with the Chinese dominance in the region, South Asia's first ever transnational oil pipeline was launched from India's Motihari district in Bihar to Amlekhgunj in Nepal.
- œ Beijing has lured Nepal's private schools to offer Mandarin as a language in exchange for the Chinese covering the salaries of teachers in those schools. This coincides with China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative in Nepal.
- œ China is successfully delivering several infrastructure projects in Nepal. It is building a new airport in Pokhara to encourage tourism, a Himalayan railway line that plans to connect Kathmandu to Lhasa, hydroelectric projects, to name a few.
- œ The Kathmandu-Lhasa railway line will establish a solid physical connectivity too, allowing Kathmandu to be flooded with Chinese goods, destroying medium and small scale industries- both in Nepal and India.
- œ India's ability to complete infrastructure projects on time has remained dismal. The Chinese on the other hand are exceptional with their engineering marvel.
- œ The importance of hydroelectric projects in Nepal is humongous. China has been assisting Nepal in that field too, by allowing them to generate more hydropower than before.

© WAY FORWARD:

- œ India and Nepal have had the most progressive relations in South Asia, with open borders and a free intermingling of people, almost European in vision and scope. The sooner India settles this dispute with Nepal, the lesser the chances for China to get involved.
- œ India-Nepal border issues appear more easily solvable, so long as there is political goodwill and statecraft exercised on both sides. The way to move forward is to formally approve the strip maps, resolve the two remaining disputes, demarcate the entire India-Nepal boundary, and speedily execute the work of boundary maintenance.
- œ There is an immediate need to deescalate and compartmentalise. The first requires verbal restraint on the part of Prime Minister Oli and India's willingness to talk even as the pandemic continues.

© CONCLUSION:

Based on their history of friendly relations and driven by pragmatism, it should not be difficult for India and Nepal to think out of the box and find a practical solution. Delhi and Kathmandu could lead the way to liberate the subcontinent from the sovereignist, nationalist and territorial logic that continues to leave everyone in the region worse off.



INDIA'S POPULATION IS EXPECTED TO BE MORE FEMININE IN 2036

CONTEXT

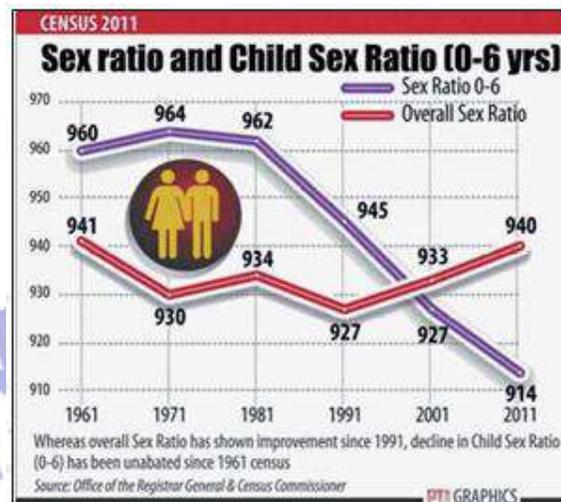
The country's sex ratio of the total population (females per 1000 males) is expected to increase from 943 in 2011 to 957 during 2036.

ABOUT:

- œ India's population is expected to be more feminine and hold better future for women after 15 years from now, indicated the population projections made by **the National Commission on Population** under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- œ The report of the technical group on population projections titled population projections for India and States 2011 – 2036 has observed that the population in 2036 is expected to be more feminine compared to the population as of 2011 when it came to sex ratio.
- œ It is observed that in 2036 sex ratio in eighteen states, except Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat will increase as compared to 2011," the report said adding that the lowest sex ratio of 899 is expected to be in NCT of Delhi in 2036, followed by 900 and 908 in Gujarat and Haryana respectively.
- œ **Infant mortality rate (IMR):** The report said that the infant mortality rate (IMR) of the country, which is reported to be 46 in 2010 is expected to go down to 30 by the end of the period 2031-35. The IMR is expected to decline in all the states during 2011-35. The IMR, which was highest in Madhya Pradesh at 58 followed by 57 in Uttar Pradesh in 2011-15 is expected to come down to 37 in Madhya Pradesh, followed by Uttar Pradesh (38) in 2031-35, the report said.
- œ Other states, where IMRs are expected to be in the range of 30-40 during 2031-35 are Rajasthan, Assam, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The lowest IMR is expected to be in Kerala at 9 in 2031-35. It will be followed by Tamil Nadu with IMR declining from 22 in 2011-15 to 16 during 2031-35, the report said indicating that lesser women will be losing their children.
- œ **Total Fertility Rate (TFR):** The report also said that the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is expected to decline from 2.34 during 2011-2015 to 1.72 during 2031-35. The assumption is that the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) would follow the recent pace of decline.
- œ **Reasons:** Over the decades, efforts made by the government have adopted a multi-pronged strategy to promote the value of the girl child, not just through schemes and programmes, such as

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, but awareness generation to build a positive environment for women and girls.

Sex ratio in India:



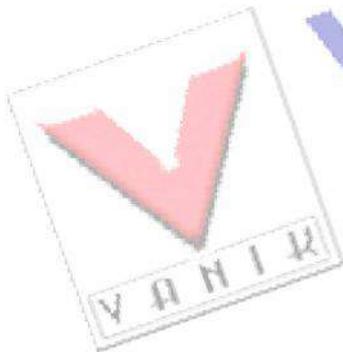
Reasons for declination of sex ratio:

- Female Foeticide
- Son Preference & Daughter Aversion
- Post Birth Sex Selection
- Social Attitude & Perceptions
- Lack of education & Awareness
- Demographic
- Commercial
- Logical

Measures taken to improve sex ratio in India

- œ Government has adopted a multi-pronged strategy entailing schemes, programmes, and awareness generation/advocacy measures, to build a positive environment to save and protect the girl child through gender sensitive policies, provision and legislation.
- œ Further, under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and within its umbrella the Reproductive

- and Child Health Programme, many interventions have been launched to improve sex ratio.
- œ For prohibition of sex selection, before and after conception, and for regulation of prenatal diagnostic techniques, the Government has enacted a comprehensive legislation, the Pre-conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act in 1994. It was further amended in 2003.
 - œ The National Inspection and Monitoring Committee (NIMC) have been reconstituted and inspections of ultrasound diagnostic facilities have been intensified.
 - œ States have been advised to focus on Districts/ Blocks/Villages with low Child Sex Ratio to ascertain the causes, plan appropriate Behaviour Change Communication campaigns and effectively implement provisions of the PC & PNDT Act.
 - œ Religious leaders, women achievers etc. are being involved in the campaign against skewed child sex ratio and discrimination of the girl child.
 - œ Beti Bacho Beti Padhao (BBBP) to improve the Child Sex Ratio and enabling education for the girl children.
- © **CONCLUSION:**
- Although the report suggests that India's population is expected to be more feminine and hold better future for women but the target is yet to achieve. To correct the persistence in adverse sex ratio, the need is to change the mindset and attitudes of people, especially young adults. The war against female foeticide, infanticide and girl child discrimination can be won only if we start this war from our own home. Once we are awake, girls are safe.



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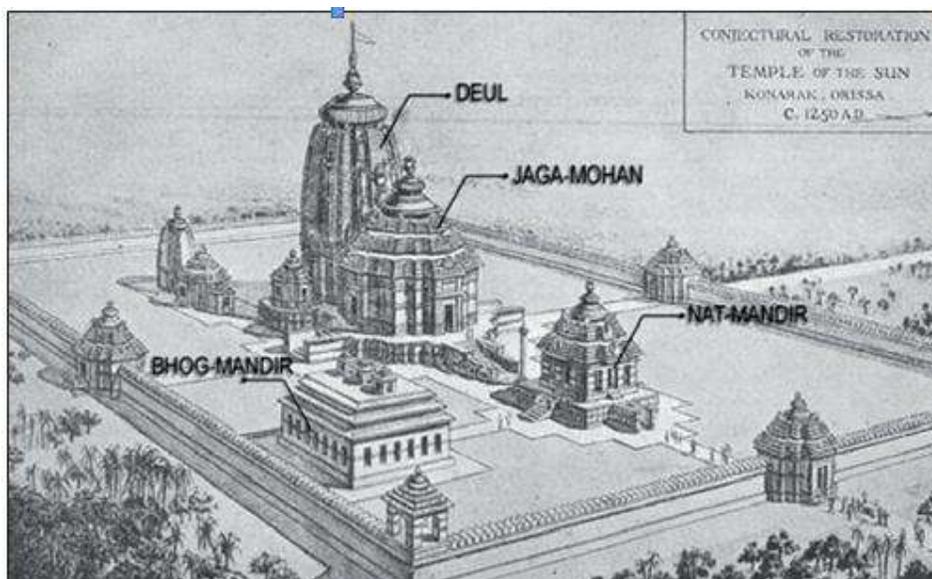
ODISHA TO GIVE FACELIFT TO 11th CENTURY LINGARAJ TEMPLE

- ◎ **CONTEXT:**
 - The Odisha government announced to give a facelift to the 11th century Lingaraj Temple, akin to its pre-350-year structural status.
- ◎ **ABOUT:**
 - Odisha's Lingaraj temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva, who is also known as 'Lingaraj'.
 - It is approximately 54.8 metres high and enshrines a huge statue of Lord Shiva which is 8 feet in diameter and is made of granite.
 - œ The deity is bathed everyday with milk, water and bhang (marijuana).
 - It is believed that the temple's construction history dates back to the later half of 11th century.
 - The temple comprises four parts namely the main temple-
 - œ the 'Garbh Griha'
 - œ the 'Bhoga Mandap'
 - œ the 'Yajna Shala'
 - œ the 'Natya Shala'
 - Bindusagar, the sacred pond near the temple, has a unique connection with Lord Lingaraj. It is the second most attractive place after the temple as religious scriptures say Bindusagar is the union of drops of water from various sacred rivers of India.
 - Its main entry gate is called as the 'Simhadwara' or the 'Lions' Gate', situated on the eastern side of the temple. The outer walls of the temple are decorated with beautiful sculptures of beasts, birds, creepers, flowers, gods and goddesses.

Important Details	
Location	Bhubaneswar, Orissa
Built by	Jajati Keshari
Built in	11 th Century
Dedicated to	Lord Shiva
Total Area	1049.66 sq m
Architectural Style	Kalinga style of architecture

Architecture

- The remarkable structure of the temple gives the tint of **Kalinga style of architecture**.
- The temple is believed to be built by the kings from the **Somavamsi dynasty**, with later additions from the **Ganga rulers**.
- It is built in the **Deula style** that has four components, each increasing in the height to its predecessor, namely-
 - œ vimana (structure containing the sanctum)
 - œ jagamohana (assembly hall)
 - œ natamandira (festival hall)
 - œ bhoga-mandapa (hall of offerings)



- œ The aesthetic sculptures look at their apex in this architectural exhibition. Erected in red sandstone, Lingraj Temple has the stone of the darkest shade.
- œ The huge temple complex covers the vast lands of Bhubaneswar in a stretch. The tall spire of the temple extends to the height of 55 meters and literally, dominates the skyline of Bhubaneswar.
- œ The spacious courtyard comprises 50 small shrines that are dedicated to several Gods of the Hindu pantheon.

Highlights of the redevelopment plan

- œ The plan has been made for the redevelopment of peripheral area of the 55-metre-tall temple, known as 'Ekamravan Kshetra', in Bhubaneswar.
- œ The redevelopment will take place over 66 acres of land surrounding the temple.
- œ At present, the space in front of the temple could barely accommodate 10,000 to 15,000 devotees during Shivratri congregation. However, upon revamping of adjoining areas of temple, 2 lakh devotees could easily congregate in the space.
- œ Lingaraj Temple depicts the rich legacy of Indian culture and traditions. The colossal temple attracts thousands of devotees and pilgrims to its doorstep every year. The spiritual ecstasy offered by the temple is worth feeling for once.

INDIA'S FORESTS AND COAL MINING

◎ CONTEXT:

Giving a boost to the mining sector, the government in its announcements intended to revive the economy following the pandemic. But a boost to mining brings with it associated troubles such as land conflicts, run-ins with communities and an impact on the environment.

◎ ABOUT:

What is 'GO and No-Go' zones?

- œ The concept of declaring certain forest areas within coal blocks as "inviolable" began in 2004.
- œ The environment ministry classified certain forests as either 'go' or 'no-go' areas and banned mining from taking place in the latter.
- œ In 2009, the environment ministry had placed the country's forested areas under two

categories - Go and No-Go - and imposed a ban on mining in the 'No-Go' zones on environmental grounds.

Initial classification and current status of 'no-go' and 'go' zones

	Total		No-Go Zones			Go-Zones		
	Total land	Total Blocks	Total land	No. of Blocks	% of Land	Total land	No. of Blocks	% of Land
Initial classification in 2010	6,52,572 hectare	605	3,20,684 hectare	222	49%	3,31,888 hectare	383	51%
Revised classification	6,02,850 hectare	582	1,40,311 hectare	105	23.27 %	4,62,539 hectare	477	76.72%

◎ BACKGROUND:

- On June 18, 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced that 41 new coal blocks would be opened for auction to the private sector to power its energy and industrial sectors.
- The decision was part of the announcements made by the Centre under the **Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**.

Status of coal mining:

- Since 1980, when the Forest Conservation Act was enacted, India has diverted 0.53 million hectares of forestland for mining, the bulk of it for coal.
- So far coal was mined keeping in mind the requirement of end use, like electricity and steel.
- In 2015, the Supreme Court said that **coal is a precious national asset** and it should be used for specific purposes. Since 2015, 49 coal mining projects have been cleared.
- The **coal industry in India is state-owned**, but this auction of 40 new coal blocks will see the creation of a privatised, commercial coal sector in India.
- In 2020, 21 of the 41 blocks put up for auction, 21 feature in the original No-Go list.
- Currently India was not utilising its existing capacity fully and only 67% of the mines auctioned since 2015 are were not operational yet.

Items for box

- India produces over 85 minerals including coal, lignite, bauxite, chromite, copper ore and concentrates, iron ore, lead and zinc concentrates, manganese ore, silver, diamond, limestone, phosphorite etc.
- India is the **second-largest producer and importer** of coal in the world.
- There are over 3,500 mining leases that are in force in the country across 23 states covering an area of 316,290.55 hectares.
- Of those, nearly 70% are in five states alone –
 - > Madhya Pradesh has 702 mining leases
 - > Tamil Nadu has 464
 - > Andhra Pradesh has 453
 - > Gujarat has 432
 - > Karnataka has 376

Ease of coal mining

- The federal government has been easing rules for coal mining, which was made a state monopoly in 1973.

- . In 1993, the government allowed private companies to mine coal for their own use.
- . It has further eased government control over the industry since 2014.
- . State-owned Coal India Limited, established in 1975, still accounts for 80% of domestic production, of which 80% is sold to thermal power plants.

Why is it a bad idea?

- . The country's major mineral area is under its richest forests and in the watersheds of its key rivers which are also the homes of India's poorest people, mainly tribal communities and forest dwellers.
- . Coal is the single largest source of air pollution and carbon dioxide (CO₂) in India. Of the total CO₂ emissions, 50% comes from coal burning.
- . Coal is among the biggest contributors to climate change and the recently released government report on climate change noted that India has already witnessed 0.7° C of warming and surface air temperature is likely to rise by 4.4° C till the end of the century.
- . This is expected to have led to-
 - œ the decimation of over 19,000 hectares of forestland
 - œ cutting down of over 1 million trees
 - œ displacement of over 10,000 families

DID DEATH VALLEY JUST HIT THE HIGHEST TEMPERATURE RECORDED EVER

◎ CONTEXT:

California's Death Valley registered a temperature of 54.4 degrees Celsius or 129.9 degrees Fahrenheit on August 16, 2020, which, once verified, could be the hottest temperature ever recorded on Earth.

◎ ABOUT:

- Death Valley is a desert valley in Eastern California, in the northern Mojave Desert, bordering the Great Basin Desert.
- . The valley is bounded on the west by the Panamint Range and on the east by the Black, Funeral, and Grapevine mountains of the Amargosa Range.
- . It is one of the hottest places on Earth, along with deserts in the Middle East and the Sahara.
- . As the hottest, driest and lowest national park, Death Valley is a land of extremes.

Highlights

- . The temperature was recorded at the United States National Weather Service's automated weather station at Furnace Creek, near the border with Nevada, at 3:41 pm local time on the afternoon of August 16.
- . The all-time highest temperature ever recorded is 134°F or 56.7°C on July 10, 1913, at the Greenland Ranch in the Death Valley.
- . However, since the temperature-recording mechanisms a century ago were not as advanced, many have doubted if that reading was reliable.
- . Similarly, a reading of 131°F or 55°C from July 1931 in Tunisia, has also been challenged.
- . The temperature recorded at Furnace Creek has been termed as 'preliminary' and not 'final'. Some have said that if it is verified as correct, it will be a new record.

Why Death Valley is so hot?

Death Valley's crazy heats are caused by a combination of the lack of water, geography, and materials that make up the valley.

- . **Lack of water:** The average yearly rainfall in Death Valley is only 2 inches. This is less than many other deserts in the world, averaging around 10 inches of rain annually. This intense lack of water also creates a lack of plants in the area resulting in the expanses of sand in the valley open to constant heating by the sun.
- . **Geography:** The lower levels of mountain ranges create an interesting phenomenon of trapping the hot air within the valley. Sand and rocks make up the valley floor which radiate a large amount of heat. However, because of the geography, this hot air cannot escape. Instead, the hot air rises along the valley walls, cools slightly and then falls back to the valley floor to be heated even more by the hot sand and low elevation air pressure.

This concept of movement by heating and cooling is called convection and exists in many other life circumstances like the boiling of water or in a kitchen oven.

What is 'Heat Dome'?

- . The high temperature recorded on August 16 is said to be a result of a so-called 'heat dome' that is smothering the west coast of the United States.
- . The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration or NOAA describes it thus:
- . High pressure circulation traps hot ocean air like a lid or a cap trapping heat at the surface and favouring the formation of a heat wave.
- . To summarize, a heat dome is a pocket of hot air that is trapped in the upper atmosphere and refuses to move.
- . While it stagnates there, it heats everything around it, forcing hot air down to the ground, where the air lingers.
- . The combination of hot air and humidity will drive the heat index much higher, making the event doubly dangerous.
- . Additionally, one of the most dangerous features is that the temperature may not reduce very much at night. This makes an endangered person more endangered, and results in even more deaths.

PLASTIC POLLUTION IN ATLANTIC AT LEAST 10 TIMES WORSE THAN THOUGHT

◎ CONTEXT:

There are 12-21 million tonnes of tiny plastic fragments floating in the Atlantic Ocean, scientists have found.

◎ ABOUT:

What is marine microplastic?

- . Marine microplastics (10–1000 μm) belong to the continuum of the discarded plastic debris that enters the ocean from land-based and marine sources.
- . The pathways of plastic input are very diverse and include riverine and atmospheric transport from
 - œ coastal and inland areas
 - œ illegal dumping activities
 - œ erosion of legacy refuse dumps
 - œ direct at-sea littering from shipping, fishing and aquaculture activities
- . The ubiquitous presence of microplastics in the marine environment raises concerns over damage they could cause to oceanic ecosystems and eventually to human health.

Key-highlights of the Study

- . The new study finds that the total amount of plastic making its way into the Earth's oceans is likely higher than previous estimates suggest.
- . A previous study published in 2015 estimated that upward of 12 million metric tons of plastic trash made it into the oceans in 2010 alone.
- . The new study estimates that there is upward of 21 million metric tons of three common types of small plastic pollution in just the top 200 meters of the Atlantic-
 - œ Polyethylene
 - œ Polypropylene
 - œ Polystyrene

How does it impact the environment?

- . **Difficult to decompose:** Plastic can take hundreds to thousands of years to decompose depending on the type of plastic and where it has been dumped.
 - . **Harmful for the ecosystem:** In the oceans, plastic pollution impacts marine life, ocean health, coastal tourism and even human health.
 - œ Marine animals unknowingly ingest plastic and often suffocate.
 - œ While all sorts of marine species are prone to get impacted by plastic pollution, typically, bigger marine species tend to get more attention because of the amounts of debris they can hold up.
- . **Impacting the entire food chain:** Microplastics below the surface of the ocean are bad news for the whole food chain. Small ocean-dwelling creatures eat them, and the plastic makes its way into larger fish and shellfish that humans eat.



SWACHH SURVEKSHAN 2020

© **CONTEXT:**

The Union Housing and Urban Affairs announced results of 'Swachh Survekshan 2020', listing out the cleanest and dirtiest cities in India.

© **ABOUT:**

- . The Swachh Survekshan is conducted to study the progress of Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) and rank cities based on cleanliness and sanitation parameters.
- . Swachh Survekshan was introduced by the government with the objective of generating large-scale citizen participation in the Mission, along with inculcating a spirit of healthy competition among cities towards becoming India's cleanest cities.
- . It monitors the performance of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, launched in 2014.
- . Four parameters were used for arriving at the overall ranking of a city-
 - œ certifications (1,500)
 - œ direct observation (1,500)
 - œ service level progress (1,500)
 - œ citizen feedback (1,500)

- Swachh Survekshan is the world's largest cleanliness survey. 4242 cities are covered for this survey. The feedback has been collected from 1.9 crore citizens. The survey covered 4,242 cities, 62 Cantonment Boards and 92 Ganga Towns in 2020.
- The extensive sanitation survey is commissioned by the Ministry of Urban Development and carried out annually by Quality Council of India.

Key-highlights of the findings

- Cleanest cities:** For the fourth time in a row, Madhya Pradesh's Indore was adjudged India's cleanest city followed by Gujarat's Surat and Maharashtra's Navi Mumbai.
- Dirtiest city:** Bihar's capital Patna was ranked as the dirtiest city.
- Jalandhar** got the top rank among **cantonments** and **New Delhi** was the **cleanest capital city**.
- Jharkhand** ranked on top in the list of best performing states, with less than 100 ULBs, in terms of overall performance.
- Chhattisgarh** bagged the award for the best-performing state with over 100 ULBs.
- Varanasi** was adjudged the '**best Ganga town**' in the central government's cleanliness survey.

A ROW BETWEEN TURKEY AND GREECE RAISING TENSION IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

◎ **CONTEXT:**

NATO allies Turkey and Greece have locked horns over who gets to explore hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean. This latest spat over gas reserves and maritime rights has prompted fears that tensions could escalate further.

◎ **ABOUT:**

Eastern Mediterranean waters

- Eastern Mediterranean denotes the region in the east of the Mediterranean Sea (the Levantine Sea) in Western Asia.
- The countries and territories of this region include Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Egypt and Libya.



- The East Mediterranean includes:
 - the **Adriatic Sea**, northwest of the main body of the eastern Mediterranean Sea, separates the Italian peninsula from the Balkan peninsula and extends from the

Strait of Otranto to the south (where it connects to the Ionian Sea) to the **Gulf of Venice** to the north

- œ the **Ionian Sea** lies to the south of Italy and Greece
- œ the **Aegean Sea**, located between the Greek and the Anatolian peninsulas, with the island of Crete defining its southern border
- œ the **Levantine Sea**, separated from the Ionian Sea by a submarine ridge between the western end of Crete and Cyrenaica (Libya); it extends to the south of the Anatolia peninsula.
 - > It is bordered by Turkey in the north, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the Gaza Strip in the east, Egypt and Libya in the south, and the Aegean Sea in the northwest.
 - > The western border to the open Mediterranean (the also called **Libyan Sea**) is defined as a line from the **cape Ra's al-Hilal** in Libya to the island of **Gavdos**, south of Crete.

The Mediterranean neighbours

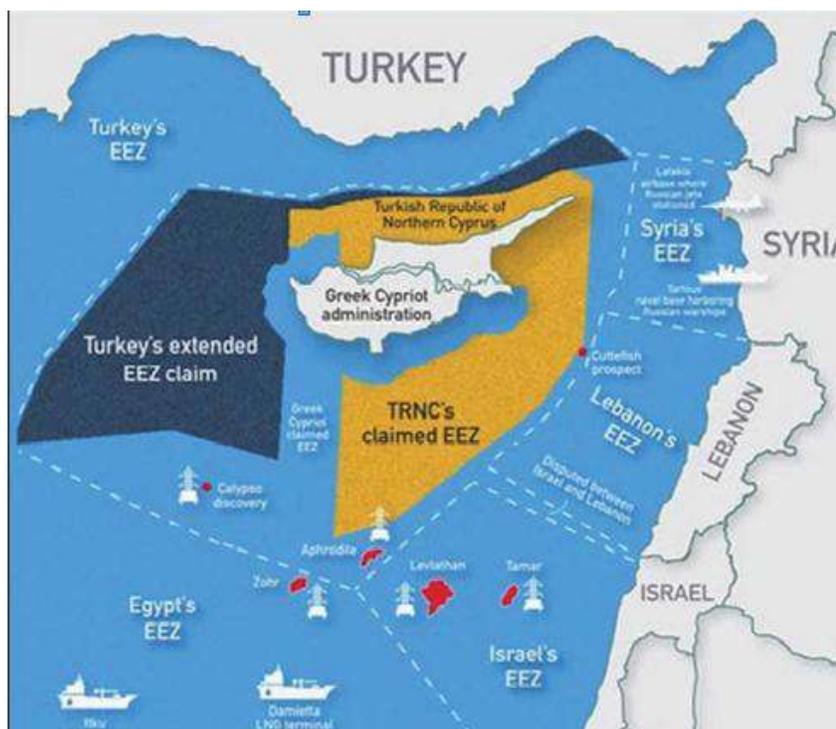
- For centuries, Turkey and Greece have shared a chequered history.
- Greece won independence from modern Turkey's precursor, the Ottoman Empire, in 1830.
- In 1923, the two countries exchanged their Muslim and Christian populations – a migration whose scale has only been surpassed in history by the Partition of India.
- The two nations continue to oppose each other on the **decades-old Cyprus conflict**, and on two occasions have almost gone to war over exploration rights in the **Aegean Sea**.
- Both countries are, however, part of the 30-member NATO alliance, and Turkey is officially a candidate for full membership of the European Union, of which Greece is a constituent.

How did the Eastern Mediterranean become the eye of a geopolitical storm?

- For decades, Eastern Mediterranean maritime boundary disputes were a local affair, confined to sovereignty claims and counterclaims among Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey.
- But over the past five years, the region's offshore natural gas resources have turned the Eastern Mediterranean into a key strategic arena through which larger geopolitical fault-lines involving the EU and the MENA region converge.
- Italy and France have played integral roles in driving that change, which has placed the EU and Turkey's already complicated relationship onto more adversarial terms.
- The game changer was the August 2015 discovery of the massive Zohr natural gas field in Egyptian maritime territory.

What about international laws?

- The territorial claims of Greece and Cyprus are backed by international law under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- But Turkey is not a signatory to the convention so even if Turkey's latest actions were found illegal by an international maritime tribunal, Turkey likely would ignore rulings against it.
- Cyprus and Greece have not brought a case against Turkey before the tribunal overseeing the Law of the Sea.



NATIONAL RECRUITMENT AGENCY

● **CONTEXT:**

The Union Cabinet approved the plan to set up a National Recruitment Agency (NRA).

● **ABOUT:**

- The proposed National Recruitment Agency will be an independent body to conduct examination for government jobs.
- . It will conduct a common preliminary examination for various recruitments in the central government.
- . It will conduct the Tier-1 examination for these three agencies online. Examination centres will be set up in each district, with the Centre committing to invest in the necessary infrastructure for 117 aspirational districts.
- . This agency is set up under the **Societies Registration Act**.
- . NRA will have representatives from the ministry of railways, ministry of finance/department of financial services, the Staff Selection Commission (SSC), Railway Recruitment Board (RRB) and the Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS).

What will be the process?

- . Initially, it will organise a CET to screen/shortlist candidates for the Group B and C (non-technical) posts, which are now being conducted by the Staff Selection Commission (SSC), Railways Recruitment Board (SSC) and Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS).
- . Later on, more exams may be brought under it.
- . The agency will have representatives from SSC, IBPS and RRB.

- . The test will be conducted for three levels:
 - œ Graduate candidates
 - œ higher secondary (12th pass) candidates
 - œ the matriculate (10th pass) candidates
- . However, the present recruitment agencies– IBPS, RRB and SCC — will remain in place.
- . Based on the screening done at the CET score level, final selection for recruitment shall be made through separate specialised Tiers (II, III, etc.) of examination which shall be conducted by the respective recruitment agencies.
- . The curriculum for CET would be common.

Validity of CET Score

- . The CET score of a candidate shall be valid for a period of three years from the date of declaration of the result.
- . The best of the valid scores shall be deemed to be the current score of the candidate. While there will be no restriction on the number of attempts to be taken by a candidate to appear in the CET, it will be subject to the upper age limit.
- . However, the relaxation in the upper age limit shall be given to candidates of SC/ST/OBC and other categories as per the extant policy of the Government.

The need

- . As of now, aspirants have to take different exams that are conducted by various agencies for central government jobs.
- . On an average 2.5 crore to 3 crore aspirants appear for about 1.25 lakh vacancies in the central government every year.
- . As and when it will be set up, the NRA will conduct a common eligibility test (CET) and based on the CET score a candidate can apply for a vacancy with the respective agency.

Assessing the benefits

- . Easing the process: NRA will benefit around 25 million aspirants who apply for multiple government jobs every year and have to apply for each exam separately.
- . Streamlining the recruitment process: A single eligibility test would “significantly reduce” the recruitment cycle.

BIOETHANOL BLENDING OF PETROL

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** The government has set targets of 10 per cent bioethanol blending of petrol by 2022 and to raise it to 20 per cent by 2030 under the ethanol blending programme to curb carbon emissions and reduce India’s dependence on imported crude oil.
- ◎ **ABOUT:**
 - What are 1G and 2G biofuel plants?**
 - . Biofuels are liquid or gaseous fuels that are produced from biodegradable fractions of products, remains from agricultural production and forestry, as well as biodegradable fractions of industrial and municipal wastes.
 - . However, ethanol produced from renewable energy sources is one of the most promising biofuels for the future.
 - . 1G bioethanol plants: 1G bioethanol plants utilise sugarcane juice and molasses, byproducts in the production of sugar, as raw material

- . 2G bioethanol plants: Whereas 2G plants utilise surplus biomass and agricultural waste to produce bioethanol.
- . 1G and 2G bioethanol plants are set to play a key role in making bio-ethanol available for blending but face challenges in attracting investments from the private sector.

Challenges

- . **Insufficient domestic production:** Currently, domestic production of bioethanol is not sufficient to meet the demand for bio-ethanol for blending with petrol at Indian Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs).
 - œ Sugar mills, which are the key domestic suppliers of bio-ethanol to OMCs, were only able to supply 1.9 billion litres of bio-ethanol to OMCs equating to 57.6 per cent of the total demand of 3.3 billion litres.
- . **Costly agricultural waste:** The price of obtaining agricultural waste required for the production of bio-ethanol at 2G plants was currently too high for it to be viable for private investors in the country.
- . **Doubtful financial stability:** Many sugar mills which are best placed to produce bioethanol do not have the financial stability to invest in biofuel plants and there are also concerns among investors on the uncertainty of the price of bio-ethanol in the future.

What needs to be done?

- . **Pricing of agricultural waste:** The state governments needed to set up depots where farmers could drop their agricultural waste and that the central government should fix a price for agricultural waste to make investments in 2G bioethanol production an attractive proposition.
 - œ The three state-run OMCs Indian Oil Corporation Ltd., Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd. are currently in the process of setting up 2G bio-ethanol plants.
- . **Greater visibility on price:** The government should provide greater visibility on the price of bioethanol that sugar mills can expect by announcing a mechanism by which the price of bio-ethanol would be decided.

More focus on production: The impetus for bioethanol uptake was driven by government worldwide, and a target that a certain percentage of ethanol blending be done using ethanol generated from 2G plants would help boost investment in the area.

INDIA RANKS AMONG LOWEST IN TERMS OF INTERNET QUALITY

● **CONTEXT:**

India ranks among the lowest in the world in terms of Internet quality, according to a global research released by online privacy solutions provider SurfShark.

● **ABOUT:**

- The **Digital Quality of Life Index 2020** is prepared by Surfshark, a virtual private network (VPN) provider based in the British Virgin Islands.
- . The study sampled the quality of a digital wellbeing in 85 countries across the globe over five key pillars:
 - œ Internet affordability
 - œ Internet quality
 - œ electronic infrastructure

- œ electronic government
- œ electronic security
- . All parameters have equal weightage.

Key-highlights of the Index

- . As per the "Digital Quality of Life Index 2020", which researches on the quality of a digital wellbeing in 85 countries (81% of the global population), in terms of e-infrastructure, India occupies 79th place, ranking below countries including Guatemala and Sri Lanka.
- . India makes it into the top 10 in terms of Internet affordability. With a ranking of nine, it outperforms countries such as the U.K., the U.S. and China.
- . Additionally, when it comes to e-government, India occupies the 15th place globally, just below countries like New Zealand and Italy.
- . However, India's Internet quality is one of the lowest across 85 countries analysed in the research.
- . In position 78, India is at the bottom of the pillar with unstable and slow mobile Internet dragging it down in the overall Internet quality index.
- . This year's Digital Quality of Life Index found that seven of the 10 countries with the highest digital quality of life are in Europe, with Denmark leading among 85 countries.
- . Canada stands out as a country with the highest digital quality of life in the Americas, while Japan takes the leading position in Asia.
- . Among the countries in Africa, people in South Africa enjoy the highest quality of digital lives whereas New Zealand leads in Oceania, outperforming Australia in various digital areas.

THE FIRST WORLD SOLAR TECHNOLOGY SUMMIT

◎ **CONTEXT:**

The First World Solar Technology Summit will be organized by International Solar Alliance, ISA on a virtual platform on 8th of September. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will deliver the inaugural address of the First World Solar Technology Summit.

◎ **ABOUT:**

- The World Solar Technology Summit is an attempt to bring together scientists, engineers and member states to sit down together and think about what the challenges are in realising the dream of making energy affordable and abundant
- . The objective of the event is to bring the spotlight on state-of-the-art technologies as well as next-generation technologies which will provide impetus to the efforts towards harnessing solar energy more efficiently.
- . It will help provide a multilateral connect when global trade is increasingly being viewed through the bilateral prism.
- . Discussion topics include-
 - œ PV technology development and its future
 - œ recent advances – including conversion efficiency improvements and declining costs – in PV modules and storage
 - œ disruptive solar technologies for grid application – ground-mounted, floating or on residential and commercial rooftops
 - œ solar beyond the power sector

ISA Journal on Solar Energy

- . ISA would also be launching the ISA Journal on Solar Energy that would help authors from across the globe to publish their articles on solar energy, during the event.

International Solar Alliance

- Officially announced during the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in 2015, the ISA is a partnership of solar resource-rich countries.
- Countries located between the Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn, the two regions that receive the most amount of sunlight, are mostly the members of ISA.
- Currently, 121 countries have agreed to be members of ISA. Most of these are countries with a large participation from Africa, South-east Asia, and Europe.
- Pakistan and China are not a members of the ISA.
- It is headquartered in Gurugram.

The ISA aims to reduce the cost of solar technology and finance to facilitate the deployment of more than 1 TW of solar generation capacity and mobilize more than \$1 trillion (Rs74.6 lakh crore) of solar power investment by 2030 in its member countries.

It's only been a year and a half since ISA started working in a full-fledged way. Projects worth 1.4 billion has already been tied up and is at different stages of construction.

Progress so far:

- Clean energy projects now account for more than a fifth of India's installed power generation capacity.
- India has 34.6 gigawatts (GW) of solar power, and aims to have 100GW by 2022.

One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG)

- In contrast to 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', the Indian Government is deliberating with the idea of One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG) which has quite an ambitious objective and focuses on flow of green energy across nations through one grid.
- If the Government is to develop this concept seriously, then it will require reforms in the regulatory framework governing the electricity sector.
- On the international landscape, the concept of OSOWOG intends to tap the global solar energy potential for the benefit of all nations and requires an international electricity grid to allow inter-country free flow of power.
- To achieve this, the OSOWOG will require certain changes in the regulatory framework especially in two areas –
 - > grid security for the Indian grid
 - > development of appropriate international energy exchange
- The grid has to be a "smart grid" in order to obtain highest efficiencies given the constraints of transmission of solar power, i.e. transmission losses.

OCS SELECTIONS OF 2018

1 SELECTION IN EVERY
2 SELECTION ARE FROM VANIK

7 IN TOP 10
11 IN TOP 20
24 IN TOP 50
47 IN TOP 100
48% SELECTION FROM VANIK



DEBASIS PANDA



RITUPARNA MOHAPATRA



AKASH KUMAR PANDA



SANTOSHINI DAS



NARAYANI P. PANDA



SHAKTI MOHAPATRA



SMARANIKA TULO



Sampat Ku. Dash



Serada P. Panda



Sidhant Narayan



Akash Pattnaik



Priti R. Rath



Rajiv Das



Abhishek Sahu



Annanya Tripathy



Prasenjit Mishra



Debajyoti Panda



Avipsa Mohanty



Dillip Satapathy



Nibedita Parida



Rashmi Prava Das



Asima Padhi



Om Prasad



Jyotibikash Dash



Narayan Behera



Suvasnigdha



Subrat Ku. Swain



Biswa Tripathy



Upasana Padhi



Bibhuti Satapathy



Avilash Purshit



Birendra Tripathy



Himanshu B. Pale



Sambit Ku. Majhi



Subhadra



Byomakesh



Bishnu Govind



Tanmaya Nayak



Ashutosh Matarji



Anshuman Sarangi



Krishna Padhi



Madhusmita Nanda



Adarsh A. Tripathy



Sanishree Mallick



Om Prakash Parida



Md. Azharuddin Khan



Rajesh Ku. Samal



Tattwomasi



Amit Biswal



Agurba R. Aich



Trisandhya Patra



Bani Satabdi Dash



Harekrushna Sahu



Nirmal Ku. Bhouli



Ajit Ku. Uttaray



Manoja Ku. Behera



Ananda Ch. Palei



Sushree Supriya



Dhiren Ku. Nayak



Nivedita Nayak



Biranchi N. Jagat



Sridhar Ku. Sethi



Ananta Ku. Nayak



Abhijit S. Swain



Gyanaranjan Majhi



John Major Dalai



Jyoti P. Sethi



Arjun Majhi



Subha P. Kanungo



Deepak Ku. Jena



Rashmirani Sonapat



Subha Kanta Naik



Madhusmita Samal



Gitu Behera



Madhusmita Singh



Manaranjan Suna



Prachi



Tapan Ku. Malik



Manoj Ku. Behera



Manaswee Sethi



Bhabani Pradhan



Upanjali Majhi



Satyabrata Naik



Sagar Palo



Prasanti Pradhan



D. Satyabhusan



Prem Chand Jani



Mrutunjaya Sabar



Gouranga Ghosh



Meera Naik



Deepak Bara



Debasish Patra



Bhabesh Majhi



Vikas Mundari



Sandeep Singh



Prafulla Muduli



Smrutiranjana Tudu



Lalit Ku. Naik



Phalguni Sabar



Sunita Panda

And Many More Selections