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ABOUT CURRENT CONNECT

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

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

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

Team KSG

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

India and the Democracy

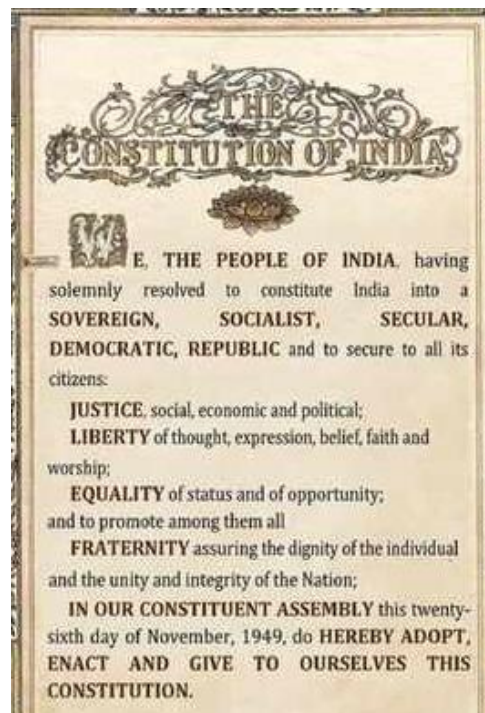
News Excerpt

India's overall score fell from 6.9 in 2019 to 6.61 in the **Economist Intelligence Unit's 2020 Democracy Index**. It provides a snapshot of the current state of democracy worldwide for 167 countries.

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Pre-Connect

- The democracy is a **government of the people, by the people, and for the people**. Democracies fall into two basic categories, direct and representative.
- In a direct democracy, all citizens, without the intermediary of elected or appointed officials, can participate in making public decisions. Such a system is clearly only practical with relatively small numbers of people – in a community organisation or tribal council, e.g., the local unit of a trade union, where members can meet in a single room to discuss issues and arrive at decisions by consensus or majority vote.
- **India is a representative democracy** where every citizen has the important right to vote her/his representative. People elect their representatives to all levels from Panchayats, Municipal Boards, State Assemblies and Parliament.



Key Highlights

- The Economist Intelligence Unit's latest Democracy Index report titled "Democracy in sickness and in health?"
- Norway topped the Index with Iceland, Sweden, New Zealand and Canada making up the top five.
- The "democratic backsliding" by authorities and "crackdowns" on civil liberties has led to a further decline in the country's ranking.
- India is ranked higher than most of its neighbouring countries. However there has been a decline in India's rankings in the recent past.
- Out of 167 countries, the Democracy Index classifies 23 countries as full democracies, 52 as flawed democracies, 35 as hybrid regimes and 57 as authoritarian regimes.
- India has been classified as a 'flawed democracy' along with countries such as the US, France, Belgium and Brazil.

The most closely related example of direct democracy in India is Gram Sabha.

Tools of direct democracy:

- ❖ Referendum is a procedure whereby a proposed legislation is referred to the electorate for settlement by their direct votes.
- ❖ Initiative is a method by means of which the people can propose a bill to the legislature for enactment.
- ❖ Recall is a method by means of which the voters can remove a representative or an officer before the expiry of his term, when he fails to discharge his duties properly.
- ❖ Plebiscite is a method of obtaining the opinion of people on any issue of public importance. It is generally used to solve the territorial disputes.

- The EIU report also looks at the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on freedom and democracy around the world.

Conclusion

India has maintained its democratic institutions ever since it became independent. In the past seventy years, 17 parliamentary elections have been held, and there are more state assembly elections. Peaceful transfers of power between rival political parties have occurred many times at the central and state level. Political dissent is a key element of any democratic system. The Indian democratic system has converged the dissent and maintains the democratic system by transforming the reasonable needs of the people according to their needs, regardless of any discrimination. Hence, it can be said that India’s democracy is vibrant, thriving, and evolving by addressing contemporary issues.

PEPPER IT WITH
Preamble, Part III and IV of the Constitution, fundamental rights, the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951

Judicial Review and Judicial Activism

News Excerpt

Recently, the Supreme Court stayed the implementation of the three recently passed laws to regulate farming in India and also said for the formation of a four-member committee to study them. The court issued the order while hearing petitions challenging the constitutional validity of the laws. This has again raised the issue of Judicial Review as well as Activism.

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Pre-Connect

- Constitution establishes concepts and not conceptions. Framers gave citizens fundamental rights and enjoined the Supreme Court and the High Courts to protect them under Articles 32 and 226 respectively.
- Judicial review of laws and administrative actions is thus expressly mandated. The constitution recognises one paramount principle: **“Be you ever so high, the law is above you.”**
- ‘Judicial activism’ is therefore a misnomer. The constitution delegates power to the courts to enforce its own conceptions of political morality so long as its conception is relatable to standard concepts, i.e., the articles thereunder.

Judicial review is the power of the judiciary to examine the constitutionality of legislative enactments and executive orders of both the Central and State governments. On examination, if they are found to be violative of the Constitution (ultra vires), they can be declared as illegal, unconstitutional and invalid (null and void) by the judiciary. Consequently, they cannot be enforced by the Government.

Judicial review falls under following three categories:

- ❖ Judicial review of constitutional amendments.
- ❖ Judicial review of legislation of the Parliament and State Legislatures and subordinate legislations.
- ❖ Judicial review of administrative action of the Union and State and authorities under the state.

The Supreme Court used the power of judicial review in various cases, as for example, the Golaknath case (1967), the Bank Nationalisation case (1970), the Privy Purses Abolition case (1971), the Kesavananda Bharati case (1973), the Minerva Mills case (1980), and so on.

Analytica

- The court’s move is debatable on many counts—One, by appointing a committee on a government action, and saying it will issue an order based on the report of that committee, the court is seeking to have a say on government policy.
- It was only recently that another bench of the same court, in its judgment on petitions against the **Central Vista project**, made it clear that the court does not have the

wherewithal to sit in judgment on a government policy and that the Parliament is the right forum to debate it.

- Now, the court has, instead of performing its constitutionally defined job—as the interpreter of the Constitution, chosen to be a mediator and influencer on government policy. It goes against the spirit of the Constitution, which is clear on the **separation of powers**.
- The same logic applies to the farmers, too. Farmers can continue with their agitation and the SC has repeatedly clarified that the farmers have every right to hold peaceful protests.
- On the other hand, the court can hardly order scrapping of the laws even if it finds them to be detrimental to the interests of farmers.
- While the court is very well within its rights to stay the operation of a law suspecting it to be ultra vires on the Constitution, it defies logic when it appoints a committee to study an aspect of the law other than legal.
- It must be reiterated that the highest court of the land has not been called upon to adjudicate on the impact of a government action borne out of a public policy. It has been asked strictly to subject that action to judicial review and see if it meets the constitutional and legal requirements.

Checks and Balances:

- ✓ The framers of the Constitution were clear in their intentions. There must be checks and balances within the state.
- ✓ Parliament may not keep that check in constitutional spirit due to majoritarianism of the party in power, although it should. Yet, the Constitution of India is founded on the principle of ‘pluralism’ and rejects the idea of a single norm. Here, the judiciary’s role assumes great significance.
- ✓ If there was no constitution, there would have been no power to strike down laws and executive actions.
- ✓ Judicial review is foundational in the Indian constitution and the judiciary alone can interpret the constitution. In fact, it is their duty.
- ✓ It is political scepticism which seeks to label this as judicial activism. Sceptics seek to restrict judicial power by fashioning labels of judicial restraint or judicial deference as democratic arguments, saying moral and political principles must be resolved by institutions which are politically responsible – which courts are not.
- ✓ This does not de-mean the democracy. In fact, there is no rule limiting judicial review. Our Supreme Court has gone to the extent of holding that **“there is no decision which is un-reviewable under the constitution.”**

PEPPER IT WITH
 Article 13, 32, 124, 214,
 226 and 368 of the
 Constitution of India

Voting and its provisions

News Excerpt

Maharashtra Assembly Speaker has directed the State Law and Justice Department to prepare the draft of a Bill which provides an option to voters to exercise their franchise on ballot papers along with electronic voting machines (EVMs).

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Pre-Connect

- **Article 328 of the Indian Constitution and item- 37 of the State list of seventh schedule of the Constitution** provide rights to the State legislature to formulate a law on the manner of holding elections within the State.
- The **61st Amendment Act of 1988** has reduced the voting age from 21 to 18 years. This came into force on March 28, 1989.
- **Under Art. 243 K** of the Indian Constitution there is a separate state election commission to deal with elections to the panchayats and municipalities in the state.

Electronic Voting Machine (EVM)

An EVM is a simple electronic device used to record votes in place of ballot papers and boxes which were used earlier in conventional voting system. The advantages of the EVM over the traditional ballot paper / ballot box system are–

- It eliminates the possibility of invalid and doubtful votes which, in many cases, are the root causes of controversies and election petitions.
- It makes the process of counting of votes much faster than the conventional system.
- It reduces to a great extent the quantity of paper used thus saving a large number of trees making the process eco-friendly.
- It reduces cost of printing (almost nil) as only one sheet of ballot paper is required for each Polling Station.

Ballot Papers and Symbols

- After nomination of candidates is complete, a list of competing candidates is prepared by the Returning Officer, and ballot papers are printed.
- Ballot papers are printed with the names of the candidates (**in languages set by the Election Commission**) and the symbols allotted to each of the candidates. Candidates of recognised parties are allotted their party symbols.

Voting Procedure

- ✓ Voting is by secret ballot. Polling stations are usually set up in public institutions, such as schools and community halls.
- ✓ To enable as many electors as possible to vote, the officials of the Election Commission try to ensure that there is a polling station **within two kilometres of every voter**, and **that no polling stations should have to deal with more than 1500 voters**. Each polling station is open for **at least eight hours** on the day of the election.
- ✓ In ballot system, the elector votes by marking the ballot paper with a rubber stamp on or near the symbol of the candidate of their choice, inside a screened compartment in the polling station. The voter then folds the ballot paper and inserts it in a common ballot box which is kept in full view of the Presiding Officer and polling agents of the candidates.
- ✓ This marking system eliminates the possibility of ballot papers being surreptitiously taken out of the polling station or not being put in the ballot box.
- ✓ Since 1998, the Commission has increasingly used Electronic Voting Machines (EMVs) instead of ballot boxes. In 2003, all state elections and by elections were held using EVMs. Encouraged by this, the Commission took a historic decision to use only EVMs for the Lok Sabha election in 2004. More than 1 million EVMs were used in this election.

Electoral Roll is a list of all people in the constituency who are registered to vote in Indian elections. Only those people with their names on the electoral roll are allowed to vote. The electoral roll is normally revised every year to add the names of those who are to turn 18 on the 1st January of that year or have moved into a constituency and to remove the names of those who have died or moved out of a constituency.

Fact Sheet

- ❖ NOTA is not applicable for the election of Rajya Sabha and Legislative Councils
- ❖ Through Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT), the voter can view the symbol and name of the candidate he has voted for 7 seconds
- ❖ Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation program (SVEEP), is the flagship program of the Election Commission of India for voter education, spreading voter awareness and promoting voter literacy in India.
- ❖ SVEEP's primary goal is to build a truly participative democracy in India.

PEPPER IT WITH

Art 324, 326, 327, 329, 243I, Model Code of Conduct, 49 (O) of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 and NOTA

Conclusion

Over the past few years, serious concerns and doubts had been raised over the EVMs and whether those could be manipulated. Maharashtra Government is not going to abolish EVMs. Even, state government cannot do that. Government can give an option of ballot voting in state and local body elections. It would boost people’s confidence in the electoral process which would ultimately lead to an increase in the voting percentage.

Official Secrets Act

News Excerpt

There has been regular demand for an inquiry into the access to confidential and sensitive information and its use by the TV channels to increase ratings.

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Pre-Connect

- **The Official Secrets Act (OSA),1923** is essentially India’s anti-espionage law and has under its purview all matters of secrecy and confidentiality with regard to the government.
- The law extends to the whole of India and also applies to servants of the Government and to **Indian citizens not residing in the country.**
- The most commonly invoked sections of the law are Sections 3 and 5. Under Section 3, the law deals with spying and under Section 5, it deals with disclosure of secret information of the government.
- The latter, according to the law, could be anything from a secret official code, a password, a sketch, plan, model, article, note, document or information that could either directly or indirectly assist an enemy or even bring about the disclosure of a matter that could affect the integrity or sovereignty or security of India or affect friendly relations with foreign states.

Official Secrets Act: A 19th Century Colonial Hangover

- While the Official Secrets Act in its current form dates back to 1923, the origin of this law goes back far beyond and can be traced to 1843, in a Notification issued by the Foreign Department of the Government of India in 1843.
- At a time when government officials sometimes doubled as correspondents for newspapers, this notification prohibited them from making official documents public.
- The first iteration of it as a legislation, however, dates back to 1889, when The Indian Official Secrets Act (Act XIV), 1889 was passed by the Viceroy’s Executive Council.

- Both the person disclosing or communicating the information as well as the person receiving the same can be punished under this law. The law also says that one cannot approach, inspect, or even pass over a prohibited government site or area.
- Punishment under the Act involves a fine or imprisonment ranging from three to 14 years or both.
- The provisions of the OSA include a requirement that the person committed the action with the intent to endanger India’s security or national interests, though there have been some situations where even an unintentional act has been prosecuted under it.

Issues with the Official Secrets Act, 1923

➤ Secrecy & Lack of Transparency

- Any kind of information is covered under the **OSA if it is classified as ‘secret’**, states a report by the Second Administrative Reforms Commission. However, the OSA itself does not define what a “secret” document is or what “official secrets” means and it is left to the government to decide what could be a cause for being charged under OSA.

- According to a report, despite repeated attempts by activists over the years to find out the same under the Right to Information Act (RTI), there has been no answer from the Ministry of Home Affairs.
 - Owing to this lack of clarity over the definition of what classifies as “secret” documents or information, there have been long-expressed concerns that the Act can be misused by the government choosing to brand information or documents as “official secrets” as per their convenience.
 - One criticism is that the secrecy allowed under the OSA is at loggerheads with the transparency expected in a democracy. It is argued that the OSA gives the government sweeping, draconian powers in limiting information to citizens and then prosecuting them in case such information is made public.
- **Obstacle to Bail**
- Judges are more likely to deny bail if a person is charged under the OSA, because it is a question of national security. It also makes it that much harder to contest the charges.
 - By the time individual prove that the material he/she have is not a secret, individual may have been in jail for many years. That’s the kind of presumption of the judiciary when someone is charged with OSA.
- **Definition of Spying & Proof of Intent**
- **Section 3 of the OSA** deals with spying, but the definition given is far too broad and cannot justified as “necessary” for protection of national security, leading to a lack of clarity about when one could fall within the clutches of the OSA, and a consequential self-censorship.
 - Further, Section 3(2) of the Act places the burden of proof on the accused, in so that they must prove their lack of guilt or their intent.
 - It shall not be necessary to show that the accused person was guilty of any particular act tending to show a purpose prejudicial to the safety or interests of the State. One may be convicted if, from the circumstances of the case, his conduct or his known character as proved, it appears that his purpose was a purpose prejudicial to the safety or interests of the State.
- PEPPER IT WITH**
Article 19(1)(a) of the
Indian Constitution,
Right to Information Act
- **OSA's conflict with the Right to Information**
- Another very considerable problem is that the OSA is in conflict with the RTI Act. In 2019, the Supreme Court said during the Rafale row over OSA that the RTI Act supersedes the OSA, with Section 22 of the RTI Act expressly overriding the OSA, and Section 8(2) compelling the government to disclose information “if public interest in disclosure outweighs the harm to protected interests”.
 - It states that the provisions of this Act “shall have effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent therewith contained in the Official Secrets Act, 1923”.
 - Justice KM Joseph’s opinion in this matter delved into this issue further and concluded that, looking at the content of provisions like Section 8 along with Sections 22 and 24 of the RTI Act, it would trump the Official Secrets Act and that because of it “disclosure of information can be refused only on the foundation of public interest being jeopardised.” Apart from the dead letter of the RTI Act’s provisions, he sought to explain that the RTI Act had led to a cultural change as well, in which legal provisions had to be interpreted in favour of transparency.
 - However, if the government classifies a document as “secret” under Clause 6 of the OSA, that document could still be kept outside the ambit of the RTI Act by invoking Sections 8 or 9, which allows the government to refuse information.

Conclusion

The attempt to target the messenger and to criminalise the whistleblower, all under cover of “**national security**” or “**stability**” of government or “**official secrecy**”, can be cited as an attack on the freedom of expression and the people’s right to know. What falls under the Official Secrets Act in a democracy is something that needs constant contest, the need for

official secrecy has to be weighed against the citizen’s right to know. In any conflict between the two, in a democracy that calls itself open, surely the letter — and spirit — of the right to freedom of speech and expression and information should trump the archaic and increasingly anachronistic OSA. Notably, the Supreme Court has recognised this democratic imperative. Over the years, India’s apex court has enlivened and expanded the protections accorded to the whistleblower, to ensure that those who expose corruption and wrongdoing are not vulnerable to bullying and intimidation.

Mercy Plea

News Excerpt

The mercy petition of one of the convicts serving life sentence for the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 will be decided by the President. It was informed by the Centre to the Supreme Court.

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Pre-Connect

- **Article 72** of the Constitution empowers the President to grant pardonsto persons who have been tried and convicted of any offence in all cases where the–
 - Punishment or sentence is for an offence against a Union Law;
 - Punishment or sentence is by a court martial (military court); and
 - Sentence is a sentence of death.
- The pardoning power of the President is independent of the Judiciary; it is an executive power.
- **Article 161** gives the Governor the “power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the state extends”.
- Convict Perarivalan was among seven persons convicted by a Special TADA court for being part of the conspiracy to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi on May 21, 1991.
- In November 2020, during the arguments on Perarivalan’s petition, the Centre took a legal objection to the Governor having power to decide on the mercy plea.
- Additional Solicitor General who represented the Centre argued that the entire issue of granting remission in such a case lies with the President under Article 72 and not the Governor under Article 161.
- In 2014, the Supreme Court commuted the death penalty of Perarivalan and two other convicts who had spent over twenty years in death row in the RajivGandhi assassination case to life sentence on the ground of inordinate delay in deciding their mercy petitions.

Background

- Without specifying any time-frame, the Centre stated that the proposal received by the central government will be processed in accordance with law.
- Perarivalan had moved the SC in 2016 for an early decision on his pending remission plea.
- The court took serious exception to the five-year delay on part of the governor to decide the convict’s plea.
- In Jan 2021, Solicitor General representing Governor Banwarilal Purohit informed the court that the governor will decide Perarivalan’s petition within a week.
- Ahead of the hearing of the case, the Centre in an affidavit informed the court saying that the governor of Tamil Nadu considered all the facts on record and after perusal of the relevant documents, recorded that the President is the appropriate competent authority to deal with the said request.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Article 72, 161, pardon, reprieve, respite, suspension, remission or commutation

Comparing Pardoning Powers of the President of India and the Governor of State

President	Governor
He can pardon, reprieve, respite, remit, suspend or commute the punishment or sentence of any person convicted of any offence against a Central law.	He can pardon, reprieve, respite, remit, suspend or commute the punishment or sentence of any person convicted of any offence against a state law.
He can pardon, reprieve, respite, remit, suspend or commute a death sentence. He is the only authority to pardon a death sentence.	He cannot pardon a death sentence. Even if a state law prescribes for death sentence, the power to grant pardon lies with the President and not the governor. But the governor can suspend, remit or commute a death sentence.
He can grant pardon, reprieve, respite, suspension, remission or commutation in respect to punishment or sentence by a court-martial (military court).	He does not possess any such power.

Conclusion

The President can pardon death sentence while governor cannot. Even if a state law prescribes death sentence, the power to grant pardon lies with the President and not the governor. However, the governor can suspend, remit or commute a death sentence. In other words, both the governor and the President have concurrent power in respect of suspension, remission and commutation of death sentence.

Question Hour

News Excerpt

Question Hour, which had been suspended by the government during the monsoon session, resumed when Parliament meets for the budget session. The suspension had been strongly criticised by the Opposition.

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Prior to Independence, the first **question asked of government was in 1893**. It was on the burden cast on village shopkeepers who had to provide supplies to touring government officers.

While Question Hour is strictly regulated, **Zero Hour** is an Indian parliamentary innovation. The phrase does not find mention in the rules of procedure. The concept of Zero Hour started organically in the first decade of Indian Parliament

Pre-Connect

- No discussion on a **matter of general public importance** can take place except on a motion made with the consent of the presiding officer.
- The House expresses its decisions or opinions on various issues through the adoption or rejection of motions moved by either ministers or private members.

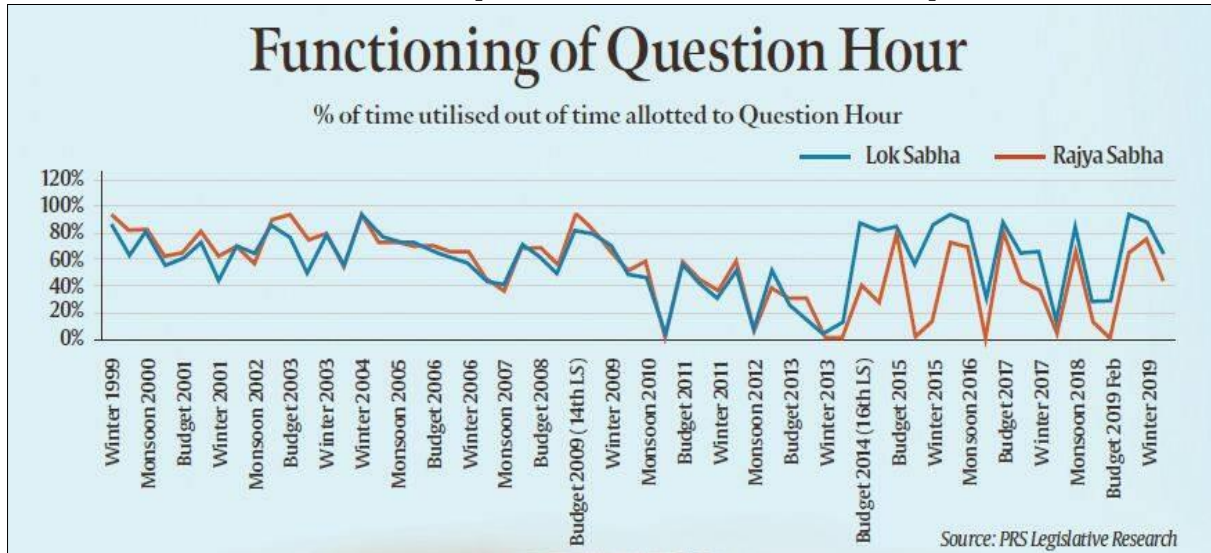
About Question Hour

- The first hour of every parliamentary sitting is slotted for this. During this time, the members ask questions and the ministers usually give answers. The questions are of three kinds, namely, starred, unstarred and short notice.

PEPPER IT WITH

Zero Hour, Calling Attention Motion, Adjournment Motion, No-Confidence Motion, Censure Motion, Notice (Mention) Under Rule 377, Motion of Thanks

- A **starred question** (distinguished by an asterisk) requires an oral answer and hence supplementary questions can follow.
 - An **unstarred question**, on the other hand, requires a written answer and hence, supplementary questions cannot follow.
 - A **short notice question** is one that is asked by giving a notice of less than ten days. It is answered orally.
- In addition to the ministers, the questions can also be asked to the private members. Thus,



a question may be addressed to a private member if the subject matter of the question relates to some Bill, resolution or other matter connected with the business of the House for which that member is responsible.

- The procedure in regard to such question is the same as that followed in the case of questions addressed to a minister.
- The list of starred, unstarred, short notice questions and questions to private members are printed in green, white, light pink and yellow colour, respectively, to distinguish them from one another.

Significance of the Question Hour

The questions that MPs ask are designed to elicit information and trigger suitable action by ministries. Over the last 70 years, MPs have successfully used this parliamentary device to shine a light on government functioning. Their questions have exposed financial irregularities and brought data and information regarding government functioning to the public domain. With the broadcasting of Question Hour since 1991, Question Hour has become one of the most visible aspects of parliamentary functioning.

Conclusion

The government had cited “extraordinary situation” from the coronavirus crisis for its decision. But Opposition parties said the Question Hour was cancelled as the government wanted to evade questions on China, the coronavirus pandemic, the state of India’s economy, and most recently, the new agricultural legislations. The question Hour is a vital parliamentary procedure to check the arbitrariness of the political executive.

Internet and the Right to Privacy

News Excerpt

The Supreme Court refused to entertain a plea which had sought a direction to instant messaging platform WhatsApp to roll back its new privacy policy on grounds that it allegedly violate laws and can impact the country's security.

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The Constitution of India encompasses **Right to Privacy under Article 21**, which is a requisite of right to life and personal liberty. The scope of Article 21 is multi-dimensional under the Indian Constitution.

Pre-Connect

- India's most comprehensive legal provisions that speak to privacy on the internet can be found in the Information Technology Act (ITA) 2000.
- A nine-judge bench of the SC in the case of *Puttuswamy v. Union of India* has declared that the **right to privacy is a fundamental right protected under Part III** of the Constitution of India.

Key Highlights

- The bench hearing a plea seeks court's direction to the Centre to intervene in the matter and frame guidelines to govern large technology-based companies such as WhatsApp Inc. and Facebook Inc. on the issues of privacy and other related aspects.
- The plea had said that the public interest litigation (PIL) was necessitated due to the alleged failure of the State in carrying out its constitutional duty and responsibility to protect the rights to privacy and freedom of speech and expression of the citizens of India.

- Union of India has granted permission to run the WhatsApp application in India, but has failed to play the role of a guardian to protect the fundamental rights of citizens in as much as WhatsApp, which is rendering essential public services by enabling citizens to communicate, has recently imposed unconstitutional privacy conditions which are not only violative of the law but can impact the national security of the country.
- While Facebook-owned WhatsApp's updated privacy policy has been stoking concerns about privacy and data sharing with other apps., if India had a data protection law in place, WhatsApp would not have been able to go ahead with this update in the first place. In fact, India's data protection law has been languishing for two years by now.
- In January, WhatsApp has introduced its new privacy policy through which it scrapped its '**opt-out policy**' and from now on, users will have to compulsorily consent to share their data with Facebook and its group companies for using the platform. The new policy is purposed to come into effect from February.

Why do privacy rights matter so much?

- ❖ The right to privacy is enshrined in article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), article 17 in the legally binding International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and in article 16 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC).
- ❖ Many national constitutions and human rights documents mention the right to privacy.
- ❖ In many cases, the Indian Supreme Court has upheld the right to privacy. There are also many privacy laws designed to protect personal data from the government and corporations.
- ❖ The rise of the internet has complicated privacy laws and many believe that the law has fallen behind.
- ❖ The right to privacy also intersects with many other human rights such as freedom of expression, the right to seek, receive and impart information and freedom of association and assembly.
 1. It prevents the government from spying (without any legitimate cause) on people.
 2. It keeps groups from using personal data for their own goals.
 3. It helps ensure those who steal or misuse data are held accountable.
 4. It helps to maintain social boundaries.
 5. It helps to build trust.
 6. It ensures we have control over our data.
 7. It protects freedom of speech and thought.
 8. It lets one engage freely in politics.
 9. It protects reputations.
 10. It protects your finances.

- It is believed that the updated privacy policy of WhatsApp would adversely impact the citizens' fundamental right to privacy and is also fundamentally opposed to their representation.
- Users share confidential information on the platform on the assurance that their private and personal conversations, along with their confidential data and information, will neither be accessed by any other person (including the service provider itself) nor would such data or information be shared or exploited or utilised by anyone in any manner whatsoever.

Analytica

- ✓ The technology giants who deal with such data must have a fiduciary duty to ensure that the information they so possess and collect from citizens and businesses must be safe and not used for their own commercial gains without the consent of the users.
- ✓ It is also the responsibility of the State to guarantee and ensure the protection of the personal and private data and information of the citizens.

PEPPER IT WITH
Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, Right to privacy, Judicial Review

Conclusion

Privacy does not have to be an all or nothing. Sure, technology is changing privacy, but law can help. We can legislate greater protections to counterbalance the privacy harms of new technologies, while still enjoying their benefits. And we'd better act quickly, because a range of new cool devices is about to come online and blow privacy out of the water.

Fundamental Rights and Reservation

News Excerpt

The Supreme Court granted two weeks' time to the Tamil Nadu Government to file a reply to a plea challenging the constitutional validity of Tamil Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions and appointments or posts in the Service under the State) Act, 1993.

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- **Article 16(1)** of the Constitution gives to every Indian citizen the fundamental right to equality of opportunity in employment with the government.
- **Article 16(4)** says that the government may, despite Article 16(1), reserve posts in favour of any "backward class of citizens" (i.e., Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes) which are not adequately represented in the services.
- The report prepared by **Janarthanam Commission** in the year 2011 affects fundamental rights guaranteed under Article 14, 15 & 16 of the Constitution to the General Category students to the admissions and candidates to the recruitments.
- The government cannot arbitrarily refuse to have reservations, especially where a state has backward communities who are inadequately represented in public employment.

One Hundred and Third Amendment Act, 2019

- ❖ Empowered the state to make any special provision for the advancement of any economically weaker sections of citizens.
- ❖ Allowed the state to make a provision for the reservation of up to 10% of seats for such sections in admission to educational institutions including private educational institutions, whether aided or unaided by the state, except the minority educational institutions.
- ❖ This reservation of up to 10% would be in addition to the existing reservations.
- ❖ Permitted the state to make a provision for the reservation of up to 10% of appointments or posts in favour of such sections. This reservation of up to 10 % would be in addition to the existing reservation.

Reservations and SC's Observations

- In the last three decades, the discourse around caste-based reservations in India has taken a turn towards hostility.
- Proponents and opponents of reservations have regularly engaged in heated demonstrations and lobbying for their respective demands.
- The Supreme Court, in **Mahesh Kumar and Another v. The State of Uttarakhand**, deals with question of reservations in promotions for disadvantaged groups in public services.
- The Apex Court opined that reservations for disadvantaged groups were not fundamental rights, and it would be well within the State's power to not reserve seats after using its discretion.
- In 1992, a bench of nine judges of the Supreme Court, in **Indra Sawhney v. Union of India**, adopted that reservations were not an exception but a component of the principle of equality of opportunity.
- The impact of reservations, as an enabling provision of the Constitution of India, has thus been diluted and left at the discretion of the State.

Over the years, the Supreme Court used Ambedkar's speech in the Constituent Assembly to create two rules concerning reservations:

- The court held that reservations cannot exceed 50% of all available posts. Since reservations were an exception to the principle of equality of opportunity, the exception would swallow the rule if a majority of seats were to be reserved for the backward classes.
- The court also said that there was no fundamental right to reservations. Citizens had a fundamental right to equality of opportunity. Reservations were an exception to this fundamental right.
- It, therefore, followed that if a government decided to scrap reservations, backward class citizens had no fundamental right to force the government to reinstate their quotas. In legal jargon, Article 16(4) of the Constitution was only an "enabling provision" according to the Supreme Court—it was not mandatory for a government to have reservations at all.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Article 14, 15, 16, 243D, 338, 338A of the Constitution of India, 83rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2000

Bodoland Territorial Region Agreement

News Excerpt

Union Home Minister asserted that the Bodoland Territorial Region Accord (BTR), inked a year ago, has initiated the process of ending insurgency in the northeast.

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Pre-Connect

- The BTR Accord, designed to usher peace in the Bodoland Territorial Areas District (BTAD), was signed in January, 2020 by the Centre, the Assam government, all four factions of the National Democratic Front of Boroland and the then Bodoland Territorial Council chief HagramaMohilary.
- **The Bodo Accord** visualises an expansive autonomous

Bodoland Contention

- ❖ In 1966-67, the demand for a separate state called Bodoland was raised under the banner of the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA), a political outfit.
- ❖ In 1987, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) renewed the demand. "Divide Assam fifty-fifty", was a call given by the ABSU.
- ❖ The unrest was a fallout of the Assam Movement (1979-85), whose culmination — the Assam Accord — addressed the demands of protection and safeguards for the "Assamese people", leading the Bodos to launch a movement to protect their own identity.

framework within the state of Assam to protect the political, social, cultural and ethnic identities and interests of the community.

Key Highlights

- A consensus had emerged among various Bodo armed groups and civil society organisations that waging war against the Indian state is futile.
- The BTR Accord is unique in that it is the first peace agreement in the Northeast where all the existing insurgent groups in a particular area have put their signatures, with a joint commitment to end violence and strive for progress and development.
- A masterstroke by government negotiators is their flexible approach in letting the area's frontline student organisation, the ABSU, be a signatory to the deal.
- After the 1986 Mizo Accord, at least five major peace agreements have been clinched with insurgent groups.
- But for the first time a student organisation which had acted as a catalyst and unifier has become a signatory to an accord along with a civil society conglomeration. This could well be a new peace template for the region.
- After two earlier Bodo agreements – the 1993 Bodoland Autonomous Council Accord and the 2003 deal with the rebel Bodo Liberation Tigers – last time the government was keen on a comprehensive settlement of the Bodo issue where the key demand for a separate Bodoland state was given up once and for all in lieu of adequate provisions for the uplift of Bodo people.
- The new Accord says on the issue that the negotiations were held with Bodo organisations for a comprehensive and final solution to their demands while keeping intact the territorial integrity of the State of Assam.
- Since most of the powers and aspirations of people seeking a separate state has been provided for in the new Accord, there is no need any more to demand a separate state.

WHAT THE BODOS GET

1 A national sports university	8 Institutes of livelihood management and hotel management	12 Bodoland institute of rural development, polytechnic and vocational training institute, organic university at Rwota, paramedical institute, provincialisation of music and fine arts colleges, Birsu Munda cultural centre, Swami Vivekananda youth centre, Gorkha memorial, Bhupen Hazarika memorial multi-utility auditorium and a Mother Dairy plant
2 A central university named after Upendra Nath Brahma, former president of All Bodo Students' Union	9 A regional campus of Indira Gandhi National Tribal University	13 Centre to expedite the process of granting ST Hills status to Bodos living in the hill areas
3 A railway coach factory	10 A Bodo memorial museum	
4 Sports Authority of India (SAI) centres at Udalguri, Baksa and Chirang	11 A National Institute of Technology campus in Udalguri	
5 A cancer hospital and medical college at Tamulpur		
6 A veterinary college at Kumarikata		
7 A central university and RIIMS		

*The Bodoland Territorial Area District will now be known as Bodoland Territorial Region

Legend:
 ■ Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District
 ■ Districts outside the BTAD where clashes occurred

PEPPER IT WITH
 Schedule V and VI of the Constitution of India, Major insurgent groups of the North East,

SOCIAL ISSUES, GOVERNMENT SCHEMES, REPORTS & INDICES

Minimum age of Marriage for Men and Women

News Excerpt

Recently, Supreme Court decided to examine plea to transfer to itself cases pending in High Courts on Uniform minimum age for marriage.

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What plea says?

- A Bench led by Chief Justice of India issued notice to the government on the plea by advocate who argued that the transfer plea had been filed to “secure gender justice, gender equality, and dignity of women”.
- Various laws state that the minimum age for getting married should be 18 for women and 21 for men. “Petitioner is compelled to approach this court as more PILs may be filed in other High Courts seeking ‘Uniform Minimum Age of Marriage for Men and Women’.
- Therefore, to avoid multiplicity of the litigations and conflicting views on the interpretation of Articles 14, 15, 21 and judgments on gender justice and gender equality, the Court may be pleased to transfer these PILs and decide them collectively.
- The transfer plea filed under Article 139A of the Constitution.
- The plea also sought a direction to the Centre to take appropriate steps to make marriage ‘gender-neutral, religion-neutral and uniform for all citizens’ in the spirit of the fundamental rights of equality and right to life and international conventions.
- The minimum age of marriage shall be 21 years for all citizens.

Article 139A in The Constitution of India 1949

139A. Transfer of certain cases

(1) Where cases involving the same or substantially the same questions of law are pending before the Supreme Court and one or more High Courts or before two or more High Courts and the Supreme Court is satisfied on its own motion or an application made by the Attorney General of India or by a party to any such case that such questions are substantial questions of general importance, the Supreme Court may withdraw the case or cases pending before the High Court or the High Courts and dispose of all the cases itself: Provided that the Supreme Court may after determining the said questions of law return any case so withdrawn together with a copy of its judgment on such questions to the High Court from which the case has been withdrawn, and the High Court shall on receipt thereof, proceed to dispose of the case in conformity with such judgment

(2) The Supreme Court may, if it deems it expedient so to do for the ends of justice, transfer any case, appeal or other proceedings pending before any High Court to any other High Court

Analytica

- The distinction is based on patriarchal stereotypes, has no scientific backing, perpetrates de jure and de facto inequality against women, and goes completely against the global trends.
- The differential bar discriminated against women, thus contravened the fundamental principles of gender equality, gender justice, and dignity of women.
- The Indian Christian Marriage Act, the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, the Special Marriage Act, the Hindu Marriage Act, and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, were “responsible for this discriminatory bar.”
- Under Section 60 of the Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872, the man intending to be married shall not be under 21 years, and the age of the woman planning to be married shall not be under 18 years.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Articles 14, 15, 21, Indian Christian Marriage Act, the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, the Special Marriage Act, the Hindu Marriage Act, and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act

- As per the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act of 1936, a man's age had to be 21 years, and a women had to complete 18.

Note-The full detail of this topic was covered in August Correct Connect 2020 Check the link below

<https://ksgindia.in/current-connect/2020/August2020.pdf>

India Innovation Index

News Excerpt

Recently, NITI Aayog released the second edition of India Innovation Index 2020.

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Pre-Connect

- The last edition of the India Innovation Index, released in October 2019, was a first-of-its-kind metric for assessing the innovation capabilities of Indian states and union territories.
- Since then, India, and the world, have undergone a tectonic shift due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- With the pandemic triggering an economic shutdown, the role of innovation to revitalize the economy, has never been more important.

About the Index

The objective of the India Innovation Index is to scrutinize the innovation capacities and performance of Indian states. The index provides an extensive framework for the constant evaluation of the innovation ecosystem of the 28 Indian states and 9 union territories. The index intends to accomplish the following three functions:

- Rank all states and union territories based on their index score
- Identify opportunities and challenges
- Assist in modifying governmental policies to foster innovation

Global Innovation Index 2020

India has been ranked as the 48th most innovative nation in the world in 2020; entering the top 50 nations for the first time. GII is developed jointly by Cornell University, INSEAD and World Intellectual Property Organization. GII 2020 ranks 131 economies based on 80 indicators, compiled under 7 pillars.

Geographic Coverage:The scope of this project covers all the twenty-eight states and eight union territories.

State Level Performance

- Amongst the Major States, the average innovation score is 25.35. Karnataka tops with 42.5, which is attributable to its strong number of venture capital deals, registered GIs and ICT exports.
- Karnataka's high FDI inflow has also enhanced the innovation capabilities of the state.
- Maharashtra follows second at 38, while Bihar finishes last at 14.5.
- The case for the southern states as the top performers has also become stronger as four of them occupy the top-five spots within the Major States.
- The NE and Hill states achieve an average innovation score of 17.89, with Himachal Pradesh as the best performer with a score of 25, followed by Manipur (22.77) and Sikkim (22.28).
- With 31.9% of its total employment generated being knowledge-intensive, Himachal Pradesh benefits from a high number of knowledge workers.

Best performers		
Rank	Major States	Score
1	Karnataka	42.5
2	Maharashtra	38.03
3	Tamil Nadu	37.91
4	Telangana	33.23
5	Kerala	30.58
6	Haryana	25.81
7	Andhra Pradesh	24.19
8	Gujarat	23.63
9	Uttar Pradesh	22.85
10	Punjab	22.54

Four of the five highest scoring major States in the India Innovation Index are from the south



- Another characteristic that boosts the state’s level of innovation is its industry-friendly policies and incentives, which are reflected in its high rank (7) in the Ease of Doing Business Index.
- The innovation score of UT and City States averages at 26.01. Delhi, the best performer among all groups, naturally tops the ranking in the group of union territories as well.
- Chandigarh follows second with a score of 38.57, whereas Lakshadweep and Jammu and Kashmir occupy the last two positions in the group respectively.

Other findings

- ✓ The India Innovation Report also pointed out that the best practices observed within the States should often be documented and disseminated to encourage peer-to-peer learning.
- ✓ In addition, to ensure that the index’s framework is even more robust to capture the best picture for the Indian innovative ecosystem, a micro-analysis of the State-level policies must be done.
- ✓ The objective of this reform is to focus on state innovation policies, local innovation cells, and the Knowledge Output developing from such entities. This will further delve into the state-level nuances required to understand the underlying innovative tendencies within a state.

Way forward

- As India heads into an uncertain future where the global economy is still reeling from the pandemic, innovation holds the key to transition any economy from a developing one toward the developed category.
- India has the potential and capacity to be such a nation that can transform its economic identity by relying on innovation. The central Government consulted stakeholders to formulate the STIP 2020.
- This is a crucial step to allow a decentralized focus on innovation where policies are inclusive and the benefits follow the bottom-up approach. A policy such as the STIP holds the promise that would allow successful leverage of the strengths of each state and thus convert their Enablers into Performance.

Burden on Women

News Excerpt

A political Party recently promised salaries to housewives as a part of its electoral campaign in Tamil Nadu.

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Pre-Connect

- Demand for wages against housework was first raised at the third National Women’s Liberation conference in Manchester, England.
- International Wages for Housework Campaign (IWFHC) was formed by Selma James in 1972. Since then, several organisations, particularly in the UK, US, Canada and Italy, have raised similar requests.
- In India, an application by the National Housewives Association, seeking recognition as a trade union in 2010, was rejected by the deputy registrar of trade unions on the ground that housework is not a trade or an industry.
- In 2012, the then minister for Women and Child development, Krishna Tirath, announced that the government was considering mandating a salary for housework to wives, from husbands.

Time-use data from 2019 gathered by the National Sample Survey Organisation revealed that only about a quarter of men and boys above six years engaged in unpaid household chores, compared to over four-fifths of women. Every day, an average Indian male spends 1.5 hours per day in unpaid domestic work, compared to about five hours by a female.

Women and the Burden of Unpaid labour

- The traditional Indian imagination of a household almost takes it for granted that certain jobs within the household are to be performed only by women.
- These tasks can include domestic upkeep, cooking, cleaning and childcare, while a broader definition would also include the hours of emotional labour that goes into holding families

together and putting up with patriarchal constructions of what women are expected to tolerate and expect.

- Regardless of the hours of the day women put in to this domestic labour, the work is often dismissed as a set of daily chores and not accounted for in either the GDP or the employment metrics.
- Since the work done at home doesn't necessarily generate products and services for the market, economists often ignore it in their calculations and the result is that a massive portion of the work done by women in India goes unrecognised as labour and is treated as a duty.
- While much of this imbalance is explained by the discrepancy in care-giving and unpaid work, institutional and policy inertia, outdated organisational structures and discrimination, one additional explanatory factor is the skills differentials in the types of degrees women and men seek out in their education.
- India particularly, is a country where this phenomenon is at its worst, with women putting in 352 minutes a day into domestic work while men put in only 51.8. While to the common observer, this might not seem like a problem, the fact that 49 per cent of women in a country of 1.3 billion people don't have their work accounted for in the annual GDP, throws up several problems.

Benefits

- ✓ While the global value of unpaid domestic labour by women hovers around 13 per cent, in India, the number is almost 40 per cent of its current GDP.
- ✓ In recognising this labour as genuine work, the benefit to India in terms of its GDP figures is almost self-evident, more importantly however, is its potential at the level of families for women's empowerment around the country.
- ✓ Recognition is one of the most central processes in empowerment, and for more than 150 million women in the country, the recognition of their primary occupation as genuine work, that contributes not only to the family but to the welfare of the nation state as a whole, is such that it gives them a claim to equality within the patriarchal Indian household that only recognises the work done by men.
- ✓ Second, it moves us towards a more holistic understanding of labour that isn't purely tied to the exchange value of a service on the market, and recognises an extremely intimate form of labour that has proved essential to keeping the unit of the family intact and functional.
- ✓ Third, once recognised as work, this arena of unpaid domestic labour that is dominated almost entirely by women can become one where women can demand some degree of parity in terms of the time and energy expended on it. Without the recognition of unpaid women's labour as genuine work, the building block of this argument goes missing and recognition becomes fundamental to this call for gender justice.

Fact Sheet

The proportion of "unpaid work per day is far higher for women than men globally, while in case of India on average 66 per cent of women's work is unpaid.

According to the Census in 2011, people engaged in household duties have been treated as non-workers, even when 159.9 million women stated that "household work" was their main occupation.

In a report, the International Monetary Fund also suggested that if women's participation in the economy was raised to that of men, then India could grow its GDP by 27 per cent.

Disadvantage

- Asking men to pay for wives' domestic work could further enhance their sense of entitlement. It may also put the additional onus on women to perform.
- Besides the ethics of buying domestic labour from wife poses a serious risk of formalising the patriarchal Indian family where the position of men stems from their being "providers" in the relationship.
- Despite a legal provision, equal inheritance rights continue to be elusive for a majority of women.

Conclusion

- More than creating a new provision of salary for housework, we need to strengthen awareness, implementation and utilisation of other existing provisions. Starting from the right to reside in the marital home, to streedhan and haqmeher, to coparcenary and inheritance rights as daughters and to basic services, free legal aid and maintenance in instances of violence and divorce.
- Our aim cannot be only to ensure “basic income” to women. Women should be encouraged and helped to reach their full potential through quality education, access and opportunities of work, gender-sensitive and harassment-free workplaces and attitudinal and behaviour change within families to make household chores more participative. Once these conditions are met, working inside the home or outside must be a woman’s choice, a freedom that she can exercise for herself.

Institutions of Eminence Scheme

News Excerpt

Recently, the new guidelines have been issued in line with the new National Education Policy (NEP) as per which foreign universities will be allowed to set up campuses in India and top Indian institutes in foreign countries.

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Pre-Connect

The Education Ministry had launched the IoE scheme in 2018 as per which 20 institutions were to be selected -- 10 public and 10 private ones -- that would enjoy complete academic and administrative autonomy.

What are new guidelines?

- Indian universities and colleges with the Institutions of Eminence (IOEs) tag, which include several IITs, will now be able to set up campuses in foreign countries with the University Grants Commission (UGC).
- The new guidelines have been issued in line with the new National Education Policy (NEP).
- IoEs shall be permitted to start a maximum of three off-campus centres in five years, but not more than one in an academic year.
- They will, however, require approval from as many as three ministries — education, home and external affairs — before they can venture out.
- An institution willing to establish an off-campus centre shall have to submit an application to the Ministry of Education containing its 10-year ‘strategic vision plan’ and a five-year ‘rolling implementation plan’ which would include the plans for academics, faculty recruitment, student admissions, research, infrastructure development, finance and administration, etc.
- The IoEs shall be permitted to start an off-campus centre in an interim campus, subject to the condition that the permanent campus shall be ready “within a reasonable time period not exceeding five years”.
- IoEs shall ensure that the norms and standards of offshore campus shall be the same as that maintained in the main campus for similar courses, and shall follow similar admission criteria, curriculum, exam and evaluation system.
- In the first lot, Indian Institutes of Delhi, IIT Bombay and the Bengaluru-based Indian Institute of Science (IISc) were awarded the IoE status in the public sector, and Manipal Academy of Higher Education and BITS Pilani in the private sector, while the Jio Institute by Reliance Foundation was given the tag in Greenfield category.
- Government will provide funding upto Rs 1,000 crore to public institutions with IoE tag, in case of the private institutions proposed as Institutions of Eminence, there will be no

The University Grants Commission of India

is a statutory body set up by the Government of India in accordance to the UGC Act 1956 under Ministry of Education, and is charged with coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of higher education.

Objectives: Coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of university education. It provides recognition to universities in India, and disburses funds to such recognized universities and college.

financial support. But they will be entitled to more autonomy as a special category Deemed University.

- A proposed off-campus centre is expected to achieve a teacher-student ratio of 1:20 initially, and 1:10 by the end of five years.

Khadi Prakritik Paint

News Excerpt

Recently, Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways & MSME launched an innovative new paint – India's first cow dung paint - developed by Khadi and Village Industries Commission.

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Pre-Connect

The project was conceptualized by Chairman KVIC in March 2020 and later developed by Kumarappa National Handmade Paper Institute, Jaipur.

Key Features of the Paint:

- Khadi Prakritik Paint" is a first-of-its-kind product, with anti-fungal, anti-bacterial properties.
- It is an eco-friendly and non-toxic paint.
- Based on cow dung as its main ingredient, the paint is cost-effective and odourless and has been certified by the Bureau of Indian Standards.
- The paint is free from heavy metals like lead, mercury, chromium, arsenic, cadmium and others.
- Khadi Prakritik Paint is available in two forms - distemper paint and plastic emulsion paint. Production of Khadi Prakritik Paint is aligned with Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of increasing farmers' income.
- Khadi Prakritik Distemper and Emulsion Paints have been tested at 3 reputed National Laboratories.
- Khadi Prakritik Emulsion paint meets BIS 15489:2013 standards; whereas Khadi Prakritik Distemper paint meets BIS 428:2013 standards.
- The paint has successfully passed various test parameters such as application of paint, thinning properties, drying time and finish, among others.

Benefits of the paints

- It will be a boost to local manufacturing and will create sustainable local employment through technology transfer.
- This is estimated to generate an additional income of ₹30,000 (approx) per annum per animal to farmers/gaushalas. Utilization of cow dung will also clean the environment and prevent clogging of drains.
- It dries in less than 4 hours, and has a smooth and uniform finish. The paint can be applied on interior as well as exterior walls. Both distemper and emulsion paints are available in white base colour, and it can be developed in any colour by suitably mixing colorants.

What is KVIC scheme?

Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) plans, promotes, organizes and implements programs for the development of Khadi and other village industries in rural areas nationwide. KVIC also helps in building up reserve of raw materials for supply to producers. The commission focuses in creation of common service facilities for processing of raw materials, such as semi-finished goods. KVIC has also helped in creation of employment in Khadi industry.

Functions of KVIC

- ✓ Building up of a reserve of raw materials and implementation for supply to producers
- ✓ Formation of common service facilities for processing of raw materials that include semi-finished goods
- ✓ Promoting the sale and marketing of Khadi and Village Industries products, as well as handicrafts
- ✓ Promoting research in the village industries sector related production techniques and equipment

- ✓ Providing financial assistance to individuals and institutions for the development and operation of Khadi and Village industries

Objectives of KVIC

- To promote Khadi in rural areas
- To provide employment
- To produce saleable articles
- To create self-reliance amongst the poor
- To build up strong rural community

Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC)

News Excerpt

Recently, Prime Minister laid the foundation for six Light House Projects (LHPs) under the Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC) and distributed the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) Urban and ASHA India awards.

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ASHA India awards

Andhra Pradesh secured the third position in the 'best performing State' category. It received awards in 'project monitoring tools' and 'innovative construction technology' sections under the 'special award' category, and Visakhapatnam received an award under the 'best performing municipal corporation' category.

PMAY Urban

- The State took the lead in the implementation of PMAY (urban) and launched a special drive for providing house sites to 30.75 lakh poor people.
- Under this programme, 68,677 acres of land, including 25,433 acres of government land, had been plotted and distributed to eligible poor families.
- Over 16,000 housing colonies for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) were being developed in the urban areas.
- It was estimated that a sum of ₹12,410 crore was required for providing the infrastructure in the colonies. A total of 20.21 lakh houses had been sanctioned so far.

Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC)

- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India has conceptualized a Global Housing Technology Challenge - India (GHTC- India) which aims to identify and mainstream a basket of innovative technologies from across the globe that are sustainable and disaster-resilient.
- Such technologies would be cost effective, speedier and ensure a higher quality of construction of houses, meeting diverse geo-climatic conditions and desired functional needs.
- The GHTC-India platform aspires to provide an ecosystem for the adoption of innovative technologies in the housing construction sector in a holistic manner.
- Lighthouse projects are envisaged that will be built using these innovative technologies and further support will be provided to upcoming domestic technologies to foster an environment of research and development.
- Conceptualised through extensive consultations with various stakeholders, GHTC-India leverages the scale and successes of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) and its Technology Sub-Mission.
- It furthers the transformative vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister and his belief in technological advances to rapidly deliver low-cost housing that meets stringent environmental, societal, quality and economic standards.
- To enable a technology transition, GHTC-India will encourage participation from across the affordable urban housing and construction sectors, such as technology providers,

Six Technology providers have been selected through rigorous online bidding process for construction of Light House Projects (LHPs) at six different locations in six states.

Indore, Madhya Pradesh
Rajkot, Gujarat
Chennai, Tamil Nadu
Ranchi, Jharkhand
Agartala, Tripura
Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

researchers, start-ups, developers, academia, public sector agencies, and civil society organizations.

Light House Project

LHPs are model housing projects with houses built with shortlisted alternate technology suitable to the geo-climatic and hazard conditions of the region. This will demonstrate and deliver ready to live houses with speed, economy and with better quality of construction in a sustainable manner.

Salient Features

- ✓ LHP, shall mean a model housing project with approximate 1,000 houses built with shortlisted alternate technology suitable to the geo-climatic and hazard conditions of the region.
- ✓ This will demonstrate and deliver ready to live houses with speed, economy and with better quality of construction in a sustainable manner.
- ✓ The minimum size of houses constructed under LHP shall be in accordance with the prevailing guidelines of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban).
- ✓ Constructed housing under LHP will include on site infrastructure development such as internal roads, pathways, common green area, boundary wall, water supply, sewerage, drainage, rain water harvesting, solar lighting, external electrification, etc.
- ✓ Houses under LHP will be designed keeping in view the dimensional requirements laid down in National Building Code (NBC) 2016 with good aesthetics, proper ventilation, orientation, as required to suit the climatic conditions of the location and adequate storage space, etc.
- ✓ Convergence with other existing centrally sponsored schemes and Missions such as Smart Cities, AMRUT, Swachh Bharat (U), National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM), Ujjwala, Ujala, Make in India shall be ensured during the designing of LHPs at each site.
- ✓ The structural details shall be designed to meet the durability and safety requirements of applicable loads including earthquakes and cyclone and flood as applicable in accordance with the applicable Indian/International standards.
- ✓ Cluster design may include innovative system of water supply, drainage and rain water harvesting, renewable energy sources with special focus on solar energy.
- ✓ The period of construction will be maximum 12 months from the date of handing over of sites to the successful bidder after all statutory approvals. Approvals will be accorded through a fast track process by the concerned State/UT Government.
- ✓ Technology Providers successfully completing the construction of LHPs within the stipulated 15 month’s period of the contract (including 3 months for preparing relevant drawings and taking all statutory approvals from various agencies in State followed by 12 months period for actual construction) will be rewarded with USD 20,000 each.
- ✓ A further incentive for early completion is being provided wherein technology providers who complete LHPs in less than 12 months will receive an incrementally higher bonus of USD 2,000 for each month less than stipulated period of 12 months.
- ✓ For the subsequent allotment of constructed houses under LHPs to the eligible beneficiaries in States/ UTs, procedures of existing guidelines of PMAY (U) will be followed.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna (3.0)

News Excerpt

Recently, The third phase of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY 3.0) will be launched in 600 districts across all states of India.

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Pre-Connect

- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) implemented by National Skill Development Corporation.

- The objective of this Skill Certification Scheme is to enable a large number of Indian youths to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood.
- Individuals with prior learning experience or skills will also be assessed and certified under Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

PMKVY 1.0	PMKVY 2.0
Launched- July 2015 World Youth Skill Day	Launched- July, 2016
Aims: to skill 1 Crore youth of the country with an outlay of Rs 12,000 crores. It is being implemented across the country through the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).	PMKVY (2016 - 2020) is a modified and improved version of PMKVY 2015-2016 with more focus on stringent quality parameters. The overall budgetary allocation for four years of the scheme is INR 12,000 crore.
PMKVY will fulfill the dream of a skilled country - skills that make young people, who have been skilled at state of the art training centers or at home or with a craftsman, ready for the international market or the national industry or for rural needs. It is the first step towards making India the skill capital of the world.	The PMKVY (2016-2020) Scheme is being implemented by the Centre along with the States. It has two components namely Centrally-Sponsored Centrally-Managed (CSCM) and Centrally-Sponsored State-Managed (CSSM). CSCM, PMKVY (2016 - 2020): It has three training formats: Short Tem Training (STT), Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Special Project.

PMKVY 3.0

- The Government’s growth agenda is guided by ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’ and ‘Vocal for Local’ vision. Keeping this in mind, PMKVY 3.0 is a progressive step towards achieving the vision by establishing increased connect at state, district and block level.
- PMKVY 2.0 broadened the skill development with inclusion of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and focus on training. With the advent of PMKVY 3.0, the focus is on bridging the demand-supply gap by promoting skill development in areas of new-age and Industry 4.0 job roles.
- While the National Educational Policy puts focus on vocational training for a holistic growth and increased employability, PMKVY 3.0 role will be a propagator of vocational education at an early level for youth to capitalize on industry-linked opportunities
- As a young nation, we’re poised to seize the opportunities that will make India the Skill Capital of the World. By taking the bottom-up approach to training, PMKVY 3.0 will identify job roles that have demand at the local level and skill the youth, linking them to these opportunities.
- PMKVY 3.0 will encourage healthy competition between states by making available increased allocation to those states that perform better.



ECONOMY

Off Budget Borrowing

News Excerpt

In a recent report, it has been stated by the government that it was using its off-budget borrowings on a massive scale through public sector agencies to avoid showing such borrowing in its own books.

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Pre-Connect

- One of the most sought-after details in any Union Budget is the level of fiscal deficit. It is essentially the gap between what the central government spends and what it earns. In other words, it is the level of borrowings by the Union government.
- This number is the most important metric to understand the financial health of any government’s finances. As such, it is keenly watched by rating agencies — both inside and outside the country. That is why most governments want to restrict their fiscal deficit to a respectable number.
- One of the ways to do this is by resorting to “off-budget borrowings”. Such borrowings are a way for the Centre to finance its expenditures while keeping the debt off the books — so that it is not counted in the calculation of fiscal deficit.

What are the off-budget Borrowings?

- Off-budget borrowings are loans that are taken not by the Centre directly, but by another public institution which borrows on the directions of the central government. Such borrowings are used to fulfil the government’s expenditure needs.
- But since the liability of the loan is not formally on the Centre, the loan is not included in the national fiscal deficit. This helps keep the country’s fiscal deficit within acceptable limits.
- As a result, as a Comptroller and Auditor General report of 2019 points out, this route of financing puts major sources of funds outside the control of Parliament. Such off-budget financing is not part of the calculation of the fiscal indicators despite fiscal implications.
- Every year, the Finance Minister announces the quantum of funds that will be raised by the government by borrowing from the market. This amount and the interest due on it is reflected in the government debt.

PEPPER IT WITH
Zero Budget Borrowing, Deficit financing

How are off-budget borrowings raised?

- ✓ The government can ask an implementing agency to raise the required funds from the market through loans or by issuing bonds. For example, food subsidy is one of the major expenditures of the Centre. In the Budget presentation for 2020-21, the government paid only half the amount budgeted for the food subsidy bill to the Food Corporation of India. The shortfall was met through a loan from the National Small Savings Fund. This allowed the Centre to halve its food subsidy bill from Rs 1,51,000 crore to Rs 77,892 crore in 2020-21.
- ✓ Other public sector undertakings have also borrowed for the government. For instance, public sector oil marketing companies were asked to pay for subsidised gas cylinders for Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana beneficiaries in the past.
- ✓ Public sector banks are also used to fund off-budget expenses. For example, loans from PSU banks were used to make up for the shortfall in the release of fertiliser subsidy.
- ✓ Given the various sources of off-budget borrowing, the true debt is difficult to calculate. For instance, it was widely reported that in July 2019, just three days after the presentation of the Budget, the CAG pegged the actual fiscal deficit for 2017-18 at 5.85% of GDP instead of the government version of 3.46%.

Limited Liability Partnership

News Excerpt

The Company Law Committee (CLC), headed by the Corporate Affairs Secretary has recently recommended that 12 offences under the LLP Act be decriminalised and that LLPs be allowed to issue non-convertible debentures

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(NCDs) to raise funds with the aim of improving ease of doing business for limited liability partnership (LLP) firms.

Highlights

- A number of offences related to timely filings, including annual reports and filings on changes in partnership status of the LLP, which are unrelated to fraud have been recommended for decriminalisation.
- The move is in line with decriminalisation of the Companies Act through an amendment in 2020 in which offences which do not involve fraud or impact public interest were decriminalised.
- While none of these provisions recommended for decriminalisation in the CLC report currently have prison terms as a possible punishment, the panel has recommended that companies be required to pay penalties for non-compliance, instead of fines which are imposed after a partner or the LLP is found guilty of misconduct by a court.
- The report notes that there is a risk of a convicted person being disqualified or becoming ineligible for various posts and designations in the case of fines imposed by courts, which would not be the case for penalties imposed by an appropriate authority.
- The Registrar of Companies would have the authority to levy penalties with prescribed minimum and maximum penalties for any contravention of provisions of the LLP Act.

What is Limited Liability Partnership?

- Limited liability partnerships (LLPs) allow for a partnership structure where each partner's liabilities are limited to the amount they put into the business.
- Having business partners means spreading the risk, leveraging individual skills and expertise, and establishing a division of labour.
- Limited liability means that if the partnership fails, creditors cannot go after a partner's personal assets or income.
- LLPs are common in professional businesses like law firms, accounting firms, and wealth managers.

PEPPER IT WITH
Joint Venture, Public Limited Company, Private Limited Company

Benefits of the move

- ✓ According to experts, the move to impose penalties would reduce the time taken for LLPs to resolve non-compliance and moving to penalties would help unclog the judicial system from complaints not related to fraud or public interest.
- ✓ Firms would take care to not violate the amended provisions as despite decriminalisation the committee had recommended higher monetary penalties for violations in a number of provisions.
- ✓ The CLC has also recommended that LLPs which are currently not allowed to issue debt securities be permitted to issue NCDs to facilitate raising of capital and financing operations.
- ✓ The move is likely to benefit start-ups and small firms in sectors like real estate and infrastructure which require heavy capital investment. It would also give more flexibility to alternative investment funds (AIFs) seeking to invest in such firms.
- ✓ The Reserve Bank of India and Securities and Exchange Board of India would also have to make changes to current regulations to allow LLPs to issue NCDs for the implementation of the committee's recommendation.

Faceless Tax Assessment Scheme

News Excerpt

The government's faceless tax assessment scheme, an attempt to remove individual tax officials' discretion and potential harassment for income tax payers, has managed to deliver about 24,000 final orders since its introduction in August 2020.

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Faceless Tax Assessment Scheme

- The government recently launched 'Transparent Taxation - Honoring the Honest' platform in order to "reform and simplify our tax system."

- Under faceless scrutiny assessment, a central computer picks up tax returns for scrutiny based on risk parameters and mismatch and then allots them randomly to a team of officers.
- This allocation is reviewed by officers at another randomly selected location and only if concurred, a notice is sent by the centralised computer system.
- All such notices need to be responded to electronically without the requirement of visiting a tax office or meeting any official.

Features

- Selection is done through system using data analytics and artificial intelligence;
- Abolition of territorial jurisdiction;
- Automated random allocation of cases;
- Central issuance of notices with document identification number (DIN);
- No physical interface and need to visit income tax office;
- Team-based assessments and review;
- Draft assessment order in one city, review in another and finalisation in the third city

Exceptions

- ✓ Cases relating to serious fraud, major tax evasion, sensitive and search matter
- ✓ International Tax
- ✓ Black Money Act and benami property

Advantages of the Faceless Assessment

- **Faceless assessment reduced chances of corruption:** e-Assessment would almost eliminate person-to-person contact in the Tax Department for greater transparency in assessment procedures.
- **Saves time and efforts:** Since assessment procedures are electronic it saves travelling time for assessee, also it saves effort to find jurisdiction/place of assessing officers.
- **This is the future as cloud storage and paperless offices are growing:** Taxpayers can access/view all the documents that they might have submitted during the assessment period. Complete information related to all the submissions is saved in the e-Filing portal account which can be accessed any time for future reference. And risk like loss of files or damage to files are avoided due to e-Assessment.
- **Cost effective for the Government:** Since assessment proceedings are paperless, it makes this initiative an environment-friendly project.
- **Assessment will be handled by two officers:** E – assessment of a taxpayer will now be handled by two officers, instead of the current system involving a single assessing officer, deputation of two officials for one assessment case will aid in increased level of monitoring.

Disadvantages of the Faceless Assessment

- ✚ **Traditional offices face trouble in uploading of voluminous documents:** Traditional offices which do not have sufficient infrastructure find difficulties in uploading voluminous documents.
- ✚ **Difficult to explain the subject entirely in submission without physical demonstration:** When submission is complex in nature at that time assessee need to give physical presence at the Income Tax office to explain the case to assessing officers.
- ✚ **Officers make conclusions when they don't understand the submissions:** Many times, because of complex nature of business assessing office find difficulties in understanding documents submitted by assessee, due to which officer conclude the assessment based on his understanding.
- ✚ **Technical glitches on the portal delays the submission process:** It is possible sometimes speed of Internet is not good because some technical problems or excess load over Income Tax website, due to which assessee find difficulties in uploading documents at e-filing portal.
- ✚ **Size of the file is restricted to 5 MB:** Submission

PEPPER IT WITH
Ease of doing business, Vivad
se Vishwas Scheme

size of a single file is maximum 5 MB. Assesses have come with complaints that documents are larger in size and not getting uploaded. When it is suggested to assessee that upload documents after dividing files, then it becomes an added burden on the assesses.

- ✚ **Number of documents are restricted to 10 per submission:** When submission size is voluminous in nature at that time assessee needs to attach multiple documents but due to restriction on attachment assessee cannot submit whole documents on e-filing portal.

Core Sector Industries

News Excerpts

The output of eight core infrastructure sectors contracted by 1.3 per cent in December 2020 dragged down by poor show by crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel and cement sectors. According to the data recently released by the Commerce and Industry Ministry, the production of eight core sectors had expanded by 3.1 per cent in December 2019.

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Highlights

- Barring coal and electricity, all sectors recorded negative growth in December 2020.
- During April-December 2020-21, the sectors’ output dropped by 10.1 per cent against a growth rate of 0.6 per cent in the same period of the previous year.
- The output of crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel and cement declined by 3.6 per cent, 7.2 per cent, 2.8 per cent, 2.9 per cent, 2.7 per cent, and 9.7 per cent, respectively.
- The eight core industries constitute 40.27 per cent of the Index of Industrial Production.

Analytica

- The core sector comprises the 8 key sectors that are at the core of the Indian economy.
- These 8 sectors include Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement and Electricity.
- The core sector is also known as Infrastructure output as they represent the basic industries that form the base of the economy.
- The components of core sector need to be further sub-divided into sectors that can be directed by government policy and sectors that are driven more by demand.
- For example, oil sector is a function of demand and government policy as is natural gas. Cement is normally more a function of demand and the construction activity than of government policy.
- Steel demand is also an outcome of rise in economic activity but the government has been supportive in the last few years through a more progressive anti-dumping policy.
- These 8 sectors jointly constitute the core of the Indian manufacturing sector and constitute over 40% of the IIP.
- Core sector is useful as a turnaround indicator. Normally, economic activity picks up when the core sector number picks up.
- Normally, sectors like cement, steel and electricity are strong lead indicators for a revival in economic growth. These sectors have a strong multiplier effect on growth and that is normally positive for a revival in growth.
- Higher production is normally associated with higher demand and this is a signal of a revival in economic activity and higher demand. This is normally conducive to higher growth in demand and a virtuous cycle leading to higher output and economic activity.

Agricultural Policies in India

News Excerpt

In the context of the three contentious agricultural reform bills, the discussions regarding what kind of agricultural policies does Indian agriculture need are taking rounds among the media and intellegentia.

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Pre-Connect

- The pandemic lockdown across the country has brought economic activity to a near halt.
- Amid this situation, the government is expecting that agriculture sector could be a silver lining for the Indian economy.
- According to the NITI Aayog, the agriculture sector is estimated to grow at a rate of 3 per cent for the year 2020-21.

The three contentious Agri Reform Bills at glance

Agri Reform Bills	Pros	Cons
The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permits the sale of produce outside the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) mandis. • No cess or levy outside the mandis will be charged to farmers. • Permits interstate trade of agricultural produce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state's income from the respective mandis would be lost. While the bill proposes to abolish the middleman, farmers across various states believe that the scheme would lead to the end of Minimum Support Price (MSP) regime.
The Farmers (Empowerment & Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This policy encourages 'contract farming' wherein farmers enter into direct contracts with buyers who want to purchase farm produce by removing intermediaries appointed by the state APMC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given that companies might be more interested in dealing with groups of farmers and not with individual farmers, the probability of conflicts will increase. • Dealing with an agent is much better from a business point of view.
The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It deregulates manufacturing, storing, and selling of a range of food products, including cereals, pulses, edible oils, and onions, except in rare situations. • It can bring in new investments from FDI and large companies in infrastructure provisions, e.g., cold storage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If prices of perishables increase by 100% or non-perishables by 50%, the Act can be invoked. • This legalises hoarding effectively, which can be devastating for prices of vital commodities such as vegetables and pulses.

What kind of agriculture policies does India need?

According to the experts, India needs to frame an optimal agri-food policy to address both short-run and long-term challenges. Such a policy must have at least four touchstones which can be discussed as below:

- It should be able to produce enough food, feed and fibre for its large population. In this regard, the best step is to invest in R&D for agriculture, and its extension from laboratories to farms and irrigation facilities. It is believed that developing countries should invest at least one per cent of their agri-GDP in agri-R&D and extension. India invests about half.
- It should do so in a manner that not only protects the environment — soil, water, air, and biodiversity — but achieves higher production with global competitiveness. This can be

PEPPER IT WITH

Doubling Farmers Income by 2022-23, Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhivaan

done by switching from the highly subsidised input price policy (power, water, fertilisers) and MSP/FRP policy for paddy, wheat and sugarcane, to more income support policies linked to saving water, soil and air quality.

- It should enable seamless movement of food from farm to fork, keeping marketing costs low, save on food losses in supply chains and provide safe and fresh food to consumers. This segment has been crying for reforms for decades, especially with respect to bringing about efficiency in agri-marketing and lowering transaction costs.
- Consumers should get safe and nutritious food at affordable prices. The public distribution of food, through PDS, relies on rice and wheat, and that too at more than 90 per cent subsidy over costs of procurement, stocking and distribution, is not helping much to reduce the hardships in agriculture.

Conclusion

Thus, the steps by the present government to reform agriculture through the bills is a much-needed activism to bring out the change in the present stagnant scenario. However, the consultation process should be all inclusive and the concerns of even the last farmer in the line should also be addressed as this sector still employs nearly half of the working population in India. But at the same time, it should also be made sure that, government takes the prudent decision without getting lured by the temptations of populism and political pressures.

IBC (section 32A)

News Excerpt

The Supreme Court recently held that the successful bidders for a corporate debtor under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) would be immune from any investigations being conducted either by any investigating agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate (ED) or other statutory bodies such as Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

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Pre-Connect

- Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (**IBC**) was enacted on May 28, 2016 to effectively deal with insolvency and bankruptcy of corporate persons, partnership firms and individuals, in a time bound manner.
- It has brought about a paradigm shift in laws relating to insolvency resolution to promote entrepreneurship, maximize value of assets, providing a robust insolvency resolution framework and differentiating between impropriety and business debacle.
- The predominant object of the Code is resolution of the Corporate Debtor.
- IBC is a transformational piece of legislation and has been amended four times to resolve problems hindering objectives of the Code.
- IBC (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019, introduced Section 32A IBC to provide Resolution Applicant, a fair chance to revive Corporate Debtor without imposing additional liabilities on Resolution Applicant arising from malafide acts of previous promoter/management.

Section 32A

- Prior to insertion of section 32A, a successful Resolution Applicant faced the hassle of prosecution and liabilities before courts and tribunals for prior acts of Corporate Debtor.
- Thus, there was a clamant need to protect Corporate Debtor from its prior offences and to revive the Corporate Debtor by removing obstacles faced by successful Resolution Applicant.
- Section 32A provides that Corporate Debtor shall not be prosecuted for an offence committed prior to commencement of Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (**CIRP**) once Resolution Plan has been approved by Adjudicating Authority (**AA**).
- The section further provides that no action shall be taken against property of Corporate Debtor covered under such a Resolution Plan.
- However, 32A continues to hold liable every person who was a 'designated partner' or an 'officer who is in default' or was in any manner in-charge of, or responsible to Corporate Debtor for conduct of its business or associated in any manner and who was directly or indirectly involved in commission of such offence.

Analytica

Supreme Court Judgement

- ✓ In its judgment, the apex court, while upholding the validity of Section 32 A of IBC, said it was important for the IBC to attract bidders who would offer reasonable and fair value for the corporate debtor to ensure the timely completion of corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP).
- ✓ Such bidders, however, must also be granted protection from any misdeeds of the past since they had nothing to do with it.
- ✓ Such protection, the court said, must also extend to the assets of a corporate debtor, which form a crucial attraction for potential bidders and helps them in assessing and placing a fair bid for the company, which, in turn, will help banks clean up their books of bad loans.
- ✓ The extinguishment of the criminal liability of the corporate debtor is apparently important to the new management to make a clean break with the past and start on a clean slate.
- ✓ The apex court has, however, also said that such immunity would be applicable only if there is an approved resolution plan, and a change in the management control of the corporate debtor.
- ✓ The new management cannot be the disguised avatar of the old management. It cannot even be the related party of the corporate debtor. The new management cannot be the subject matter of an investigation which has resulted in material showing abetment or conspiracy for the commission of the offence and the report or complaint filed thereto.

Significance of the judgement

- ✓ Since the IBC came into being in 2016, the implementation of resolution plan of several big-ticket cases has been delayed because of various challenges mounted by its own agencies and regulators.
- ✓ With the Supreme Court upholding the validity of Section 32 A, the cases such as that of Bhushan Power are expected to be completed soon. Experts also said that this will give confidence to other bidders to proceed with confidence while bidding on such disputed companies and their assets.

**PEPPER IT WITH
PARA, IBBI, IBC**

Secured Overnight Financing Rate

News Excerpt

State Bank of India (SBI) has recently executed two inter-bank short term money market deals with pricing linked to SOFR (Secured Overnight Financing Rate).

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What is SOFR?

- The SOFR is a benchmark interest rate for dollar-denominated derivatives and loans that is replacing the London interbank offered rate (LIBOR).
- SOFR is based on transactions in the Treasury repurchase market and is seen as preferable to LIBOR since it is based on data from observable transactions rather than on estimated borrowing rates.
- While SOFR is becoming the benchmark rate for dollar-denominated derivatives and loans, other countries have sought their own alternative rates, such as SONIA and EONIA.

Evolution of SOFR

- Since its inception in the mid-1980s, the LIBOR has been the go-to interest rate to which investors and banks peg their credit agreements.
- Comprising of five currencies and seven maturities, the LIBOR is determined by calculating the average interest rate at which major global banks borrow from one another.
- The five currencies are the U.S. dollar (USD), euro (EUR), British pound (GBP), Japanese yen (JPY), and the Swiss franc (CHF), and the most commonly quoted LIBOR is the three-month U.S. dollar rate, usually referred to as the current LIBOR rate.
- Following the financial crisis of 2008, regulators grew wary of overreliance on that particular benchmark. For one, the LIBOR is based largely on estimates from global banks who are surveyed and not necessarily on actual transactions.

- The downside of giving banks that latitude became apparent in 2012 when it was revealed that more than a dozen financial institutions fudged their data in order to reap bigger profits from LIBOR-based derivative products.
- In addition, banking regulations after the financial crisis meant that there was less interbank borrowing happening, prompting some officials to express concern that the limited volume of trading activity made the LIBOR even less reliable.
- Eventually, the British regulator that compiles LIBOR rates said it will no longer require banks to submit interbank lending information after 2021. This update sent developed countries around the world scrambling to find an alternative reference rate that could eventually replace it.
- In 2017, the Federal Reserve (Fed) responded by assembling the Alternative Reference Rate Committee, comprising several large banks, to select an alternative reference rate for the United States. The committee chose the secured overnight financing rate (SOFR), an overnight rate, as the new benchmark for dollar-denominated contracts.

Transitioning to the Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR)

For now, the LIBOR and the SOFR will coexist. However, it's expected that the latter will supplant the LIBOR over the next few years as the dominant benchmark for dollar-denominated derivatives and credit products.

In November 2020, the Federal Reserve announced that LIBOR will be phased out and eventually replaced by June 2023. In the same announcement, banks were instructed to stop writing contracts using LIBOR by the end of 2021 and all contracts using LIBOR should wrap up by June 30, 2023.

Transition Challenges

- ✓ Transitioning to a new benchmark rate is difficult, as there are trillions of dollars worth of LIBOR-based contracts outstanding and some of these are not set to mature until the LIBOR's retirement.
- ✓ That includes the widely used three-month U.S. dollar LIBOR, which has approximately \$200 trillion of debt and contracts tied to it.
- ✓ Repricing contracts is complex because the two interest rates have several important differences. For instance, the LIBOR represents unsecured loans, while the SOFR, representing loans backed by Treasury bonds (T-bonds), is a virtually risk-free rate.
- ✓ In addition, the LIBOR actually has 35 different rates, whereas the SOFR currently only publishes one rate based exclusively on overnight loans.
- ✓ The move to the SOFR will have the greatest impact on the derivatives market. However, it will also play an important role in consumer credit products—including some adjustable-rate mortgages and private student loans—as well as debt instruments such as commercial paper.
- ✓ In the case of an adjustable-rate mortgage based on the SOFR, the movement of the benchmark rate determines how much borrowers will pay once the fixed-interest period of their loan ends.
- ✓ If the SOFR is higher when the loan “resets,” homeowners will be paying a higher rate as well.

Shadow Entrepreneurs

News Excerpt

Recently, it has been observed that there is the global rise of shadow entrepreneurship in education and other sectors such as finance (for easy loans), the betting economy (online games) and healthcare (e-pharmacies). Given the potential perverse consequences of shadow entrepreneurship in the long run for consumer welfare, regulation is needed to monitor quality of services.

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Pre-Connect

- Shadow entrepreneurs are individuals who manage a business that sells legitimate goods and services but they do not register their businesses.
- This means that they do not pay tax, operating in a shadow economy where business activities are performed outside the reach of government authorities.

- Researchers have found that a large number of shadow entrepreneurs are operating in India who aren't registering their businesses with official authorities, hampering economic growth.

Analytica

- Experts say the shadow economy results in loss of tax revenue, unfair competition to registered businesses and also poor productivity – factors which hinder economic development.
- As these businesses are not registered it takes them beyond the reach of the law and makes shadow economy entrepreneurs vulnerable to corrupt government officials.
- The researchers suggest that if India improved the quality of its democratic institutions to match that of Malaysia for example, it could boost its rate of formal economy entrepreneurs by up to 50%, while cutting the rate of entrepreneurs working in the shadow economy by up to a third. This means that the government could benefit from additional revenue such as taxes.
- The study says that business activities conducted by informal entrepreneurs can make up more than 80% of the total economic activity in developing countries.
- Types of businesses include unlicensed taxicab services, roadside food stalls and small landscaping operations.
- It is also found that the quality of economic and political institutions has a substantial effect on entrepreneurs registering their businesses around the world.
- Understanding shadow economy entrepreneurship is incredibly important for developing countries because it is a key factor affecting economic development.
- Government policies could play a big role in helping shadow economy entrepreneurs' transition to the formal economy.
- This is important because shadow economy entrepreneurs are less likely to innovate, accumulate capital and invest in the economy, which hampers economic growth.
- The researchers suggest that shadow entrepreneurs are highly sensitive to the quality of the political and economic institutions.
- Informal entrepreneurs trade legal products and services, yet do not apply for business registration or file any incorporation documents with government authorities. The phenomenon of informal entrepreneurship is seen as a potential driver of job growth and economic development, especially in developing countries.
- Where proper economic and political frameworks are in place, individuals are more likely to become 'formal' entrepreneurs and register their business, because doing so enables them to take advantage of laws and regulations that protect their company such as trademarking legislation.

Conclusion

Informal sector entrepreneurship, poverty, and inequality are conditioned by a country's economic and political institutions. Non-inclusive political and economic institutions can engender and perpetuate inequality and aggravate poverty. The institutional qualities of a society and its economy — such as economic freedom, the presence of policies that condition the operation of private sector, and institutions regulating the balance of political power and the structure of the bureaucratic system — play an important role in either facilitating or inhibiting economic growth and alleviating poverty.

Types of economic recovery

News Excerpt

Recently, experts stated that the prospects of a K-shaped recovery from COVID are increasing both in India and across the world.

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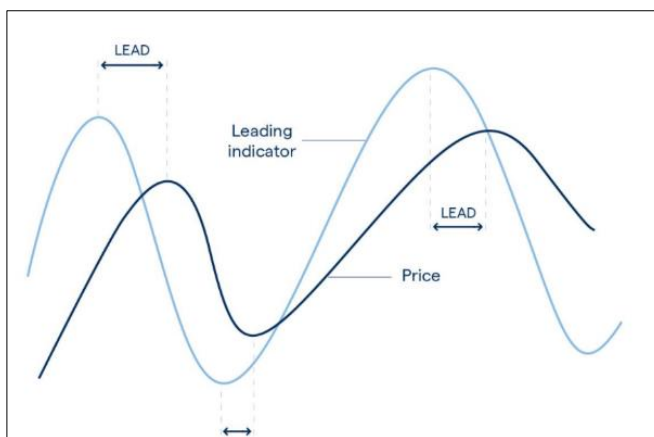
What is economic recovery?

An economic recovery is when an economy is bouncing back from a recession and starting to expand again. Economies move in phases and, once they have contracted and fallen into a recession, they eventually enter a stage of recovery before starting the cycle again.

The recovery starts when the recession bottoms out and ends once the economy has recovered all the gains that were lost. It then gives way to a new era of expansion and a fresh peak.

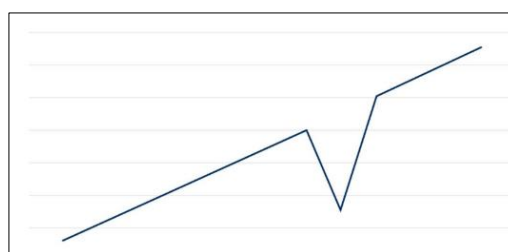
Indicators of an economic recovery

There are two key types of indicators to track in order to judge the state of the economy and where it is headed: lagging and leading indicators. The key difference between the two is that leading indicators can be used to help predict market movements, while lagging indicators confirm trends that are already taking place.



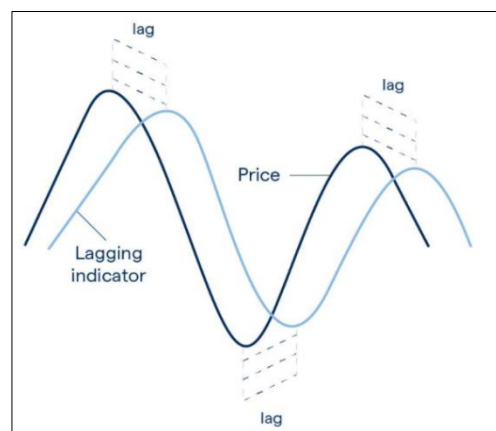
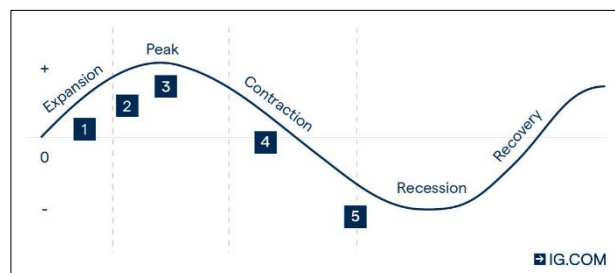
Lagging indicators of an economic recovery

- The main lagging indicator to watch is gross domestic product (GDP), as this is what most countries use to measure the size of the overall economy.
- For example, an economy only technically enters a recession once it has reported two consecutive quarters of GDP contraction.
- An economy won't exit recession and enter a recovery until it starts to grow again.
- Other lagging indicators of economic recovery include jobs data to examine the condition of a country's employment, and the consumer price index (CPI) that tracks movements in the price of goods and inflation.
- Higher employment and rising inflation would confirm that the country's economy is expanding rather than contracting.



Leading indicators of an economic recovery

- For investors and traders, leading indicators are far more important. This is because they can be used to predict where the economy is headed and to provide an edge to your strategy.
- Lagging indicators are great for confirming what has happened but provide very limited insight to aid your own predictions.
- An economy is amalgamation of everything – jobs, businesses, wages, currency strength, interest rates, consumer confidence, the stock market and so on.
- Monitoring the performance of individual elements of an economy means one can predict what the overall result will be once the lagging indicators – like GDP – are released.
- There is a swathe of popular leading indicators. A rising stock market suggests confidence is growing and businesses are performing better.
- PMI (purchasing managers index) informs whether key sectors like manufacturing or services are expanding or contracting. Consumer confidence surveys give a glimpse into how people feel about their finances, while retail sales can show how people are spending their money.



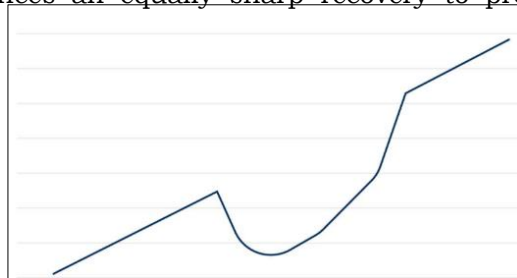
Types of economic recovery

V-shaped recession and economic recovery

A V-shaped recession and economic recovery is all about speed and sharpness. There can be a sharp contraction in the economy before it experiences an equally sharp recovery to pre-recession levels. This is treated as the best-case scenario for any economy that enters a recession as it quickly recovers without any complications.

U-shaped recession and economic recovery

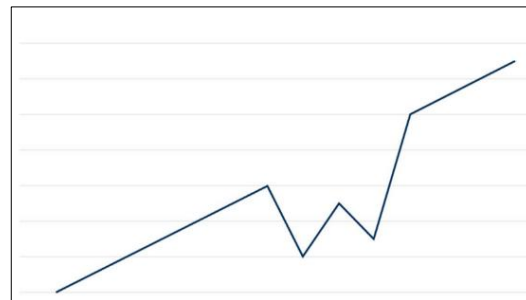
A U-shaped recovery sees an economy experience a sharp fall into a recession like the V-shaped scenario, but a more gradual and slower recovery to pre-recession levels. This means the economy remains depressed for a longer period, possibly for several years, before growth starts to pick up again.



W-shaped recession and economic recovery

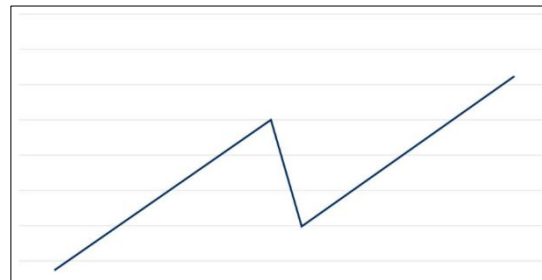
W-shaped recessions throw up surprises and are also known as 'double-dip' recessions. This is because, at first, it can look like an economy is undergoing a V-shaped recovery before it plunges into a second, often smaller, contraction before fully recovering to pre-recession levels.

Markets are likely to be more volatile under a W-shaped recovery than any of the other letters on this list. Investors and traders can be under the illusion that the economy is about to recover only to find there is another dip.



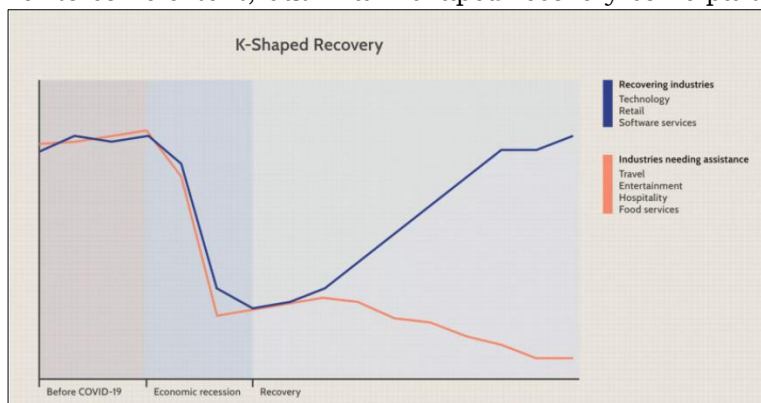
L-shaped recession and economic recovery

An L-shaped recession and recovery is seen as the worst-case scenario. Although the economy returns to growth it is at a much lower base than pre-recession levels, which means it takes much longer to fully recover. This can happen if there is lacklustre investment levels, low levels of economic growth and a slow revival in employment.



K-shaped recession and economic recovery

A K-shaped recovery is one in which the performance of different parts of the economy diverges like the arms of the letter "K." Economic performance of different sectors, industries, and groups within an economy always differ to some extent, but in a K-shaped recovery some parts of the economy may see strong growth while others continue to decline. Unlike other letter-shaped descriptors, which focus on large aggregates, a K-shaped recovery is described in terms of data broken out across different parts of the economy. The meaning of a K-shaped recovery really depends on the choice of how to disaggregate data across the economy.



The macro implications of a K-shaped recovery

- ✓ Upper-income households have benefitted from higher savings for two quarters. What we are currently witnessing is a sugar rush from those savings being spent. This is, however, a one-time effect.
- ✓ To the extent that households at the bottom have experienced a permanent loss of income in the forms of jobs and wage cuts, this will be a recurring drag on demand, if the labour market does not heal faster.
- ✓ To the extent that COVID has triggered an effective income transfer from the poor to the rich, this will be demand-impeding because the poor have a higher marginal propensity to

consume (i.e., they tend to spend (instead of saving) a much higher proportion of their income.

- ✓ If COVID-19 reduces competition or increases the inequality of incomes and opportunities, it could impinge on trend growth in developing economies by hurting productivity and tightening political economy constraints.

LNG Pipeline

News Excerpt

Recently, Indian Prime Minister dedicated to the nation the Kochi-Mangaluru natural gas pipeline of the Gail Authority of India Limited (GAIL). The key infrastructure project has come about after overcoming protests in Kerala, misconceptions about safety, and a long delay.

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Pre-Connect

- The first interstate natural gas pipeline of the country was commissioned in 1987, and by 2014, India had 15,000 kilometres of natural gas pipeline built.
- Today there are over 16,000 kilometres of new gas pipelines being worked upon. According to the government estimates, this work is going to be complete in the next 5 to 6 years.
- There were just 900 compressed natural gas (CNG) stations in 2014, over 1,500 new CNG stations were built.
- The goal now is to have 10,000 CNG stations in the country.
- Till 2014 there were 2.5 million Piped Natural Gas connections, today there are over 7.2 million connections.

Highlights

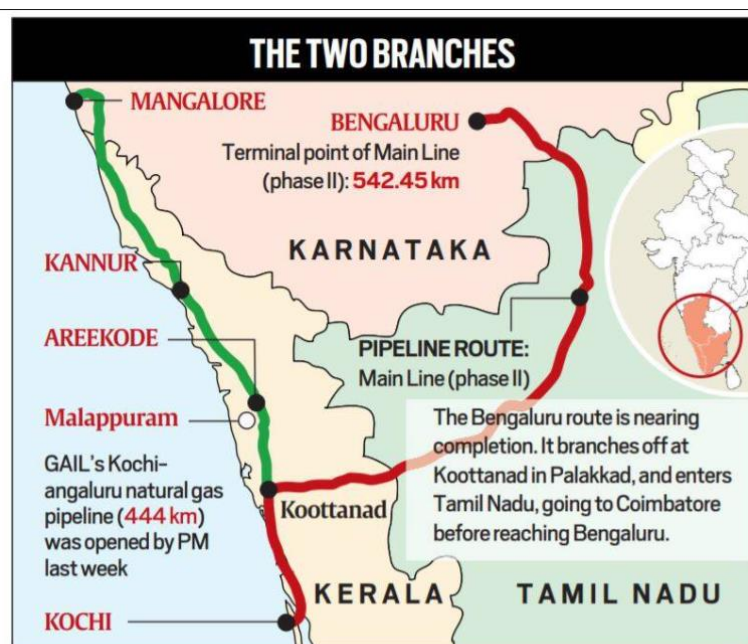
- Kochi- Mangaluru pipeline is part of the centre’s initiative to increase the share of natural gas in India’s energy mix from six per cent to 15 per cent.
- This pipeline will help setting up 700 new CNG stations across Kerala and Karnataka.
- Another 2.1 million new consumers will be added through the Kochi- Mangaluru pipeline.
- The 450-km pipeline will help supply clean fuel for households, vehicles and industries in Kerala and Karnataka.

➢ It will transport natural gas from Kochi in Kerala through Ernakulum, Trissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasargode districts to Mangaluru in Dakshina Kannada district of Karnataka and provide industrial fuel and feedstock for petrochemical and fertilizer sectors.

➢ The pipeline is part of India’ journey towards ‘one nation-one gas grid.’

➢ A total of 1,544 km pipeline had been laid as part of the National Gas Grid in 2020. India plans to spend \$60 billion in creating gas infrastructure till 2024, including for pipelines, liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and city gas distribution (CGD) networks.

➢ This comes in the backdrop of India’ push for a gas-based economy and assumes significance in a country that is now the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases after the US and China, and is among countries most vulnerable to climate change.



The two branches

- India plans to reduce its carbon footprint by 33-35% from its 2005 levels by 2030, as part of its commitments to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted by 195 countries in Paris in 2015.

Analytica

- ✓ Gas comprises about 6.2% of India’s primary energy mix, far behind the global average of 24%.
- ✓ The government plans to increase this share to 15% by 2030.
- ✓ India’s gas demand is expected to be driven by fertilizer, power, city gas distribution, and steel sectors.
- ✓ The Centre also plans to boost domestic gas production by 40 million standard cubic meters a day (mmscmd), from the current 80 mmscmd.
- ✓ India is the fourth-largest importer of LNG.
- ✓ Some of the strategies adopted to meet the objective of energy security and energy transition include a faster clean energy trajectory by leveraging natural gas and green hydrogen.
- ✓ The country is projected to see over \$300 billion investment by 2030 in the oil and gas sector to meet rising demand.

PEPPER IT WITH
PM Ujjwala Yojana,
ethanol blending program



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UPSC 2021

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

Difficult 4 countries

News Excerpt

Along with Russia, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, India is classed as one of the “difficult four” countries, destined to count among the UK’s “rivals” or “awkward counterparts” as it pursues its global goals.

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Highlights

- On January 11, 2021 Chatham House, the century-old UK-based policy institute also known as the Royal Institute of International Affairs, published a report proposing a blueprint for Britain’s future foreign policy after Brexit.
- The Chatham House report groups India on the other side of a “new divide in international affairs — between open societies where citizens have the capacity to fight for their rights and those where these rights are denied”.
- Part of the justification for labelling India ‘difficult’ centres on a critique of India’s domestic political developments.
- The report notes how “the overt Hindu nationalism of the ruling Party is weakening the rights of Muslims and other minority religious groups, leading to a chorus of concern that intolerant majoritarianism is replacing the vision of a secular, democratic India.
- The report also states that India is a reluctant supporter of liberal democracy, is “ambivalent” about human rights abuses within other states, and possesses “a long and consistent record of resisting being corralled into a ‘Western camp’”.
- Behind closed doors across North Atlantic and European capitals, diplomatic concerns — usually unspoken in public — have been bubbling since 2014 about growing religious and other forms of intolerance and the suppression of critique and dissent in India’s domestic space.

PEPPER IT WITH
Heart of Asia Conference,
Mekong Ganga Cooperation,
Raisina Dialogue

Conclusion

The next two years will see India move into a critical period of high-profile international activity, both as an elected member of the UN Security Council and as host of the 2023 G20 Summit. India can leverage these positions of influence to centre a more demanding vision of internationalism that disrupts the civilisational and racialised hierarchies that linger from Europe’s imperial era.

India and UNSC

News Excerpt

India will sit in the 15-nation UNSC for the 2021-22 term as a non-permanent member. It is the eighth time that the country has had a seat on the powerful horseshoe table.

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Pre-Connect

- The Security Council is one of the UN’s six main organs, and is aimed at maintaining international peace and security.
- The Security Council consists of five permanent members (China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America) and 10 non-permanent members elected by the General Assembly for a term of two years.
- The permanent members have the veto rights whereas the non-permanent members have no veto rights.
- In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the election is held by secret ballot and there are no nominations. Under rule 83 of the rules of procedure, the non-permanent members of the Security Council are elected by a two-thirds majority. As stipulated in the rules of procedure, a retiring member is not eligible for immediate re-election.

Highlights

- On 17 June, India was elected to the UN Security Council with 184 of the total 192 votes.
- India had last assumed the role of a non-permanent member at the UNSC in 2011-12. Prior to that, it was a non-permanent member for 1950-51, 1967-68, 1972-73, 1977-78, 1984-85 and 1991-92.
- On January 1, India, Norway, Kenya, Ireland and Mexico will join non-permanent members Estonia, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia and Vietnam and the five permanent members China, France, Russia, U.K. and the U.S.
- India will be UNSC President in August 2021 and will preside over the council again for a month in 2022.
- The presidency of the council is held by each of the members in turn for one month, following the English alphabetical order of the member states' names.

What will be India's agenda?

- ✓ India's message will be to ensure "how do we let diversity flourish in a united framework, which is in many ways the United Nations itself".
- ✓ India will emphasise on a greater need for cooperation in the council, where because of paralysis of decision making, urgent requirements do not get properly focused.
- ✓ India will also underscore the importance of respect for rule of law and international law.
- ✓ India outlined counter-terrorism; peacekeeping; maritime security; reformed multilateralism; technology; women, youth and developmental issues, especially in the context of peace-building, as India's priorities for the UNSC tenure.
- ✓ India would be a strong voice for the developing world in the UNSC. For instance, India has always maintained that Africa should have a say in decisions pertaining to it and not have other countries alone decide. Similarly, India favors an Afghan led, Afghan owned and Afghan controlled process.

UNSC reform necessity

- ❖ UNSC still reflects the geopolitical architecture of the Second World War.
- ❖ Expanded only once in 1963 to add 4 non-permanent members.
- ❖ Since then, the membership of the United Nations has increased from 113 to 193 without any change in the composition of the UNSC.
- ❖ No permanent member from Africa, despite 75% of work of the UNSC focused on Africa.
- ❖ Unable to respond effectively to situations of international conflict.
- ❖ Misuse of veto power by the current permanent members.
- ❖ G4 was created in the mid-2000s to voice a collective campaign of India, Germany, Japan and Brazil for UNSC expansion.

PEPPER IT WITH

UNGA, Trusteeship council, The International Court of Justice

Conclusion

Mr. Modi in the virtual high-level General Assembly session, had asserted that reform in the responses, processes and in the very character of the United Nations was the "need of the hour". It is imperative that India, the world's largest democracy and home to 1.3 billion people, be included as an integral part of the decision-making structures of the UN.

Draft Arctic Policy

News Excerpt

The Government of India is in the process of formulating an Arctic Policy.

Pre-Connect

- The Arctic is commonly understood to refer to the region above the Arctic Circle, north of latitude 66° 34' N, which includes the Arctic Ocean with the North Pole at its centre.

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- Much of this Ocean falls within the jurisdiction of five Arctic littoral states—Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Norway, Russia and the USA (Alaska). Three other Arctic nations, Finland, Sweden and Iceland along with the five littorals form the Arctic Council.
- India was accorded the status of an Observer to the Arctic Council in 2013, one of the thirteen countries in the world to have done so.
- The fact that this status was renewed in 2018 reflects India’s contribution to Arctic studies and research.
- India’s Arctic policy will rest on five pillars:
 - Science and research
 - Economic and human development cooperation
 - Transportation and connectivity
 - Governance and international cooperation
 - National capacity building
- This Policy shall be implemented through an Action Plan and an implementation and review mechanism based on timelines, prioritisation of activities and allocation of resources. The implementation will involve all stakeholders including academia, research community, business and industry.

Analytica

- The importance of the Arctic for India is constantly growing, primarily due to the challenges associated with climate change and global warming.
- India seeks to play a constructive role in the Arctic by leveraging its vast scientific pool and expertise in Himalayan and Polar research.
- India would also like to contribute in ensuring that as the Arctic becomes more accessible, the harnessing of its resources is done sustainably and in consonance with best practices formulated by bodies such as the Arctic Council.
- India’s engagement with the Arctic has been multi-dimensional. Within the span of a little over a decade, it has grown from a modest station at Svalbard to encompass a wide range of activities.
- Further, given the synergies between research pertaining to the Himalayas and the Arctic as well as the potential influence of changes in the Arctic to the Indian monsoon system, India’s stake in the Arctic is significant.
- India regards the Arctic as the common heritage of mankind. India is well poised to utilise experience within its vast human resources to contribute towards the study of the Arctic and the preservation of its unique bio-diversity.
- India believes that any human activity in this fragile region should be sustainable, responsible, and transparent with respect for international laws, including UNCLOS. India,



therefore, looks forward to increasing its engagement with this vital region and its governing bodies as a responsible partner.

Why Arctic is important for India and the world?

- ✓ The Arctic is home to almost four million inhabitants, of which approximately one-tenth are considered as indigenous people.
- ✓ The Arctic influences atmospheric, oceanographic and biogeochemical cycles of the earth’s ecosystem.
- ✓ The vulnerability of the Arctic to unprecedented changes in the climate is manifested by the loss of sea ice, ice caps, and warming of the ocean and atmosphere. It will lead to lowering of salinity levels, rising temperature differential between land and oceans in the tropical regions, drying of subtropical areas and increase in precipitation at higher latitudes.
- ✓ The potential threat to biodiversity and its impact remains in the Arctic, but it is intricately connected with the subtropics and even the tropics ecosystems.
- ✓ India is particularly impacted due to the likely effect of these changes on critical aspects of national development, economic security, water security and sustainability, weather conditions and monsoon patterns, coastal erosion and glacial melting.
- ✓ Indian agriculture is heavily dependent on the monsoons. Changes in the Arctic and global ecosystem induced by melting Arctic ice, can thus be highly disruptive for India.
- ✓ The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us the scale of disruption that can be caused by pathogens. Climate change induced melting of ice bears similar portents. The thawing of permafrost soil could potentially release viruses and bacteria that have lain dormant for thousands of years, thereby increasing the propensity of pandemics.
- ✓ Arctic research will help India’s scientific community to study melting rates of the third pole - the Himalayan glaciers, which are endowed with the largest freshwater reserves in the world outside the geographic poles.

PEPPER IT WITH
Maitri, Bharati, Himadri

Conclusion

The Arctic Ocean and its surrounding landmasses have been a topic of immense interest and a high priority area of research among the global scientific fraternity as well as of importance to policy makers. India’s draft Arctic Policy captures these goals while charting a way ahead that focuses on building capacities to increase our level of engagement with the region.

Solidarity and stability deal of gulf leaders

News Excerpt

Gulf leaders have signed a “solidarity and stability” agreement towards ending the diplomatic rift with Qatar at a summit in Saudi Arabia.

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Pre-Connect

- GCC is a political, economic, social, and regional organisation which was established by an agreement concluded in 1981 between Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE in view of their special relations, geographic proximity, similar political systems based on Islamic beliefs, joint destiny and common objectives.
- In June 2017, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain cut diplomatic and trade ties with, and imposed a land, sea and air blockade on Qatar.
- The quartet accused Doha of being too close to Iran and supporting “terrorist” groups.
- Qatar vehemently denied the allegations and accused its neighbours of attacking its sovereignty.

It has been assessed that Saudi Arabia is a fading power whereas UAE, Qatar and Iran are emerging as the new regional leaders. Oman and Iraq will have to struggle to retain their sovereign identities.

Highlights

- Gulf States have signed ‘solidarity and stability’ deal at GCC Annual summit in Saudi Arabia amid a breakthrough in the long-running GCC crisis.
- Leaders of the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council signed the Al-Ula declaration, named after the Saudi city where the summit is being held, and a final communiqué.

- This deal will help to reach the agreement of the Al-Ula statement that will be signed at this summit, where GCC states affirmed Gulf, Arab and Islamic solidarity and stability.
- According to the deal Saudi Arabia will remove all the sanctions over Qatar and re-open their land, sea and air borders to Qatar.



Conclusion

Indian interests would be best served if the stability in the region is ensured through cooperative security since the alternative, of competitive security options, cannot ensure durable peace.

25th Amendment of US Constitution

News Excerpt

In the immediate aftermath of Donald Trump supporters storming the US Capitol building, which houses both the US Senate as well as the House of Representatives, there are calls by many to either impeach President Trump or invoke the 25th Amendment.

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- The Twenty-fifth Amendment was an effort to resolve some of the continuing issues revolving about the office of the President; that is, what happens upon the death, removal, or resignation of the President and what is the course to follow if for some reason the President becomes disabled to such a degree that he cannot fulfill his responsibilities.
- It has 4 sections. However, the fourth section of the 25th Amendment has never been invoked.
- While the first section codified the traditionally observed process of succession in the event of the death of the president—that the vice president would succeed to the office—it also

PEPPER IT WITH

James Madison, Constitutional Convention, Impeachment procedure in India

introduced a change regarding the ascent of the vice president to president should the latter resign from office.

- In the event of resignation, the vice president would assume the title and position of president—not acting president—effectively prohibiting the departing president from returning to office.
- The second section of the amendment addresses vacancies in the office of the vice president.
- The third section of the amendment set forth the formal process for determining the capacity of the president to discharge the powers and duties of office.
- If the president is able to declare his/her inability, then the vice president takes over as the acting president.

Palk Bay Fishing Conflict

News Excerpt

Four fishermen from Ramanathapuram district are the latest casualties in the decades-old Palk Bay fisheries conflict between India and Sri Lanka.

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Pre-Connect

- The Palk bay, which is 137 kilometers in length and varies from 64 to 137 Kilometers in width, is divided by the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL). Bordering it are five Indian districts and three Sri Lankan districts.
- The narrow strip of water, separating the state of Tamil Nadu in India from the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, has historically provided rich fishing grounds for both countries. However, the region has become a highly contested site in recent decades, with the conflict taking on a new dimension since the end of the Sri Lankan Civil War in 2009.
- Multiple issues have compounded to bring tensions to a near crisis point, with serious ramifications for internal and bilateral relations.
- These issues include ongoing disagreement over the territorial rights to the island of Kachchatheevu, frequent poaching by Indian fisherman in Sri Lankan waters, and the damaging economic and environmental effects of trawling.

Analytica

- The intimate ties between fishermen and the sea have affected the history, economy, and culture of both countries. Historically, the shallow waters of the Palk Bay and geographical contiguity between India and Sri Lanka facilitated the movement of ideas, goods, and men.
- The bonds of ethnicity, language, and religion helped fishermen lead lives of harmonious coexistence for several centuries. Frequent migrations between India and Sri Lanka through the Palk Bay took place. Inter-marriages were common.
- However, over the last several decades, internal and bilateral relations have suffered from a range of issues from coastal insecurity to overfishing.
- Since the conflict's end in 2009, tensions have risen around the livelihood of Sri Lankan Tamil fishermen. Many fishing villages, converted into high-security zones during the civil war, continue to be under army control. Further, while Tamil fishermen find the current



presence of Indian trawlers to be a major hindrance, the navy has not handled the poaching consistently, causing significant frustration.

- In India, the fisheries dispute chiefly began with an internal debate about sovereignty related to ceding of the island of Kachchatheevu to Sri Lanka—a situation that proceeded to exacerbate the tension between fishermen practicing traditional fishing and those using trawlers.
- Internal relations and perspectives in both countries are having a marked impact on bilateral relations.
- The livelihoods of their populations and the bay’s marine ecology are being threatened, evident by the ongoing disagreement over Kachchatheevu and the economic and environmental effects of increased trawling on both sides of the IMBL.
- A severe side effect of introduction of trawlers has been the untold damage to marine ecology and, specifically, fish stocks. Trawlers have since been referred to as the “hoovers of the shelf bottom” and “bulldozers mowing down fish and other benthic species.” After their introduction, the Indian side of the Palk Bay quickly became devoid of fish.
- It was less than a month ago that the two countries resumed discussions through their Joint Working Group on fisheries after a three-year gap. India sought the early release of fishermen arrested in Sri Lankan waters, as well as the boats in Sri Lankan custody. Sri Lanka underscored the need to curb the illegal fishing, which adversely affects the livelihood of its war-affected fishermen.
- India has lodged a strong protest with the Sri Lankan authorities, who have set up a committee to find a permanent solution to the incursions by Indian fishermen.

Way Forward

- ✓ India and Sri Lanka should collaborate to convert the contested territory into a common heritage of mutual benefit.
- ✓ Immediate actions should be taken to begin the phaseout of trawling and identify other fishing practices in waters.
- ✓ Through incentives and persuasion, fishermen from the Palk Bay could be encouraged to switch over to deep sea fishing in the Indian exclusive economic zone and in international waters.
- ✓ India must view the Palk Bay region as a common heritage of the two countries and project this vision.
- ✓ The first step for arriving at an amicable solution is to recognize that in addition to New Delhi and Colombo, there are other stakeholders to engage, including the governments of the Northern Province and Tamil Nadu and the fishing communities in both countries.

Conclusion

The success of diplomacy lies in converting a crisis into an opportunity. If New Delhi and Tamil Nadu are determined, they can create a win-win scenario in the Palk Bay. With renewed commitment, India and Sri Lanka have a chance to bring stakeholders together, halt the damaging effects of trawling, and secure the livelihoods of their people.

PEPPER IT WITH
Colombo Port, Internally Displaced Persons, Indian Housing Project

International Organization of Securities Commissions

News Excerpt

International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) said it has become an **associate member of the International Organization of Securities Commissions.**

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Pre-Connect

- The International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO) is the international body that brings together the world's securities regulators and is recognized as the global standard setter for the securities sector.
- IOSCO was created in 1983, when 11 securities regulatory agencies from North and South America agreed to build their inter-American regional association into an international cooperative body.

- Currently, its membership regulates more than 95% of the world's securities markets in more than 115 jurisdictions; securities regulators in emerging markets account for 75% of its ordinary membership.
- The Secretariat remained in Montreal until 1999 when it was then moved to Madrid.
- IOSCO develops, implements and promotes adherence to internationally recognized standards for securities regulation.
- The IOSCO works closely with the G20 and the Financial Stability Board in setting up the standards for strengthening the securities markets and global regulatory reform agenda.
- By providing high quality technical assistance, education and training, and research to its members and other regulators, IOSCO seeks to build sound global capital markets and a robust global regulatory framework.
- In 1998 IOSCO adopted a comprehensive set of Objectives and Principles of Securities Regulation (IOSCO Principles), now recognized as the international regulatory benchmarks for all securities markets.
- The IOSCO Objectives and Principles of Securities Regulation have been endorsed by Financial Stability Board as one of the key standards for sound financial systems.

International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA)

- The first International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in the country has been set up at the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT) in Gandhinagar.
- To regulate such institutions, the government established IFSCA on April 27 last year with its head office in Gandhinagar.
- As the dynamic nature of business in the IFSCs requires a high degree of inter-regulatory coordination within the financial sector, the IFSCA has been established as a unified regulator with a holistic vision in order to promote ease of doing business in IFSC and provide world class regulatory environment.
- The main objective of the IFSCA is to develop a strong global connect and focus on the needs of the Indian economy as well as to serve as an international financial platform for the entire region and the global economy as a whole.
- The membership of IOSCO would provide IFSCA the platform to exchange information at the global level and regional level on areas of common interests.
- Further, the IOSCO platform would enable IFSCA to learn from the experiences and best practices of the regulators of other well established financial centers.

PEPPER IT WITH
Financial Stability Board, Global
Regulatory Reform Agenda

Open Sky Treaty and New START treaty

News Excerpt

Both houses of the Russian parliament voted unanimously on Wednesday to extend the New START treaty for five years. However, Russia withdrew from Open Skies Treaty after US departure.

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Open Skies Treaty

- Open Skies Treaty (OST) is a 34-member accord that allows participants to fly unarmed reconnaissance flights over any part of their fellow member states.
- First proposed in 1955 by former US President Dwight Eisenhower as a means to deescalate tensions during the Cold War, the landmark treaty was eventually signed in 1992 between NATO members and former Warsaw Pact countries following the demise of the Soviet Union.
- It went into effect in 2002 and currently has 35 signatories along with one non-ratifying member (Kyrgyzstan).
- The OST aims at building confidence among members through mutual openness, thus reducing the chances of accidental war.
- Under the treaty, a member state can “spy” on any part of the host nation, with the latter’s consent. A country can undertake aerial imaging over the host state after giving notice 72 hours before, and sharing its exact flight path 24 hours before.

- The information gathered, such as on troop movements, military exercises and missile deployments, has to be shared with all member states.

New START Treaty

- The Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms also known as the New START Treaty.
- The treaty, signed in 2010 by President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers, and envisages sweeping on-site inspections to verify compliance.
- After both Moscow and Washington withdrew from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2019, New START is the only remaining nuclear arms control deal between the two countries.
- Each Party has the flexibility to determine for itself the structure of its strategic forces within the aggregate limits of the Treaty.
- The Treaty's duration is ten years, unless superseded by a subsequent agreement. The Parties may agree to extend the Treaty for a period of no more than five years.
- The Treaty does not constrain testing, development, or deployment of current or planned missile defense programs or long-range conventional strike capabilities.

Impact of withdrawal from Open Skies Treaty

- ✓ The exit from the Open Skies Treaty is the most recent example of important pacts Washington has stepped away from during the Trump presidency, including the Paris Agreement and the Iran nuclear deal.
- ✓ Trump had suspended US participation in the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty– another security agreement that had been credited with curtailing the arms race in Europe towards the end of the Cold War.
- ✓ The move by the United States could further distance Washington from its European allies.
- ✓ Surveillance aircraft provide key information that still cannot be gathered by satellite sensors, such as thermal imaging data. Also, since only the US has an extensive military satellite infrastructure, other NATO members would have to rely on Washington to obtain classified satellite data.
- ✓ Russia's departure could adversely impact Washington's European allies, which rely on OST data to track Russian troop movements in the Baltic region.
- ✓ Moscow has argued that the US withdrawal will erode global security by making it more difficult for governments to interpret the intentions of other nations, particularly amid Russia-West tensions after the Russian annexation of Ukraine's Crimea in 2014.

Impact of New START Treaty

- Nuclear arms control has been particularly important during past times of U.S.-Russian tensions. It minimized the possibility for miscalculation or misinterpretation of military activities and headed off unintended or inadvertent escalation.
- The maintenance of strategic stability is key to ensure that U.S. and Russian nuclear policies are more predictable.
- Arms control is also vital for addressing mounting challenges of nuclear proliferation. Arms race would diminish the effectiveness of the regime based on the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), which is central to addressing the acute proliferation challenges posed by North Korea and Iran. This would further complicate the maintenance of peace and stability.
- Extension of this treaty could potentially avoid a renewed arms race.
- Extending the treaty will preserve its significant security advantages, not only the numerical limits but also the mutual transparency provided by the treaty's verification measures.
- An extension would buy time for the two countries to discuss other stabilizing measures, including further reductions in their nuclear stockpiles. Moreover, it could have the important benefit of improving the bilateral political atmosphere.
- However, New START only covers the stockpiles of Russian and American "strategic" weapons. This refers to those warheads the two adversaries point at each other's homeland.

The treaty says nothing about “tactical” nukes, the more flexible and usually smaller warheads built for potential use in a war zone to win or avoid losing a conventional conflict.

- Some experts argue that extending START without any sort of follow-up plan to compel the Chinese and Russians to halt the modernization of their nuclear weapons programs makes the world a more dangerous place.
- Speaking via video link to the World Economic Forum’s virtual meeting, Mr. Putin hailed the decision to extend the treaty as “a step in the right direction,” but warned of rising global rivalries and threats of new conflicts.

Way Forward

- ✚ To make the global matrix even more complex, there are also the other seven nuclear powers to consider and perhaps additional ones in future.
- ✚ In a gesture of global protest against this insanity, 86 non-nuclear countries have signed a Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, with a goal of totally banning these satanic arms. But these — mainly smaller and poorer — states don’t hold the future in their hands. The big nuclear powers must put their daunting other differences aside and begin comprehensive.
- ✚ There is a need to extend cooperation on exploring strategic stability discussions on a range of arms control and emerging security issues.
- ✚ Russia and the United States should pursue, on a priority basis, effective steps to reduce nuclear risks and tensions and to avoid a renewed nuclear arms race by strengthening nuclear arms control instruments.
- ✚ Active cooperation is required to resolve the INF Treaty compliance dispute.

Conclusion

Today, with relations among Washington, Moscow, and Europe at their lowest point since the end of the Cold War, nuclear arms control is even more vital to contain nuclear risks, ease worsening U.S.-Russian tensions, and prevent a new nuclear arms race that would be costly and dangerous.

Despite the current tensions and the political difficulty of returning to the arms control agenda, the prevention of a new nuclear arms race requires joint U.S.-Russian leadership and urgent steps. There is the opportunity to reduce nuclear risk by recognizing that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. Important steps in that direction would come from extending New START, preserving the INF Treaty while resolving compliance disputes, and resuming discussion of the strategic stability agenda, from which both sides and the broader world community will benefit.

PEPPER IT WITH
Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapon, NATO

Prelims 2021
BATCH 2
PT DESTINAIRE
14th Feb 2021
9667 779 058 | 9811 598 995

Prelims 2021
KSG
An Institute For IAS Exam...
BATCH 2
PT DESTINAIRE
14th Feb 2021
9667 779 058 | 9811 598 995

ENVIRONMENT

Stratospheric Warming and Rainfall in India

News Excerpt

Scientist has cited the SSW (polar sudden stratospheric warming) as one of the reasons for the unforeseen rainfall in the southern India during winter days.

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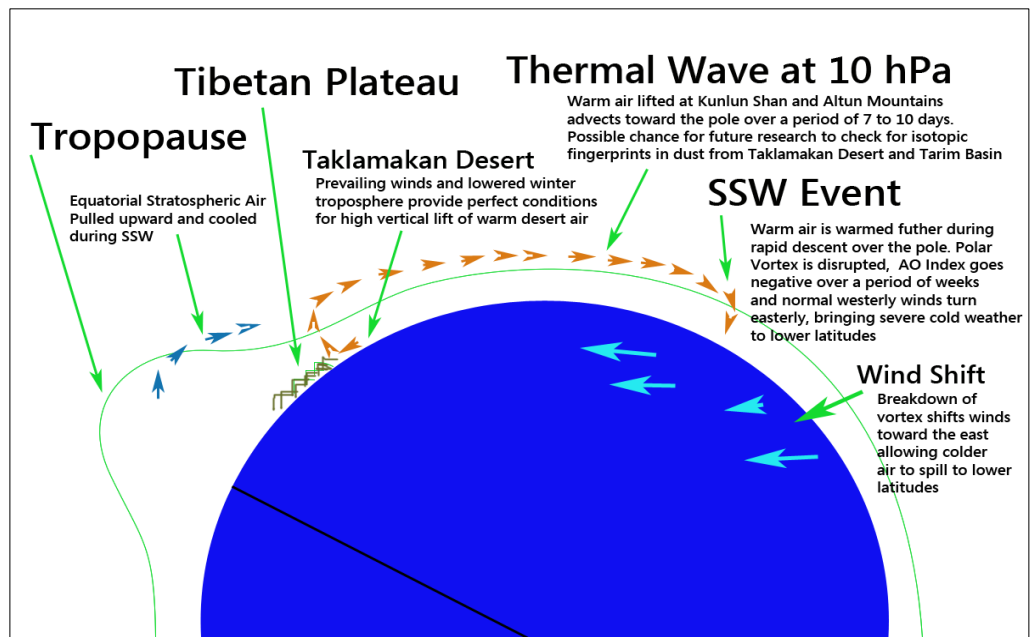
- In the winter, the pole is tilted away from the sun and remains under 24 hours dark. At the equator, the stratosphere receives insolation.
- Subsequently, a large anomaly in temperature between the high latitude stratosphere and the stratosphere at lower latitudes (a strong temperature gradient) is formed. This sets up strong winds blowing in a westerly direction around the cold air over the pole. This arrangement is known as the Stratospheric Polar Vortex (SPV). This forms every winter.

This can become disturbed, and temperature can raise by up to 50 degrees Celsius in a few days (although it is still cold) and the winds can weaken, or even reverse.

- SPV can become disturbed, and temperature can raise by up to 50 degrees Celsius in a few days (although it is still cold) and the winds can weaken, or even reverse.
- If the winds reverse, then a sudden stratospheric warming (SSW) is said to have happened.

About

- A sudden stratospheric warming (SSW) event occurred in January over the Arctic region and several kilometres above the Earth's surface in the stratospheric layer.
- Due to SSW, winds in the stratosphere can reverse from westerly to easterly. The weather in the atmospheric layers also gets affected by SSW.
- The warming events are regular but non-periodical For instance- it last occurred in 2019. Its natural frequency is about six times in a decade.
- SSW is related to the behaviour of the stratospheric polar vortex, a fast-blowing band of winds that forms over the Arctic region during the winter due to reduced solar radiation.



Polar Vortex

- ❖ The polar vortex is a large area of low pressure and cold air surrounding both of the Earth's poles.
- ❖ When a Polar Vortex weakens it creates more acute winter conditions and can lead to extreme frigid weather conditions in adjacent regions.
- ❖ It always exists near the poles, but weakens in summer and strengthens in winter.
- ❖ The term "vortex" refers to the counter-clockwise flow of air that helps keep the colder air near the Poles.
- ❖ Many times during winter in the northern hemisphere, the polar vortex will expand, sending cold air southward with the jet stream. This occurs fairly regularly during wintertime.
- ❖ During an SSW event in the 2019, the North Pole vortex had split into three smaller vortices releasing cold winds into the southern regions.

- SSW may also occur over the South Pole (rare case). Waves in the atmosphere can disturb the flow of the polar vortex. In the most extreme cases, such as during SSW, the polar vortex flow weakens dramatically and sometimes even reverses.

Impacts of SSW on India

- ✓ It could cause unusually heavy rainfall in the tropical regions. The southern India received unusually heavy rainfall in January. This winter rain may have been caused by sudden stratospheric warming (SSW).
- ✓ Due to SSW, each district of Tamil Nadu witnessed an excess precipitation of 400 per cent, according to Indian Meteorological Department. Kerala and Karnataka have witnessed 19 and 12 times excess rainfall respectively. It causes heavy damage to standing crops.
- ✓ It might have had an impact on global weather pattern associated with the upper-most layer of the atmosphere –thermosphere, to the surface of the planet even in the tropical regions. (Though the phenomena of vortex and SSW is not associated with the tropical region).
- ✓ It might cause difficulties in satellite navigation due to cold winters and can cause potential disruption on day-to-day activities in case of increase in cold spells or extended winter.
- ✓ It could make the web of climate change even more complex, SSW may have influence on other global weather circulations and wind patterns.

PEPPER IT WITH
 ENSO, El Nino, La Nina, Indian Ocean Dipole, Winter Rainfall in India, Retreating monsoon in India

Conclusion

With climate change in tow, if the SSW events increase in number, as some scientists have surmised, then such extreme rainfall events over tropical regions like southern India might also increase in the future. It could hamper agricultural activities in negative way. Hence, it is important to study and gain a better understanding of SSWs. The better understanding of pattern would facilitate a ‘reliable forecasting’.

Electronic waste (e-waste): Report by CPCB

News Excerpt

Recently, the central pollution control board (CPCB) has released a report on electronic waste (e-waste) in India.

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- The Rules governing collection, storage and processing of the e-waste are implemented under E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2016. These rules are framed under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- As per MEITY, Ninety-five percentage of the e-waste in India is being recycled in non-formal sector and five percentage of the e-waste volume are handled in formal unit.

Global trends

- ❖ According to a 2019 UN report, consumers discard 44 million tonnes worth of electronics each year; out of which only 20 percent is recycled sustainably.
- ❖ The Global E-Waste Monitor 2020 shows that consumers discarded 53.6 million tonnes worth of electronics in 2019 globally, up 20 percent in 5 years.

Key Highlights of the Report

- India collected just 10 per cent of the e-waste estimated to have been generated in the country in 2018-19 and 3.5 per cent of that in the generated in 2017-18.
- E-waste is increasing year-by-year. India generated 708,445 tonne e-waste in 2017-18 and 771,215 tonne the following fiscal, the report estimated. In 2019-20, the figure rose 32 per cent to 1,014,961 tonne.
- The actual collection was lower in both the years — 25,325 tonnes in 2017-18 and 78,281 tonnes in 2018-19.
- The report also states that the volume of e-waste that a dismantler or recycler was handling increased over time but the shed area of these units remained the same.

- Thus, the report highlighted the pain points regarding e-waste collection due to the lack of adequate measures and poor enforcement by concerned authorities on formal collection and recycling of e-waste.

National Green Tribunal (NGT) and E-waste management

- ✓ NGT issues directions on implementation of E-Waste Management Rules by state PCBs and CPCB.
- ✓ The NGT has directed the CPCB, to ensure scientific management of e-waste. It has also asserted that environmental crimes are as serious as cases of assaults. Negligence may lead to serious governance deficit.
- ✓ NGT has directed to fill the gaps in compliance of rules which are being more held in breach, higher authorities should take adequate steps to deal with the issue of e-waste collection and recycling.
- ✓ Recently, NGT ordered all producers and manufactures of electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) in some states have to set up collection centres and take back systems for discarded electronic goods. The bench came down heavily on producers and manufacturers for failing to implement extended producer responsibility (EPR), under E-waste rules.

PEPPER IT WITH
E-waste (Management) Rules,
Global e-waste monitor 2020,
NGT Act, EPA, 1986

Way Forward

- **Short term measures:** Constant vigilance is required and equally the Liability of manufacturers should be enforced in 'outcome based approach'. The producers should have assured buy-back or return offers for obsolete equipment and should incentivise the consumer financially.
- **Long term measures:** There dire need to adopt policies which creates circular economy of electronics. The electronic products need to be designed in such a way that it can be easily reused, durable and safe for recycling. Government should act as a 'facilitator bridge' between producers and consumers of electronic products. In order to trig formal e-waste recycling facilities government should aware, educate and impart skills to manage waste in sustainable way.

United Nations Adaptation Gap Report, 2020

News Excerpt

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) launched the 5th edition of the Adaptation Gap Report.

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The Paris Agreement entails all its signatories to plan and implement adaptation measures through national adaptation plans, studies, monitoring of climate change effects and investment in a green future.

Key highlights

- The UNEP Adaptation Gap Report 2020 cited that adaptation actions are lagging far behind.
- It finds that while nations have advanced in planning and implementation, huge gaps remain, particularly in finance for developing countries and bringing adaptation projects to the stage where they bring real reductions in climate risks.
- The current annual adaptation costs in developing countries are around \$70 billion.
- The annual cost of adaptation to the effects of climate change for developing countries is estimated to at least quadruple by 2050.
- Adaptation costs in actual terms, is higher in developed countries but the burden of adaptation is greater for developing countries in relation to their gross domestic product.
- Countries like Africa and Asia, which are least equipped to tackle climate change, will be the most impacted by it. Moreover, the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has impacted adaptation efforts.

India's initiative for climate change adaptation

The National Action Plan on Climate change (NAPCC) was formally launched in 2008. The NAPCC identifies measures that promote development objectives while also yielding co-benefits for addressing climate change effectively.

Sectors	Potential Impacts on sector	Adaptation strategy/ Adaptation measures
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in crop yield; for instance- grain yield of rice declined by 10% for each 1 degree increase in the growing season minimum temperature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Initiative on Climate Resilient Agriculture. Improved and efficient agricultural practices such as Climate Smart Agriculture. Risk-transfer mechanisms such the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme, which is the largest crop insurance scheme in the world.
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decline in water quantity as well as quantity because of increased evapotranspiration and extreme weather events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Water Mission, as part of National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).
Cities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater exposure of coastal cities to risks such as cyclones and sea-level rise, and associated risk of flooding and infrastructure damage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Mission on Sustainable Habitats, as part of NAPCC and ongoing Smart Cities initiatives. Preparation of City Resilience Strategy for many cities.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased incidence of water-borne diseases. Increased incidence of vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed National Mission on Health as part of NAPCC. Specific actions such as the 'Ahmedabad Heat Action Plan' to cope with extreme heat waves.
Coastal livelihoods and fisheries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decline in fish catch in inland and coastal fisheries due to change in sea temperature and hydrological changes in major river systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various actions under the coastal zone management plan, including livelihood support to coast-dependent communities Proposed new mission on coastal resources under the NAPCC.
Mountain systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temperature changes will result in snow melting and glacier retreat in many parts of the Himalayas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific mission on sustaining the Himalayan ecosystem and other programs.

Conclusion

Adaptation finance is critical to enhance climate change related planning and implementation and limit climate damages, particularly in developing countries. Climate change adaptation helps individuals, societies and organisations to deal with those consequences of climate change that cannot be eluded. It includes taking concrete actions to manage risks from climate impacts, protect communities and strengthen the resilience of the economy.

Pollution in Yamuna

News Excerpt

Supreme Court takes Suo motu cognizance regarding the issue of contamination of Yamuna River. Delhi Jal Board (DJB) alleged that Industries in Haryana are dumping untreated discharge in Yamuna River.

Pre-Connect

- In 2017, Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti v/s Union of India case, SC directed norms for generating funds, for setting up and operating the 'Common Effluent Treatment Plant' as well as 'Sewage Treatment Plants' shall be finalised, before march, 2017.
- SC directed that for the purpose of setting up these plants, the state government should prioritise their policy implementation.

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Supreme Courts Directions

- SC directed to CPCB to explore any other possible sources of effluent and contamination within the limits of Municipalities.
- The court also directed CPCB –to submit a report identifying municipalities along the river Yamuna, which have not installed treatment plants for sewage as per the requirement or have gaps in ensuring that the sewage is not discharged untreated into the river.
- SC has mandated that discharge of effluents, untreated water and other contaminated sources should be regulated and bio-remediated by the concerned municipalities.
- The court pointed out that Article 243W of the Constitution vests municipalities and local authorities with the performance of functions and implementation of schemes in relation to the matters listed in Twelfth Schedule.

Ammonia pollution in Yamuna River

- ✓ The acceptable maximum limit of ammonia in drinking water, as per the Bureau of Indian Standards, is 0.5 ppm. The DJB presently has the capacity to treat approximately 0.9 ppm. At some instances, Ammonia level reached up to 2-3 ppm, cause public supply breakdown.
- ✓ The concentration of ammonia above 1 ppm makes water toxic. In humans, long term ingestion of water having ammonia levels of 1 ppm or above may cause damage to internal organs.
- ✓ The most likely source is believed to be effluents from dye units, distilleries and other factories in satellite districts around Delhi.

❖ Ammonia is a colour less gas and used as an industrial chemical in the production of fertilisers, plastics, synthetic fibres, dyes and other products.

❖ Ammonia occurs naturally in the environment from the breakdown of organic waste matter, and may also find its way to ground and surface water sources through industrial effluents or through contamination by sewage.

Impacts of Ammonia on River Ecosystem

- Ammonia at high level make difficult for aquatic organisms to sufficiently excrete the toxicant, leading to toxic buildup in internal tissues and blood, and potentially death.
- Environmental factors, such as pH and temperature, can affect ammonia toxicity to aquatic animals.
- Ammonia also exerts a biochemical oxygen demand on receiving waters (referred to as nitrogenous biological oxygen demand or NBOD). This occurs because dissolved oxygen is consumed as bacteria and other microbes oxidize ammonia into nitrite and nitrate.
- Ammonia is one of the main sources of nitrogen pollution, alongside nitrogen oxides. It can impact the nitrogen accumulation in riparian plant species, diversity and composition within affected habitats.
- Ammonia also effects species composition through soil acidification, direct toxic damage to leaves and by altering the susceptibility of plants to frost, drought and pathogens. At its most serious, certain sensitive habitats may destruct.

PEPPER IT WITH
CPCB, Article 243W,
Stockholm convention,
chlorination of water, BOD

Way forward

- ✚ There is need for stringent implementation of guidelines against dumping of harmful waste into the river. Multi-level monitoring is required to make sure that untreated sewage does not enter the river water.
- ✚ Capacity augmentation of municipalities in terms of data, regulation and treatment plants should be carried out in priority. A comprehensive top-bottom level cumulative approach is required, involvement of Inter-state agencies and coordination among them is essential to achieve optimum efficiency to deal with untreated effluent.
- ✚ Central government should devolve addition funds to support capacity augmentation; meager resources would always result into poor management.

Green Tax & Scrappage Policy

News Excerpt

Recently, Union Road Transport and Highways Ministry have approved a proposal to levy a 'green tax' on older vehicles. Ministry has also approved the policy for deregistration and scrapping of vehicles owned by Government.

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Pre-Connect

- Green tax is tax imposed on environmental pollutants or on goods whose repeated use contributes to pollution.
- Commercial vehicles constitute about 5 per cent of the total vehicle, which contribute about 65-70 per cent of total vehicular pollution.
- The older fleet, typically manufactured before the year 2000 constitutes less than 1 per cent of the total fleet but contributes around 15 per cent of total vehicular pollution. These older vehicles pollute 10-25 times more than modern vehicles.
- Diesel vehicles older than 10 years are banned in Delhi-NCR as per a ruling by the National Green Tribunal in 2015.
- Bharat Stage VI emissions standards and electric vehicle incentives are in place and polluted cities have included old vehicle phase-out initiative as part of their clean air action under the National Clean Air Programme.

Combating pollution

PERSONAL VEHICLES ABOVE 15 YEARS TO BE CHARGED GREEN TAX

- Transport vehicles to be charged during fitness certificate renewal
- Higher Green tax for vehicles registered in highly polluted cities
- Tax exemption for electric vehicles, fuels like CNG, ethanol and LPG
- Proposal will go to States for consultation before formal notification
- Ministry approved policy of deregistration and scrapping of vehicles

Older fleet contributes around **15%** of total vehicular pollution

Key Provisions for Green Tax

- For personal vehicles, a green tax to be levied at the time of renewal of Registration Certification after 15 years.
- At the time of renewal of fitness certificate, a green tax at the rate of 10% to 25% of road tax to be levied on transport vehicles older than 8 years.
- Public transport vehicles are to be charged lower green tax.
- Higher green tax is purposed (about 50% of road tax) for vehicles being registered in highly polluted cities. F
- Varying rates of green tax, based on fuel and type of vehicle. Strong hybrid vehicles, electric vehicles, and vehicles running on alternate fuels like CNG, ethanol, LPG etc. to be exempted.
- Agricultural vehicles, including tractor, harvester, tiller, etc. to be exempted.
- Revenue collected through the green tax will be utilised for tackling pollution.
- According to the ministry, the revenue collected from the green tax will be kept in a separate account and will be used for tackling pollution.

WHAT IS VEHICLE SCRAPPAGE POLICY

After numerous delays, India may soon implement the policy for old vehicles

The What...

- Old and polluting cars to be sent to scrapyards.
- Owners of such vehicles to be compensated based on certain conditions.
- The compensation amount may be equal or more to resale value of such vehicles.

The Why...

- Taking old and polluting vehicles off roads can help the environment.
- Many parts from old vehicles can be recycled. Parts that cannot be recycled need to be disposed off in an environmentally-safe manner.
- Can create boost in demand for new vehicles.

...and The Concerns

- Who will bear the cost of compensation?
- Which vehicles would be eligible?

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- This move will discourage people from using vehicles that damage the environment, motivate them to switch to newer, less polluting vehicles and to reduce overall pollution level and make the 'polluter pay' for it. Green taxes in India will have a deterrent effect, sensitizing the denizens about pollution control and management.

- ✓ Green Tax will add revenue support to the Exchequer. More funds can be allocated to improve Air Quality and facilitate Auto Industry. The automobile industry has long been seeking an incentive-based scrappage policy to take older, more polluting vehicles off India's roads and boost the sale of new cars.
- ✓ However, automakers are in favour of the suggestions aimed at putting road-unworthy vehicles to sleep, but freight carriers showed concerns that they face cost inflation risks if the proposals were to go through.
- ✓ Green tax is meant to curb or reduce the extent and amount of the use or consumption of harmful substances or activities, or depletion of a resource. Thus, if the imposition of the tax is well targeted and compliance is competent, it will add to the costs of the subject paying the tax. The adding of costs to a producer may impact competitiveness among auto Industry in positive way. Simultaneous adoption of scrappage policy would pave way for 'circular' automobile Industry.
- ✓ If tax compliance and implementation goes correctly, the green tax could also be a permanent solution rather than a temporary incentive-based scrappage scheme.
- ✓ Adoption of comprehensive scrappage policy will facilitate the Automobile Industry in terms of availability of key raw materials. For Instance- scrapping steel, aluminium and plastic can bring down automobile prices by 20-30 per cent.

The policy for deregistration and scrapping of vehicles

- ❖ The Ministry has also approved the policy for deregistration and scrapping of vehicles owned by Government departments and PSUs.
- ❖ The policy to scrap more than 15-year-old vehicles owned by government departments and PSUs is likely to be notified soon and will be implemented from April 1, 2022.
- ❖ Under the policy vehicles of both, Central and State Governments that are older than 15 years will be scrapped.

Need for the Policy:

- ❖ India will have a monumental load of over two crore old vehicles nearing the end of their lives by 2025.
- ❖ These, along with other unfit vehicles, will cause huge pollution and environmental damage.
- ❖ Scrapping policy provides opportunities to maximise emissions gains from replacement of end-of-life vehicles and recover material from the wasted clunkers for reuse and recycling.

BS-VI and CAFE norms

- ❖ BS-VI and CAFE norms are almost similar to each other, aimed at bringing massive fuel changes in vehicles.
- ❖ The BS-VI emission is seen to contain five times fewer Sulphur traces, while the nitrogen oxide level in the upcoming norm will be brought down by 70% for diesel engine and 25% in the case of petrol engines.
- ❖ Corporate Average Fuel efficiency (CAFE) has been proposed by the Indian government, to realign the country with global auto industries. Under this norm, India seeks cars to become 30% or more fuel-efficient from 2022, while 10% or more by 2021 end.
- ❖ With CAFE norms, a car's mileage is seen to improve and will be decided on litres of fuel consumed by a vehicle to run 100 kilometers. Also, reduction in carbon footprint is targeted in auto industry.

Way Forward

- Under the Green Tax, Diesel vehicles that are considered more polluting than petrol should be provisioned with higher tax. This taxation should be progressive in nature, to encourage people towards the adoption of cleaner vehicles. Along with this policy, the government must also institute a much more effective way of certifying the fitness of vehicles, both passenger and commercial.
- Environmentally sound vehicle scrappage infrastructure should be scaled up country-wide for safe disposal of waste and for material recovery for recycling like steel, aluminum and plastics. Safe disposal and material recovery should be the 'critical parameters' of an effective vehicle scrapping policy for India.

- Equally, there is dire need to reduce the amount of toxic material used in Vehicle. For instance- Use of lead, mercury, cadmium or hexavalent chromium should be minimized to facilitate recycling of Vehicle’s in India. Auto Industry should work on ‘end-of-life’ regulations and use of optimum material recyclable / recoverable / reusable from end-of-life vehicles.
- The scrappage policy should formulate in such way that offer incentives to owners to scrap their old vehicles in terms of reward. India needs a well-designed scrappage policy to lower emissions, reduce environmental damages and recover material from clunker as part of a post-COVID-19 new green deal.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Carban Tax, EV in India, Switch Delhi, FAME-II, Circular Economy, Primary pollutants, VOCs

Dzukou Valley

News Excerpt

Recently, Dzukou valley located at the Manipur-Nagaland border was on fire, and it has been doused after it raged for two weeks.

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About Dzukou Valley

- Dzukou valley is well known for its biodiversity and natural beauty. It is located at the borders of the northeastern states of Nagaland and Manipur.
- The Dzukou Valley situated at an altitude of 2,452 metres and it is a popular trekking destination.
- It is famous for a variety of flora and fauna. Dzukou Lily is only found in this valley region.
- The valley is called “Dziiko” by **Mao Naga tribe of Manipur** and “Dzukou” by the **Angami tribe of Nagaland**.
- The dwarf bamboo is endemic to eastern Himalayas and also grows in the Dzukou valley and surrounding hills of north-east India. The hills surrounding Dzukou valley have rich temperate forest vegetation.

Impacts of forest fire on forest Eco-system

Soil and Nutrients:	Vegetation:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changed the rate of formation of soil organic matter. Effects the availability of minerals Affects population of Micro-organism Increases soil erosion with loss of vegetation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curtailement of Natural Succession and forest regeneration Affects plant Bio-mass, structure and shape Affects plant nutrient uptake
Water circulation:	Species:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changed rate of evaporation and transpiration Changed rate of permeability and sub-surface flow Changed the rate of sediment and water Changed the stream and river structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Altering the pattern of resources like-food and water Altering pattern of distribution of species Possibility of early mortality

Way Forward

- Preventive steps to reduce the risk of wildfires must be cemented in a holistic way. Additionally, mapping of Eco-fragile zone’s resources such as water sources, roads and staging areas can help to contain fires in a limited landscape, So that damage can be minimized and managed efficiently.
- A broad and comprehensive policy is much needed to deal with the instances of forest fires. Convergence of academia, researchers, fire fighters and people’s participation is pre-requisite to manage the events of wildfires.

The State of the Global Climate 2020: WMO

News Excerpt

Recently, World meteorological organisation (WMO) has released the ‘State of the Global Climate report 2020’.

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Key Highlights of the report

- In order to substantiate the complexity of climate, the WMO uses seven Climate Indicators to describe the changing climate.
- Despite temporary holdups from COVID-19, Year 2020 has marked a record increase in GHGs emission. Concentration of Carbon dioxide increased to 148 per cent of pre-industrial levels, similarly methane amounts to 260 per cent increase, and Nitrous oxide recorded with 123 per cent increase from pre-industrial levels.
- Despite the prevailing La Nina conditions in 2020. The year was one of the three warmest years on record. In 2020, Global Mean Surface Temperature (GMST) was 1.2°C warmer than the pre-industrial baseline. The last decade (2011-2020) is cited as the warmest on record till now.
- Rising global temperatures have attributed to more recurrent and severe extreme weather events across the world.
- Around 90% of the excess energy that accumulates in the earth system due to increasing concentrations of GHGs goes into the ocean.
- Over 80% of the ocean area experienced at least one marine heat wave in 2020 to date. More of the ocean experienced marine heat waves.
- Globally, sea level has been rising an average of ~3.29 mm per year, peaking in 2020.
- Approximately 152 Gt of ice were lost from the ice sheet between September 2019 and August 2020.
- In the Arctic, the annual minimum sea-ice extent was the second lowest on record and record low sea-ice extents were observed in the months of July and October 2020.
- Greenhouses gases are not only the cause of the Earth's warming; it also contributes to the acidification of the ocean.
- The ocean absorbs around 23% of the annual emissions of anthropogenic CO2 to the atmosphere, helping to alleviate the impacts of climate change but at a high ecological cost to the ocean.

Ocean Heat Content (OHC) is a measure of this heat accumulation in the Earth system. It is measured at various ocean depths, up to 2000m deep.

PEPPER IT WITH
UNFCCC, IPCC,
UNDP, Rio+20, SDGs

Report and India

- This report has placed India at ‘greater risk’ of climate change implications. In India, cyclone Amphan, was the costliest tropical cyclone on record for the North Indian Ocean with reported economic losses in India of approximately US\$14 billion.
- Due to climate change India had one of its two wettest monsoon seasons since 1994, with nationally-averaged rainfall for June to September 9 per cent above the long-term average. Heavy rain, flooding and landslides also affect people at large.

Conclusion

Climate change is one of the most formidable developmental challenges faced by humanity. Its consequences are global and inter-generational. Its economic impacts, particularly on poor, make it a major governance issue as well. To cope with the ‘web of challenges’, comprehensive mitigation and adaptation strategies are required. Adaptation policies aimed at enhancing resilience, policies such as investment in disaster-proof infrastructure and early warning systems, risk sharing through financial markets, and development of social safety nets—can limit the impact of weather-related shocks and help the economy and people.

Indian Star Tortoise

News Excerpt

Recently, Indian star tortoises were smuggled in Odisha. Forest Department seized more than 400 live tortoises.

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Pre-Connect

- Star Tortoises, with their distinct star-like markings on the shell, are endemic to parts of dry lowlands of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In India, they are found in six states — Gujarat, Karnataka, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and parts of Odisha.
- As per IUCN Red List, the Indian Star Tortoise is a ‘vulnerable species’. It is protected under Appendix I of CITES.
- The species was placed under ‘Schedule IV’ of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 of India.

Conservation Challenges

- The biological attributes of star tortoise make them extremely vulnerable. They can easily hunted, have a low reproductive rate, potentially occur at low densities, and do not survive or breed readily in captivity. Its population is decline rapidly due to heavy poaching pressure, particularly for use in the international live trade for use as exotic pets.
- Scrub forest habitat is being converted to orchards and cash crop agriculture, a decrease in area and quality of habitat due to deforestation and land conversion, leading to reduction in ‘habitat area’ preferred by star tortoise. Although star tortoise is relatively adaptable species, able to tolerate anthropogenically-altered habitat, but sustained habitat loss is likely to further impact its numbers.

India’s efforts

- ✓ A genetic database will be maintained by Wildlife Institute of India (WII) for the conservation of star tortoise. A genetic database is, a repository of biological data — blood samples, tissue, faeces, anything that holds DNA. The genetic profile of each tortoise will be maintained.
- ✓ India is considering up-gradation of status under Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 to assure a greater degree of protection. In the wake of illegal instances of trade, Schedule IV protections are not enough, as of now.

Manufactured Sand

News Excerpt

Rajasthan state government brought the policy on manufactured sand (M-sand) to reduce dependency on naturally occurred river band sand.

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Pre-Connect

- Sand mining is the extraction of sand through an open pit but sometimes mined from inland dunes from oceans, riverbeds and beaches.
- Sand is in high demand in the construction sector. By 2020, 1.4 billion tonnes of sand will be required in India.
- The Supreme Court had banned illegal mining on riverbeds in 2017. States like Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh had adopted M sand policies.

About M Sand

- Manufactured sand (M-Sand) is artificial sand produced from crushing hard stones into small sand sized angular shaped particles, washed and finely graded to be used as construction aggregate.
- It does not contain organic and soluble compounds and it is a superior alternative for construction purpose.

M Sand in Rajasthan

- ❖ As per the department records, 243 units in Rajasthan are manufacturing M-sand. About 2,00,000 tonnes M-sand is produced in the state per day, while the demand is for 6,00,000 tonnes.
- ❖ Manufactures will be provided with incentives including stamp duty, VAT/GST, and subsidy on loans. Moreover, facilities and packages will be provided under Rajasthan Investment Promotion Scheme (RIPS).

- It does not have the presence of impurities such as clay, dust and silt coatings. This increase quality and durability of concrete.
- M-Sand has increased durability, higher strength, reduction in segregation, permeability, increased workability, decreased post-concrete defects; it proves to be economical as a construction material replacing river sand.

M- Sand and River Sand

M Sand	River Sand
The source of M sand is a quarry. It is manufactured by quarry stones, Crushing rocks, or larger aggregate pieces into sand size particles in a factory or quarry.	It is naturally available on river banks and extracted from the riverbanks or river beds.
M sand is produced by reducing larger pieces of aggregate into sand-sized aggregate particles.	Natural sand has an ideal shape for use as fine aggregate in concrete. The natural sand particles are well-rounded and are usually nearly spherical.
M sand tends to be more angular and flaky due to the crushing process. Highly angular particles tend to increase the paste content of concrete because additional lubrication is required for particles with sharp corners.	Spherical particles decrease the percentage of voids within the concrete mixture so no additional paste is required to fill these voids. Well-shaped natural sands are ideal for workability of mixtures. Natural sand does not require more water to enhance the workability of the mixture so the amount of bleed water in the concrete will not be increased.

Analytica

- ✓ M-Sand is the best suited alternative to river sand. M Sand uses natural coarse aggregates to form and it causes less damage to the environment as compared to river sand. Better quality control can be achieved since it is manufactured in a controlled environment.
- ✓ Success of Affordable housing scheming like-the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), is largely relied on the availability of sufficient quantity of sand. In the absence of natural sand-such projects may paralyse. The new policy will ensure availability of M-sand as a long-term alternative to natural sand and construction sector.
- ✓ M sand is likely to prove to be a “game changer” for the construction industry. The policy would help to create employment opportunities through new units and resolve the issue of huge quantities of waste generated in the mining areas.
- ✓ Since manufactured sand can be crushed from hard granite rocks, it can be readily available at the nearby place, reducing the cost of transportation from far-off river sand bed.
- ✓ M sand can't be cited as environmentally sound, input substances used in quarrying facilities could encourage the unscientific and illegal stone mining. Law and compliance at in-situ location would always be a challenge for government to monitor and restrict the illegal mining.

Impacts of River Sand Mining

- Widespread sand mining attributed to harm river's ecosystem and biodiversity. It reduces the groundwater level and rivers water gets dried up.
- Mining of sand manifold higher than natural replenishments leads to severe damages to river systems. The mining process not only intercepts movement of sediments along the river channels, but disturbs the sediment balance established over the time periods.
- Excessive sand mining can, force the river to change course, erode banks and lead to flooding.
- Widespread and unscientific sand mining imposes several deleterious impacts on river ecosystems like bed formation, alter the river bed properties, sediment milieu, water quality, force the river to change course, erode banks and lead to flooding. It also destroys the habitat of aquatic animals, micro-organisms and flora and fauna. These externalities badly impact the socio-economic conditions of the people in the long run.

- Illegal sand mining leads to the losses to the exchequer. For instance- According to government estimates, one metric ton of legally extracted sand or stone fetches the government Rs 27, but is illegally sold for Rs 6,500-7,000.

Way Forward

- ✚ Government should try to popularize M-sand, and equally should enact ‘nudge based policies’ to encourage the use of M sand in construction and include people’s participation in such environment focused initiative.
- ✚ Government should incentivize the crusher plants in initial stage, equally government should assure that these plants should have minimum externalities on environment, and must be regulated in stringent manner to avoid exploitation of other mineral resources for instance- Granite, Or else loose regulation will led to the large-scale stone mining (just like sand mining) for crushed stones, Illegal stone quarrying and the theft of natural resources will be uninterrupted and unabated.

PEPPER IT WITH
 Sand Mining Framework, MMDR act, District Mineral Foundation funds, Pradhan Mantri KhanijKshetra Kalyan Yojana

The Asian Bird Water Census

News Excerpt

The Asian Water bird Census-2020 is started under the aegis of expert from the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS).

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Pre-Connect

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) is a pan-India wildlife research organization. It has been promoting conservation of nature since 1883. It is aimed to conserve nature, primarily biological diversity through action based on research, education and public awareness.

About Asian Water bird Census

- The Asian Water bird Census (AWC) takes place every January. It is citizen-science event part of the global International Water bird Census (IWC) that supports the conservation and management of wetlands and water birds worldwide.
- AWC was initiated in 1987 in the Indian sub-continent and has grown rapidly to cover major region of Asia, from Afghanistan eastwards to Japan, Southeast Asia and Australasia. AWC is an integral part of the global water bird monitoring programme, the International Water bird Census (IWC) of Wetlands International.
- The census aims to collect information on an annual basis of the water bird populations in the wetlands. It evaluates and monitors the status of wetland and water birds.
- AWC is recognized as essential annual activity to record wetlands & water birds status for conservation by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC), as important part of the ministry’s National Action Plan for conservation of Migratory Birds and their habitats along the Central Asian Flyway.

Management Effectiveness Evaluation

News Excerpt

Recently, the Union environment minister released Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) report of National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries. MEE Framework for Indian Zoos and for Marine Protected Areas is also launched.

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Pre-Connect

- India has 70% of the global tiger population, 70% of Asiatic lions and more than 60% of leopards.
- India has a network of 903 Protected Areas in the country, cover 5% of the total geographic area of the country.

- The assessment process of India's National Park (NP) and Wildlife Sanctuaries (WLS) was adopted from International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) framework of Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE).

State	NP&WLS
Top five scored NP&WLS	
West Bengal	Jaldapara NP
West Bengal	Raiganj WLS
Himachal Pradesh	Sainj WLS
Himachal Pradesh	Great Himalayan NP
Himachal Pradesh	Tirthan WLS
Bottom five scored NP&WLS	
Uttar Pradesh	Turtle WLS
Haryana	Khaparwas WLS
Rajasthan	Ramsagar WLS
Assam	Pani-Dihing Bird WLS
Uttar Pradesh	Jai Prakash Narayan (Surhatal) Bird WLS

Key Points of MEE

- In order to consider the effectiveness of Protected Areas, evaluation of management efficiency is required.
- There are 30 "Headline Indicators" developed under six elements of MEE framework suitable in Indian context for evaluation. The ratings are assigned in four categories. The total score would be from 300.
- From this year onwards 10 best National Parks, 5 coastal and marine parks and top five Zoos in the country will be ranked and awarded every year.
- The results of present assessment are encouraging with overall mean MEE score of 62.01% which is higher than the global mean of 56%.
- MEE of Protected Areas has emerged as a key tool for being used by governments and international bodies to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the protected area management systems.
- The assessment criteria and indicators look beyond the traditional concepts, include issues of animal welfare, husbandry and sustainability of resources and finance.
- The MEE-ZOO exercise aimed to develop highest standards in zoos across India and following to core values of accountability, transparency, innovation, use of technology, collaboration and integrity to achieve the mandate of conservation of endangered species.

National Capital Accounting and valuation of Ecosystem Project (NCAVES)

- ❖ The NCAVES Project is funded by EU and it is jointly implemented by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD).
- ❖ India is one of the five countries taking part in this project - the other countries being Brazil, China, South Africa and Mexico.
- ❖ In India, the project is being implemented by the MoSPI in close collaboration with MoEF&CC.
- ❖ NCAVES is aimed to advance the knowledge agenda on environmental-economic accounting.
- ❖ It is aimed to improve the measurement of ecosystems and their services (both in physical and monetary terms) at the national level; Mainstream biodiversity and ecosystems at national level policy planning and implementation; Contribute to the development of internationally agreed methodology and its use in partner countries.

Conclusion

The contemporary MEE process has delivered valuable understandings regarding the management processes and practices in all National parks (NP) and & Wild life Sanctuaries (WLS). It has observed the strengths and weaknesses; efforts should be made to implement the immediate actionable points indicated for NP&WLS. It should be assured that each NP&WLS has a good science-based Management Plan formulated through a participatory process. The MoEFCC must ensure that adequate funds are provided and a system of compliance monitoring is put in place.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Parker Solar Probe

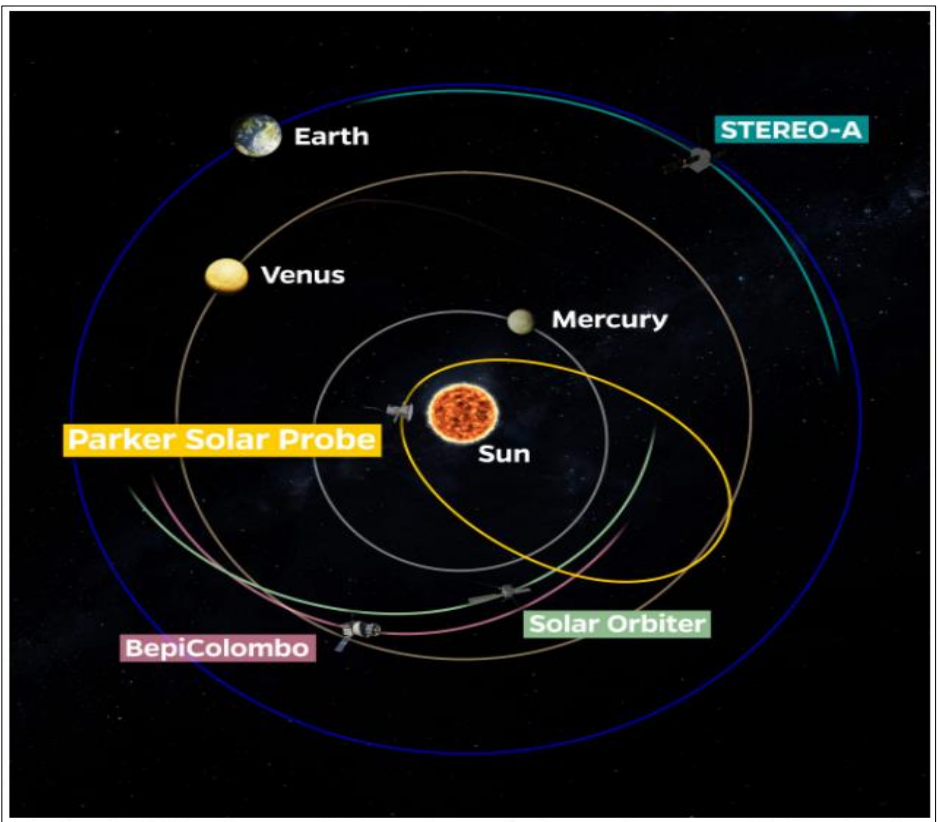
News Excerpt

Recently, Parker Solar Probe passed just 8.4 million miles (13.5 million kilometres) from the Sun’s surface while flying at 289,932 miles per hour (466,600 kilometres per hour) on Jan. 17, essentially matching its own records for solar proximity and speed. Around this same time, several spacecraft and dozens of earthbound telescopes were primed to contribute observations that will give scientists a comprehensive and coordinated picture of solar activity.

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Highlights

- The geometry of this particular orbit means that Parker Solar Probe’s closest approach to the Sun, or perihelion, was in direct view of Earth.
- Some 40 observatories around the globe, including major installations in Hawaii, the southwestern United States, Europe, and Asia, trained their telescopes on the Sun over the several weeks around the perihelion.



With Parker Solar Probe’s latest closest approach to the Sun in direct view of Earth, some 40 observatories around the globe and several spacecraft, including STEREO, BepiColombo, and Solar Orbiter, made simultaneous observations of activity stretching from the Sun to Earth. Distances and planet and spacecraft locations are not to scale. Credit: NASA/Johns Hopkins APL/Nate Rudolph

- About a dozen spacecraft, including NASA’s STEREO, Solar Dynamics Observatory, TIMED, and Magnetospheric Multiscale missions, ESA and NASA’s Solar Orbiter, and ESA’s BepiColombo made simultaneous observations of activity stretching from the Sun to Earth.

- Now just over two years into its seven-year mission, the Parker Solar Probe spacecraft will eventually travel within 4 million miles of the Sun’s surface.
- The mission’s primary goal is to provide new data on solar activity and the workings of the Sun’s outer atmosphere – the corona – which contributes significantly to our ability to forecast major space weather events that impact life on Earth.
- The spacecraft will make three more progressively close passes to the Sun in 2021 alone, as well as two gravity-assist flybys at Venus in February and October to adjust the trajectory of its orbit.

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Parker Solar Probe

- It aims to provide new data on solar activity and make critical contributions to our ability to forecast major space-weather events that impact life on Earth.
- The primary science goals for the mission are to trace the flow of energy and understand the heating of the solar corona and to explore what accelerates the solar wind.

- Parker Solar Probe provides a statistical survey of the outer corona.
- Parker Solar Probe has three detailed science objectives:
 - Trace the flow of energy that heats and accelerates the solar corona and solar wind.
 - Determine the structure and dynamics of the plasma and magnetic fields at the sources of the solar wind.
 - Explore mechanisms that accelerate and transport energetic particles.
- Parker Solar Probe aims to use seven Venus flybys over nearly seven years to gradually shrink its orbit around the Sun, coming as close as 3.83 million miles (and 6.16 million kilometres) to the Sun, well within the orbit of Mercury and about seven times closer than any spacecraft has come before.
- Parker Solar Probe is a true mission of exploration; for example, the spacecraft will go close enough to the Sun to watch the solar wind speed up from subsonic to supersonic, and it will fly through the birthplace of the highest-energy solar particles.

PEPPER IT WITH
Aditya-L1 Mission, Magnetospheric Multiscale Mission

5G Technology and India

News Excerpt

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has recently sought inputs from telcos and other industry experts on the sale and use of radio frequency spectrum over the next 10 years, including the 5G bands.

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What is 5G Technology?

- 5G is the fifth-generation cellular network technology. It is designed to improve network connections by addressing the legacy issues of speed, latency and utility, which the earlier generations and the current generation of mobile networks could not address.
- 5G is promised to deliver data speed at a rate 100 times faster than 4G networks. Importantly, it is designed to transmit data almost instantly with a network latency of less than 10ms.
- It will also have an enhanced throughput to handle more simultaneous connections at a time than current-generation networks.
- 5G is the latest upgrade in the long-term evolution (LTE) mobile broadband networks. 5G mainly works in 3 bands, namely low, mid and high frequency spectrum — all of which have their own uses as well as limitations.
- While the low band spectrum has shown great promise in terms of coverage and speed of internet and data exchange, the maximum speed is limited to 100 Mbps (Megabits per second). This means that while telcos can use and install it for commercial cell-phone users who may not have specific demands for very high-speed internet, the low band spectrum may not be optimal for specialised needs of the industry.
- The mid-band spectrum, on the other hand, offers higher speeds compared to the low band, but has limitations in terms of coverage area and penetration of signals. Telcos and companies, which have taken the lead on 5G, have indicated that this band may be used by industries and specialised factory units for building captive networks that can be moulded into the needs of that particular industry.
- The high-band spectrum offers the highest speed of all the three bands, but has extremely limited coverage and signal penetration strength. Internet speeds in the high-band spectrum of 5G has been tested to be as high as 20 Gbps (giga bits per second), while, in most cases, the maximum internet data speed in 4G has been recorded at 1 Gbps.

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5G Technology- Global Scenario

- More than governments, global telecom companies have started building 5G networks and rolling it out to their customers on a trial basis.
- In countries like the US, companies such as AT&T, T-mobile, and Verizon have taken the lead when it comes to rolling out commercial 5G for their users.

- In other countries such as China, some of the telcos such as China Unicom had started 5G trials as early as 2018, and have since rolled out the commercial services for users.
- South Korean company Samsung, which had started researching on 5G technology way back in 2011, has, on the other hand, taken the lead when it comes to building the hardware for 5G networks for several companies.

5G Technology- A case of India

Present Scenario

- ✓ A potent combination of favourable demographics, Massive 4G Adoption as well as exponential surge in data usage holds immense promise of rapid growth in the telecom consumption, especially as India is on the cusp of crossing the USD 2,000 per capita GDP mark.
- ✓ With a population of >1.3 tn, India's domestic market itself offers immense growth opportunities.
- ✓ Currently, India is home to mere 322 mn wireless broadband subscribers, which is estimated to jump to a whopping 1 bn by 2025.
- ✓ 4G technology is rapidly gaining market share as operators are gradually reducing their 2G and 3G footprint.
- ✓ Apart from increasing internet speed, mass affordability of high-speed data will be catalyst driving data consumption.
- ✓ Data prices are significantly higher in India compared to global peers. However, the fierce competition unleashed by RJIO's entry has brought down data rates to less than one-third in a short span of four-five months. This is envisaged to further spur data consumption.
- ✓ China's commercial 5G launch plan in 2019 and subsequent acceleration in 5G capex, which is expected to peak out in 2023, will prune the cost of 5G devices and other network equipments in India.

What Lies Ahead?

- On par with the global players, India had, in 2018, planned to start 5G services as soon as possible, with an aim to capitalise on the better network speeds and strength that the technology promised.
- All the three private telecom players, Reliance Jio Info COMM, Bharti Airtel and Vi, have been urging the DoT to lay out a clear road map of spectrum allocation and 5G frequency bands, so that they would be able to plan the roll out of their services accordingly.
- One big hurdle, however, is the lack of flow of cash and adequate capital with at least two of the three players, namely Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea.
- On the other hand, Reliance Jio plans to launch an indigenously built 5G network for the country as early as the second half of this year.
- The company is said to have a complete end-to-end 5G solution prepared by the company itself that is ready for deployment once the networks are in place. This solution can also be deployed by other telecom operators as a complete managed service.

What are the bottlenecks in 5G technology adoption?

- ✚ Digitisation will be impossible if what is in the hands of people is analog. 5G technology could be the backbone of India's growth—but it will require reforms to simplify the upgradation of critical infrastructure.
- ✚ The fact that unlike in the US and China, where most towers are backhauled using fibre, more than 75% of the towers in India still employ legacy microwave transmission systems.
- ✚ Its rollout will be slower in rural areas due to massive fibre requirements, rendering it uneconomical for relatively low data demand in those areas.
- ✚ Since 5G works in high-frequency bands (also called millimeter waves), its range is restricted. That necessitates the deployment of dense networks—i.e., more than twice the number of towers needed today.
- ✚ And, most importantly, there are stressed finances of Telecom sector to contend with.

Conclusion

There are good reasons why India should be at the forefront of the digital revolution. Future growth is going to come from applications and services based on technologies such as the Internet of Things, automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Telepresence and remote

servicing will be a ubiquitous substitute for people taking a flight, and driverless cars may lead to a disruption in the automobile industry. India wants to create 100 smart cities that will have intelligent power and urban utility systems.

PEPPER IT WITH
National Broadband Mission,
Digital India, Bharatnet program

All these applications will provide a good opportunity for the services industry as more areas demand cloud computing, Big Data, AI and machine-learning applications. Home-grown giants such as Ola, Flipkart and Zomato have shown that they can build competitive applications and compete with global giants on an equal footing. A timely roll-out of 5G will allow Indian entrepreneurs a chance to experiment alongside their global competitors.

Science, Technology and Innovation Policy

News Excerpt

Recently, the Department of Science and Technology released the draft of 5th National Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy for public consultation.

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Highlights

- The policy drafted through a 4-track process of consultations during last 6 months aims to bring about profound changes through short, medium and long-term mission mode projects by building a nurtured ecosystem that promotes research and innovation on the part of both individuals and organizations.
- It aims to foster, develop, and nurture a robust system for evidence and stakeholder-driven science, technology and innovation (STI) planning, information, evaluation, and policy research in India.
- The objective of the policy is to identify and address strengths and weaknesses of the Indian STI ecosystem to catalyse socio-economic development of the country and also make the Indian STI ecosystem globally competitive.

Analytica

- As India and the world reorient in the present context of the COVID-19 crisis, a new Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy (STIP) was initiated at this crucial juncture during mid-2020.
- For India to march ahead on a sustainable development pathway to include economic development, social inclusion and environmental sustainability for achieving an "Atmanirbhar Bharat", a greater emphasis may be needed on promoting traditional knowledge systems, developing indigenous technologies and encouraging grassroots innovations.
- The emergence of disruptive and impactful technologies poses new challenges and simultaneously greater opportunities.
- The COVID-19 pandemic provided a compelling opportunity for R&D institutions, academia and industry to work in unison for sharing of purpose, synergy, collaboration and cooperation.
- The STIP will be guided by its broad vision of achieving technological self-reliance and position India among the top three scientific superpowers in the decade to come, to attract, nurture, strengthen and retain critical human capital through a 'people centric' STI ecosystem, to double the number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) researchers, Gross Domestic Expenditure on R&D (GERD) and private sector contribution to the GERD every 5 years and to build individual and institutional excellence in STI with the aspiration to achieve the highest level of global recognitions and awards in the coming decade.
- The new policy, STIP, revolves around the core principles of being decentralized, evidence-informed, bottom-up, experts-driven, and inclusive.
- Also, it aims to bring in the concept of 'dynamic policy' with a robust policy governance mechanism incorporating features such as implementation strategy, periodic review, policy evaluation, feedback, and adaptation, and most importantly, a timely exit strategy for various policy instruments.
- The process so far involved nearly 300 rounds of consultations with more than 40,000 stakeholders well distributed in terms of region, age, gender, education, economic status, etc.

- The STIP Secretariat was coordinated, supported, and guided by the Office of PSA, NITI Aayog, and DST.
- The formulation process, by design, envisioned as a very inclusive and participative model with intense interconnectedness among different tracks of activities.

ASTROSAT

News Excerpt

Astronomers from the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) have recently spotted rare hot Ultraviolet (UV)-bright stars in MilkyWay’s massive intriguing globular cluster called NGC 2808 that is said to have at least five generations of stars.

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The team captured these stars using **Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (UVIT)** onboard AstroSat, India’s first multi-wavelength space satellite. In September 2020, AstroSat completed five years in orbit.

Analytica

- These stars whose inner core is almost exposed, making them very hot, exist in the late stages of evolution of a Sun-like star.
- It is not clear how these stars end their lives as not many of them are detected in these fast-evolving phases, making this study crucial.
- With spectacular UV images of the cluster, the team distinguished the hot UV-bright stars from the relatively cooler red giant and main-sequence stars which appear dim in images.
- The scientists combined the UVIT data with observations made using other space missions such as the Hubble Space Telescope and the Gaia telescope along with ground-based optical observations.
- About 34 UV-bright stars were found to be members of the globular cluster. From the data, the team derived the properties of these stars such as their surface temperatures, luminosities and radii.
- One of the UV-bright stars was found to be about 3,000 times brighter than the Sun with a surface temperature of about 1,00,000-K (Kelvin).
- The properties of these stars were then used to place them on what astronomers call the Hertzsprung -Russel (HR) diagram along with theoretical models to throw light on the characteristics of their parent stars and to predict their future evolution.
- Most of the stars were found to have evolved from a solar stage called the horizontal branch stars with hardly any outer envelope.
- Thus, the team said, they were bound to skip the last major phase of life called the asymptotic giant phase and directly become dead remnants or white dwarfs.
- Such UV-bright stars are speculated to be the reason for the UV radiation coming from old stellar systems such as elliptical galaxies which are devoid of young blue stars. Hence, it is all the more important to observe more such stars to understand their properties.

AstroSat Mission

- AstroSat is the first dedicated Indian astronomy mission aimed at studying celestial sources in X-ray, optical and UV spectral bands simultaneously. The payloads cover the energy bands of Ultraviolet (Near and Far), limited optical and X-ray regime (0.3 keV to 100keV).
- One of the unique features of AstroSat mission is that it enables the simultaneous multi-wavelength observations of various astronomical objects with a single satellite.
- AstroSat with a lift-off mass of 1515 kg was launched on September 28, 2015 into a 650 km orbit inclined at an angle of 6 deg to the equator by PSLV-C30 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota. The minimum useful life of the AstroSat mission is expected to be 5 years.
- The scientific objectives of AstroSat mission are:
 - To understand high energy processes in binary star systems containing neutron stars and black holes;
 - Estimate magnetic fields of neutron stars;

- Study star birth regions and high energy processes in star systems lying beyond our galaxy;
- Detect new briefly bright X-ray sources in the sky;
- Perform a limited deep field survey of the Universe in the Ultraviolet region. At present, all the payloads are operational and are observing the cosmic sources. The spacecraft and payloads are healthy. The first six months was dedicated for performance verification and calibration of payloads. After that, the science observations by the payloads began.

SOPs for Immunisation Emergencies

News Excerpt

The Union Ministry of Health and Welfare (Immunisation Division) has recently issued a Standard Operating Procedure for the Ministry of Home Affairs in case of Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI). The SOP is meant to help the investigator ensure appropriate handling of the vaccine, victim assistance as well as timely and effective law enforcement.

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Provisions in the Standard Operating Procedures

Evidence collection

- In case of an AEFI, the officer must ensure proper handling of the vaccine and diluent as evidence, and make sure the samples are preserved maintaining proper cold chain.
- The police officer must also ensure that the AEFI victims, and any witnesses, are provided assistance and appropriate protection, care and attention.
- The police officer/inspector and the medical officer/district immunisation officer, investigating the case shall ensure that all serious AEFI cases are provided immediate assistance.
- If post-mortem examination of the case is required, the Department of Health shall provide the necessary assistance.

Official stamp

- Documentation and completed requisition form for transportation of the AEFI sample to a laboratory must have same official stamp. The seal will ensure the samples and details sent to the lab are not tampered with during transportation.
- The SOP also provides for investigation/interrogation of the vaccinator, if needed. This will help in monitoring immunisation safety, correcting unsafe immunisation practices, reducing negative impact of the event on health and contributing to the quality of immunisation.
- While probing serious AEFI, which has resulted in death, the police must always keep the perspective that the event might be coincidental and/or reaction to the vaccine and it may not be criminal negligence of the vaccinator and/or other workers, for which causality assessment report by an expert is needed.

Spectrum Auctions

News Excerpt

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) recently declared that auctions for 4G spectrum in the 700, 800, 900, 1,800, 2,100, 2,300, and 2,500 MHz bands will begin from March 1.

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Pre-Connect

- The last spectrum auctions were held in 2016, when the government offered 2,354.55 MHz at a reserve price of Rs 5.60 lakh crore.
- Although the government managed to sell only 965 MHz – or about 40 per cent of the spectrum that was put up for sale – and the total value of bids received was just Rs 65,789 crore, the need for a new spectrum auction has arisen because the validity of the airwaves bought by companies is set to expire in 2021.

- In the spectrum auctions scheduled to begin on March 1, the government plans to sell spectrum for 4G in the 700, 800, 900, 1,800, 2,100, 2,300, and 2,500 MHz frequency bands.
- The reserve price of all these bands together has been fixed at Rs 3.92 lakh crore. Depending on the demand from various companies, the price of the airwaves may go higher, but cannot go below the reserve price.
- All three private telecom players, Reliance Jio Infocomm, Bharti Airtel, and Vi are eligible contenders to buy additional spectrum to support the number of users on their network.
- Apart from these three, new companies, including foreign companies, are also eligible to bid for the airwaves.
- Foreign companies, however, will have to either set up a branch in India and register as an Indian company, or tie up with an Indian company to be able to retain the airwaves after winning them.

What are spectrum auctions?

- Devices such as cellphones and wireline telephones require signals to connect from one end to another.
- These signals are carried on airwaves, which must be sent at designated frequencies to avoid any kind of interference.
- The Union government owns all the publicly available assets within the geographical boundaries of the country, which also include airwaves.
- With the expansion in the number of cellphone, wireline telephone and internet users, the need to provide more space for the signals arises from time to time.
- To sell these assets to companies willing to set up the required infrastructure to transport these waves from one end to another, the central government through the DoT auctions these airwaves from time to time.
- These airwaves are called spectrum, which is subdivided into bands which have varying frequencies. All these airwaves are sold for a certain period of time, after which their validity lapses, which is generally set at 20 years.

Widening the Spectrum

Spectrum bands to go for sale

4G bands: 700 MHz, 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz and 2500 MHz

Who needs it most?
Jio. A bulk of spectrum it owns & shares with RCom in 800 MHz band expires starting July

How much could the auction fetch?
Analysts say given the sector's health, ₹40,000-50,000 cr

How much were the prices slashed compared to 2016 auction?
700MHz: Cut by 43%, may go unsold again

Price for unsold blocks of 800/900MHz lowered by 20-30%

What will not be up for auction?
5G in 3300-3600 MHz bands

Bird Flu Outbreak

News Excerpt

Bird flu has been reported among wild geese in **Himachal Pradesh**, crows in **Rajasthan** and **Madhya Pradesh** and ducks in **Kerala**. In Haryana, around one lakh poultry birds have died mysteriously in the last few days.

In Himachal Pradesh's Pong Dam Lake, around 1,800 migratory birds have been found dead. In Kerala, the flu has been detected in two districts, prompting authorities to order culling of ducks. A bird flu alert has been sounded in Rajasthan, where more than 250 crows were found dead in half a dozen districts.

Pre-Connect

- Bird flu outbreaks have been affecting poultry around the globe for decades, and culling of infected birds has been a common measure to contain the spread.

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- But it was in 1997 when humans are first known to have contracted bird flu following an outbreak in a live bird market of Hong Kong. It was the H5N1 strain of the virus, and 6 out of 18 infected humans died of the disease.
- It was contained, but re-emerged a few years later in various other parts of the globe and caused hundreds of human deaths, particularly in Southeast Asia.
- Movement of infected poultry and migratory birds, and an illegal bird trade are believed to be the causes of the spread. Some mammals such as cats and lions were also infected.
- Subsequently, several other strains of the virus such as H5N2 and H9N2 spread from animals to humans, thus becoming a global public health concern.

Analytica

Avian Influenza or Bird Flu

- It is a highly contagious viral disease caused by Influenza Type A viruses which generally affects poultry birds such as chickens and turkeys.
- There are many strains of the virus – some of them are mild and may merely cause a low egg production or other mild symptoms among chickens, while others are severe and lethal.
- Wild aquatic birds such as ducks and geese are the natural reservoir of Influenza A viruses and the central players in the ecology of these viruses.
- Many birds carry the flu without developing sickness, and shed it in their droppings. According to experts, since birds excrete even while flying, they provide a nice aerosol of influenza virus, shedding it all over the world.
- From water birds, many of whom migrate and travel long distances, the viruses are thus further spread to poultry and terrestrial birds. Sometimes, the virus jumps over to mammals such as pigs, horses, cats and dogs.

Spread of Virus to humans

- Generally, people coming in close contact with infected alive or dead birds have contracted the H5N1 bird flu, and it does not usually spread from person to person, as per the WHO.
- There is also no evidence, the WHO says, that the disease can be spread to people through properly prepared and cooked poultry food. The virus is sensitive to heat, and dies in cooking temperatures.
- H5N1 is severe and deadly – around 6 out of 10 confirmed cases in humans have led to deaths (though the actual mortality rate may be lower due to under-reporting of asymptomatic cases).
- If the virus mutates and becomes easily transmissible from person to person, say by altering its shape to grab human cells much more effectively, it can potentially cause a pandemic.
- Also, flu viruses are more prone to mutation because they have a segmented genome. All known strains of flu – including the seasonal flu and the pandemic flu – have jumped from birds to humans in this way.

PEPPER IT WITH

Foot and Mouth Disease, Brucellosis,
National Animal Disease Control
Program

Bird flu in India

In India, no case of bird flu in humans has been detected so far, according to the Union health ministry. The department of animal husbandry has reported 25 episodes of H5N1 bird flu in poultry in 15 states from 2006 (when the first outbreak occurred in Maharashtra and Gujarat) till 2015. It has also been detected in crows.

Bird flu: Symptoms and treatment

- ❖ Unlike in birds, where it generally infects the gut, the avian influenza attacks the respiratory tract of humans and may cause severe respiratory illnesses such as pneumonia or Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS). Its early symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, and sometimes abdominal pain and diarrhoea.
- ❖ Antiviral drugs, especially oseltamivir, improve the prospects of survival in humans, according to the Union health ministry. The ministry advises people working with poultry to use PPEs and follow hand hygiene. In the US, the FDA approved a vaccine for the H5N1 virus in 2007.
- ❖ Among poultry birds, vaccination strategies advised by the World Organisation for Animal Health can be used to prevent the flu, and the Organisation recommends eradicating the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) at its source to decrease the disease in avian species and further human infections.

Limit for Trans-fat level in India by FSSAI

News Excerpt

India’s food regulator, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is planning to reduce the level of trans fats in food items from the permissible limit of 5 per cent to 3 per cent by 2021 and to 2 per cent by 2022. The regulation is also being extended to food products having fats or oils. This is an important milestone since the World Health Organisation (WHO) has called for global elimination of trans fat by 2023.

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Trans fats and their side effects

- Industrially produced trans fats are created artificially during the hydrogenation processes of vegetable oils, and result in partially hydrogenated vegetable oils (PHVOs).
- PHVOs are a major source of trans fats in India and are found in vanaspati, margarines, and shortenings. Vanaspati is used in preparation of Indian traditional sweets (mithais) and deep-fried foods.
- Margarine and bakery shortenings are the most common fats used in baked goods.
- Some trans fats are also formed during manufacturing process when high temperature refinement process is used to create vegetable oils.
- Experts in the edible oil industry say that technologies are available to make trans fats-free products for baking and frying.
- Consumption of trans fats is associated with increased risk of heart diseases. It is estimated that the 2017 global market volume of partially hydrogenated oils – the main source of industrially produced trans-fatty acids in food – was approximately 13.6 million tonnes.
- Eliminating industrially produced trans-fatty acids can save 17 million lives over the next 25 years. Regulation and enforcement are the only ways to remove this toxic ingredient from the supply.
- There is a sizeable unorganised or informal food producer and supply network in India. Research and interaction with people who are a part of this network indicate that there is a need to create more awareness about harmful effects of trans fat.
- According to 2017 estimates, India has the highest burden of heart disease deaths due to high trans-fat intake out of all countries in the world. More than 1.5 million deaths each year due to coronary heart disease, and nearly 5 per cent of these deaths each year (71,000) can be attributed to trans fats intake.
- According to WHO’s REPLACE second annual report released in September 2020, around 40 countries have already enacted the best practice policies to eliminate trans fats.
- These best practice policies limit industrially produced levels of trans fats to 2 per cent or less of total fats in all foods. The new regulations announced by FSSAI will bring levels of trans fats in all fats and oils down to the level recommended by the WHO.

- In addition, in 2019, FSSAI drafted another regulation that limited trans fats in all foods, which is still to be enacted. Once adopted, this additional regulation will place India in the ranks of countries with best practice trans-fat policies in place, according to WHO standards.
- The trans fats limit is in line with FSSAI's regulation to support a healthy India, and also supports the Eat Right India movement-- a flagship programme focusing on safe, healthy and sustainable food environment. The Eat Right India movement has been recognized as one of the world's most aspiring program by Rockefeller Foundation.

PEPPER IT WITH
Eat Right India Movement, FSSAI

Flue Gas Desulfurization

News Excerpt

India's power ministry has proposed pushing back the deadlines for adoption of new emission norms by coal-fired power plants, saying an unworkable time schedule would burden utilities and lead to an increase in power tariffs.

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Pre-Connect

- India initially had set a 2017 deadline for thermal power plants to comply with emissions standards for installing Flue Gas Desulfurization (FGD) units that cut emissions of toxic sulphur dioxide. That was later changed to varying deadlines for different regions, ending in 2022.
- Under the latest proposal, no new dates have been set. However, a final decision will have to be approved by the Supreme Court, which is hearing the issue.

Highlights

- The recent decision can avoid immediate increase in power price in various relatively clean areas of the country and avoid unnecessary burden on power utilities/consumers.
- The power ministry proposed a "graded action plan," whereby areas where plants are located would be graded according to the severity of pollution, with Region 1 referring to critically polluted areas, and Region 5 being the least polluted.
- Indian cities have some of the world's most polluted air, much of which is blamed on coal-fired plants in close proximity to urban centres. Vehicular pollution, dust, industries and crop burning add to the bad air quality.

Analytica

What is Flue Gas Desulfurization?

The Flue-Gas Desulfurization (FGD) process utilizes a set of technologies to remove sulfur dioxide (SO₂) from the flue gas emissions of coal-fired power plants. FGD systems were developed as a response to the exhaust – flue gases – from fossil fuel-burning plants, principally coal-burning, that posed both an environmental and human health hazard. SO₂ can be removed from flue gases by a variety of methods. For a typical coal-fired power plant, FGD systems will remove ~95% of the SO₂ in the flue gases. FGD predominantly employs two methods of filtering the emissions (dry or wet scrubbing) for coal-burning plants.

Dry FGD

In the process of dry scrubbing injection systems, lime is used as a reagent to react and remove gaseous pollutants. There are two common dry methods, the dry injection system and spray drying systems. Each process injects lime into flue gas to remove SO₂. A dry injection process injects dry hydrated lime directly into the flue gas duct, whereas the spray dry system injects atomized lime slurry into a separate vessel. Both methods yield a dry final product, collected in particulate control devices for further treatment.

PEPPER IT WITH
Graded Response Action Plan,
National Clean Air Program

Wet FGD

The process of wet scrubbing typically utilizes an alkaline-based slurry of lime to scrub gases. A shower of lime slurry is then sprayed into a flue gas scrubber, where the SO₂ is absorbed into the spray and becomes a wet calcium sulphite. Wet scrubbing provides high-efficiency sulfur dioxide removal capacity, in addition to reducing any scaling potential.

SECURITY

Desert Knight-21

News Excerpt

Indian Air Force and French Air and Space Force conducted a bilateral Air exercise, Ex Desert Knight-21 at Air Force Station Jodhpur.

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Pre-Connect

- As part of Indo-French defence cooperation, Indian Air Force and French Air and Space Force have held sixth editions of Air Exercises named '**Garuda**', the latest being in 2019 at Air Force Base Mont-de-Marsan, France.
- The French Air and Space Force deployment while ferrying to Australia for Ex Pitchblack in 2018 was hosted by IAF at Air Force Stations Agra and Gwalior for exercise with fighters and MRTT aircraft.

The Rafale jets, manufactured by French aerospace major Dassault Aviation, are India's first major acquisition of fighter planes in 23 years after the Sukhoi jets were imported from Russia.

Highlights

- The French side will participate with Rafale, Airbus A-330 Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT), A-400M Tactical Transport aircraft and approximately 175 personnel.
- The Indian Air Force aircraft participating in the exercise will include Mirage 2000, Su-30 MKI, Rafale, IL-78 Flight Refueling Aircraft, AWACS and AEW&C aircraft.
- The exercise marks an important milestone in the series of engagements between the two Air forces.
- Presently, the French detachment for Ex Desert Knight-21 is deployed in Asia as part of their 'Skyros Deployment' and will ferry in forces to Air Force Station Jodhpur.

PEPPER IT WITH
Garuda exercise, Ex Shakti

Analytica

- The exercise is unique as it includes fielding of Rafale aircraft by both sides and is indicative of the growing interaction between the two premier Air Forces.
- It will put into practice operational experience gained across terrains and spectrums and endeavour to exchange ideas and best practices to enhance interoperability.

Rakshita

News Excerpt

DRDO hands over Motor Bike Ambulance 'Rakshita' to CRPF.

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Highlights

- Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), Delhi based DRDO laboratory, handed over Rakshita, to Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).
- It is a bike-based casualty transport emergency vehicle.
- Rakshita is fitted with a customized reclining Casualty Evacuation Seat (CES), which can be fitted in and taken out as per requirement.
- Other major features are the head immobilizer, safety harness jacket, hand and foot straps for safety, adjustable footrest, physiological parameter measuring equipment with wireless monitoring capability and auto warning system for driver.
- The vital parameters of the patient can be monitored on the dashboard mounted LCD.
- It is also equipped with air splint, medical and oxygen kit for on spot medical care.

Analytica

- The bike ambulance will help in overcoming the problems faced by Indian security forces and emergency healthcare providers.
- It will provide life-saving aid for evacuation of injured patients from low intensity conflict areas.

- ✓ This will be handy in the congested streets and remote locations, where access through ambulance is difficult and time consuming.
- ✓ The bike can respond to a medical emergency need of patients faster than a four-wheeler due to its functionality and integrated emergency medical support system.
- ✓ This bike ambulance is useful not only for the paramilitary and military forces but has potential civil applications too.

Exercise Kavach

News Excerpt

The Indian Army has carried out a large-scale conjoint military training exercise named 'Kavach' in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.

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Highlights

- It formed a part of the AMPHEX-21 tri-service joint amphibious exercise in the Andaman and Nicobar group of islands.
- The drill was conducted under the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC), the only Joint Forces Command of the country, with the participation of the Eastern Naval Command and Army Southern Command involving the Indian army, navy, air force as well as the coast guard.
- The joint force executed multi-domain, high intensity offensive and defensive manoeuvres in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal. It would carry out amphibious landing operations, air landed operation, helicopters-borne insertion of Special Forces from sea culminating in tactical follow-on operations on land.

Analytica

- ✓ The tri-services exercise fine-tuned joint war fighting capabilities and Standard Operating Procedures towards enhancing operational synergy.
- ✓ Concurrently Joint Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) exercise involving various technical, electronic and human intelligence from three services will be conducted.
- ✓ The ISR exercise will validate the capabilities of intelligence gathering from space, air, land and sea-based assets/ sensors, its analysis and sharing to achieve battle field transparency for quick decision making at different stages of operations.

KSG
An Institute For IAS Exam...

Prelims 2021

BATCH 2

PT DESTINAIRE

14th Feb 2021

UPSC 2021

9667 779 058 | 9811 598 995

Prelims 2021

BATCH 2

PT DESTINAIRE

14th Feb 2021

UPSC 2021

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Prelims 2021

PT DESTINAIRE

BATCH 2

14th Feb 2021

UPSC 2021

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ART & CULTURE

Subhash Chandra Bose

News Excerpt

The Union Culture Ministry has announced that January 23, birth anniversary of Subhas Chandra Bose, would be celebrated as “Parakram Divas”, day of courage, every year.

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Pre-Connect

Recently the Government of India has also instituted Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskaar to recognise the excellent work done by the individuals and institutions in the field of disaster management.

Highlights

- Subhas Chandra Bose was born on 23 January, 1897, in Cuttack, Orissa Division, Bengal Province.
- Subhash Chandra Bose (Netaji) is one of the most revered freedom fighters of India.
- Since his young days, he was highly influenced by Vivekananda's teachings and considered him as his spiritual Guru.
- Bose studied at Presidency College, Calcutta where he was later expelled for attacking a professor making racist remarks towards Indians.
- Subhas Chandra Bose was Selected for the Indian Civil Services (ICS) but refused to take up service.
- Bose authored the book 'The Indian Struggle' which covers the Indian independence movement from 1920 to 1942.
- His death is one of the greatest mysteries in the history, Bose is said to have died from third-degree burns in a plane crash in Taiwan on August 18, 1945.

Contribution in National Movement

- ✓ Bose joined the Indian National Congress in 1921. He started a newspaper called ‘Swaraj’.
- ✓ In 1923, Bose was elected the President of the All India Youth Congress and also the Secretary of Bengal State Congress. He also served as the Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, with Das as mayor of Calcutta.
- ✓ Bose was sent to prison in Mandalay in 1925 and was released in 1927 and became the INC’s general secretary. He worked with Jawaharlal Nehru.
- ✓ Bose’s ideologies were highly contradictory to that of Mahatma Gandhi, who was highly popular among masses. While Bose stood for self-governance, even if it meant the use of force against the British, Gandhi emphasized on non-violent means.
- ✓ On June 22, 1939, Bose organized the All India Forward Bloc, a faction within the Indian National Congress, aiming at consolidating the political left, but was arrested again, and released following a seven-day hunger strike.
- ✓ He also founded the Indian Legion out of about 4500 Indian soldiers who were in the British army and had been taken prisoners by the Germans from North Africa.
- ✓ In 1943, Bose travelled to Tokyo, Japan and took leadership of the Indian Independence Movement in East Asia and proceeded, with Japanese aid and influence, to form a trained army in Japanese-occupied Southeast Asia known as the Indian National Army.
- ✓ Bose’s arrival in Japan revived the Indian National Army (Azad Hind Fauj) which had been formed earlier.

The INA was first formed under Mohan Singh and Japanese Major Iwaichi Fujiwara, and comprised Indian prisoners of war of the British-Indian Army captured by Japan in the Malayan (present-day Malaysia) campaign and at Singapore. The army was declared to be the army of Bose’s ArziHukumat-e-Azad Hind (the Provisional Government of Free India). Under Bose’s leadership, the INA drew ex-prisoners and thousands of civilian volunteers from the Indian expatriate population in Malaya and Burma.

- ✓ Azad Hind or the Provisional Government of Free India was established as a government-in-exile with Bose as the head. Its headquarters was in Singapore. The INA was its military.
- ✓ Bose is credited with the very famous slogan, “Give me blood, and I shall give you freedom!” as well as “Jai Hind.” He is also credited to be the first man to call Mahatma Gandhi “Father of the Nation”, in his address from Singapore.
- ✓ The INA supported the Japanese army in its invasion of northeast India and also took control of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. However, they were forced to retreat by the British forces following the Battles of Kohima and Imphal in 1944.

Veer Savarkar

News Excerpt

A portrait of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar at the Vidhan Parishad Picture Gallery was inaugurated by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister recently.

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Pre-Connect

In 2002, Port Blair airport in Andaman and Nicobar island was renamed after Veer Savarkar International Airport.

Highlights

- Born on May 28, 1883, in a Marathi Brahmin family, Veer Savarkar is known for his vision of Hindu Rashtra (Hindu Nation) and Akhand Bharat (United India).
- Savarkar began his political activities as a high school student and continued to do so at Fergusson College in Pune. He was inspired by leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal. He was also influenced by the protest against the partition of Bengal and the Swadeshi movement.
- The Savarkar brothers were active in the Mitra Mela, a secret society formed with the aim of liberating, through the use of armed force, India from British rule.
- He and his brother founded a secret society called Abhinav Bharat Society.
- When in 1906, Savarkar left for London to get credentialed in law, he involved himself with organizations such as India House and the Free India Society.
- Savarkar was a friend and guide to Madan Lal Dhingra who assassinated Curzon Wylie at the Imperial Institute, a British army officer. After Dhingra was executed by the British, Savarkar encouraged further revolution.
- In his book 'The History of the War of Indian Independence', he analysed the circumstances of 1857 uprising. It was Veer Savarkar who named the 1857 rebellion as the first war of independence, was banned by British authorities.
- In 1911, Savarkar was sentenced to 50 years in the cellular jail of Andamans, also known as Kala Pani for revolting against the Morley-Minto reforms (Indian Councils Act 1909). After several mercy petitions for not participating in politics, he was released in 1924.
- He served as president of the Hindu Mahasabha from 1937 to 1943.

VD Savarkar: As a Social Reformer

- ✓ He was a champion of atheism and rationality and a passionate promoter of Hindutva.
- ✓ He worked on the abolishment of untouchability and caste-based discrimination in Ratnagiri.

Relevance in Present day

- Savarkar’s ideas of modernity, social and religious reforms, cultivation of scientific temper and embracing technological tools continue to be relevant for building a new India in the post COVID-19 era.
- The central government is proactively taking measures for the building of “Ek Bharat-Shrestha Bharat” — following the contemporary relevance of the ideas of such eminent personalities.
- During the 21st annual session of the Hindu Mahasabha held in Calcutta in 1939, Savarkar, in his presidential address, he highlighted the importance of Hindu-Muslim unity in building a common Hindustani constitutional state.

Risa (Hand woven cloth in Tripura)

News Excerpt

Recently, in an effort to boost Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s call of ‘Vocal for Local’, Tripura Chief Minister and his government have been promoting the traditional Risa, a handwoven cloth used by the state’s indigenous communities, as a signature identity of the state.

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Highlights

- The traditional Tripuri female attire comprises three parts — risa, rignai and rikutu.
- Risa is a handwoven cloth used as a female upper garment, and also as headgear, a stole, or a present to express respect.
- As an upper garment, it is wrapped around the torso twice.
- Rignai is primarily worn as the lower garment and literally translates into ‘to wear’. It can be understood as an indigenous variety of the sari of mainland India.
- Rituku is mainly used as a wrap, or like a ‘chunri’ or a ‘pallu’ of the Indian saree. It is also used to cover the head of newly married Tripuri women
- These garments were traditionally handwoven. Handloom remains an integral part of the Tripuri household, even with the advent of powerloom-manufactured garments.

Why is the Risa important?

- Woven in colourful designs and worn as an upper garment, the Risa also has a host of crucial, social and religious utilities.
- Adolescent Tripuri girls are first given a Risa to wear in an event called Risa Sormani, at age 12 to 14.
- The Risa is used in religious festivals such as Garia Puja by tribal communities, a turban by men during weddings and festivals, a cummerbund over the dhoti, a head scarf by young girls and boys, and a muffler during winters.
- The cloth is also used as a makeshift hanger to hold an infant on the mother’s backs. And it is presented as a mark of honour to distinguished recipients.
- Risa is common in almost all 19 indigenous tribal communities of Tripura.

The Risa been part of Tripura’s traditions: The complete Tripuri attire is claimed to have originated even before the time of the Manikya kings, who ruled Tripura for over 500 years starting from the 15th century.

The garment is made in handloom or loin looms at homes, usually not more than one or two pieces in a month. Most of this art is handed down through generations. However, many of the designs were lost with the passage of time, and only a few remain.

Govind Ballabh Pant

News Excerpt

Recently, a statue of freedom fighter Govind Ballabh Pant was unveiled at its new location, a roundabout opposite Gurdwara Rakab Ganj on Pandit Pant Marg, New Delhi.

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The statue of Govind Ballabh Pant near the Raisina Road circle, has been relocated as part of construction of new Parliament building.

Pre-Connect

Bharat Ratna Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, Premier of United Provinces (1937 - 1939), First Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh (1946 -1954) and Union Home Minister (1955 - 1961) was a recipient of the highest civilian award for Public Service, the Bharat Ratna in 1957.

Highlights

- Govind Ballabh Pant was born on 10 September 1887 in Uttarakhand, at Almora.
- Govind Ballabh Pant is remembered as one of the country’s most prominent freedom fighters and an administrator who played a key role in shaping modern India.
- He was 18 years old, he started serving as a volunteer at sessions of the Indian National Congress, looking up to Gopalkrishna Gokhale and Madan Mohan Malaviya as his idols.

- In Kashipur, he established an organisation called Prem Sabha that started working towards several reforms and also saved a school from shutting down due to non-payment of taxes to the British government.

Contribution in National Movement

- Govind Ballabh Pant joined the congress in 1921 and soon joined the Non-Cooperation Movement.
- In 1922 he gave up his legal practice to follow Mahatma Gandhi.
- He was elected to the United Provinces Legislative Council on the Swarajist ticket from Nainital and headed the party in the assembly.
 - During his tenure, he raised several important issues like the need to abolish the zamindari system and championed the cause of forest preservation. He also worked to protect farmers from excessive rents levied by the British government.
 - He encouraged many cottage industries in the country and raised his voice against the coolie-beggar law.
 - Pant was always against a separate electorate for minorities, saying the step would further divide communities and his politics always centred on internal reform.
- In 1930, he was imprisoned for organizing a Salt March inspired by Gandhi's earlier actions.
- During the Second World War, Pant acted as the tiebreaker between Gandhi's faction, which advocated supporting the British Crown in their war effort, and Subash Chandra Bose's faction, which advocated taking advantage of the situation to expel the British Raj by any means necessary.

Post-Independence

- ✓ He became the first Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh with leading policy priorities like abolishing the zamindari system, forest conservation, women's rights, economic stability, and safeguarding the livelihoods of the most vulnerable groups.
- ✓ He served as India's home minister from 1955 to 1961. It was during his tenure that states were reorganised on linguistic lines.

AnubhavaMantapa

News Excerpt

Recently, Karnataka Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for the 'New AnubhavaMantapa' in Basavakalyan, the place where 12th century poet-philosopher Basaveshwara lived for most of his life.

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Pre-Connect

A project to highlight the teachings of Basaveshwara (an icon of Veerashaiva-Lingayat community) was first proposed back in 2016 when Siddaramaiah was the Chief Minister and a committee led by Go. Ru. Channabasappa was set up to draw a plan.

PEPPER IT WITH
Lord Basaveshwara and his philosophy.

Highlights

- The New AnubhavaMantapa, will be a six-floor structure in the midst of the 7.5-acre plot and represent various principles of Basaveshwara's philosophy.
- It will showcase the 12th Century AnubhavaMantapa (often referred to as the "first Parliament of the world") established by him in Basavakalyan where philosophers and social reformers held debates.
- The grand structure supported by 770 pillars will have an auditorium with a seating capacity of 770 people.
 - It is believed that 770 Sharanas (followers of Basaveshwara) led the Vachana reformist movement in the 12th Century.
- On its top, the structure would have a Linga placed on a large pedestal.
- The project also envisages state-of-the-art robotic system, open-air theatre, modern water conservation system, terrace garden, library, research centre, prayer hall, yoga centre and so on.

Mannathu Padmanabhan

News Excerpt

The Prime Minister, paid tribute to Sri Mannathu Padmanabhan Ji on his jayanti.

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About Sri Mannathu Padmanabhan

- Mannathu Padmanabhan Nair was a social reformer and a freedom fighter from the State of Kerala, India.
- In 1914, he with the help of a few others established the Nair Service Society (NSS), his main ambition was to uplift the Nairs and to regain the lost power of this former ruling sect. This organization represents the Nair community which constitutes almost 14.5% of the population of the state.

Political Life and Contributions

- In 1924, he took part in the Vaikom (1924) and Guruvayoor (1931) temple-entry and anti-untouchability agitation.
- He even opened his family temple for everyone irrespective of any caste distinction.
- He became a member of the Indian National Congress in 1947 and took part in the Travancore State Congress agitation against Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer’s administration in Travancore.
- In 1949, Padmanabhan became a member of the Travancore Legislative Assembly.
- In 1959, he along with Christian Churches led a united opposition against the State Communist Ministry, which became known as the VimochanaSamaram (liberation struggle). It resulted in dismissal of the Communist government.
- The immediate cause of the outbreak of the VimochanaSamaram was the introduction of an Education Bill by the Minister of Education Joseph Mundassery.
- He was honored with the title ‘Bharata Kesari’ from the President of India. He also received Padma Bhushan in 1966.

Indian Telegraph Act, 1885

News Excerpt

Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) ordered temporary suspension of Internet services in parts of Delhi.

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Pre-Connect

- It governs the use of wired and wireless telegraphy, telephones, teletype, radio communications and digital data communications.
- At the time the Act was conceived, India was still under the rule of the British Raj.
- Telegraph was first installed in 1851 under the Governor-general Lord Dalhousie and a trans-India telegraph was completed three years later in 1854.

Privileges and Powers of the Government

- It gives the Government of India exclusive jurisdiction and privilege of the government to establishing, maintaining, operating, licensing and oversight of all forms wired and wireless communications within Indian territory.
- Section 5(2) of the act allows central and state governments to prevent the transmission of messaging during a “public emergency or in the interest of public safety”, or “in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state”.
 - The Rules framed in 2017, issued under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, stipulate that only the Home Secretary of the Union or a state can pass an order to suspend the telecom services, including the Internet, “due to public emergency or in the interest of public safety”, and that the order must include the reasons for the decision.
- It also authorizes government law enforcement agencies to monitor/intercept communications and tap phone lines under conditions defined within the Indian Constitution.

Analytica

- ✓ India tops the total number of Internet suspensions ordered by authorities every year, according to the Software Freedom Law Centre (SFLC)'s Internet shutdown tracker.
 - According to Software Freedom Law Center's tracker, there have been 381 shutdowns since 2012, 106 of which were in 2019.
- ✓ The Centre has never ordered a nationwide Internet shutdown.
- ✓ Most Internet shutdowns are done using the 'kill switch' on an individual tower-wise basis in respective areas.

Prelims 2021
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PT DESTINAIRE
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Miscellaneous

Statue of unity

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- The statue of unity is built in honour of the Iron Man of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the first home minister of independent India. It was designed by Indian sculptor Ram V. Sutar, and was inaugurated on 31 October 2018, the 143rd anniversary of Sardar Patel's birth.
- He was responsible for uniting all 562 princely states of the country to build the Republic of India.
- It is the world's tallest statue 182-metre (600 feet approx.)
- It stands on the Sadhu Bet island on the Narmada river, which flows between the Satpura and the Vindhya mountain ranges.
- It is a three-layered structure. The innermost layer is made of reinforced cement concrete (RCC), comprising two towers 127 metres high that rise till the statue's chest. The second layer is a steel structure and the third an 8 mm bronze cladding on the surface.
- The base of the statue is constructed with over 129 tonnes of scrap iron, donated by nearly 100 million farmers from across India.
- The statue is built to withstand wind velocity up to 60 meters per second and earthquakes measuring below 6.5 on the Richter scale.
- Larsen and Toubro and state-run Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Ltd built the statue, with intricate bronze cladding work done by a Chinese foundry, the Jiangxi Toqine Company.

Makaravilakku Festival

- Makaravilakku is an annual festival held on Makara Sankranti in Kerala, India at the shrine of Sabarimala.
- Makara jyothi is a star that appears in the sky on Makara Samkramam, when the Sun moves from dhanurasi (Sagittarius) to Makaramrasi (Capricorn) on the first day of the Malayalam month of Makaram, which is on-January 14 (Makara Sankranti) this year.
- The festival includes the Thiruvabharanam (sacred ornaments of Lord Ayyappan) procession and a congregation at the hill shrine of Sabarimala.
- The erstwhile royal family of Pandalam is the custodian of the ornaments.
- Makaravilakku is a light lit at Ponnambalamedu, a plateau across the Sabarimala shrine. The light, believed to have celestial origins, is shown three times by the chief priest of Pamba temple. Pamba is the base station of Sabarimala.
- This ritual is done after the Sirius star appears in the sky. This ritual had been done by Malaya arya tribes in the past. When the Travancore Devaswom Board took over the administration of the temple in the early 1950s, the tribal community lost that right.

Dragon Fruit

- Recently, Gujarat has given dragon fruit the Sanskrit name 'Kamalam'.
- Dragon fruit is the fruit of a species of wild cactus indigenous to South and Central America, where it is called pitaya or pitahaya.
- The world's largest producer and exporter of dragon fruit is Vietnam, where the plant was brought by the French in the 19th century.
- Dragon fruit is also cultivated in — apart from its native Latin America — Thailand, Taiwan, China, Australia, Israel, and Sri Lanka.
- It was brought to India in the 1990s, and is grown in Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- It grows in all kinds of soil, and does not require much water.
- The change in name, need approval from the Botanical Survey of India and the National Biodiversity Authority under the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
 - "Dragon fruit is not a species native to India and any change in its nomenclature in official annals can lead to international litigation.

National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI)

- It is a non-profit Company incorporated under section 8 of the Companies Act 2013 with an objective of facilitating improved internet services in the country.
- It was setup to facilitate exchange of domestic Internet traffic between the peering ISP, Content players and any other organizations.
- It is working since 2003 for spreading the internet technology to the citizens of India through the following activities:
 - Internet exchanges through which the internet data is exchanged among ISPs (Internet Service Providers) and between ISPs and CDNs
 - IN Registry for maintenance of IN country code domain and IDN domain for India.
 - IRINN, managing and operating Internet Protocol addresses (IPv4 and IPv6).
- The Main Objects to be pursued by the Company on its incorporation are:
 1. To Promote Internet.
 2. To set up, when needed, in select location(s)/parts/regions of India Internet Exchanges/Peering Points.
 3. To enable effective and efficient routing, peering, transit and exchange of the Internet traffic within India.
 4. To continuously work for enhancing and improving the quality of Internet and Broadband services.
 5. Set up. Internet Domain Name Operations and related activities.
- NIXI results in better Internet infrastructure in the country and saving of foreign exchange on international bandwidth.

TRIFOOD Parks

- Recently, TRIFED Signs MoU with Akhil Bhartiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram for Setting up of TRIFOOD Parks in Madhya Pradesh.
- Akhil Bhartiya Vanvasi Kalyan Kendra has been working for the welfare of tribals in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand since 1952.
- This partnership is in line with its mission to improve the livelihoods of the tribals (both forest dwellers and artisans) and work towards tribal Empowerment.
- It will ensure round-the-year income-earning opportunity for tribals by engaging them in a variety of economic activities ranging from agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, Medicinal & Aromatic plants, etc. and go beyond Minor Forest Produces.
- The two organisations will work together by undertaking various initiatives all aimed at improving the livelihood of tribal people and implementation of the Van Dhan Yojana through the mobilization of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) / Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVKs) / VPCs / TRIFOOD Parks.

Prarambh: Startup India International Summit

- The Summit was organized by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The two-day Summit organised as a follow up of the announcement made by the PM at the fourth BIMSTEC Summit held in Kathmandu in August 2018 wherein India committed to host the BIMSTEC Startup Conclave.
- The Summit marks the 5th anniversary of the Startup India initiative, launched by the PM on 16 January, 2016.
- It will be the largest startup confluence organised by the Government of India since the launch of the Startup India initiative.
- It will focus on enhancing multilateral cooperation and engagement with countries from around the globe to collectively develop and strengthen the startup ecosystems.

Pangolin

- Recently, the Odisha Forest department has stressed the need for stricter monitoring of social media platforms to check pangolin poaching and trading.
- Investigations revealed that the accused were trading pangolin and scales online by forming WhatsApp groups.

- It's believed to be the world's most trafficked non-human mammal for their meat and scales.
- Pangolins, also known as scaly anteaters, are the only known mammals with large keratin scales covering their skin. They are also toothless and nocturnal.
- The Indian Pangolin is found throughout the country south of the Himalayas, excluding the north-eastern region while the Chinese Pangolin ranges through Assam and the eastern Himalayas.
- Both these species are Listed in Schedule I of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- **Protection Status:**
 - Indian Pangolin: Endangered,
 - Chinese Pangolin: Critically Endangered
- TRAFFIC India released a study that revealed that nearly 6,000 pangolins have been poached between 2009 and 2017.

Four indigenous games in the Khelo India Youth Games 2021

The Sports Ministry has approved the inclusion of four indigenous sports - Gatka, Kalaripayattu, Thang-Ta and Mallakhamba - in the Khelo India Youth Games 2021, scheduled to take place in Haryana.

Kalaripayattu of Kerala

- Considered among the oldest and most scientific martial arts in the world, Kalaripayattu is an Indian martial art and fighting style that originated in modern-day Kerala and can be traced back to the third century BC.
- Kalaripayattu is also mentioned in the Vadakkan Pattukal ballads written about the Chekavar from the Malabar region of Kerala.
- **Stages of the art form**
 - While the first stage consists of body conditioning exercises such as sequences, workouts and kicks to develop the pace of the body, the second stage is all about fighting techniques with wooden weapons such as sticks. The third stage involves the use of metal weapons and the fourth and final stage includes bare hand fighting techniques, massage treatments etc.
- There are also lessons in using weapons like swords, daggers, spears, maces, and bows and arrows.
- The primary aim is the ultimate coordination between mind and body. Kalaripayattu kicks help increase stamina and balance, that in turn, help improve the metabolism rate.
- Another focus of Kalaripayattu is specialisation in indigenous medicinal practices. Three forms of massage are prevalent in the Kalarichikitsa system – ennathechupidipikkal or oil massage, kai uzichil or massage using hands, and chavittiuzhichil or massage using feet.
- Kalaris are also important centres of religious worship. Once the course is complete, one should engage in oil massage and practice to maintain shape.

Mallakhamb of Central India

- ✓ Mallakhamb is the ancient traditional purely Indian Sport. It was originated in Maharashtra around 200 years ago.
- ✓ Guru Balambhattdada Deodhar is known as founder of Mallakhamb. Now it is popular in over 26 states in the country.
- ✓ From 1961 to 1976 Gymnastics Federation of India conducted the National Mallakhamb Championships along with Gymnastics.
- ✓ Even in All India Inter University Championships, Mallakhamb competitions are being conducted for men since 1968-69. There are 3 types of Mallakhamb which are played on competitive level: Fixed Mallakhamb, Hanging Mallakhamb and Rope Mallakhamb

Gatka of Punjab

- Gatka originates in the state of Punjab and this traditional fighting style of the Nihang Sikh warriors is used both as self-defense as well as a sport.
- The form which was earlier confined to gurudwaras, nagar kirtans and akharas, finds presence in the sports category after the formation of Gatka Federation of India (GFI) in 2008 and is now played by trained Gatka players at the national level.

- It is believed to have originated when sixth Sikh guru Hargobind adopted 'Kirpan' for self defense during Mughal era and tenth Guru Gobind Singh made it compulsory for everyone to use the weapons for self defense. Guru Gobind Singh Ji is known as the greatest Gatka warrior of all times.
- Gatka uses the sword as the main weapon, amongst others. Sri Guru Har Gobind Singh Ji used to carry 2 swords- Miri and Piri, which stood for strength and spirituality, respectively. It is a form that can only be used to defend yourself and others only when all other means have failed.
- The Gatka performance that we see today was developed in the early 19th century. It has been divided into the traditional (Rasmi) and sports (Khel) style.
- Although there are several academies in Punjab that teach Gatka but the Punjabi University, Patiala, offers a recognised diploma course to learn it. It was started in 2013. Eligibility for a student to get enrolled for the diploma course is graduation in any stream.
- Punjab government has now officially recognised Gatka as a sport in its policy, and the players enjoy the 3% quota during admissions, as do the players of other sports.

Thang-ta of Manipur

- ✚ Thang-Ta, a Manipur marital art has passed into oblivion in the recent decades, but the sport will get national recognition again with the help of the Khelo India Youth Games.
- ✚ Thang Ta--"The Art of the Sword and Spear"-- is the traditional martial art of Manipur in Northeast India.
- ✚ It integrates various external weapons - the sword, spear, dagger, etc. - with the internal practice of physical control through soft movements coordinated with the rhythms of breathing. It is part of the great heroic tradition of Manipur.
- ✚ The proper name for Thang-Ta is HUYEN LALLONG ("method of safe-guarding").
- ✚ It is an elaborate system of physical culture that involves breathing methods, meditations, and rituals.
- ✚ Some of the sword and spear forms are entirely ritualistic, although they are composed of material techniques. They are to be performed only at special occasions or under special circumstances.
- ✚ The heart of Thang-Ta is the "sword". To our knowledge, KhiltonNongmaithem (of HULA SINDAMSANG, IMPHAL) is the only Manipuri teaching Thang-Ta outside of Manipur."
- ✚ Three warriors - PaonaNaol Singh, NingthoukhongjaPoila, Loukrakpam Sana Mityeng each founded a distinct style within the art of THANG-TA. Paona died fighting the British and is still regarded as a hero in Manipur.
- ✚ The unarmed aspect of Thang-Ta is named SARIT-SARAT. Traditionally, it is taught after competence in weapons was gained. It uses footwork and handwork form the weapons forms, with a liberal dose of the native wrestling style (MUKNA) thrown in.
- ✚ KhiltonNongmaithem is one of the foremost exponents of Thang Ta, He has represented India in international festivals throughout the USA, Sweden, Italy, Germany, China, and England.

Padma Awards

- Recently, The Padma Awards for the year 2021 were announced on the occasion of 72nd Republic Day. The awards are announced on the occasion of Republic Day every year (26th January). Instituted in 1954, it is one of the highest civilian Awards of the country.
- The award seeks to recognize achievements in all fields of activities or disciplines where an element of public service is involved.
- The Padma Awards are conferred on the recommendations made by the Padma Awards Committee, which is constituted by the Prime Minister every year.
- The award is given in three categories, namely:
 - Padma Vibhushan for exceptional and distinguished service;
 - Padma Bhushan for distinguished service of a high order; and
 - Padma Shri for distinguished service.
- All persons without distinction of race, occupation, position or sex are eligible for these awards. However, Government servants including those working with PSUs, except doctors and scientists, are not eligible for these Awards.

Concept Clearing Assignment

1. Critically analyse India's record of handling e-waste. Also, suggest measures to ensure the scientific management of e-waste in India.
2. India's climate change vulnerability is driven by its high levels of socio-economic deprivation. Do you agree? Also, comment on the initiatives taken by India in the sphere of climate change adaptation and mitigation.
3. Highlight the key issues involved in the Official Secrets Act. Do you think that secrecy allowed under the act is at loggerheads with the transparency expected in a democracy? Substantiate your views.
4. Given the context of ongoing debate on agricultural reforms, critically analyse agricultural policies of India. Also, give your inputs on what sort of agricultural policy does India need in order to make it a profitable as well as a sustainable venture.
5. Recent years have seen both greater empowerment of women, as well as a rise in the crimes against women. What could be the causes of such contradicting patterns? Elucidate.
6. Explain the term 'economic recovery'? Also, discuss various types of economic recoveries in brief.
7. Explain in what ways the faceless tax assessment scheme will help in promoting the transparent taxation? Also, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the aforementioned scheme.
8. The Bodo Accord visualises an expansive autonomous framework to protect the political, social, cultural, and ethnic identities and interests of the community. Discuss.
9. Analyse the nature of women's movement in India and its relationship with political parties and trade unions.
10. What is 5G technology? Comment on India's preparedness for the adoption of 5G technology and bottlenecks associated in the adoption of the 5G technology.
11. What is 'One Nation-One Gas Grid'? Also, discuss the steps taken by India to fulfil the objectives of energy security and transition to clean energy.
12. Explain how indigenous technologies and traditional knowledge systems can help in achieving the goal of "Atmanirbhar Bharat"?
13. The Special Marriage Act way back in 1950's provided for a special form of marriage, regardless of castes or religion, for all Indians. Still inter-caste marriage in India is a rare phenomenon. What reasons do you attribute to this? Suggest short and long term measures for the same.
14. To make India a Global Innovation hub for startups it is necessary that India develops a robust innovation and start-up policy. Comment on the progress made by India in this so far.
15. Differentiate between Judicial review and judicial activism with suitable illustration? Do you think that judicial restraint is required in a democracy like India? Substantiate your views.



Prelims 2021
BATCH 2
PT DESTINAIRE
14th Feb 2021
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KSG An Institute For IAS Exam...
UPSC 2021

P.T Oriented Questions

1. Consider the following statements regarding the India Innovation Index 2020:

1. It was released by NITI Aayog.
2. Northern states perform top as four of them occupy the top-five position.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

2. Recently, the new guidelines have been issued in line with the new National Education Policy (NEP) under Institutions of Eminence Scheme, in this context consider the following statements:

1. Under the new guidelines, all Indian universities and colleges would be able to set up campuses in foreign countries with the Higher Education Commission of India.
2. Ministries involved in approval are education, home and external affairs.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

3. Consider the following statements regarding the Khadi Prakritik Paint:

1. It is first of its kind product with anti-fungal, anti-bacterial properties.
2. It is the mixture of cow dung, lead and chromium.
3. It is developed by Khadi and Village industries commission.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

4. Consider the following statements regarding the Flue Gas Desulfurization (FGD):

1. FGD systems were developed as a response to the exhaust flue gases from fossil fuel burning plants, principally coal-burning.

2. FGD systems will remove 100% sulfur dioxide from the flue gas emission of coal-fired power plant.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

5. Recently, the power ministry proposed a 'graded action plan'; It is related to-

- (a) Pollution
(b) Power discrepancies
(c) Adoption of solar energy means
(d) Green term Ahead market

6. Recently, a report stated that the government was using its off-budget borrowings on massive scale; in this context consider the following statements:

1. Off-budget borrowings are loans that are directly taken by the Central Government.
2. This type of loans are included in the national fiscal deficits.
3. Off-budget borrowings are used to fulfil the government's expenditure needs.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

7. With reference to the Limited Liability Partnership (LLP), consider the following statements:

1. It allow for a partnership structure where each partner's liabilities is limited to the amount they put into the business.
2. LLPs are common in professional businesses like law firms, accounting firms, and wealth managers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

8. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has recently approved a proposal to levy a 'green tax', in this context consider the following statements:

1. As per the provisions, personal vehicles will be charged a tax at the time of renewal of registration certification after 15 years.
2. In highly polluted cities the provisions are intended to levy more than 50% of road tax on older vehicles.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

9. Consider the following statements regarding Shadow Entrepreneurs:

1. They are individual who manage a business that sell legitimate goods and services but they do not register their businesses.
2. Shadow economy results in loss of tax revenue, unfair competition to registered businesses and also poor productivity.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

10. Consider the following statements regarding the Kochi-Mangalore natural gas pipeline:

1. It is part of the centre's initiative to increase the share of natural gas in India's energy mix from 6% to 15%.
2. It will supply CNG fuel for households and industries.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

11. Democracy Index is launched by which of the following?

- (a) United Nations Human Rights Council
(b) Association for democratic reforms
(c) Economist Intelligence Unit
(d) Transparency International

12. Consider the following statements regarding judicial review:

1. It is the power of judiciary to examine the constitutionality of legislative enactments.
2. Judiciary can't review the executive orders of the central and state Governments.

Which of the Statements given above is/are correct?

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

13. With reference to Voting and its provisions, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Article 328 of the Indian Constitution provides rights to the State legislature to formulate a law on the manner of holding elections within the State.
2. The 61st Amendment Act of 1988 has reduced the voting age from 21 to 18 years.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

14. Consider the following statements regarding the Official Secrets Act:

1. The official secrets act enumerates all matters of secrecy and confidentiality with regard to the government.
2. The law extends to the whole of India and applies to Indian citizens not residing in the country.

Which of the Statements given above is/are correct?

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

15. Consider the following statements:

1. Article 32 of the Constitution empowers the President to grant pardons to persons who have been tried and convicted of any offence.
2. The pardoning power of the President is independent of the Judiciary.

Which of the Statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
16. Consider the following statements regarding Vinayak Damodar Savarkar:
1. In his book 'The History of the War of Indian Independence', he analysed the circumstances of 1857 uprising.
 2. He was inspired by leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal.
 3. He served as president of the Indian national congress.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 1 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3
17. Which of the following best describes the term "Rakshita" sometimes seen in news?
- (a) An Ayurvedic Serum to fight for COVID-19.
(b) A naval petrol vessel developed by Goa Shipyard Limited
(c) A Motor Bike Ambulance developed by DRDO.
(d) None of the Above
18. Consider the following statements regarding the Exercise Kavach:
1. It is a large-scale conjoint military training exercise carried out by the Indian Army.
 2. It formed a part of the AMPHEX-21 tri-service joint amphibious exercise.
 3. The drill was conducted under the Andaman and Nicobar Command.
- Which of the Statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 3 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) All of the Above
19. Consider the following statements regarding polar vortex:
1. It is a large area of low pressure and cold air surrounding both of the Earth's poles.
 2. Usually, it weakens in winter and strengthens in summer.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
20. Consider the following statements regarding Dzukou valley:
1. It is located at the Assam-Nagaland border.
 2. Dzukou Lily is only found in this valley region.
 3. Mao Naga tribe and Angami tribe is related to this valley region.
- Which of the statements given above are correct?
- (a) 2 and 3 only (b) 1 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 2 only (d) 1, 2 and 3
21. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding Indian Star tortoise?
1. The species placed under Schedule-I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 of India.
 2. It is protected under Appendix III of CITES.
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
22. With reference to the Manufactured Sand (M-sand), consider the following statements:
1. The source of M sand is a quarry.
 2. It is produced by reducing larger pieces of aggregate into sand-sized aggregate particles.
 3. Its particles are well-rounded and are usually spherical.
- Which of the statements given above are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

23. The National Capital Accounting and valuation of Ecosystem Project (NCAVES) is implemented by which of the following?

1. The United Nations Statistics Division
2. The United Nations Environment Programme
3. The Secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

24. Consider the following statements regarding Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) of India:

1. This process was adopted from the united national environment programme.
2. The result of India's present assessment is higher than the global mean.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

25. With reference to the Desert Knight-21, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. It is a bilateral air exercise recently held between Indian and the Russian Air Force.
2. It was conducted at Chara Sands desert of Russia.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

26. With reference to chemical fertilizers in India, consider the following statements: (UPSC 2020)

1. At present, the retail price of chemical fertilizers is market-driven and not administered by the Government.
2. Ammonia, which is an input of urea, is produced from natural gas.
3. Sulphur, which is a raw material for phosphoric acid fertilizer, is a by-product of oil refineries.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

27. If a particular plant species is placed under Schedule VI of The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, what is the implication? (UPSC 2020)

- (a) A licence is required to cultivate that plant.
- (b) Such a plant cannot be cultivated under any circumstances.
- (c) It is a Genetically Modified crop plant.
- (d) Such a plant is invasive and harmful to the ecosystem

28. Who among the following were the founders of the "Hind Mazdoor Sabha" established in 1948?(UPSC 2018)

- (a) B. Krishna Pillai, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and K.C. George
- (b) Jayaprakash Narayan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay and M.N. Roy
- (c) C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, K. Kamaraj and Veeresalingam Pantulu
- (d) Ashok Mehta, T.S. Ramanujam and G.G. Mehta

29. How is the National Green Tribunal (NGT) different from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)? (UPSC 2018)

1. The NGT has been established by an Act whereas the CPCB has been created by an executive order of the Government.
2. The NGT provides environmental justice and helps reduce the burden of litigation in the higher courts whereas the CPCB promotes cleanliness of streams and wells, and aims to improve the quality of air in the country.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

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

30. The money multiplier in an economy increases with which one of the following? (UPSC 2019)

- (a) Increase in the banking habit of the population
- (b) Increase in the cash reserve ratio
- (c) Increase in the statutory liquidity ratio
- (d) Increase in the population of the country

Answers

1. A
2. B
3. C
4. A
5. A
6. C
7. C
8. A
9. C
10. C

11. C
12. A
13. C
14. C
15. B
16. A
17. C
18. D
19. A
20. A

21. D
22. A
23. D
24. B
25. D
26. B
27. B
28. D
29. B
30. A



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OUR TOPPERS

KANISHAK KATARIA
(AIR - 1)



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

Signature: 

AKSHAT JAIN
(AIR - 2)



TESTIMONIAL

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

Signature: 

SRUSHTI JAYANT DESHMUKH
(AIR - 5)




TESTIMONIAL

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Signature: 

SHUBHAM GUPTA
(AIR - 6)




TESTIMONIAL


Khan Sir,

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

Thanks again to you Sir and the entire KSG Team.


Signature: 

VAISHALI SINGH
(AIR - 8)



TESTIMONIAL

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

Signature: 

GUNJAN DWIVEDI
(AIR - 9)



TESTIMONIAL

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

Signature: 

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Delhi- 110009

9717 380 832

DELHI CENTRAL

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Marg, Old Rajender
Nagar Market, Near
Salwan Public
School Gate No-2,
Delhi- 110060

9811 293 743

JAIPUR TONK ROAD

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

8290 800 441

BHOPAL M.P NAGAR, ZONE II

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

7509 975 361

PATNA EXHIBITION ROAD

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

7463 950 774

INDORE BHAWAR KUAN

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

9893 772 941

BENGALURU KORAMANGALA CHANDRA LAYOUT

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

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

7619 166 663

7619 136 662

RANCHI SIRAM TOLI CHOWK

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

7463 950 774