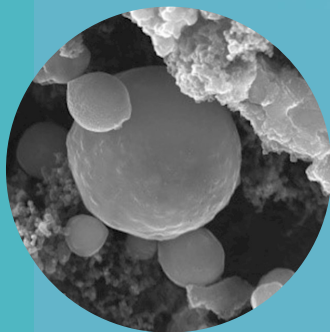


# PRAYAS4IAS

AN INITIATIVE BY THE PRAYAS INDIA

JUNE WEEK 1



# June (Week 1)

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# Prelims

## NATIONAL

### PM-CARES for Children

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** The Union government announced a special “PM-CARES for Children” scheme for all those orphaned due to COVID-19. It will include a corpus of ₹10 lakh for each child till he or she reaches the age of 18.

#### Details:

- The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Children who have lost both parents or the lone surviving parent or their legal guardian or adoptive parent due to COVID-19 will be supported under the scheme.
- The Women and Child Development Ministry has said that there are a total 577 COVID-19 orphans identified across the country.

## Timely support

The Centre has announced a comprehensive financial aid package for children orphaned during the pandemic

- Students can be enrolled in Kendriya Vidyalayas or private school with govt. taking care of expenses
- Students of 11-18 years can be enrolled in Sainik Schools or Navodaya Vidyalayas
- Health insurance cover of ₹5 lakh
- Corpus of ₹10 lakh per child to be created
- Monthly stipend will be offered from corpus after 18 years of age
- Lump sum to be disbursed once the age of 23 is attained



■ AFP

- When a child turns 18, he or she will draw a monthly stipend from the corpus of ₹10 lakh in order to meet expenses for personal needs and higher education.
- On reaching the age of 23, the child will get the entire ₹10 lakh, according to an official statement.
- The government will also assist such children with school education. They will be given admission in the nearest Kendriya Vidyalaya or in a private school as a day scholar.
- If the child is admitted in a private school, the fees will be paid from the PM CARES Fund as per norms under the Right To Education Act, 2009. PM CARES will also meet the expenses on uniform, textbooks and notebooks.

#### Residential schools

- Children in the age group of 11-18 will have the option to study in a residential school under the Central government such as Sainik School and Navodaya Vidyalaya.
- These children will also be supported in their higher education through either scholarship equivalent to the tuition fees or educational loans where the interest will be paid by the PM CARES Fund.
- All children will be enrolled as a beneficiary under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme with a health insurance cover of ₹5 lakh, where the premium amount will be paid by PM CARES till a child turns 18.
- The government has also announced measures to help the families who have lost the sole earning member due to COVID-19.

### **Suryakiran aerobatic display team**

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** *The Suryakiran aerobatic display team of the Indian Air Force (IAF), which has enthralled crowds across the country with their hair-raising manoeuvres with their aircraft in red and white, has just completed 25 years.*

#### **Details:**

- One of the few nine aircraft display teams in the world and the only one in Asia, the team has carried out over 600 displays across the country and south east Asia.
- The team is also performing across the country to commemorate the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh, he stated.
- The team currently has 13 pilots and is led by Group Captain Anoop Singh.
- “Suryakiran”, which means ‘rays of the sun’ in Sanskrit, was raised in May 27, 1996, at the IAF air base in Bidar, Karnataka, with six Kiran MkII trainer aircraft.
- It carried out its first display on September 15, 1996 for the golden jubilee celebrations of the Air Force Administrative College in Coimbatore.
- However, the team was disbanded in 2011 after the Aero India show due to shortage of training aircraft in the IAF and was resurrected in 2015 on advanced jet trainer Hawk Mk-132 aircraft.
- The team was built up to a nine-aircraft team in quick time in 2017.
- At Aero India 2021, the Suryakiran teamed up with the Sarang helicopter display team in the world’s first-ever integrated display of nine aircraft and four helicopter teams. Their first foreign display was for the Sri Lankan Air Force Day in Colombo in 2001 and the most recent was to commemorate the 20th Sri Lankan Air Force Day.

### **DM Act is of 2005**

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** *Hours before he retired on May 31, former Chief Secretary of West Bengal Alapan Bandyopadhyay was served a show-cause notice by the Union Home Ministry under Section 51 of the Disaster Management (DM) Act, 2005, punishable by imprisonment of up to two years or a fine or both.*

#### **Details:**



- The DM Act, 2005, came into existence after the 2004 tsunami. It was invoked for the first time in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- On March 24, 2020, the Centre, through the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) headed by the Prime Minister, invoked the provisions of the Act to streamline the management of the pandemic, empowering district magistrates to take decisions and centralise other decisions on the supply of oxygen and movement of vehicles.
- The Act has been extended across the country till June 30 and it is enforced by the Home Ministry.
- The officer, by abstaining himself from the review meeting taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at cyclone-affected Kalaikunda in West Bengal on May 28, “has acted in a manner tantamount to refusing to comply with lawful directions of the Central Government and is thus violative of Section 51 (b) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005,” the notice to Mr. Bandyopadhyay said.
- The Section prescribes “punishment for obstruction” for refusal to comply with any direction given by or on behalf of the Central government or the State government or the National Executive Committee or the State Executive Committee or the District Authority under the Act.
- It says that violation shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term that may extend to one year or with a fine or both upon conviction. It adds that if “such refusal to comply with directions results in loss of lives or imminent danger thereof, shall on conviction be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years”.
- Section 51 of the Act has two important caveats. “Under the Act, the action on the part of the person has to be ‘without reasonable cause’ and ‘failure of an officer to perform the duty without due permission or lawful excuse’.

### **SDG India Index**

(Source: [Indian Express](https://www.indianexpress.com) )

**Context:** Kerala has retained the top rank in NITI Aayog’s SDG India Index 2020-21, while Mizoram, Haryana, and Uttarakhand are the top gainers in terms of improvement in their rankings from 2019, according to a report released by the government think tank Thursday. Bihar, Jharkhand and Assam were the worst performing states in this year’s India index.

#### **What is SDG India Index?**

- The Index for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) evaluates progress of states and Union Territories (UTs) on various parameters including health, education, gender, economic growth, institutions, climate change and environment.
- First launched in December 2018, the index has become the primary tool for monitoring progress on the SDGs in India. It has also fostered competition among the states and UTs by ranking them on the global goals.
- The SDG India Index scores range between 0–100, higher the score of a State/UT, the greater the distance to target achieved. States and UTs are classified in four categories based on their SDG India Index score — aspirant: 0–49; performer: 50–64; front-runner: 65–99, achiever: 100.

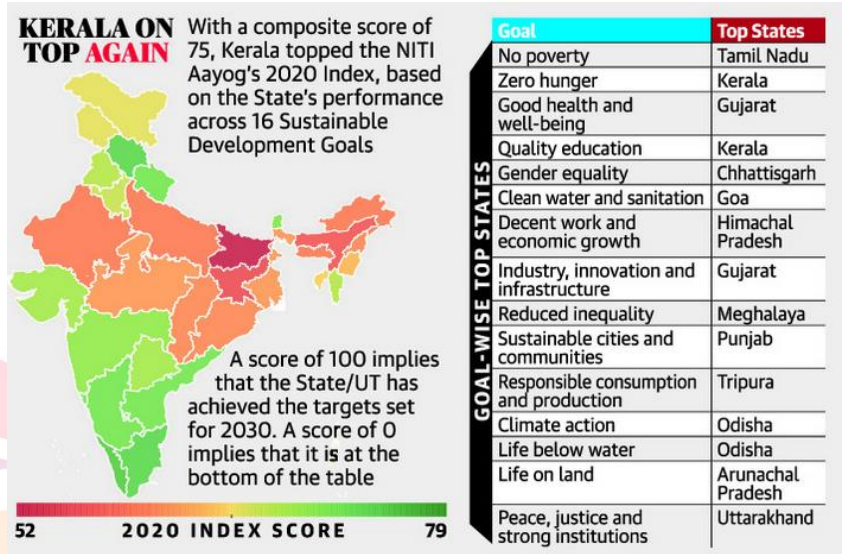
Top 5 positions		Bottom 5 positions	
State	Score	State	Score
Kerala	75	Chhattisgarh,	61
Himachal Pradesh,	74	Nagaland, Odisha	
Tamil Nadu		Arunachal Pradesh,	60
Andhra Pradesh, Goa,	72	Meghalaya, Rajasthan,	
Karnataka, Uttarakhand		Uttar Pradesh	
Sikkim	71	Assam	57
Maharashtra	70	Jharkhand	56
		Bihar	52



- Currently, there are no states in the aspirant and achiever category; 15 states/UTs are in the performer category and 22 states/UTs in the front runner category.

### What is the significance of the SDG India Index?

- The index is developed in collaboration with the United Nations in India. It tracks the progress of all states and UTs on 115 indicators aligned with the National Indicator Framework (NIF) of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- The index is a key tool for focused policy dialogue, formulation and implementation through development actions, in line with the global SDG framework.
- It helps in identifying crucial gaps related to tracking the SDGs and the need for India to develop its statistical systems.
- From covering 13 Goals with 62 indicators in its first edition in 2018, the third edition of the index covers 16 Goals on 115 quantitative indicators.



### Banking Regulation Act

(Source: [Indian Express](https://www.indianexpress.com) )

**Context:** During a meeting with his party, NCP chief Sharad Pawar approved a plan to set up a task force to prepare an action plan against a recent change in the law that has brought cooperative banks under the supervision of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). NCP spokesperson Nawab Malik said the Centre was trying to weaken the cooperative banking sector through changes to The Banking Regulation Act, 1949, and the NCP would stop its “game”.

### How has The Banking Regulation Act been amended?

- Cooperative banks have long been under dual regulation by the state Registrar of Societies and the RBI. As a result, these banks have escaped scrutiny despite failures and frauds.
- The changes to The Banking Regulation Act approved by Parliament in September 2020, brought cooperative banks under the direct supervision of the RBI.
- The amended law has given RBI the power to supersede the board of directors of cooperative banks after consultations with the concerned state government. Earlier, it could issue such directions only to multi-state cooperative banks.
- Also, urban cooperative banks will now be treated on a par with commercial banks.
- And a cooperative bank can, with prior approval of the RBI, issue equity shares, preference shares, or special shares to its members or to any other person residing within its area of operation, by way of public issue or private placements.

- It can also issue unsecured debentures or bonds with maturity of not less than 10 years. This essentially means non-members can become shareholders of the bank, and this will allow the RBI to merge failing banks quickly.

### **What triggered the need for the changes in the law?**

- India has some 1,540 urban cooperative banks, with a depositor base of 8.6 crore and deposits of at least Rs 5 lakh crore.
- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told Lok Sabha last year that the financial status of at least 277 urban cooperative banks was weak, and around 105 cooperative banks were unable to meet the minimum regulatory capital requirement.
- Also, Sitharaman said, the net worth of 47 banks was in the negative, and as many as 328 urban cooperative banks had gross non-performing assets of more than 15 per cent.
- According to RBI's latest financial stability report, the gross non-performing asset ratio of urban cooperative banks deteriorated from 9.89 per cent in March 2020 to 10.36 per cent in September 2020.
- Not only do these banks have high levels of bad loans, they also have a small capital base — something that the changes in the law has tried to address by allowing these banks to issue shares with RBI's approval.
- Political interference in staff appointments is also a problem with these banks, which has added to inefficiencies.

### **Kedar Nath Singh Guidelines**

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** *The Supreme Court quashed case of sedition filed against journalist Vinod Dua in Himachal Pradesh for allegedly making remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the government's handling of the migrant crisis during the Covid-19 lockdown last year. In doing so, the court also reiterated the principles in the landmark case on sedition — Kedar Nath Singh v Union of India (1962).*

### **What are the Kedar Nath Singh guidelines?**

- In the landmark 1962 Kedar Nath Singh case, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of the sedition law, it attempted to restrict its scope for misuse.
- The court held that unless accompanied by an incitement or call for violence, criticism of the government cannot be labelled sedition.
- Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code states: "Whoever, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards, the Government established by law in [India], shall be punished with imprisonment for life, to which fine may be added, or with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which fine may be added, or with fine."
- Seven principles in the Kedar Nath Singh ruling specify situations in which the charge of sedition cannot be applied.
  - The expression " 'the Government established by law' has to be distinguished from the persons for the time being engaged in carrying on the administration. 'Government established by law' is the visible symbol of the State. The very existence of the State will be in jeopardy if the Government established by law is subverted."
  - "Any acts within the meaning of Section 124-A which have the effect of subverting the Government by bringing that Government into contempt or hatred, or creating disaffection against it, would be within the penal statute because the feeling of disloyalty to the Government



established by law or enmity to it imports the idea of tendency to public disorder by the use of actual violence or incitement to violence.”

- “Comments, however strongly worded, expressing disapprobation of actions of the Government, without exciting those feelings which generate the inclination to cause public disorder by acts of violence, would not be penal.”
- “A citizen has a right to say or write whatever he likes about the Government, or its measures, by way of criticism or comment, so long as he does not incite people to violence against the Government established by law or with the intention of creating public disorder.”
- “The provisions of the Sections read as a whole, along with the explanations, make it reasonably clear that the sections aim at rendering penal only such activities as would be intended, or have a tendency, to create disorder or disturbance of public peace by resort to violence.”
- “It is only when the words, written or spoken, etc. which have the pernicious tendency or intention of creating public disorder or disturbance of law and order that the law steps in to prevent such activities in the interest of public order.”
- “We propose to limit its operation only to such activities as come within the ambit of the observations of the Federal Court, that is to say, activities involving incitement to violence or intention or tendency to create public disorder or cause disturbance of public peace.”

### **What has been the impact of that verdict?**

- The significance of the verdict lies in the Supreme Court’s subsequent reiteration of the Kedar Nath Singh principles.
- A fresh constitutional challenge by two journalists, Kishorechandra Wangkhemcha and Kanhaiya Lal Shukla, against the sedition law pending before the Supreme Court, and the ruling in Dua’s case, make a strong case against keeping the colonial law in the books.

### **Model Tenancy Act**

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** After releasing the draft in 2019, the Union Cabinet approved the Model Tenancy Act (MTA) to streamline the process of renting property in India and aid the rent economy in the estate sector.

### **Why this Act**

- As per Census 2011, more than 1 crore houses were lying vacant in urban areas.
- The existing rent control laws are restricting the growth of rental housing and discourage owners from renting out their vacant houses due to fear of repossession.
- One of the potential measures to unlock the vacant house is to bringing transparency and accountability in the existing system of renting of premises and to balance the interests of both the property owner and tenant in a judicious manner.
- States can adopt the Act as it is with fresh legislation, since it is a state subject, or they can amend their existing rent acts to factor in the new MTA. States and Union Territories have MoUs with the Centre under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban which has this provision.
- The government says the Act aims to formalise the shadow market of rental housing, unlock vacant properties, increase rental yields, ease/remove exploitative practices, reduce procedural barriers in registration, and increase transparency and discipline.

### **How it was conceived**

- In 2015, before the Housing for All by 2022 Mission (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban) was launched, it was decided that 20% of the two crore houses to be created should be exclusively for rent.

- The decision was based on a 2013 report by a Task Force for Rental Housing, which held that affordable rental housing “addresses the issues of the underprivileged and inclusive growth, in an even more direct manner than affordable ownership housing”.
- The Expenditure Finance Committee cleared an outlay of Rs 6,000 crore for a rental component in PMAY-U; the Centre would bear 75% with the rest borne by states, urban local bodies, or through NGOs or CSR activities of the private sector.

### **Where it applies**

- After enforcement of this Act, no person can let or take on rent any premises except by an agreement in writing.
- Repeal of local rent control Acts has been a politically sensitive issue in cities with high-value rent markets, such as especially South Mumbai, where old properties in prime locations have been occupied for decades by tenants at negligible rent.
- The Model Act has been in the making since 2015, but has been held up on this point.
- The new Act will be applicable prospectively and will not affect existing tenancies.
- The Act seeks to cover urban and as well as rural areas.

### **What's new**

- States will set up a grievance redressal mechanism comprising of Rent Authority, Rent Court and Rent Tribunal to provide fast-track resolution of disputes. Disposal of a complaint/appeal by the Rent Court and the Rent Tribunal will be mandatory within 60 days.
- There is no monetary ceiling. At present, in many old properties let out under archaic rent-control Acts, such ceilings have left landlords stuck with outdated rent amounts.
- A digital platform will be set up in the local vernacular language or the language of the State/Union Territory for submitting tenancy agreement and other documents. Rent Authority will keep a tab on these agreements.
- Verbal agreements will be out of the picture, as the MTA mandates written agreement for all new tenancies which is to be submitted to Rent Authority. Tenant will continue to pay the rent even during the pendency of a dispute with a landlord.
- Subletting of premises can only be done with the prior consent of the landlord, and no structural change can be done by the tenant without the written consent of the landlord.

### **Practices enshrined in the Act**

- The security deposit to be paid by the tenant should not exceed two months' rent for residential property (six months' rent in case of non-residential property), and should be a minimum of one month's rent for non-residential property.
- The Act lists the kinds of repairs each party would be responsible for, with the proviso that money for repairs can be deducted from the security deposit or rent, as applicable, if a party refuses to carry out their share of the work.
- No arbitrary eviction of a tenant can be done during currency of the tenancy period, except in accordance with provisions of the Act.
- The Rent Court can allow repossession by the landlord if the tenant misuses the premises, after being served a notice by the landowner.
- Misuse of the premises, as defined, includes public nuisance, damage, or its use for “immoral or illegal purposes”.
- If the tenant refuses to vacate, the landlord can claim double the monthly rent for two months, and four times the monthly rent thereafter.
- In case of a force majeure event, the landlord shall allow the tenant to continue in possession until a period of one month from the date of cessation of such disastrous event, on the terms of existing tenancy agreement.

## **Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS)**

(Source: [PIB](#) )

**Context:** *Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) has been expanded.*

### **Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme**

- The Union Cabinet approved the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme in May 2020 and allowed additional funding of up to Rs.3 lakh crores to different sectors, especially Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and MUDRA borrowers.
- The scheme is a part of the AtmaNirbhar Bharat Abhiyan which was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to make India a self-dependent country.
- Under the ECLGS, all loans sanctioned under the Guaranteed Emergency Credit Line (GECL) facility will be provided with additional credit. However, there are two specifications:
  - The scheme would be applicable for loans sanctioned from the date of announcement of the scheme to October 31, 2020, [**Now September 3, 2021**] OR
  - Guarantees for an amount of Rs.3 lakh crore are issued (whichever happens first)
  - Disbursement is permitted up to December 31, 2021.

### **Objectives of Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS)**

- While the country was fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, major losses were faced by the MSMEs in the manufacturing and other sectors. To overcome this loss, the Government introduced the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme.
- As per this scheme, 100% guarantee coverage is to be provided by National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC) to the Member Lending Institutions (MLI), Banks, Financial Institutions, and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFC)
- It would increase access to, and enable the availability of additional funding facilities to MSME and MUDRA borrowers
- The Scheme aims at mitigating the economic distress faced by MSMEs by providing them additional funding in the form of a fully guaranteed emergency credit line
- It shall also provide credit to the sector at a low cost, thereby enabling the small sector businesses to meet their operational liabilities and restart their manufacturing and work
- Once the proper functioning of the MSMEs in India starts off normally, it will benefit India economically and socially. This is one of the major reasons why the Government introduced this scheme during the unprecedented situation of a pandemic.

### **Who is eligible under the ECLG Scheme?**

- As per the latest eligibility criteria with the launch of the expanded Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme, the following criteria had to be met to be applicable for a loan under the scheme:
  1. Enterprises with a turnover of up to Rs. 250 crores (FY 2019-20) with outstanding loans up to Rs. 50 crores, as of February 29, 2020
  2. GECL credit provided will be up to 20% of the borrower's total outstanding credit as of February 29, 2020.
  3. The maximum amount of loan that can be availed under the scheme is Rs. 5 crore

### **Tenure & Interest Rates under ECLGS**

- The loan tenure is for 4 years and the moratorium period of 1 year on the principal amount is also applicable [**Now the loan tenure is 5 years**]

- Interest rates under ECLGS have also been capped:
  - 9.25% for Banks and Financial Institutions
  - 14% for Non-Banking Financial Companies
- The National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd (NCGTC) is not allowed to charge any Guarantee Fee from the Member Lending Institutions that are included under this scheme

### **Norms for employing retired officials defined**

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** *The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has laid down a defined procedure to be followed by government organisations for getting vigilance clearance before employing a retired official on a contractual or consultancy basis.*

#### **Details:**

- In a letter to the Secretaries of all the Union Ministries and departments, chief executives and chief vigilance officers of public sector undertakings, the CVC said the absence of a uniform procedure sometimes led to a situation where officials with tainted past or cases pending against them were engaged.
- According to the procedure, before offering employment to retired All India Services and Group A officers of the Central government or their equivalent in other organisations owned or controlled by the Centre, vigilance clearance from the employer organisation, from which the officer has retired, should be obtained.
- In case a retired officer served in more than one organisation, clearance has to be obtained from all of them where the person was posted in the 10 years prior to retirement.
- Simultaneously, a communication seeking clearance should also be sent to the CVC.
- If no reply is received from the erstwhile employer (s) within 15 days of sending the communication by speed post, a reminder can be sent.
- If there is no response within 21 days, vigilance clearance should be deemed to have been given. Later, if the employee is found involved in any vigilance-related matter or not cleared from the vigilance point of view, the erstwhile employer organisation would be responsible for all consequential actions.

#### **Cooling-off period**

- In the case of retired officials taking up full-time or contractual assignments in the private sector, the Commission said often, the “cooling off” period was not observed and the act constituted serious misconduct. It directed all government organisations to formulate rules to ensure the cooling-off period was observed.

### **INS Sandhayak decommissioned**

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** *Hydrographic survey ship INS Sandhayak, the first of its class indigenously designed and built, was decommissioned after 40 years of service, at the Naval Dockyard Visakhapatnam in a low-key event attended only by in-station officers and sailors, in line with COVID-19 protocols.*

#### **Details:**





- The ship was conceptualised by the then Chief Hydrographer to the Government of India, Rear Adm FL Fraser, who had a strong desire for indigenously designed and built hydrographic survey vessels in India.
- The design was finalised by Naval Headquarters and the construction began at Garden Reach Ship Builders Limited (GRSE) Kolkata (then Calcutta) by laying the keel in 1978.
- The ship was commissioned into the Navy on February 26, 1981, by Vice Adm M.K. Roy, then FOC-in-C, ENC.
- Since commissioning, the ship has been the alma mater, nurturing the hydrographers of the Navy and laying the foundation for a complete hydrographic coverage of the peninsular waters.
- Also, the success of her design paved the way for all the survey ships in various modifications till recently, it stated. It said the ship had undertaken approximately 200 major hydrographic surveys and numerous minor surveys in both the east and west coasts of the country, the Andaman seas and neighbouring countries too.
- The ship has also been an active participant in many significant operations such as Op Pawan (assisting the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka in 1987), Op Sarong, and Op Rainbow (rendering humanitarian assistance post 2004 Tsunami) and participated in the maiden joint Indo-US HADR Exercise 'Tiger-Triumph'.

### **Stagflation**

(Source: [The Hindu Businessline](http://TheHinduBusinessline.com) )

**Context:** *In India we have hardly had any periods without inflation, while developed markets besides inflation, also experience deflation occasionally. But it's been decades since we saw any of the major economies experience stagflation; a potential threat that exists now according to some economists, due to the money printing in developed economies even as global growth is sluggish.*

#### **What is it?**

- Stagflation is an economic situation where slow economic growth or stagnation, or even recession, coexists with high inflation.
- Normally periods of high economic growth are characterised by price rise. Economic growth drives incomes of corporates and employees which in turn results in more demand for goods and services.
- This leads to inflation and becomes a reinforcing loop. The reverse plays out during periods of recession, which is usually accompanied by deflation.
- But stagflation is a situation where incomes shrink and yet prices rise. The US and UK experienced stagflation in the 1970s.

#### **Why is it important?**

- In a world that has become addicted to easy monetary policy as the panacea to all economic ills, stagflation would be like blocking the jugular vein. The aim of easy monetary policy is to stimulate the economy by stoking demand.
- But if slow economic growth is accompanied by price rise, this is a challenge that cannot be addressed by cutting interest rates and quantitative easing and money printing. That would be like adding fuel to fire.
- Stagflation in the US in 1970s was attributed to three factors — the oil supply shock, poor policy decisions by the Nixon government like high import tariffs and removal of the gold standard, and accommodative monetary policy.



- Even in India monetary policy has been accommodative with low rates to help deal with Covid's economic fallout. The RBI has added to this accommodative stance with liquidity pumping measures like open market operations and special windows for distressed sectors.
- At the same time, it has also warned in its 2020-21 annual report that inflation remains a key risk. While stagflation may appear unlikely in India, plans to address it in case it materialises must be given due consideration.
- If growth does not keep trending up over the next few years, then stagflation could be a likely scenario . In the US, the Fed balance sheet has doubled to nearly \$8 trillion in 18 months.
- This apart, the world is also going through supply shocks driven by delayed supply responses in some commodities and shortages of key components like semi-conductor chips in key industries.
- Tariff wars and protectionism — policy decisions that are inflationary, have also been in play in the last couple of years.
- Connecting these dots, we may very well have in place all of the three main factors that caused the 1970's stagflation — supply shocks, government policy decisions and ultra-accommodative monetary policies.
- As of now though, supply shocks and government policy are less pronounced than ultra-accommodative monetary policy.
- The pain of economic stagnation, high inflation and high unemployment in the US due to stagflation was ended by the 'Volcker shock'.
- US Fed Governor Paul Volcker bit the bullet and took the politically difficult decision of sharply increasing the Fed rate to fight inflation. This solved stagflation, but only after causing a recession in 1981.

#### **The bottomline**

- Stagflation is not hitting the world or India tomorrow.
- But the excessive money printing over the last one year taking with emerging evidence of inflation, can result in the dreaded stagflation. We should not be dismissive of it.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Black Carbon

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** *Black carbon (BC) deposits produced by human activity which accelerate the pace of glacier and snow melt in the Himalayan region can be sharply reduced through new, currently feasible policies by an additional 50% from current levels, a study by World Bank (WB) specialists has said.*

#### Details:

- The research covers the Himalaya, Karakoram and Hindu Kush (HKHK) mountain ranges, where, the report says, glaciers are melting faster than the global average ice mass.
- The rate of retreat of HKHK glaciers is estimated to be 0.3 metres per year in the west to 1.0 metre per year in the east. BC adds to the impact of climate change.
- Full implementation of current policies to mitigate BC can achieve a 23% reduction but enacting new policies and incorporating them through regional cooperation among countries can achieve enhanced benefits, the WB said in the report titled “Glaciers of the Himalayas, Climate Change, Black Carbon and Regional Resilience” released on Thursday.
- **BC is a short-lived pollutant that is the second-largest contributor to warming the planet behind carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>).**
- Unlike other greenhouse gas emissions, BC is quickly washed out and can be eliminated from the atmosphere if emissions stop - the publication says.
- Unlike historical carbon emissions, it is also a localised source with greater local impact.
- Some of the ongoing policy measures to cut BC emissions are enhancing fuel efficiency standards for vehicles, phasing out diesel vehicles and promoting electric vehicles, accelerating the use of liquefied petroleum gas for cooking and through clean cookstove programmes, as well as upgrading brick kiln technologies.
- However, with all existing measures, water from glacier melt is still projected to increase in absolute volume by 2040, with impacts on downstream activities and communities.
- Regional integration and collaboration was one way to address the question of melting glaciers. Glacier melt produces flash floods, landslips, soil erosion, and glacial lake outburst floods.
- Deposits of BC act in two ways hastening the pace of glacier melt: by decreasing surface reflectance of sunlight and by raising air temperature, the researchers point out.
- Specifically, in the Himalayas, reducing black carbon emissions from cookstoves, diesel engines, and open burning would have the greatest impact and could significantly reduce radiative forcing and help to maintain a greater portion of Himalayan glacier systems. More detailed modelling at a higher spatial resolution is needed to expand on the work already completed.
- The WB publication says “Industry [primarily brick kilns] and residential burning of solid fuel together account for 45–66% of regional anthropogenic [man-made] BC deposition, followed by on-road diesel fuels (7–18%) and open burning (less than 3% in all seasons)” in the region.

## **H10N3 bird flu detected in human**

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** A 41-year-old man in China's eastern province of Jiangsu has been **confirmed as the first human case of infection** with a rare strain of bird flu known as H10N3, Beijing's National Health Commission (NHC) has said.

### **What do we know about H10N3?**

- Little is known about the virus, which appears to be rare in birds, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and does not cause severe disease.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) said while the source of the patient's exposure to the H10N3 virus was not known and no other cases were found among the local population, there was no indication of human-to-human transmission yet.
- Yet avian influenza viruses that have little impact on birds can be much more serious in people, such as the H7N9 strain that killed almost 300 people in China during the winter of 2016-2017. The WHO has said there had been only rare instances of person-to-person spread of the H7N9 virus.
- The risk of further infection with H10N3 is currently believed to be very low, with experts describing the case as "sporadic".
- Such cases occur occasionally in China which has huge populations of both farmed and wild birds of many species.
- And with growing surveillance of avian influenza in the human population, more infections with bird flu viruses are being picked up.
- The strain is "not a very common virus," and only around 160 isolates of the virus were reported in the 40 years to 2018.
- Still, flu viruses can mutate rapidly and mix with other strains circulating on farms or among migratory birds, known as "reassortment," meaning they could make genetic changes that pose a transmission threat to humans.

### **What do we still need to know?**

- The genetic sequence of the virus that infected the patient has not yet been published, and will be needed to fully assess its risk.
- Scientists will want to know how easily H10N3 can infect human cells to determine if it could become a greater risk.
- For example, the H5N1 variant that first infected people in 1997 has been the most deadly, killing 455 people globally so far.
- It would only take a few mutations before the H5N1 variant gains the ability to spread easily from person to person, said Ben Cowling, professor at the School of Public Health at the University of Hong Kong, making it a high priority for surveillance.
- Having the genetic information for the H10N3 variant would help assess if it was "close to being the type of virus we should be worried about", he said.

## **China's 'artificial sun' experimental fusion reactor**

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** China's Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak (EAST), which mimics the energy generation process of the sun, set a new record after it ran at 216 million degrees Fahrenheit (120 million degrees Celsius) for 101 seconds, according to state media. For another 20 seconds, the "artificial sun"



*also achieved a peak temperature of 288 million degrees Fahrenheit (160 million degrees Celsius), which is over ten times hotter than the sun.*

#### **Details:**

- The latest feat by Chinese scientists is a significant step in the country's quest to unlock clean and limitless energy, with minimal waste products.
- But experts say there is still a long way to go for China's experimental 'artificial sun'.

#### **What is China's 'artificial sun' EAST?**

- The Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak (EAST) reactor is an advanced nuclear fusion experimental research device located at the Institute of Plasma Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (ASIPP) in Hefei, China.
- The purpose of the artificial sun is to replicate the process of nuclear fusion, which is the same reaction that powers the sun.
- The EAST is one of three major domestic tokamaks that are presently being operated across the country.
- Apart from the EAST, China is currently operating the HL-2A reactor as well as J-TEXT.
- In December 2020, HL-2M Tokamak, China's largest and most advanced nuclear fusion experimental research device, was successfully powered up for the first time — a key milestone in the growth of China's nuclear power research capabilities.
- Since it first became operational in 2006, the EAST has set several records for the duration of confinement of exceedingly hot plasma.
- The EAST project is part of the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) facility, which will become the world's largest nuclear fusion reactor when it becomes operational in 2035. The project includes the contributions of several countries, including India, South Korea, Japan, Russia and the United States.



#### **How does the 'artificial sun' EAST work?**

- The EAST Tokamak device is designed to replicate the nuclear fusion process carried out by the sun and stars.
- Nuclear fusion is a process through which high levels of energy are produced without generating large quantities of waste.
- Previously, energy was produced through nuclear fission — a process in which the nucleus of a heavy atom was split into two or more nuclei of lighter atoms.
- While fission is an easier process to carry out, it generates far more nuclear waste. Unlike fission, fusion also does not emit greenhouse gases and is considered a safer process with lower risk of accidents.
- Once mastered, nuclear fusion could potentially provide unlimited clean energy and very low costs.
- For nuclear fusion to occur, tremendous heat and pressure are applied on hydrogen atoms so that they fuse together.
- The nuclei of deuterium and tritium — both found in hydrogen — are made to fuse together to create a helium nucleus, a neutron along with a whole lot of energy
- Fuel is heated to temperatures of over 150 million degrees C so that it forms a hot plasma "soup" of subatomic particles.
- With the help of a strong magnetic field, the plasma is kept away from the walls of the reactor to ensure it does not cool down and lose its potential to generate large amounts of energy. The plasma is confined for long durations for fusion to take place.

## **US investigation into digital services tax**

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** *The United States government announced further suspension of punitive tariffs for six months on India, Austria, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom while it continues to resolve the digital services taxes investigation amid the ongoing multilateral negotiations at the OECD and the G20.*

### **What is the US investigation regarding digital services taxation?**

- The US has conducted a year-long investigation into digital services taxes imposed by countries, stating that they are against tech companies like Apple, Amazon, Google and Facebook.
- The investigation began in June 2020 and in January 2021, following investigations the USTR determined that the digital services taxes adopted by Austria, India, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom discriminated against US digital companies and were inconsistent with principles of international taxation and burdened US companies.
- The US announced 25 per cent tariffs on over \$2 billion worth of imports from these six countries but then immediately suspended the duties to allow time for international tax negotiations.

### **What's the case against India?**

- In the case of India, the USTR's proposed course of action includes additional tariffs of up to 25 per cent ad valorem on an aggregate level of trade that would collect duties on goods of India in the range of the amount of DST that India is expected to collect from US companies.
- Around 26 categories of goods are in the preliminary list of products that would be subject to the additional tariffs.
- This includes shrimps, basmati rice, cigarette paper, cultured pearls, semi precious stones, silver powder and silver articles of jewelry, gold mixed link necklaces and neck chains and certain furniture of bentwood.

### **What are the digital services taxes in India?**

- The NDA government had moved an amendment in the Finance Bill 2020-21 imposing a 2 per cent digital service tax on trade and services by non-resident e-commerce operators with a turnover of over Rs 2 crore, effectively expanding the scope of equalisation levy that, till last year, only applied to digital advertising services.
- The new levy that became applicable from April last year has expanded the ambit of the equalisation levy for non-resident e-commerce operators involved in supply of services, including online sale of goods and provision of services.
- E-commerce operators are obligated to pay the tax at the end of each quarter. Estimates by the USTR indicate that the value of the DST payable by US-based company groups to India will be up to approximately \$55 million per year.

## **NASA missions for the exploration of Venus**

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** *NASA has selected two missions to the planet Venus, Earth's nearest neighbour. The missions called DAVINCI+ and VERITAS have been selected based on their potential for scientific value and the feasibility of their development plans. NASA is expected to allot \$500 million to each of these missions that will launch between 2028-2030.*

## About Venus

- For those on Earth, Venus is the second-brightest object in the sky after the moon. It appears bright because of its thick cloud cover that reflects and scatters light.
- But while Venus, which is the second closest planet to the Sun, is called the Earth's twin because of their similar sizes, the two planets have significant differences between them.
- For one, the planet's thick atmosphere traps heat and is the reason that it is the hottest planet in the solar system, despite coming after Mercury, the closest planet to the Sun. Surface temperatures on Venus can go up to 471 degrees Celsius, which is hot enough to melt lead, NASA notes.
- Further, Venus moves forward on its orbit around the Sun but spins backwards around its axis slowly. This means on Venus the Sun rises in the west and sets in the East.
- One day on Venus is equivalent to 243 Earth days because of its backward spinning, opposite to that of the Earth's and most other planets. Venus also does not have a moon and no rings.



## What are these missions?

- Both missions are part of the space agency's Discovery Program, which began in 1992 to give scientists the chance to launch some missions that use fewer resources and have shorter developmental times.
- The two selections are a part of the ninth Discovery Program and were made from proposals submitted in 2019.
- DAVINCI+ is short for 'Deep Atmosphere Venus Investigation of Noble gases, Chemistry, and Imaging' and is the first US-led mission to the planet's atmosphere since 1978. It will try to understand Venus' composition to see how the planet formed and evolved.
  - This mission also consists of a descent sphere that will pass through the planet's thick atmosphere and make observations and take measurements of noble gases and other elements.
  - Significantly, this mission will also try to return the first high resolution photographs of a geological feature that is unique to Venus. This feature, which is called "tesserae" may be comparable to Earth's continents, NASA says. The presence of tesseraes may suggest that Venus has tectonic plates like Earth.
- The second mission called VERITAS is short for 'Venus Emissivity, Radio Science, InSAR, Topography, and Spectroscopy' and will map the planet's surface to determine its geologic history and understand the reasons why it developed so differently from Earth.
  - VERITAS will orbit Venus with a radar that will help to create a three dimensional reconstruction of its topography which might be able to tell scientists if processes such as plate tectonics and volcanism are still active there.
  - This mission will also map the emissions from Venus's surface that may help in determining the type of rocks that exist on Venus—a piece of information that is not exactly known yet. It will also determine if active volcanoes are releasing water vapour into the atmosphere.

## The EAGLE Act

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** Recently, Democrat Representative Zoe Lofgren and Republican John Curtis, introduced the Equal Access to Green cards for Legal Employment (EAGLE) Act of 2021, which, according to their statement, will "benefit the US economy by allowing American employers to focus on hiring immigrants

*based on their merit, not their birthplace”. The bill will be advantageous for Indian job-seekers who currently rely on temporary visas or await green cards to work in the US.*

### **What does the EAGLE Act say about the per-country limit?**

- The bipartisan act seeks to phase out the seven per cent per-country limit on employment-based immigrant visas and raises the per-country limit on family-sponsored visas from seven per cent to 15 per cent.
- It provides for a nine-year period for the elimination of this limit.
- The seven per cent limit was introduced in the mid-20th century, which has led countries with relatively small populations to be allocated the same number of visas as a relatively large-population country, states a press release by the Representatives.

### **How does it help Indians?**

- Think-tank Cato Institute had reported in March 2020 that 75 per cent of the backlog for employment-based visas was made up of Indians.
- “Backlogged Indian workers face an impossible wait of nine decades if they all could remain in the line,” the report states. “More than 200,000 petitions filed for Indians could expire as a result of the workers dying of old age before they receive green cards.”
- With the EAGLE Act, the per-country cap would be removed, which may expedite the petitions for those applying for employment-based green cards.
- However, since the highest number of applicants are from India and China, the EAGLE Act also seeks to reserve visas for ‘Lower Admission States’ for nine fiscal years (FY).
- While 30 per cent of employment-based visas will be reserved in FY1, this would be reduced to five per cent in FY 7, 8 and 9.
- The bill also ensures that “no country may receive more than 25 per cent of reserved visas and no country may receive more than 85 per cent of unreserved visas,” in the nine fiscal years.

## **Pope updates canon law to address paedophilia by priests**

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** *Pope Francis updated the Catholic Church’s criminal code by adding details on punishing sexual abuse crimes of minors by priests, measures long sought by activists against paedophilia.*

### **Details:**

- Revision of the penal sanctions within the Code of Canon Law followed a years-long process involving input from canonist and criminal law experts and came after repeated complaints by victims of sexual abuse and others that the code’s previous wording was outdated and intransparent.
- The purpose of the revision, the most comprehensive since 1983, is “restoration of justice, the reform of the offender, and the repair of scandal” wrote Pope Francis in introducing the changes.
- Since becoming pope in 2013, the Argentine pontiff has striven to tackle the decades-long sexual abuse scandals involving Catholic priests around the globe, although many activists against paedophilia insist much more needs to be done.
- He convened an unprecedented summit on clerical sex abuse in 2019 while lifting secrecy rules that hindered investigations of abusing priests, among other measures.
- The new code falls short of explicitly spelling out sexual offences against minors yet refers to offences against the sixth commandment, which prohibits adultery.



- Under the new heading of “Offences against human life, dignity and liberty”, the code specifies that a priest is to be stripped of his office and punished “with other just penalties” if he commits offences against the sixth commandment with a minor.
- Similarly, a priest who grooms or induces a minor “to expose himself or herself pornographically or to take part in pornographic exhibitions” will be similarly punished.
- One aim of the revision, wrote Pope Francis, was to reduce the number of penalties left to the discretion of judges, especially in the most serious cases.

### **International Red Corner Notice**

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** Lawyers for fugitive businessman and diamond dealer Mehul Choksi and the public prosecutor in Dominica filed written submissions at the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, ahead of a hearing on whether he will be deported. As Indian investigators watch the outcome of the hearing carefully, lawyers are expected to argue over whether Dominica is prepared to implement the **International Red Corner Notice** in India’s favour, and whether his citizenship will be a factor in the court’s decision.

#### **Interpol Notices**

- INTERPOL Notices are international requests for cooperation or alerts allowing police in member countries to share critical crime-related information.

<b>Interpol Notices</b>	
Red Notice	To seek the location/arrest of a person wanted by a judicial jurisdiction or an international tribunal with a view to his/her extradition.
Green Notice	To warn about a person’s criminal activities if that person is considered to be a possible threat to public safety.
Blue Notice	To locate, identify or obtain information on a person of interest in a criminal investigation.
Yellow Notice	To locate a missing person or to identify a person unable to identify himself/herself.
Black Notice	To seek information on unidentified bodies.
Orange Notice	To warn of an event, a person, an object or a process representing an imminent threat and danger to persons or property.
Purple Notice	To provide information on modus operandi, procedures, objects, devices, or hiding places used by criminals.
Interpol – UNSC Special Notice	To inform Interpol’s members that an individual or an entity is subject to UN sanctions.

### **China’s 3-child policy**

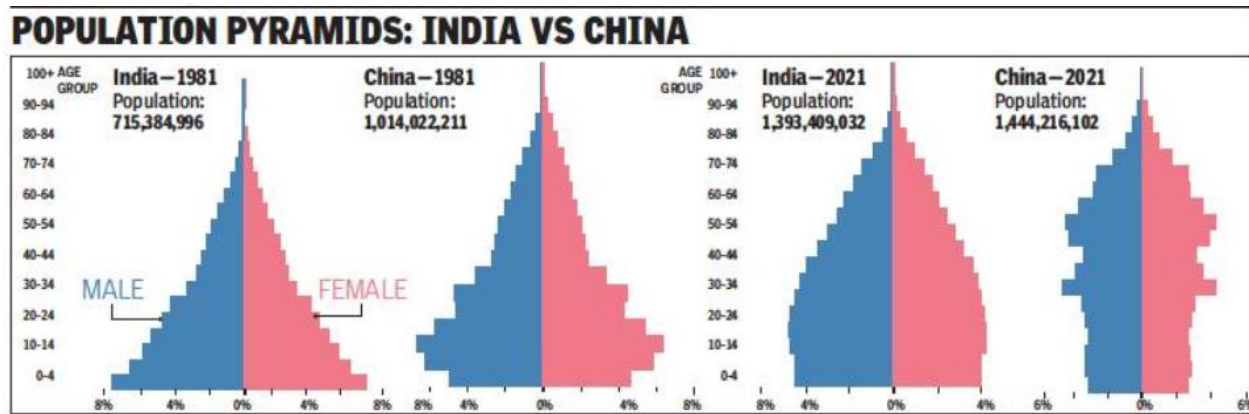
(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** China will for the first time allow couples to have a third child, the country’s government said, in a further relaxation of family planning rules five years after a “two-child policy” largely failed to boost birth rates.

#### **Details:**



- The change comes less than three weeks after the release of China's once-in-a-decade population census that painted an alarming picture of declining births.
- The National Bureau of Statistics said on May 11 that 12 million babies were born last year, the lowest number since 1961, a time when Mao's China was in the midst of a four-year famine, and down from 17.86 million in 2016.
- The census said China's population was 1.41 billion in 2020, an increase of 72 million since the last census in 2010, reflecting a 5.38% growth in this period and a 0.53% annual growth.
- Forecasts say the population could peak in the next couple of years and most likely by 2025, when India will become the world's most populous country.



### Litoria mira

(Source: [Indian Express](https://www.indianexpress.com) )

**Context:** A species of frog lives in the rainforests of New Guinea that appears to be made from chocolate — just like the magical sweets popular in the wizarding world of J K Rowling's Harry Potter.

#### Details:

- It is called Litoria mira, inspired by the Latin adjective mirum, which means surprised or strange, stemming from the scientist's surprise in discovering an undescribed member of the predominately Australian Litoria genus of tree frogs.
- The Litoria mira has a well-known relative — the common green tree frog of Australia called Litoria cerulean. Except for the colour of their skins, the two seem alike — until you study them closely.
- Litoria mira can be distinguished from all other Litoria by its unique combination of moderately large size, webbing on hand, relatively short and robust limbs, and small violet patch of skin on the edge of its eyes.
- The reason that the chocolate frog from New Guinea and the Australian green tree frog are similar is that



Australia and New Guinea used to be linked by land for much of the late Tertiary period (2.6 million years ago), and share many biotic elements.

- Today, the island of New Guinea is separated from the 'horn' of Queensland by the Torres Strait. New Guinea is dominated by rainforest, and northern Australia by the savannah.

### **Texas voting bill**

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** *Democrat lawmakers in Texas walked out in the state House of Representatives night to block passage of a controversial bill that will make it harder for people to cast their votes in state elections.*

#### **What is this Bill?**

- The legislation called SB 7 was passed in the House along party lines earlier this month.
- The Texas Tribune notes that among the legislation's most significant measures include limiting how local officials can expand voting options, regulating the distribution of polling places in urban areas, requiring paper trails for voting, setting new rules for voting by mail, regulating donations to counties, setting new rules for removing people from the voter rolls, enhancing poll watcher freedom and requiring the recording of vote counting.
- The text of the bill states that it is an act "...relating to elections, including election integrity and security; creating criminal offenses; providing civil penalties."

#### **What is this legislation about?**

- According to the Brennan Center for Justice, this year, various states have already enacted more than 20 laws that will make it harder for Americans to vote.
- The center also notes that more than one-third of these bills are in three states including Texas and Michigan that have nine bills each and Wisconsin that has seven bills that are trying to restrict voting.
- Further, while at least 32 moving bills in 15 states would restrict the ability to vote by mail, two bills in Wisconsin would eliminate the ability of voters to receive an absentee ballot for each election. Other such bills in different states will make voting restricted by imposing new and stricter voter ID requirements, expanding voter purge practices and increasing barriers to voter registration.
- Even before the US presidential elections last year, the US Postal Service (USPS), which is one of the most important and trusted public institutions in the country was at the centre of a political row with Democrats on one side insisting that more Americans be given access to mail-in voting and Republicans, on the other hand, opposing this demand alleging that there are greater chances of fraud with mail-in voting.
- In the run up to the elections, former president Donald Trump repeatedly alleged that mail-in voting will lead to fraud in the election process.

### **Water bears and Baby squid in the International Space Station**

(Source: [The Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** *On June 3, NASA will send 128 glow-in-the-dark baby squids and some 5,000 tardigrades (also called water bears) to the International Space Station for research purposes.*

### **The International Space Station**

- A space station is essentially a large spacecraft that remains in low-earth orbit for extended periods of time. It is like a large laboratory in space, and allows astronauts to come aboard and stay for weeks or months to carry out experiments in microgravity.
- The ISS has been in space since 1998, and has been known for the exemplary cooperation between the five participating space agencies that run it: NASA (United States), Roscosmos (Russia), JAXA (Japan), ESA (Europe), and CSA (Canada).
- For over 20 years since its launch, humans have continuously lived and carried out scientific investigations on the \$150 billion ISS under microgravity conditions, being able to make breakthroughs in research not possible on Earth.
- As per NASA, the floating laboratory has hosted more than 3,000 research and educational investigations from researchers in 108 countries and areas, carrying out cutting edge research in various disciplines, including biology, human physiology, and physical, material and space science.

### **So, why are the sea animals needed at the ISS?**

- The water bears and bobtail squid will be involved in experiments aboard the floating laboratory, and will be arriving in a semi-frozen state before they are thawed out, revived and grown in a special bioculture system, according to CNN.
- One of these studies involves looking at how the water bears– tiny animals (around 1mm long) that can adapt to extreme conditions on Earth, including high pressure, temperature and radiation– would behave in a spaceflight environment.
- Researchers will be able to study their hardiness close up, and possibly identify the genes that allow them to become so resilient.
- By learning how the water bears can survive in low gravity conditions, it would be possible to design better techniques to keep astronauts healthy on long-duration space missions.
- Scientists also want to look at how microgravity conditions affect the relationship between the bobtail squid –which are also tiny (3 mm long)– and beneficial microbes, as part of a study called UMAMI, short for Understanding of Microgravity on Animal-Microbe Interactions.
- Microbes play a crucial role in the normal development of animal tissues and in maintaining human health, and the research will allow scientists to have a better understanding of how beneficial microbes interact with animals when there is a lack of gravity.
- In the human body, microorganisms contribute to a variety of functions, including digestion, developing the immune system and detoxifying harmful chemicals. A disruption in our relationship with these microbes can lead to disease.





# Mains

## GS I

### Recognising caste-based violence against women

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** *The horror of the gang rape of a 19-year-old Dalit woman in Hathras in 2020 is still fresh in our minds. Activists, academics and lawyers argued that the sexual violence took place on account of the woman's gender and caste and that the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 (PoA Act) must be invoked.*

#### Details:

- On the heels of the Hathras crime came a new judgment of the Supreme Court (Patan Jamal Vali v. State of Andhra Pradesh) addressing the intersectionality of caste, gender and disability. In this case, the victim of sexual assault was a blind 22-year-old Dalit woman.
- The trial court and the High Court had convicted the accused for rape under Section 376 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), and under Section 3(2)(v) of the PoA Act, and sentenced him to life imprisonment.
- The Supreme Court, in its judgment delivered by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and Justice M.R. Shah, confirmed the conviction and the punishment for rape under the IPC but set aside the conviction under the PoA Act.
- On the one hand, this judgment is a huge step forward as the court used the opportunity to bring recognition to intersectional discrimination faced by women on the grounds of sex, caste and disability.
- However, by setting aside the conviction under the PoA Act, it is like many other previous judgments of the Supreme Court.

#### The intersectional approach

- Let us focus on the positive aspects first. The Supreme Court, in a first, elaborated on the need for an intersectional approach, to take into account the multiple marginalities that the victim faced.
- It relied on well-known intersectional theorists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw who first coined the term 'intersectionality' and on the statement of the Combahee River Collective which addressed the intersectional discrimination faced by black women in the U.S.
- Using these sources, the court recognised that when the identity of a woman intersects with her caste, class, religion, disability and sexual orientation, she may face violence and discrimination due to two or more grounds.
- It said we need to understand how multiple sources of oppression operated cumulatively to produce a specific experience of subordination for the blind Dalit woman. Placing special emphasis on making the criminal justice system more responsive to women with disabilities facing sexual assault, the court also laid down directions to train judges, the police and prosecutors to be sensitised in such cases.
- But despite using an intersectional lens, the court set aside conviction under the PoA Act. The PoA Act was enacted to address atrocities against persons from SC and ST communities and was amended in 2015 to specifically recognise more atrocities against Dalit and Adivasi women including sexual assault, sexual harassment and Devadasi dedication.
- Section 3(2)(v) states that if any person not being an SC/ST member commits any offence under the IPC punishable with imprisonment of 10 years or more against a person on the ground that such a person is from an SC/ST community, he shall be punishable with imprisonment for life and with fine.
- This was amended in 2015, to change the phrase "on the ground that such person is a member of SC/ST" to "knowing that such person is a member of SC/ST".



- In cases of sexual violence against Dalit and Adivasi women, courts have almost consistently set aside convictions under the PoA Act. In 2006 in *Ramdas and Others v. State of Maharashtra*, where a Dalit minor girl was raped, the Supreme Court set aside the conviction under the PoA Act stating that the mere fact that the victim happened to be a woman who was member of an SC community would not attract the PoA Act.
- In *Dinesh Alias Buddha v. State of Rajasthan* (2006), the Supreme Court held: “It is not case of the prosecution that the rape was committed on the victim since she was a member of Scheduled Caste.”
- In *Asharfi v. State of Uttar Pradesh* (2017), the court held that the evidence and materials on record did not show that the appellant had committed rape on the ground that the victim was member of an SC community.
- In 2019, in *Khuman Singh v. State of Madhya Pradesh*, a case of murder, again the court held that the fact that the deceased was a member of an SC community was not disputed but there was no evidence to show that the offence was committed only on that ground; conviction under the PoA Act was set aside.
- There are several precedents insisting on an unrealistic burden of proof. This issue needs to be referred to a larger bench to take a different view.

### **Burden of proof**

- In all these judgments, the court held that there was no evidence to show that the accused committed sexual assault on the ground that the victim was member of an SC/ST community.
- One is tempted to ask: what kind of evidence would that be? How would the prosecution prove in any given case that the accused had sexually assaulted the victim because she was Dalit/ Adivasi?
- The only evidence that can be led is that the victim was from an SC/ST community and that the accused was aware of that.
- When a woman is from a marginalised caste and is disabled, she faces discrimination due to her sex, caste/tribe and disability, all of which render her vulnerable to sexual violence. This is what intersectionality theory requires us to recognise.
- In the *Patan Jamal Vali* case, the court using the intersectional lens recognises that evidence of discrimination or violence on a specific ground may be absent or difficult to prove.
- It agreed with the finding of the sessions judge that the prosecution’s case would not fail merely because the victim’s mother did not mention in her statement to the police that the offence was committed against her daughter because she was from an SC community.
- It also confirmed that it would be reasonable to presume that the accused knew the victim’s caste as he was known to the victim’s family. Despite such a nuanced understanding, the court held that there was no separate evidence led by the prosecution to show that the accused committed the offence on the basis of the victim’s caste.
- It is unfortunate that intersectionality, which seeks to recognise the multiple grounds of marginalisation faced by women, was used by the court to state that it becomes difficult to establish whether it was caste, gender or disability that led to the commission of the offence.
- Why would this matter, one might ask, if the punishment of life imprisonment was upheld? It matters because the repeated setting aside of convictions under the PoA Act bolsters the allegations that the law is misused and amounts to the erasure of caste-based violence faced by women.
- Further, as stated in the recent Parliamentary Standing Committee Report on Atrocities and Crimes against Women and Children, the “high acquittal rate motivates and boosts the confidence of dominant and powerful communities for continued perpetration”. This judgment was a missed opportunity for the court to use intersectionality to uphold the conviction under the PoA Act or refer the matter to a larger bench if needed.
- We need to stop hiding behind smokescreens of hyper-technicality of evidence and recognise caste-based violence against women when it stares us in the face.
- Else, our caste discrimination laws will be rendered toothless. If intersectionality theory mattered in this case, it should have influenced an interpretation of the PoA Act that reflects the lived experiences of women facing sexual violence.

## GS II

### **Probing the origins of the SARS-CoV-2 virus**

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** On May 14, a group of 18 scientists, most of them from the U.S., led by David A. Relman, published a letter in the journal *Science*, calling for further investigation to determine the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their reasoning was that in spite of a lot of scientific progress in “understanding the causative agent, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), its transmission, pathogenesis, and mitigation by vaccines, therapeutics, and non-pharmaceutical interventions”, more work needed to be done. This was necessary because the two theories on the origins — the virus could have been accidentally released from a laboratory or it was the result of a spillover from some animal species to humans — both remained valid. The novel coronavirus was first reported from Wuhan, a Chinese city hosting a laboratory conducting virus research, and the Program for Monitoring Emerging Diseases (ProMED) notified pneumonia of unknown cause in the city on December 30, 2019. The city’s Huanan wet market was associated with many of the earliest cases.

#### **What have U.S. intelligence agencies been asked to do?**

- Since the call issued by scientists, U.S. President Joe Biden, on May 26, ordered an investigation by intelligence agencies into the origins of the virus.
- The Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, has also acknowledged that more work needs to be done on the lab leak theory, although a WHO team that visited Wuhan thought a leak to be the least likely hypothesis. Kristian G. Andersen, a professor at the Department of Immunology and Microbiology at the Scripps Research Institute in the U.S., and his colleagues have hypothesised that the virus emerged from natural mutations.

#### **Why has the demand for a fresh inquiry arisen?**

- WHO’s governing forum, the World Health Assembly, mandated the Director-General in May 2020 to conduct an inquiry into the origin of SARS-CoV-2, and a joint probe was carried out by WHO and China in January-February 2021.
- Since there was no conclusive evidence for either hypothesis — natural spillover or lab leak — there were apprehensions when the report leaned in favour of the animal origin hypothesis, describing it as “likely to very likely”, and stated that a laboratory incident was “extremely unlikely”.
- Responding to the report, Dr. Tedros said he did not see the investigation as being extensive enough, and went along with the view that more studies were necessary. “Although the team has concluded that a laboratory leak is the least likely hypothesis, this requires further investigation, potentially with additional missions involving specialist experts, which I am ready to deploy,” he informed WHO Member-States at a briefing on the report in March this year (<https://bit.ly/3fyR7M2>).
- One of the researchers who signed the letter to *Science*, Marc Lipsitch, argued that neither laboratory origin, nor natural origin had been ruled out. There was no positive evidence available from the inquiry. He was particularly concerned that the lab leak possibility had been given inadequate attention by the WHO team, and, in fact, treated as a “conspiracy theory”.
- Understanding the origin of the virus was important to both increase safety in laboratories undertaking biological research, and to prevent pandemics of animal origin.

### What is the basis for the natural origin hypothesis?

- Based on its study of possible natural origins, the Joint WHO-China study report identifies a SARS-related coronavirus in a (horseshoe) bat (SARSr-CoV; RaTG13) to which the SARS-CoV-2 virus has 96.2% genomic similarity.
- The novel coronavirus is less similar, by comparison, to the genome of viruses that have caused other epidemics such as SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) and MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome).
- Again, the higher infectivity of SARS-CoV-2 is attributed to peculiarities that it contains in the form of unique insertion of four amino acids in its spike protein that makes it more efficient than the virus causing SARS, for instance.
- Kristian G. Andersen, who wrote about the “Proximal origin of SARS-CoV-2” along with his colleagues in Nature, concluded that natural selection on a human or human-like host appeared to facilitate optimal binding of the spike protein of the novel coronavirus with ACE2 receptors.
- Their arguments are based, among other things, on genetic differences between the viruses: while the RaTG13 in bats is extremely similar to SARS-CoV-2, the receptor binding domain (RBD) of the spike — the RBD protein binds to the ACE2 receptor — actually is divergent for the two, with the former appearing less efficient.
- Again, some coronaviruses found in pangolins in China are similar to SARS-CoV-2 in the RBD, showing that the optimised spike protein for efficient binding with human-like ACE2 may have resulted from natural selection.
- It could be hypothesised that while no direct link could be identified to a progenitor virus for the one that has paralysed the world, the process by which the virus could adapt itself to spread among intermediate animals and then humans was a natural one.
- It is also possible that a progenitor virus was acquired by humans, and it became more efficient at transmission as it spread among humans during an undetected phase.
- Dr. Andersen examined the possibility that there could have been an inadvertent release of SARS-CoV-2 from a laboratory, but argues that no progenitor virus with very high genetic similarity for such an experiment has been described, and the changes to the virus to transmit efficiently would have involved its repeated passage through cell cultures or animals with similar ACE2 receptors, which have not been described either.
- What does stand out in the present crisis is the emerging call for a global framework for safe biological laboratory research, and more insight into related coronaviruses, animal hosts, mutations, and pathways by which novel viruses infect humans.

### Holding leaders to account

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** *From the first COVID-19 wave to the second, certain things have remained predictably consistent in India. First, the governments at the Centre and in different States have displayed their incapacities. Second, the party in power has constantly asked everyone to ‘refrain from playing politics’ while we are in the midst of a pandemic. While this sounds good in the first instance, repeated requests to ‘refrain from playing politics’ nudges us to examine the reasons behind such posturing.*

### Meaning of politics





- And that takes us to the question, what is politics all about? Unlike the popular myth, politics is not only about what happens in Assemblies and Parliament. It should also not be perceived as a dirty word signifying the lust for power or the route to meeting personal ambitions.
- An important element of politics is government formation, but more significant in a democratic set up is to keep creating avenues for civic engagement. It is through such avenues that informed citizens are able to fulfil their duty as well as right to question the very government they elected.
- Successful government formation or peaceful transition of power from one political outfit to another is not the end of politics.
- Vigilant citizens should be able speak directly on a platform or through an association or the existing Opposition about their concerns.
- During an unprecedented crisis such as the one we are facing now, sharing fears, trauma and anxieties through a medium also occupies a space in the approved hamper of politics and political activities. Any government which begins denigrating or demonising such critical voices against it is actually doing a great disservice to the very idea of politics. It forgets that it is the electors who occupy the central rostrum in a democracy and not the elected.
- History has taught us that whenever regimes have felt that they are no longer in control of the mess they created, their first approach is to shift the goalposts.
- Thus, ‘please don’t play politics’ is the only weapon in their hands. In the last eight weeks, an overwhelming number of people have needed hospital beds, oxygen support or basic life-saving drugs, but only thousands have been lucky to have them.
- Thousands of families have lost their loved ones due to the unavailability of a live-saving instrument or drug. They have suffered the agony of being unable to attend burials or cremations of their near and dear ones. Hundreds of bodies have been found floating in different river streams in north India.

#### **Dismissing concerns**

- Members of the Opposition, civil society groups and hundreds of doctors and healthcare professionals flagged concerns about the huge lacunae in health infrastructure much before the second wave began. Their concerns were ridiculed and dismissed.
- A government which was not able to deal with its own inferiority complex was quick to parade ministers and spokespersons to label all those voices as ‘political’. The regime must remember that pain and grief are two enduring emotions.
- The mismanagement of the pandemic has resulted in lakhs of grieving families in India. Though important, routine press conferences informing people that the recovery rate is high or that the positivity rate is going down are no soothing balm to the families who have lost their loved ones not just to the virus but to the lack of facilities which could have saved them.
- When grieving families are interviewed, they don’t blame the virus for their irreparable loss but the apathy and callousness of the government.
- The French sociologist Alain Touraine once said that the political class is becoming increasingly alien to the people. This is true of the government of the day. Our constitutional arrangement is such that the government is accountable to the people.
- The government’s disdain for people raising critical issues about the mismanagement of the crisis makes it clear that the leader of the regime does not think of “We the people...” but instead thinks, “I am the people”.

### **Breaking the cycle of child labour**

(Source: [The Hindu](http://TheHindu.com) )

**Context:** *The true extent of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on child labour is yet to be measured but all indications show that it would be significant as children are unable to attend school and parents are*

*unable to find work. However, not all the factors that contribute to child labour were created by the pandemic; most of them were pre-existing and have been exposed or amplified by it.*

### **What the data show**

- As the world enters the third decade of the 21st century, 152 million children around the world are still in child labour, 73 million of them in hazardous work.
- A Government of India survey (NSS Report No. 585, 2017-18, Statement 3.12, p.35) suggests that 95% of the children in the age group of 6-13 years are attending educational institutions (formal and informal) while the corresponding figures for those in the age group of 14-17 years is 79.6%.
- Hence, a large number of children in India remain vulnerable, facing physical and psychological risks to a healthy development.
- The Census of India 2011 reports 10.1 million working children in the age group of 5-14 years, out of whom 8.1 million are in rural areas mainly engaged as cultivators (26%) and agricultural labourers (32.9%).
- While multiple data vary widely on enrolment/attendance ratios in India, UNESCO estimates based on the 2011 Census record 38.1 million children as “out of school” (18.3% of total children in the age group of 6-13 years). Work performed may not appear to be immediately dangerous, but it may produce long-term and devastating consequences for their education, their skills acquisition, and hence their future possibilities to overcome the vicious circle of poverty, incomplete education and poor quality jobs.
- A Rapid Survey on Children (2013-14), jointly undertaken by the Ministry of Women and Child Development and UNICEF, found that less than half of children in the age group of 10-14 years have completed primary education. These remain challenges we must overcome.

### **A decrease in India**

- One piece of good news is that child labour in India decreased in the decade 2001 to 2011, and this demonstrates that the right combination of policy and programmatic interventions can make a difference. Policy interventions such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) 2005, the Right to Education Act 2009 and the Mid Day Meal Scheme have paved the way for children to be in schools along with guaranteed wage employment (unskilled) for rural families.
- Concerted efforts towards convergence of government schemes is also the focus of the implementation of the National Child Labour Project. Ratifying International Labour Organization Conventions Nos. 138 and 182 in 2017, the Indian government further demonstrated its commitment to the elimination of child labour including those engaged in hazardous occupations.
- The Ministry of Labour and Employment-operated online portal ([www.pencil.gov.in](http://www.pencil.gov.in)) allows government officials, law enforcement agencies and non-governmental organisations to share information and coordinate on child labour cases at the national, State and local levels for effective enforcement of child labour laws.
- While child labour has declined during the past decade globally, estimates indicate that the rate of reduction has slowed by two-thirds in the most recent four-year period. These positive and negative trends have to be taken into account when developing India’s policy and programmatic response during and after the novel coronavirus pandemic.
- The economic contraction and lockdowns ensuing from the pandemic have affected all countries in Asia, leading to income reductions for enterprises and workers, many of them in the informal economy. The large number of returned migrant workers has compounded the socio-economic challenges.
- India experienced slower economic growth and rising unemployment even before the pandemic. Subsequent lockdowns have worsened the situation, posing a real risk of backtracking the gains made in eliminating child labour.
- With increased economic insecurity, lack of social protection and reduced household income, children from poor households are being pushed to contribute to the family income with the risk of exposure to exploitative work.

### **Challenges in education**



- With closure of schools and challenges of distance learning, children may drop out leaving little scope for return unless affirmative and immediate actions are taken.
- As many schools and educational institutions are moving to online platforms for continuation of learning, the 'digital divide' is a challenge that India has to reconcile within the next several years. The NSS Report No. 585 titled 'Household Social Consumption on Education in India' suggests that in 2017-18, only 24% of Indian households had access to an Internet facility, proportions were 15% among rural households and 42% among urban households.
- The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2020 survey highlights that a third of the total enrolled children received some kind of learning materials from their teachers during the reference period (October 2020) as digital mode of education was opted for.
- The challenges are significant and manifold but it is not impossible to meet them if the right level of commitment among all the relevant stakeholders and the right mix of policy and programmatic interventions are present. It is through strategic partnerships and collaborations involving government, employers, trade unions, community-based organisations and child labour families that we could make a difference building back better and sooner.
- As we reinforce the commitment to protect children from unacceptable forms of work, our focus to mitigate the aftermath of the pandemic also remains. We need a strong alliance paving our way towards ending child labour in all its forms by 2025 as countries around the world have agreed to in Sustainable Development Goal 8.7.
- We — governments, employers, unions, civil society organisations and even individuals — must rise and pledge to 'Take Action against Child Labour' as a part of the UN's declaration of 2021 as the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour. Our actions today will determine the future of children tomorrow.

### **Rural health care needs fixing**

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** *The two consecutive waves of COVID-19 and Mucormycosis have left us shattered. Multiple bruises have been caused to us. But during the second wave of the pandemic, it is our rural people who are struggling the most. They are struggling to get prompt and quality health care. The key role of health-care facilities in the rural areas is to provide regular and comprehensive health-care needs guided by the World Health Organization (WHO)'s principle of Universal Health Coverage, "ensuring that all people have access to needed health services (including prevention, promotion, treatment, rehabilitation and palliation) of sufficient quality to be effective while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user the financial hardship".*

#### **Data show shortfalls**

- The second wave of the novel coronavirus pandemic has exposed the inadequate and poor health infrastructure in the rural areas.
- The fact shared by Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Ashwini Kumar Choubey on July 23, 2019 in the Rajya Sabha suggest that 29,337 primary health centres (PHCs) are required in the rural areas of the country; India has 25,743, a shortfall of 3,594 units.
- This means that we have one PHC for 25 villages in India. This needs to be revisited. In the fast-changing health scenario, we should have one expanded PHC for every 10 villages along with the provision of some beds and other minimum necessary facilities.
- We have 5,624 community health centres (CHCs) against the requirement of 7,322. Data on CHCs, which act as a referral centre covering a population of 80,000 people to 1.20 lakh people, show that, overall, there is a shortfall of 81.8% specialists at CHCs as compared to the requirement for existing CHCs.



- As in the Human Development Report 2020, India has eight hospital beds for a population of 10,000 people, while in China, it has 40 beds for the same number of people.

### **The picture in Haryana**

- If we may talk about the health infrastructure in Haryana, which remained a backward area of Punjab till 1966, it had only one medical college in the public sector up to 2005 till we became the Chief Minister.
- During my tenure up to 2014, we laid much emphasis on health services; besides many private sector medical colleges, one State health university, four medical colleges (at Karnal, Faridabad and Nuh in Mewat), and one medical college for women (in the rural area of Sonapat district) were established.
- Called the Bhagat Phool Singh Government Medical College for Women, this is the second women's medical college after Lady Hardinge Medical College in Delhi in the northern part of the country. We also established the All India Institute of Medical Sciences-II and a National Cancer Institute at Bhadsa village of Jhajjar district.
- Yet, Haryana requires 5,070 sub-health centres (SHCs) as against the existing 2,666; 845 PHCs as against 531 at present, and 253 CHCs as against 118 working at present. As per Census 2011, Haryana has a 2.53 crore population. And, as per the norms required after each block of one lakh population, Haryana requires 253 CHCs and 845 PHCs for the whole State.
- When infrastructure in the health services is so poor in a progressive and prosperous State such as Haryana, one can easily estimate the inadequacy of the physical health-care infrastructure in the rural areas in other States.
- It is of utmost importance that governments everywhere engage with all kinds of rural community organisations such as panchayats, gram sabha, notified area committees, municipal bodies and non-governmental organisations in minimising the adverse impact of the pandemic on rural life.
- For that purpose, in Haryana, we constituted Swasthya Kalyan Samitis, or SKSs for all CHCs, PHCs which has proved to be an effective management structure enabling people's participation in ensuring better functioning of rural health services.
- According to worldometers.info, out of 139 crore population of India, at least 91 crore people are living in 649,481 villages. There are at least 10% of people in the urban areas who are partly settled in villages as well since they keep moving to their rural habitations quite frequently. Villages need adequate health services.
- Given the alarming proportion of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in India, we cannot sit idle any longer and need to focus on the existing health infrastructure in the rural areas.
- This is one of the most important takeaways for us after the two waves of COVID-19 and the spread of Mucormycosis in the country.
- For want of well-oiled health machinery, most of our people are unaware of being in the grip of NCDs such as hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases which assume significance in the pandemic.

### **The health network**

- As per an estimate of WHO, NCDs including cases of cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory problems and cancer cause nearly 41 million (71%) of all deaths globally and about 5.87 million (60%) of all deaths in India. It will not be humanly possible to treat them all, thereby causing premature deaths on such a large scale. Persons with such morbidities are the most vulnerable in the case of a pandemic.
- The task is easier said than done, but it has to be accomplished. We have no other option but to treat the disease/s at the primary level in its first stage to create a healthy India. It will also help us save a lot of money and the resources being spent at tertiary level health care.
- If our SHCs work effectively, there will be less pressure on PHCs. If the PHCs function well, then there will be minimal pressure on CHCs and so on. Unfortunately, we have not been able to maintain the vibrancy and vitality of the network of health care. As a result, our vast rural populace remains deprived of critical health interventions.
- The chain of SHCs, PHCs and CHCs can very well take care of the multiple health needs of our people. They should have the health data of people in their respective areas. It will enable them to identify those likely to slip into the secondary or tertiary care zone.





- Regular health camps will help us identify those on the verge of developing tuberculosis, hypertension, diabetes or any diseases likely to be caused because of their socio and economic conditions. A CHC or referral centre equipped with specialists will do wonders if made to work efficiently.
- Every CHC is supposed to have ‘at least 30 beds for indoor patients, operation theatre, labour room, X-ray machine, pathological laboratory, standby generator’ and other wherewithal. Just imagine the kind of relief we would have had today in our fight against COVID-19 if our network of SHCs, PHCs and CHCs was working efficiently.

### Collective responsibility

- In conclusion, it is urged that all stakeholders to revisit and refurbish our health infrastructure in the rural areas and build them in a better manner.
- As more than 65% of the population resides in the rural areas, we cannot ignore their health needs. WHO has its norms and yardsticks.
- We can have our own, perhaps even better than what has been stipulated by WHO. We also know health is a State subject, but all those living in the rural areas are not only the responsibility of the States or the Centre but also a collective responsibility.
- Just spending money will not take us anywhere. We have to see and ensure that the money being spent improves facilities and contributes to people’s ease of life.
- It is hugely challenging as a task but we have to firm up our strategies, their execution and by rigorous auditing so that we are ever well prepared not only to meet this pandemic effectively but also to make our rural folk healthier.
- We must remember that no one will survive unless all of us survive. As Bertrand Russell has put it, “It’s co-existence or no existence.”

## GS III

### The time to limit global warming is melting away

(Source: [The Hindu](https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/the-time-to-limit-global-warming-is-melting-away/article17441411.ece) )

**Context:** *This is an incredibly difficult time for the world. The world is facing two momentous challenges: COVID-19 and climate change. Both need us to come together globally to find a way forward. World Environment Day (June 5) is an important moment to take stock on climate change.*

### India’s response

- India has a strong record on tackling climate change, including impressive domestic targets to have 450GW of renewable energy by 2030, and establishing the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).
- India played a critical role in delivering the landmark Paris Agreement and we are working just as closely with India in the run-up to COP26, the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties, to be hosted by the United Kingdom in Glasgow from November 1-12, 2021.
- Last month, Mr. Modi and the U.K.’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson committed through the 2030 UK-India Roadmap to work closely together on the best ways to drive the green growth agenda. They reaffirmed their personal commitment to work together for an ambitious outcome in November and sustained action beyond.



- When the U.K. welcomes the countries of the world to Glasgow in five months' time, it will be a moment to get the world on track to address the enormous threat of climate change and build a cleaner, brighter future for everyone.
- In 2015, the world signed the Paris Agreement, to limit global temperature rises to well below 2°C, aiming for 1.5°C, because the science tells us that would avoid the worst effects of climate change.

### **Emissions have to be cut**

- In terms of limiting warming, every fraction of a degree makes a difference. An average global temperature rise of 2°C, compared to 1.5°C, would see hundreds of millions more people affected.
- The Climate Action Tracker estimates that countries' current emissions reduction targets have us on course for average temperature rises of 2.4°C. To limit warming to 1.5°C, we must halve global emissions by 2030. So this is the decisive decade.
- This is what makes this year's COP so critical, and as hosts of COP26, the U.K. is pressing for urgent action around four key goals.
  - First, to keep 1.5°C within reach, globally, we need to reach net zero by the middle of this century.
    - To achieve this we will need to take strong action over the next decade. In the U.K. we have found that setting ambitious short-term targets backed up by a net zero target has given a clear signal that the future is low carbon.
    - India will reach its own decisions, but we firmly believe India has an opportunity to show that a different development path is possible.
    - An opportunity to be at the forefront of a new global green transition with all the benefits of jobs and cleaner air that brings.
    - India has already proved it has the innovation and political will to do this. India has quadrupled wind and solar capacity in the last decade.
  - Our second goal is to protect people and nature from the worst effects of climate change. Even as the world has been dealing with the novel coronavirus pandemic, the dangers of global warming have continued to become more evident.
  - Our third goal is for developed countries to deliver the \$100 billion they promised annually to support developing countries.
    - The U.K. is pushing for all developed countries to increase their climate finance commitments ahead of COP26, to deliver the right flow of finance and technology to meet the needs of countries such as India in their transition.
    - We need all developed countries to step up, as it is a matter of trust.
  - Fourth, we must work together to deliver on these goals. That includes building consensus among governments for an ambitious, balanced and inclusive outcome — so that the negotiations in Glasgow are a success. As well as bringing businesses and civil society on board behind our COP26 goals, and building up international collaboration in critical sectors.
- We must act now, to launch a concerted effort to reduce emissions throughout the next decade. And use the COVID-19 recovery to reimagine our economies, building a better future.
- We call on all countries to step up efforts on these goals, because COP26 is our last chance for keeping hopes of limiting global warming to 1.5°C alive, and our best chance of building a brighter future; a future of green jobs and cleaner air.
- This is our moment. There are no second chances. Let us seize it together.

## **Saving biodiversity, securing earth's future**

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** *On this World Environment Day (June 5), with the novel coronavirus pandemic raging across our vast country, we must reflect on the ways to rebuild our relationship with nature. India's vast and rich biodiversity gives the nation a unique identity, of which we can be proud. The varied ecosystems across land, rivers, and oceans, feed our people, enhance public health security, and shield us from environmental disasters. Our biodiversity also serves as a perpetual source of spiritual enrichment, intimately linked to our physical and mental well-being.*

### **Staggering value of forests**

- And while the precise economic value of all ecosystem services provided by biodiversity may not be known, estimates suggest our forests alone may yield services worth more than a trillion rupees per year. Imagine how much greater this value will be with grasslands, wetlands, freshwater, and marine added.
- Sadly, today, we face not only one of the worst public health crises but also worldwide declines in biodiversity. Globally, we have lost 7% intact forests since 2000, and recent assessments indicate that over a million species might be lost forever during the next several decades. Our country is not an exception to these trends.
- Climate change and the ongoing pandemic will put additional stresses on our natural ecosystems even though it is becoming clear that repairing our dysfunctional relationship with nature is one of the ways to mitigate climate change and curtail future outbreaks of infectious diseases that can bring unimaginable misery.
- Thus, preserving biodiversity is directly relevant to the social, economic, and environmental well-being of our people. We must rethink and reimagine the concept of One Health for all living organisms, including the invisible biota in soils that sustain our agricultural systems.

### **Investments in the field**

- Fortunately, our government is considering major investments in biodiversity science to meet societal needs.
- In 2018, the Prime Minister's Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC) in consultation with the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change and other Ministries approved an ambitious National Mission on Biodiversity and Human Well-Being (NMBHWB).
- A Bengaluru-based Biodiversity Collaborative is working with the National Biodiversity Authority to hold consultations and prepare road maps of the Mission that will be steered by a core of the country's leading biodiversity science and conservation organisations, from public, academic, and civil society sectors.
- The Mission will strengthen the science of restoring, conserving, and sustainably utilising India's natural heritage; embed biodiversity as a key consideration in all developmental programmes, particularly in agriculture, ecosystem services, health, bio-economy, and climate change mitigation; establish a citizen and policy-oriented biodiversity information system; and enhance capacity across all sectors for the realisation of India's national biodiversity targets and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).
- Furthermore, the Mission will allow India (home to nearly 8% of global biodiversity on just 2.3% of global land area, and containing sections of four of the 36 global biodiversity hotspots) to emerge as a leader in demonstrating linkage between conservation of natural assets and societal well-being.

### **An important framework**

- The ongoing spread of COVID-19 places this Mission among the most significant national initiatives. The pandemic has exposed the dysfunctional relationship between humanity and nature, and we must urgently address the issues it has laid bare: the emergence of infectious diseases; lack of food and



nutritional security; rural unemployment; and climate change, with all its stresses on nature, rural landscapes, and public health.

- In response to these critical and interrelated issues, the Mission offers a holistic framework, integrated approaches, and widespread societal participation.
- The Mission's comprehensive efforts will empower India to restore, and even increase, our natural assets by millions of crores of rupees. Mitigation programmes will lessen the impacts of climate change and other natural disasters, such as pandemics and floods.
- We can rejuvenate agricultural production systems and increase rural incomes from biodiversity-based agriculture while also creating millions of green jobs in restoration and nature tourism. Restoration activities across India's degraded lands, which amount to almost a third of our land area, alone could generate several million jobs.
- The Mission will help India meet its commitments under the new framework for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and UN SDGs related to pressing social issues including poverty alleviation, justice and equity, and protection of life.
- It will generate a strong national community committed to sustaining biodiversity, promoting social cohesion and uniting the public behind an important goal.
- Mission programmes will offer nature-based solutions to numerous environmental challenges, including degradation of rivers, forests, and soils, and ongoing threats from climate change, with the goal of creating climate-resilient communities. Scientific inputs, especially related to geospatial informatics and policy, can guide the development of strategies for conservation and ecosystem management.
- Equally important, the Mission's "One Health" programme, integrating human health with animal, plant, soil and environmental health, has both the preventive potential to curtail future pandemics along with the interventional capability for unexpected public health challenges.
- Additional programmes, directed at food and nutritional security, will in turn also influence public health outcomes.

### Need for a cadre

- The planned Mission recognises that we need a strong and extensive cadre of human resources required to meet the enormous and complex environmental challenges of the 21st century. This will require training professionals of the highest calibre in sustainability and biodiversity science, along with an investment in civil society outreach.
- The gains of environmental change will be upheld and carried forward by the cultural change from environmental education for millions of students, from kindergarten to postgraduate levels.
- Finally, biodiversity is everywhere, and we interact with biodiversity all the time in our daily lives. Public engagement, whether it is in the policymaking arena, or in exploration, restoration and conservation of biodiversity, is a critical component of the planned Mission.
- **Today, on the heels of the International Day for Biological Diversity celebrated last month, nothing could be more important than to renew our pledge to nurture all life on earth.**

## **The Centre-WhatsApp tussle over new IT rules**

(Source: [The Hindu](https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article3741111.ece) )

**Context:** On May 25, Facebook's messaging platform WhatsApp moved the Delhi High Court against India's new Information Technology rules. May 25 was the deadline for IT intermediaries to comply with the new rules, the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021, notified in February.

**What is WhatsApp's problem with the new rules?**





- Under the new rules, a “significant social media intermediary providing services primarily in the nature of messaging shall enable the identification of the first originator of the information on its computer resource as may be required by a judicial order...” This is the rule WhatsApp finds problematic.
- To simplify, a significant social media intermediary, as per the new norms, is a social media intermediary which has more than 50 lakh registered users. WhatsApp, which reportedly has close to half a billion users in India, is a significant social media intermediary.
- It is also a service “primarily in the nature of messaging”. The rules, therefore, require WhatsApp and those offering messaging services and having a user base of over 50 lakh to be able to trace ‘problematic’ messages to their originators. The requirement is one of traceability, and WhatsApp is opposed to it.

### **Why is WhatsApp opposed to traceability?**

- WhatsApp’s messaging system is end-to-end encrypted, which means, in its own words, “only you and the person you’re communicating with can read what’s sent, and nobody in between, not even WhatsApp”.
- This has been the case since 2016. The encryption protocol that it uses is one that was developed by Open Whisper Systems, which is well known for its Signal app.
- Traceability, according to WhatsApp, is a threat to user privacy.
- In its blog, titled ‘What is traceability and why does WhatsApp oppose it?’ (<https://bit.ly/3i28lml>), it argues that traceability would end up “breaking the very guarantees that end-to-end encryption provide”. It says, “In order to trace even one message, services would have to trace every message.” The reason it says this is because there is no way to know what a government would want to investigate in the future.
- A WhatsApp spokesperson has been quoted in The Hindu as saying that: “Requiring messaging apps to ‘trace’ chats is the equivalent of asking us to keep a fingerprint of every single message sent on WhatsApp, which would break end-to-end encryption and fundamentally undermines people’s right to privacy.”
- Further, in its blog, WhatsApp has said that traceability violates human rights. It says, “Innocent people could get caught up in investigations, or even go to jail, for sharing content that later becomes problematic in the eyes of a government, even if they did not mean any harm by sharing it in the first place.”
- This, it says, could pertain to cases where people shared something just out of concern or for checking its accuracy.
- WhatsApp also says traceability doesn’t work. It gives an example: “If you simply downloaded an image and shared it, took a screenshot and resent it, or sent an article on WhatsApp that someone emailed you, you would be determined to be the originator of that content.” And that is why it reckons that “tracing messages would be ineffective and highly susceptible to abuse”.
- Even without traceability, WhatsApp says, “We respond to valid requests by providing the limited categories of information available to us, consistent with applicable law and policy. We also have a team devoted to assisting law enforcement 24/7 with emergencies involving imminent harm or risk of death or serious physical injury.
- We consistently receive feedback from law enforcement that our responses to requests help solve crimes and bring people to justice.”
- WhatsApp has also cited the pro-privacy arguments of organisations such as Mozilla, Access Now, Internet Society, Center for Democracy and Technology, Stanford Internet Observatory, Electronic Frontier Foundation, and Internet Freedom Foundation to bolster its point.

### **What, for example, are the types of information shared by WhatsApp under a legal process?**

- In the U.S., for instance, WhatsApp, under different requirements of law, may be compelled to share the name, start date of the service, last seen date, IP address, email address, numbers blocked by the user, ‘about’ information, profile photos, group information, and address book.

### **How has the Government of India responded to this?**



- Electronics & Information Technology Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has said the government “is committed to ensure the Right of Privacy to all its citizens but at the same time it is also the responsibility of the government to maintain law and order and ensure national security.”
- A release by the Ministry of Electronics and IT elaborates on two legal points related to the traceability requirement. The first is regarding reasonable restrictions, or the conditions that could trigger a traceability order by a court.
- The release says, “No Fundamental Right, including the Right to Privacy, is absolute and it is subject to reasonable restrictions.”
- A traceability order shall only come about, as Rule 4(2) states, “for the purposes of prevention, detection, investigation, prosecution or punishment of an offence related to the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, or public order, or of incitement to an offence relating to the above or in relation with rape, sexually explicit material or child sexual abuse material, punishable with imprisonment for a term of not less than five years”.
- The second legal argument is about the test of proportionality, the cornerstone of which, as the release says, “is whether a lesser effective alternative remedy exists”. The traceability measure will be a measure of “last resort”, according to the release, which cites the rule in this regard.
- The rules further state that “in complying with an order for identification of the first originator, no significant social media intermediary shall be required to disclose the contents of any electronic message, any other information related to the first originator, or any information related to its other users”.
- The Ministry has also criticised WhatsApp for making “no specific objection” to this requirement till date. The release says, “Any operations being run in India are subject to the law of the land. WhatsApp’s refusal to comply with the guidelines is a clear act of defiance of a measure whose intent can certainly not be doubted.”
- It also makes a reference to another issue where WhatsApp and the government have a difference of opinion. It says, “At one end, WhatsApp seeks to mandate a privacy policy wherein it will share the data of all its users with its parent company, Facebook, for marketing and advertising purposes.
- On the other hand, WhatsApp makes every effort to refuse the enactment of the Intermediary Guidelines which are necessary to uphold law and order and curb the menace of fake news.”

### **What explains the surge in FDI inflows?**

(Source: [The Hindu](#) )

**Context:** Total foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow in 2020-21 is \$81.7 billion, up 10% over the previous year, reported a recent Ministry of Commerce and Industry press release. It further added, “Measures taken by the Government on the fronts of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy reforms, investment facilitation and ease of doing business have resulted in increased FDI inflows into the country.” The short press release highlighted industry and State-specific foreign investment figures without detailed statistical information. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) bulletin, which was released a week earlier, has the details. They are conceptually more transparent and consistent. The table below summarises the main headings for 2019-20 and 2020-21 and the percentage growth rate.

### **What accounts for gross inflow?**

- “Gross inflows/gross investment” in the RBI report is the same as “total FDI inflow” in the press release, identical to the Commerce Ministry’s estimate. The gross inflow consists of (i) “direct investment to India” and (ii) “repatriation/disinvestment”.



- The disaggregation shows that “direct investment to India” has declined by 2.4%. Hence, an increase of 47% in “repatriation/disinvestment” entirely accounts for the rise in the gross inflows. In other words, there is a wide gap between gross FDI inflow and direct investment to India.
- What is repatriation? Why is it so significant? FDI inflow increasingly consists of private equity funds, which are usually disinvested after 3-5 years to book profits (per its business model). In principle, private equity funds do not make long-term greenfield investment.
- Similarly, measured on a net basis (that is, “direct investment to India” net of “FDI by India” or, outward FDI from India), direct investment to India has barely risen (0.8%) in 2020-21 over the last year.
- What then accounts for the impressive headline number of 10% rise in gross inflow? It is almost entirely on account of “Net Portfolio Investment”, shooting up from \$1.4 billion in 2019-20 to \$36.8 billion in the next year.
- That is a whopping 2,526% rise. Further, within the net portfolio investment, foreign institutional investment (FIIs) has boomed by an astounding 6,800% to \$38 billion in 2020-21, from a mere half a billion dollars in the previous year.
- So, the mystery of the surge in gross FDI inflows is solved. It is entirely on account of net foreign portfolio investment. What is portfolio investment, and how is it included in FDI inflow? FDI inflow, in theory, is supposed to bring in additional capital to augment potential output (taking managerial control/stake).
- In contrast, foreign portfolio investment, as the name suggests, is short-term investment in domestic capital (equity and debt) markets to realise better financial returns (that is, higher dividend/interest rate plus capital gains). But the conceptual distinctions have blurred in official reporting, showing an outsized role of FDI and its growth in India.
- If the deluge of FII inflow did little to augment the economy’s potential output, what then did it do? It added a lot of froth to the stock prices.
- When GDP has contracted by 7.3% (as per the official estimates released) in 2020-21 on account of the pandemic and the economic lockdown, the BSE Sensex nearly doubled from about 26,000 points on March 23, 2020 to over 50,000 on March 31, 2021.
- BSE’s price-earnings (P-E) multiple — defined as share price relative to earnings per share — is among the world’s highest, close behind S&P 500 in the U.S.

### **Modest contribution**

- Thus the surge in total FDI inflow during the pandemic year is entirely explained by booming short-term FIIs in the capital market – and not adding to fixed investment and employment creation.
- For years now, the government has showcased the rise in gross FDI inflows as a badge of the success of its economic policies to counter the widespread criticisms of output and investment slowdown and rising unemployment rates (especially during the last year).
- As Figure 1 shows, between 2013-14 and 2019-20, the ratio of net FDI to GDP has remained just over 1% (left-hand scale), with no discernible rising trend in it. Likewise, the proportion of net FDI to gross fixed capital formation (fixed investment) is range-bound between 4% and 6% (left-hand scale).
- These stagnant trends are evident when the economy’s fixed investment rate — gross fixed capital formation to GDP ratio — has plummeted from 31.3% in 2013-14 to 26.9% in 2019-20 (right-hand scale).
- Thus, FDI inflow’s contribution to domestic output and investment remains modest.
- To sum up, the Commerce Ministry press release claims an unprecedented surge in gross foreign capital inflow of \$81.7 billion in 2020-21, rising 10% over the previous year. The rapid influx is evidence of the success of the economic policies during the pandemic, the government claims.
- Is it so? Probably not. Unprecedented short-term foreign portfolio investments are entirely responsible for the surge. And within the portfolio investment, FIIs shot up to \$38 billion in 2020-21, from half a billion-dollar the previous year.
- The flood of FIIs has boosted stock prices and financial returns. These inflows did little to augment fixed investment and output growth.

## **Global unemployment to surge to 205 million in 2022: ILO**

(Source: [Down to Earth](#) )

**Context:** *Global unemployment is expected to be at 205 million in 2022, surpassing the 2019 level of 187 million, according to a new report.*

### **Details:**

- The jobs shortfall induced by the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was 75 million in 2021 and is expected to be 23 million in 2022, warned the World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2021.
- Guy Ryder, director-general of the International Labour Organization (ILO) that published the report said
- It's been 15 months since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 to be a global pandemic and it's not just been a public health crisis, it's also been an employment and a human crisis as well.
- The report analyses the impact of the crisis on the labour market across the world and offers projections for recovery and gives details of the unequal impact of the crisis on different groups of workers and enterprises and calls for a broad-based human-centered recovery.

### **Pandemic-induced global shortfall in jobs compared to 2019 (in millions)**

- There has been an unprecedented disruption to labour markets worldwide due to COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected the lives of the younger generation and brought about disruption to their education, especially in those regions of the world where digital infrastructure is less developed.
- Also made it more difficult for them to enter the labour market and hold on to their jobs.
- The pandemic worsened long-standing inequalities with many women workers dropping out of the labour force, putting at risk years of progress towards achieving gender equality and pushing them back to the more traditional gender roles.
- For informal and low-skilled workers, working from home was not an option. Many had to face huge health risks to keep their jobs, often with no access to social security benefits.
- An estimated additional 108 million workers and their family members now live in poverty, according to the ILO report.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has hit African countries hard — fall in trade disrupted supply chains, remittances shrunk and tourism came to a halt.
- A crisis-induced jobs gap of nearly 17 million is estimated for Africa in 2020, which includes jobs lost in 2020 combined with forgone job growth as a result of the crisis, according to the report.
- The pandemic reversed some of the progress made in reducing poverty in Africa by driving up the share of workers living in extreme poverty.

### **The long road to recovery**

- The State Bank of India, in its recent report, reduced the gross domestic product growth projection for India for 2021-22 to 7.9 percent from 10.4 percent.
- Economic and labour market recovery is expected to start in 2021 but it would remain uneven globally and inadequate to close the gaps opened up by the crisis.
- The recovery would remain fragile in many countries due to the uneven rollout of vaccination campaigns and higher levels of public debt and deficits that would make it difficult to tackle the effects of the pandemic.
- There is an urgent need to build back better — create productive employment opportunities and foster long-term labour market prospects for the most vulnerable.





- There is a need to strengthen social protection schemes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in India and make sure nobody is left behind.
- This would require strong institutions and social dialogue and strong international cooperation to fight global disparities.

## GS IV

### Centre vs states: how IAS officers are put on central deputation

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** *Recently, West Bengal Chief Minister announced that outgoing Chief Secretary Bandyopadhyay would be appointed Chief Advisor to the Chief Minister. Bandyopadhyay, an IAS officer of the 1987 batch, has been the subject of a tussle between the Centre and the state government over the last few days. He was due to begin an extension of three months after retiring as Chief Secretary, but the **Centre instead asked him to report** and join the Government of India. He did not do so.*

#### The tussle

- On May 25, the West Bengal government issued an order, citing the Centre's approval dated May 24, "in the interest of public service, to extend" Bandyopadhyay's services for three months.
- But, on May 28, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) wrote to the Chief Secretary that "the Appointment Committee of the Cabinet has approved the placement of the services" of Bandyopadhyay with the Government of India with "immediate effect" and requested the state to relieve the officer with immediate effect and direct him to report by 10 am on May 31.
- This came after Mamata Banerjee and Bandyopadhyay last week skipped a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to the state. As it turned out, the Chief Minister did not relieve Bandyopadhyay, who did not report to New Delhi either.

#### How officers get an extension

- Rule 16(1) of DCRB (Death-cum-Retirement Benefit) Rules says that "a member of the Service dealing with budget work or working as a full-time member of a Committee which is to be wound up within a short period may be given extension of service for a period not exceeding three months in public interest, with the prior approval of the Central Government".
- For an officer posted as Chief Secretary of a state, this extension can be for six months.

#### Central deputation

- In normal practice, the Centre asks every year for an "offer list" of officers of the All India Services (IAS, IPS and Indian Forest Service) willing to go on central deputation, after which it selects officers from that list. Rule 6(1) of the IAS Cadre Rules says an officer may, "with the concurrence of the State Governments concerned and the Central Government, be deputed for service under the Central Government or another State Government..."
- It says "in case of any disagreement, the matter shall be decided by the Central Government and the State Government or State Governments concerned shall give effect to the decision of the Central Government."
- In a PIL in the Supreme Court in January this year, lawyer Abu Sohail pleaded that Rule 6(1) be struck down.



- He contended that because of the Rule, states have to bear the brunt of arbitrary actions taken by the Centre, while the Rule makes it difficult for the Centre to enforce its will on a state that refuses to back down. Ruling on March 1, a Bench of Justice L Nageswara Rao and Justice S Ravindra Bhat did not find any merit in the petition.

#### Earlier showdowns

- **WEST BENGAL, 2019:** In February 2019, the Home Ministry had written to then West Bengal Chief Secretary Malay Kumar De calling for action against five IPS officers, including DGP Virendra, for allegedly taking part in a dharna organised by the Trinamool Congress against CBI raids. The Home Ministry had asked the state to withdraw medals conferred on the officers. The state government said no officer had taken part in the dharna. To find out what action, if any, was taken against the five officers,
- **WEST BENGAL, 2020:** Last December, the Centre asked that three IPS officers who were in charge of security when BJP president J P Nadda's motorcade was attacked outside Kolkata on December 10, allegedly by supporters of the Trinamool Congress, be sent on deputation with the Centre. The state government refused, citing a shortage of IPS officers. The officers concerned were not relieved from the state and the Centre did not insist either. The officers — Rajeev Mishra (then Additional Director General, South Bengal), Praveen Tripathi (then Deputy Inspector General, Presidency Range) and Bholanath Pandey (then SP, Diamond Harbour) — continue to serve in the state government, in new positions.
- **TAMIL NADU, 2001:** A month after J Jayalalithaa took oath as Chief Minister in 2001, Tamil Nadu police's CB-CID raided former Chief Minister M Karunanidhi's home on the night of June 29 and arrested him along with his DMK colleagues Murasoli Maran and T R Baalu, then ministers in the NDA government of A B Vajpayee. The following month, the Centre asked the state government to send three IPS officers on central deputation. But Jayalalithaa refused, and wrote to other Chief Ministers for their support to protect the rights of the states. The incident resulted in the removal of Governor M Fathima Beevi, as the Centre was not happy with her report.
- **TAMIL NADU, 2014:** IPS officer Archana Ramasundaram was deputed to the CBI in 2014, but the Tamil Nadu government refused to release her, and suspended her when she defied the state's order. However, the suspension did not apply because she had by that time already joined CBI.

#### What next

- The Centre cannot take action against civil service officials who are posted under the state government, unless the latter agrees.
- Rule 7 of the All India Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1969, states that the "authority to institute proceedings and to impose penalty" will be the state government if the officer is "serving in connection with the affairs of a state..."
- For any action to be taken against an officer of the All India Services, the state and the Centre both need to agree.

## Current Affairs Quiz

1) Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to Bal Swaraj Portal?

1. It is an online tracking portal for online tracking and digital real time monitoring mechanism of children who are in need of care and protection.
2. It is a portal working under the aegis of National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR).

Select the correct answer code:

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

Answer : c

Both statements are correct

2) Golden Visa System, sometimes seen in the news recently, is being implemented by which of the following countries?

- a. France
- b. Australia
- c. Saudi Arabia
- d. United Arab Emirates

Answer : d

3) Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to Reclining Buddha Statue?

1. The reclining Buddha statue represents Buddha during his last illness, about to enter Maha Parinirvana.
2. The Reclining Buddha was first depicted in Mathura school of art around 30 BC.

Select the correct answer code:

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

Answer : a

The Reclining Buddha was first depicted in Gandhara art, which began in the period between 50 BC and 75 AD, and peaked during the Kushana period from the first to the fifth centuries AD.

4) The “Three Child Policy”, was approved recently by -

- a. China
- b. Japan
- c. Madagascar
- d. New Zealand

Answer : a

5) Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to Arabian Sea Cyclones?

1. The cyclones originating in the Arabian Sea are weaker than those originating from the Bay of Bengal.
2. The formation of weak cyclones in Arabian Sea reasons back to the presence of cold water of the sea.

Select the correct answer code:

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

Answer : c

6) Consider the following statements with respect to Vitamin D:

- 1. It is a fat-soluble vitamin, meaning that it dissolves in fats and oils and can be stored in body for a long time.
- 2. It can be produced through artificial light, particularly in the ultraviolet region of 190-400 nm wavelength.
- 3. Vitamin D deficiency can cause rickets in children and osteomalacia in adults.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer : d

7) Which of the following statements is/are incorrect with respect to Blackbucks?

- 1. In India they are found only in north western states such as, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana.
- 2. In India, hunting of blackbuck is prohibited under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972.

Select the correct answer code:

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

Answer : a

It inhabits several protected areas of India, including

- 1. Gujarat: Velavadar Wildlife Sanctuary, Gir Forest National Park.
- 2. Bihar: Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary;
- 3. Maharashtra: Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary;
- 4. Madhya Pradesh: Kanha National Park.
- 5. Rajasthan: Tal Chhapar Sanctuary, National Chambal Sanctuary, Ranthambhore National Park.
- 6. Karnataka: Ranibennur Blackbuck Sanctuary;
- 7. Tamil Nadu: Point Calimere Wildlife and Bird Sanctuary, Vallanadu Wildlife Sanctuary, Guindy National Park.

8) Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to e-Gopala App?

- 1. It is a comprehensive breed improvement marketplace and information portal for direct use of farmers.
- 2. The app send alerts on due date for vaccination, pregnancy diagnosis and also inform farmers about various government schemes and campaigns.

Select the correct answer code:

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

Answer : c



- 9) Dr. K.P. Krishnan Committee is associated with which of the following-
- To reform unorganized sector's pension scheme in India
  - To examine the feasibility of the Variable Capital Company (VCC) in India
  - To reform the current account carry forward practice under Rolling Settlements
  - To facilitate computerization of Banking Industry & Public Sector Disinvestment

Answer : b

- 10) Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to SDG India Index 2020-21?
- The Index, developed in collaboration with the United Nations in India was launched by NITI Aayog.
  - The index measures the progress at the national and sub-national level in the country's journey towards meeting the Global Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

Select the correct answer code:

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : c

- 11) Which of the following statement is incorrect with respect to Model Tenancy Act?
- Under the act, written agreement is not necessary for new tenancies
  - No landlord or property manager can withhold any essential supply to the premises occupied by the tenant
  - Under the act, separate rent authorities, courts and tribunals will be set up in every districts to protect the interest of both the owner and tenant
  - None of the above

Answer : a

Rent and duration of tenancy will be fixed by mutual consent between owner and tenant through a written agreement.

- 12) "India Cycles4Change Challenge", was launched under which of the following ministries?
- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
  - Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
  - Ministry of New and Renewable Energy
  - Ministry of Road Transport and Highways

Answer : b

- 13) Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to Testosterone?
- It is used as a medication in the treatment of hypogonadism in men and breast cancer in women.
  - Lower level of the hormone will lead to higher severity of Covid-19 in men.

Select the correct answer code:

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Answer : c

- 14) Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in -
- Telangana
  - Andhra Pradesh



- c. Maharashtra
- d. Jharkhand

Answer : c

15) Bnei Menashe, ethnolinguistic group of people are found majorly in -

- a. Sikkim
- b. Arunachal Pradesh
- c. Mizoram
- d. Nagaland

Answer : c

16) Red Tourism is being promoted by -

- a. Bangladesh
- b. Philippines
- c. China
- d. Japan

Answer : c

17) Consider the following statements with respect to Yellow Fungus:

- 1. It is also called mucor septic, which initially develops by the presence of moulds in the environment.
- 2. It may not start from the lungs but it invades internal organs of the body and affects the entire functioning.

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

Answer : c

18) State of Finance for Nature is released by -

- a. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- b. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- c. World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)
- d. The Nature Conservancy

Answer : a

19) Consider the following statements with respect to VERITAS:

- 1. It determines the geologic history of Venus and finds reasons why it developed so differently from Earth.
- 2. It will also map the emissions from Venus's surface to determine the type of rocks that exist on Venus.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

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

Answer: d

20) Which of the following statements is/are incorrect with respect to H10N3 Virus?

- 1. It is a highly severe strain of bird flu with a high risk of spreading on a large scale.
- 2. It will have a little impact on birds but can be much more serious in people, similar to H7N9 strain.

Select the correct answer code:

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

Answer: a

