



INSIGHTSIAS

SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

INSIGHTS into EDITORIAL

DECEMBER 2018

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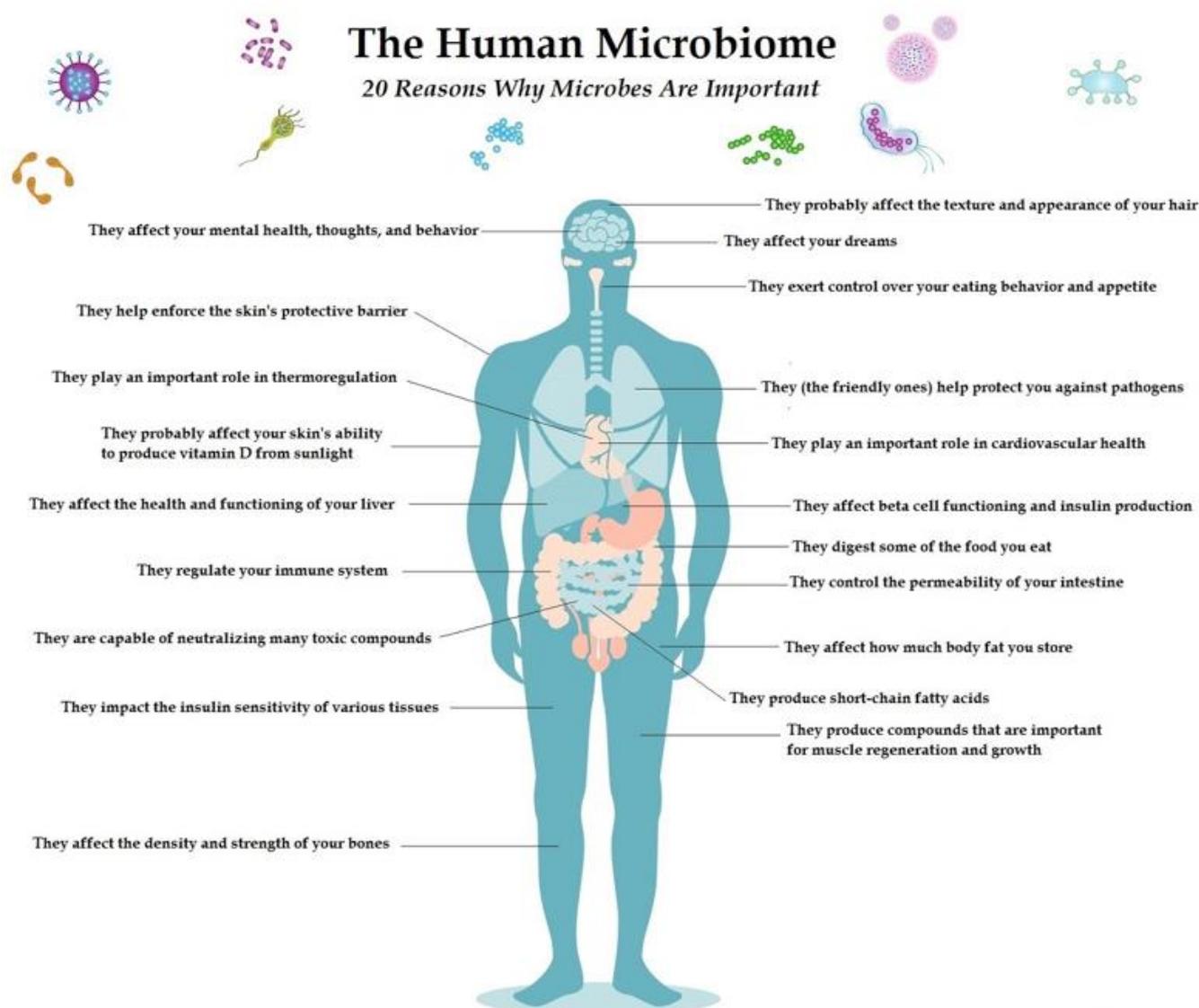
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INSIGHTS into EDITORIAL

1. WHY INDIA WANTS TO STUDY HUMAN MICROBIOME

Introduction:

- India provides a **wide range of research** with **more than 4,500 ethnic groups** and presence of **two global biodiversity hotspots Himalayas and Western Ghats**.
- In Human beings, body is full of **trillions of bacteria, viruses and fungi**. They are collectively known as the **microbiome**.
- While some bacteria are associated with disease, others are actually extremely important for your **immune system, heart, weight and many other aspects of health**.
- In human beings, the **human immune system** is hugely important to our **health and wellbeing** because it prevents infectious disease taking hold of our bodies. The **immune system** appears to be a major beneficiary of the body's microbiome.



Context:

- Recently, Pune hosted an **international conference on microbiome research**, a field of study that is still in its infancy in India.
- This provided India set to change, with a **proposed project** that would study and map the **human microbiome** across the country.
- Research on the **human microbiome** has thrown light on various aspects that
 - How **different parts of the human body** are occupied by **characteristic microbial communities**, and

- How **various factors contribute** in shaping the composition of the microbiome, including the genetics, dietary habits, age, geographic location and ethnicity.
- These studies laid a strong foundation to decipher the **microbiome's implications on health and a wide range of diseases**.
- But India lacks is a **national microbiome initiative** similar to those in other countries. Now, a **high-level committee** at the Department of Biotechnology has shown a keen interest in the proposed project.

Microbiome Research:

- The human body carries **diverse communities of microorganisms**, which are mainly bacterial. These are referred to as "**human microbiome**".
- These organisms play a key role in many aspects of host physiology, ranging from metabolism of otherwise **complex indigestible carbohydrates and fats** to producing **essential vitamins, maintaining immune systems and acting as a first line of defense against pathogens**.
- Scientists have conducted a **meta-analysis on gut microbiota** of healthy Indian individuals and compared it with that of individuals from other parts of the world.
- It shows that the Indian population harbours a **distinct gut microbial community**, which, calls for an **in-depth investigation of the Indian microbiome**.

Microbiome Research is useful in the several ways:

- It will provide the answers to following questions:
- How different parts of the human body are **occupied by characteristic microbial communities?**
- How various factors contribute in shaping the composition of the microbiome, including the genetics, dietary habits, age, geographic location and ethnicity?
- Therefore, now a **high-level committee** at the Department of Biotechnology has shown a keen interest in the proposed project, CSIR. Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), is optimistic that this **Rs 150-crore project** will get approval soon.
- The project will include collection of saliva, stool and skin swabs of 20,000 Indians across **various ethnic groups from different geographical regions**.

Importance of Microbiome in the Living Body (Human) :

- The gut is the site in the body of **greatest concentration of microbes** composing the **human microbiome**.
- The relationship between the **body and its microbiome is symbiotic** that is, both parties benefit.
- It is known that the microbiome is crucially involved in the **digestion of our food** and the **synthesis of vitamins** we absorb. In response, the microbiome is provided with **stable growth conditions and nutrients**.
- The **human large intestine is an anaerobic (without oxygen) environment** so the microbiome converts food passing through the gut into energy under **anaerobic conditions by fermentation reactions**.
- Short-chain fatty acids are produced by the microbes which serve as an energy source.
- Around **10% of our body's energy** is produced by our **microbiome fermenting food** in the gut this way. In addition, the gut microbiome synthesizes vitamins such as biotin and vitamin K and produces fat-storing hormones.
- Recent research suggests the microbiome has an **inhibitory effect** on the **development of cancer of the colon**.
- The microbiome also acts as a '**natural**' **shield to the gut**, and therefore the body, by inhibiting pathogens from attaching to lining of the gut something that must happen for infection to take place.

Conclusion:

- Therefore, there are a number of different ways in which the gut microbiome can **affect key bodily functions and influence your health**.
- India has a large number of **tribal populations largely unaffected by "modern" diet and lifestyle**.
- The prevalence of **lifestyle-related disorders** such as **obesity and diabetes** has been known to be significantly lower compared to the non-tribal (urbanised) populations across the globe.
- Hence, scientists say, a **study on the tribal population** would help improve **knowledge of evolution of the mutualism** between gut microbiota and the host.

- These studies will lay a **strong foundation** to decipher the microbiome's implications on health and a wide range of diseases.
- A **transparent regulatory framework**, adapting to recent scientific developments, creates an **enabling environment** for public and private R&D investments to support **better public health and economic outcomes**.

2. WITHOUT MATERNITY BENEFITS

Introduction:

- **Under – nutrition** continues to adversely **affect majority of women** in India. In India, **every third woman is undernourished** and **every second woman is anaemic**.
- An undernourished mother almost **inevitably gives birth to a low birth weight baby**. When **poor nutrition starts** in utero, it extends throughout the life cycle since the changes are **largely irreversible**.
- Owing to **economic and social distress** many women continue to work to earn a living for their family right up to the last days of their pregnancy.
- Furthermore, they resume working soon after childbirth, even though their bodies might not permit it, thus preventing their bodies from **fully recovering** on one hand, and also impeding their **ability to exclusively breastfeed** their young infant in the **first six months**.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** is a Maternity Benefit Programme that is implemented in all the districts of the country in accordance with the provision of the **National Food Security Act, 2013**.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):

- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme implemented by **Ministry of Women and Child Development**.
- The scheme is being implemented on a 60:40 cost-sharing basis with the State governments.
- Maternity Benefit Programme would be implemented in all the districts of the country in accordance with the provision of the **National Food Security Act, 2013**.
- It would **provide grants-in-aid** to the State Governments/ Union Territory Administrations (UTs) in a **dedicated Escrow account** for the purpose of direct benefit transfer to the beneficiaries.
- PMMVY is implemented using the **platform of Anganwadi Services scheme of Umbrella ICDS** under Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- PMMVY shall be implemented through a **centrally deployed Web Based MIS Software application** and the focal point of implementation would be the Anganwadi Centre (AWC) and ASHA/ ANM workers.

National Food Security Act,2013:

- **Every pregnant woman** is entitled to **maternity benefits** of Rs. 6,000.
- However, it excludes all those, whoever are **receiving similar benefits** as a Government employee or under other laws.
- **Critical aspects of PMMVY with respect to NFSA,2013:** Rs. 5,000 in three instalments and Rs. 1,000 later. They are **restricted to the first living child only**.
- Eligibility is only to the women **above the age of 18 years**.

Objectives:

The objectives of the scheme are:

- providing **partial compensation for the wage loss** in terms of cash incentives so that the woman can take adequate rest before and after delivery of the first living child; and
- The **cash incentives** provided would lead to **improved health seeking behaviour** amongst the Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers.

Benefits under PMMVY:

- **Cash incentive of Rs 5000** in three instalments i.e. first instalment of Rs 1000 on early registration of pregnancy at the Anganwadi Centre (AWC) / approved Health facility as may be identified by the respective administering State / UT.
- Second instalment of Rs 2000 after six months of pregnancy on receiving at least one ante-natal check-up (ANC) and
- Third instalment of Rs 2000 after child birth is registered and the child has received the first cycle of BCG, OPV, DPT and Hepatitis – B, or its equivalent/ substitute.

- The eligible beneficiaries would receive the **incentive given under the Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)** for Institutional delivery and the incentive received under JSY would be accounted towards maternity benefits so that on an average a woman gets Rs 6000.

The infographic features a large 'FOUR YEARS 2014-2018' on the left side, with each letter containing photos of women and children. At the top left are the logos for 'Saaf Niyat' and 'Sahi Vikas'. The top center displays the Government of India emblem and the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The central logo for PMMVY is a stylized orange figure with the text 'प्रधानमंत्री मातृ वंदना योजना' and 'मातृ शक्ति, राष्ट्र शक्ति'. The main title 'PRADHAN MANTRI MATRU VANDANA YOJANA' is prominently displayed. Below it, a woman icon is followed by the text 'Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers to get upto ₹ 6,000'. To the left, a group of people icon is next to 'Over 26 lakh beneficiaries'. To the right, a banknote icon is next to '₹ 440 Crore released to 17.4 lakh beneficiaries'. At the bottom left, a gear icon is next to 'PMMVY-Common Application Software (PMMVY-CAS) launched on 1st September 2017'. At the bottom right, a family icon is next to 'Pan-India expansion of Maternity Benefit Programme Since 1st January 2017'. The date '(as on 31.03.18)' is at the bottom right. Social media handles for wcd.nic.in, PMOIndia, MinistryWCD, and Manekagandhibjp are listed at the bottom.

Recent Survey Reports:

- PMMVY excludes more than half of the pregnancies** because first-order births account for **only 43% of all births in India**. Hence, less than half of the women met the PMMVY eligibility criteria
- Among those who were eligible, a little over half had applied for maternity benefits. The application process is cumbersome and exclusionary.
- A **separate form has to be filled**, signed and submitted for each of the three instalments, along with a copy of the applicant's mother-child protection card, Aadhaar card, husband's Aadhaar card, details of the bank account linking to the Aadhaar number.
- Number of women, who were **working for wages before pregnancy, could not work during pregnancy and earned zero wages**.
- On an average, respondents spent Rs. 8,272 on their **deliveries alone**. Moreover, some of them spent money **during delivery or pregnancy by borrowing**.
- It is also common for the families of the respondents to sell assets or migrate to cover these costs.

Conclusion:

- The provision for **maternity entitlements in the NFSA** is very important for women who are **not employed in the formal sector**.
- The PMMVY, however, **undermines this provision** due to the dilution of the entitled amount and the exclusion criteria.
- Even in this restricted form, the scheme is **yet to reach eligible women** as the implementation record has been dismal till date.

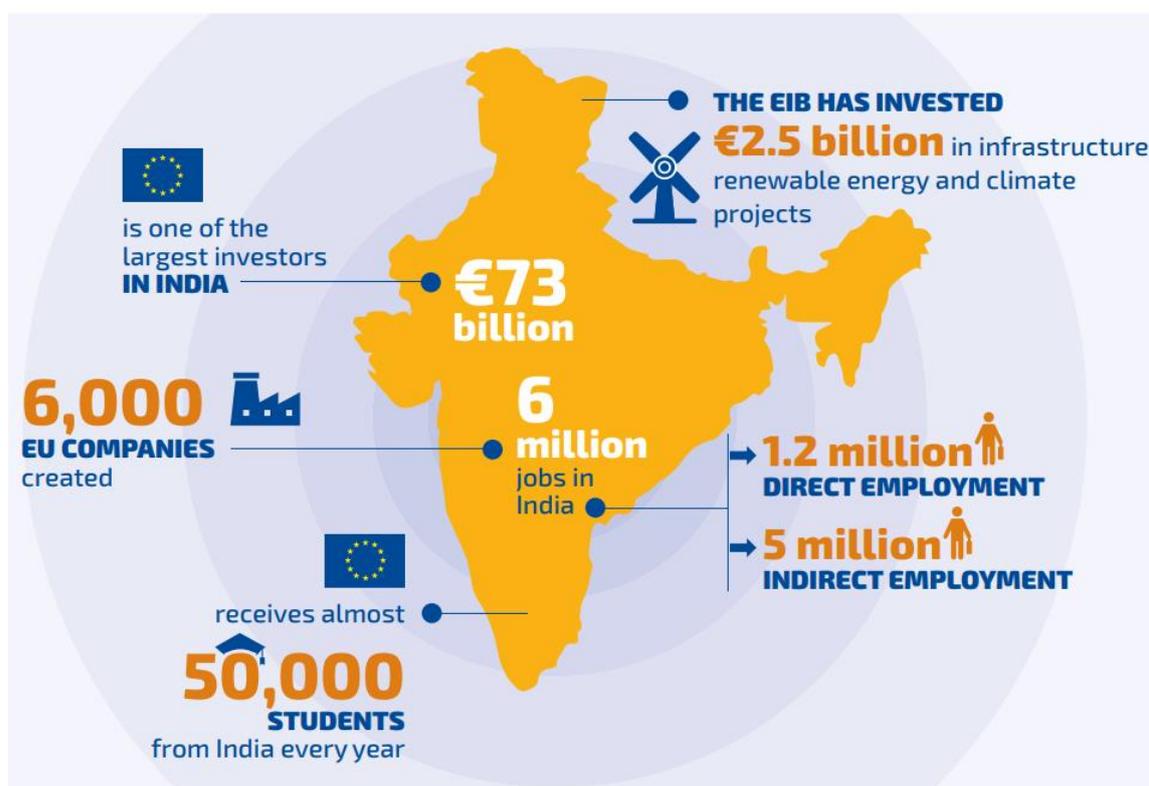
- There is an **urgent need for better implementation** as well as for compliance of the scheme with the NFSA.
- **Maternity benefits** should be raised to ₹6,000 per child at least, for all pregnancies and **not just the first living child.**

3. TOGETHER IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

Brief History:

- India was one of the first countries to develop **relations with the European Union**. The **Joint Political Statement of 1993** and the **1994 Co-operation Agreement** were the foundational agreements for the bilateral partnership.
- In 2004, India and European Union became “**Strategic Partners**”. **A Joint Action Plan** was agreed upon in 2005 and updated in 2008.
- The EU is **India’s largest trading partner** with 12.5% of India’s overall trade between 2015 and 2016, ahead of China (10.8%) and the United States (9.3%).
- **India is the EU’s 9th largest trading partner** with 2.4% of the EU’s overall trade. Bilateral trade (in both goods & services) reached €115 billion in 2017.

WHAT IS THE EU DOING WITH INDIA?



Context:

- **European Union** released its **strategy on India** after 14 years. This road map replaces **2004 EU-India Declaration** on building **bilateral strategic partnership**.
- The European Union and India have upgraded their **long-standing relationship** to a **strategic partnership** in 2004, acknowledging their common goals and principles.
- Nowadays, in a challenging international environment, the EU and India share the **same values of democracy, human rights, fundamental freedoms and support the rules-based global order centred on multilateralism.**
- The European Union has unveiled a **sweeping new vision** to significantly scale up ties with India, including **closer coordination** to forge a **multilateral rules-based world order** and enhanced **military-to-military relations** and joint exercises.

India is rapidly integrating with the global economy:

- At 1.25 billion, India is the **second most populous state** and **largest democracy** in the world. With an annual GDP growth rate in excess of 7.5 % for over a decade it is now in the **world's top ten largest economies (4th by PPP)**.
- As such, India is an important **trade and investment partner** for the EU, combining a sizable and growing market with one of the fastest growing economies in the world arguably the fastest among the big economies.
- Although it is far from the closed market that it was twenty years ago, India still maintains **substantial tariff and non-tariff barriers** that hinder trade with the EU.

New India Strategy Document:

- India needs **resources and expertise from EU** for various priority areas, such as cyber security, urbanisation, environmental regeneration and skill development.
- There is **limited partnership** which largely remained **confined to economics and trade**. EU emerged as India's largest trading partner and biggest foreign investor.
- The relationship remained devoid of any strategic content. In fact, EU-India bilateral trade and investment agreement is yet to be concluded.
- So, therefore, this comes at an appropriate time, when both have to seriously calibrate their partnership.
- The need of the hour is to **ensure security sector cooperation** to **countering terrorism and regional security**.
- Let us hope for more strategic partnership in the coming future.

The new strategy makes **EU trade policy more responsible** by basing it on **three key principles**:

- **Effectiveness:** Making sure trade actually delivers on its promise of new economic opportunities. That means addressing the issues that affect today's economy, including services and digital trade.
- **Transparency:** Opening up negotiations to more public scrutiny by publishing key negotiating texts from all negotiations, as has been done in the TTIP negotiations.
- **Values:** Safeguarding the European **social and regulatory model at home**. Using trade agreements and preference programmes as levers to for the worldwide promotion of European values such as sustainable development, human rights, fair and ethical trade and the fight against corruption.
- These three principles ensure that trade policy benefits as many people as possible.

Some of the suggestions made in the strategy paper on India on intensify foreign policy coordination are:

- Upgrade the **yearly dialogue** between the high representative/vice president of the EU and the Indian minister for external affairs to a regular strategic dialogue.
- **Establish regular bilateral**, as well as **trilateral dialogues** on/with Africa, to discuss security, economic issues, as well as connectivity.
- **Intensify dialogue on Afghanistan and Central Asia** in the appropriate settings.
- With the EU trying to build a **credible military infrastructure**, the joint communication stressed the importance of **developing "military-to-military relations with India**, including between leaders of the Indian armed forces and the EU military structures, as well as **joint exercises"**.
- The strategy paper states that India still has a **"strong reliance on exports and inward investment, and reluctance to open up to imports"**.

Transformative shift:

- The new document is sweeping in its scope and lays out a road map for **strengthening the EU-India partnership**.
- The new strategy underscores a **transformative shift** in Brussels vis-à-vis India and talks of key focus areas: such as the need to **conclude a broader Strategic Partnership Agreement**, intensifying dialogue on Afghanistan and Central Asia, **strengthening technical cooperation on fighting terrorism, and countering radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorist financing**.
- More significant from the perspective of the EU, is a recognition of the **need to develop defence and security cooperation with India**.

- Despite sharing a **congruence of values and democratic ideals**, India and the EU have both struggled to build a partnership that can be instrumental in shaping the geopolitics and geo-economics of the 21st century.
- But where India's relations with individual EU nations have progressed dramatically over the last few years and the **EU's focus on India has grown**, it has become imperative for the two to give each other a serious look.

Conclusion:

- The **EU Delegation** is at the centre of a **vibrant and multi-faceted bilateral relationship** that links the EU and India, and it is constantly working to **deepen and broaden political ties**.
- In addition, the Delegation promotes **people-to-people contacts** and **cultural cooperation** by sponsoring academic, cultural and media exchanges between India and the EU.
- Projects support the implementation of the **EU-India Agenda for Action-2020** in areas such as **social and human development, ICT, energy, water, climate change, urban development and resource efficiency**.
- The EU works closely with India **to promote peace, create jobs, boost economic growth and enhance sustainable development across the country**.

4. COOL IT: ON LABOUR LOSS DUE TO HEATWAVE

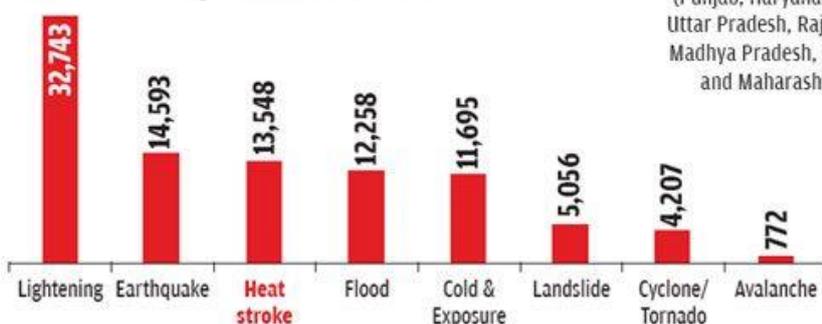
Introduction:

- Heatwaves are associated with **increased rates of heat stress and heat stroke**, worsening **heart failure** and **acute kidney injury** from dehydration.
- **Children**, the elderly and those with pre-existing morbidities are particularly vulnerable.
- The **Lancet countdown on health and climate** has reported that **India was particularly affected** by the **rising frequency of heatwave events** and **lost about 75 billion hours of work**, a significant part of it in the **agricultural sector**.
- The **staggering loss** of an estimated **153 billion hours of labour** during 2017 due to **rising temperatures** around the globe is a reminder to governments that they are not doing enough to dramatically **curb greenhouse gas emissions**.

Natural killers

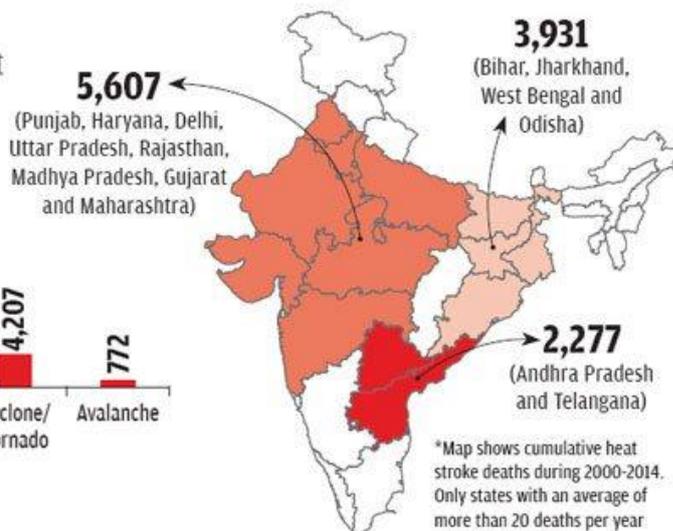
Despite being one of the top three killers in the country, heat waves are not considered a natural calamity by the government

Deaths according to causes (2000-2014)



Source: National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

Heat hot spots*



Lancet Report: Lancet urges response to heatwave exposure surge:

- From 2014-2017, the average **length of heatwaves in India** ranged **from 3-4 days** compared to the **global average of 0.8-1.8 days**.
- Indians were exposed to almost **60 million heatwave exposure events** in 2016, a jump of about 40 million from 2012, the report released.
- Almost **153 billion hours of labour** were lost globally in 2017 due to heat, an **increase of 62 billion hours** from the year 2000.

- **Ambient air pollution** led to the **premature death** of an **estimated half a million** people in India in 2015.

Farm labour vulnerable due to Heat Waves:

- For the **agriculture sector** alone, this rose to **about 60,000 million hours in 2017**, from about 40,000 million hours in 2000.
- Overall, across sectors **India lost almost 75,000 million hours of labour in 2017**, from about 43,000 million hours in 2000.
- The agriculture sector was **more vulnerable** compared to the industrial and service sectors because workers there were **more likely to be exposed to heat**.
- The findings are significant for **India as agriculture makes up 18% of the country's GDP and employs almost half the population**.
- A recent **World Bank report on South Asia's hotspots** predicted a **8% erosion** of the **country's GDP by 2050**, accompanied by a fall in living standards due to changes in **temperature, rainfall and precipitation patterns**.
- This has worrying implications for **rural employment** and the well-being of a large sections of the population that **depends on farming**.

Adaptation Approaches to Neutralise the Heat Waves:

- It is vital that India gets **more ambitious** about **cutting back on carbon emissions**, even as it presses for the fulfilment of the **climate finance obligations** of developed countries under the **Paris Agreement of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change**.
- A further reduction in the **share of coal in the energy mix through sustained support for renewable energy**, particularly **solar photovoltaics**, must form the **cornerstone of national policy**.
- This must be matched by a shift away from **use of fossil fuels** for transport, and the **induction of more electric vehicles**.
- Such a policy would yield the **parallel benefit** of **improving air quality**.

Conclusion:

- The **Lancet Countdown 2018 report** recommends **Indian policy makers** must take a **series of initiatives** to mitigate the **increased risks to health**, and the loss of labour hours due to a surge in exposure to heatwave events in the country over the 2012-2016 period.
- The **importance of funds for adaptation** is underscored by Lancet's finding that **99% of losses from climate-related events** in low-income countries were **not insured**.
- According to the **'Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C'**, if the average global temperature rose by **more than one degree** Celsius from the present, India could "annually" expect conditions like the 2015 heat wave that **killed at least 2,000**.

Way Forward:

- Coming days, The **Conference of Parties** a compact of **about 190 countries** signatory to the UN treaties to **address global warming** is set to begin talks in **Katowice, Poland**, to iron out a **'rule book'** to implement the **Paris Agreement of 2015**.
- The aggravated impact of climate change on health is a **serious issue** for policymakers to consider when they **gather in Katowice** for the conference.
- The agreement was a landmark accord, in which countries agreed to strengthen the global response to the **threat of climate change** by limiting the **global temperature rise** this century to **well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels** and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5°C.
- India's approach to adaptation should, therefore, prepare for catastrophes with a **well-considered plan to provide relief and rehabilitation**.

5. MAKE PLANNING FASHIONABLE AGAIN

Background on Planned Economy:

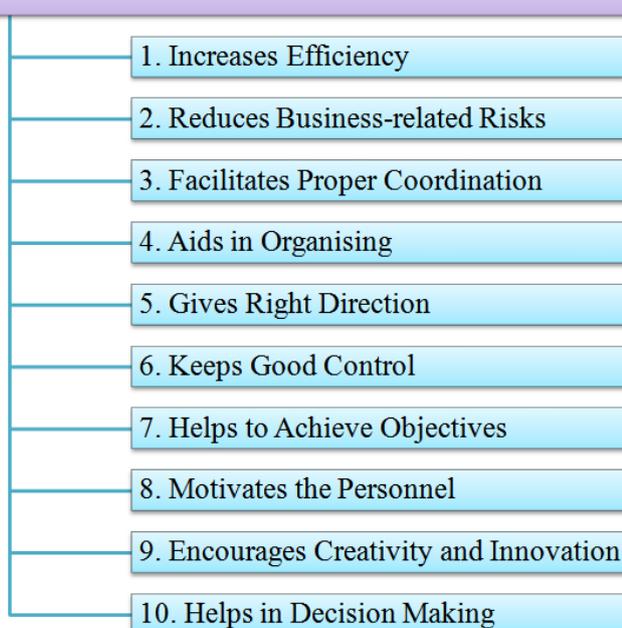
- A **planned economy** is a type of economic system where **investment and the allocation of capital goods** take place according to economy-wide economic and production plans.
- A planned economy may use **centralized, decentralized or participatory forms of economic planning**.

- India under **Nehru's leadership** inaugurated a **strategy for industrialisation** of the country in the early 1950s.
- **A labour-surplus country** like India should limit its industrial development ambitions to **labour-intensive sectors**, such as garments or leather. But Nehru adopted a different strategy.
- This involved the **setting up of public sector units (PSUs)** in **diverse areas** of **manufacturing; research institutions** in cutting-edge technologies of the time such as **space and atomic energy**; and **centres of higher learning**, including the Indian Institutes of Technologies (IITs).
- All of these by a poor country, which was still struggling to find its feet amidst the multiple blows it had to endure during the early years after Independence.

Erstwhile Prime Minister Nehru Views:

- During the colonial period, the British government in India had indeed been putting the **theory of comparative advantage** into practice to the disadvantage of most Indians.
- In his **book The Discovery of India**, Nehru described how the colonial government systematically **strangled Indian entrepreneurship**.
- Nehru argued that the fundamental requirements for a **modern India included "a heavy engineering and machine-making industry, scientific research institutes, and electric power."**

Importance of Planning - Why Planning is Important?



Challenging the Existing orthodoxy:

- By consciously **entering into sectors** such as **machine building and nuclear research**, which **needed capital and technology more critically** than labour, India was also challenging a deeply held orthodoxy in economic theory.
- Theory suggests that countries should **develop industries based on their comparative advantage**. According to this theory, a **labour-surplus country** like India should be **limiting its industrial development** ambitions **to labour-intensive sectors**, such as garments or leather.

Ideas into Reality After Independence:

- The programmes launched in India from the 1950s onwards to **build indigenous capabilities in capital- and technology-intensive sectors**, despite the general poverty of the country, **became a model** for other developing and Third World nations.
- The debates around Indian planning provided a **fertile launching pad** for the **evolution of development economics** as an important sub-discipline.

Successes that India enjoys today:

- The successes that India enjoys today in the **information technology** and **knowledge-intensive sectors** owe much to the research and educational institutions that were built **during the early decades**.
- India's commitment towards **development through planning** had begun to diminish from the early 1990s itself much before the Planning Commission was formally dismantled in 2014.
- After the **introduction of economic reforms in 1991**, **public investment**, especially on agriculture and industry, has been on a decline in the country.
- India is today one of the **largest markets in the world** for a wide range of goods, whether passenger cars, mobile phones or food products.
- There has been little recognition of the **important role that PSUs** can play as **creators of new technologies and knowledge**, particularly in fields in which the private sector may have little interest or capabilities.

- At the same time, however, planning did very little to **remove the hurdles to the growth of agriculture and small-scale industries**.
- India's record during the post-Independence period in implementing land reforms and ensuring primary education for all has been rather unimpressive.
- As a result, the benefits from state-led development have so far reached only a minority of Indians.
- Despite the emergence of such a large domestic market, the record of Indian manufacturing in **absorbing the large labour reserves** in the country remains abysmal.

Success Achieved by the Countries by Adopting "Planned Strategy":

- Planning is **not incompatible with markets and globalisation**. On the contrary, a developing country trying hard to **stay afloat** to the turbulence of a **global economy** requires more, and not less, guidance thorough **industrial policies**.
- The successes achieved by **East Asian countries** such as **South Korea** in manufacturing are, to a great extent, the **result of strategic planning** over several decades by their governments.
- **China** is gradually **shifting its economic base** from low-wage industries, and is now **emerging as a global leader**, even ahead of the U.S., in several new technologies, including artificial intelligence and renewable energy.
- These Chinese achievements owe much to the **careful planning and investments made by its government**, particularly in the area of science and technology.

Conclusion:

- It will only be reasonable to argue that the foundations for **India's diversified economic base** had been laid during the planning years.
- The **employment challenge** that India faces **close to 15 million** waiting to be absorbed in the **industrial and services sectors every year** is possibly bigger than that faced by any other country (except China) in the world.
- It cannot be resolved **with the technologies** that foreign companies bring into India, which tend to **be labour saving**.
- What India requires, on the other hand, are **technological advances** that create **new economic opportunities** and absorb not displace labour.
- For instance, breakthroughs in **biotechnology** that may find new commercial applications for **our agricultural products**, or electric vehicles and renewable energy solutions that depend **less on imported material**.

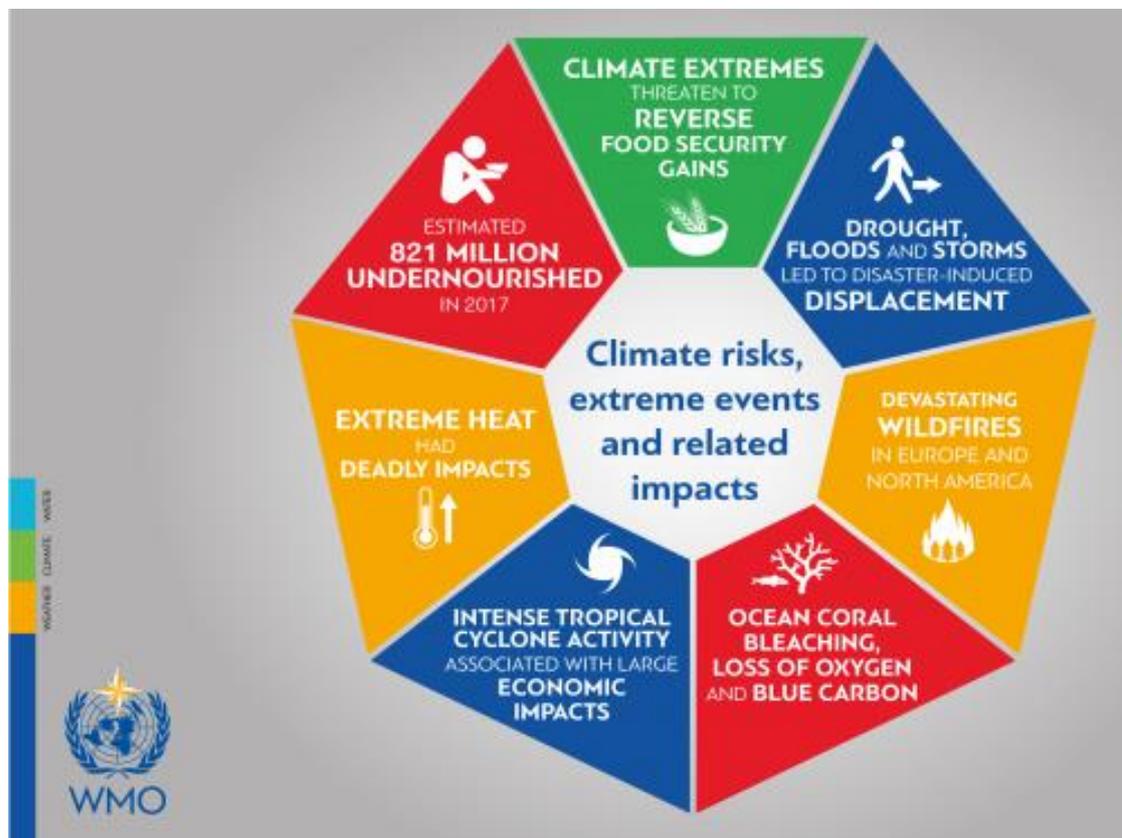
Way Forward:

- **India's research institutions** and our PSUs should **engage in the creation and dissemination of such technologies**. The country's industrial policies should be able to **enthuse young and educated entrepreneurs** from rural areas to make use of these technologies **to create new jobs**.
- There is a need of **revisiting the ideas on planning**, championed in particular by Jawaharlal Nehru.
- And, for all these, **planning** should be brought back to the **centre of our economic discussions**.

6. ON THE TABLE, A CLIMATE 'RULEBOOK'

Introduction:

- **Air pollution** is now the **fourth-highest cause of death worldwide**. Long-term exposure to air pollution contributed to the **death of 6.1 million people in 2016**.
- According to the **UN Emissions Gap Report 2018**, "global greenhouse gas emissions show no signs of peaking."
- **Total annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reached a record high in 2017**.
- While there has been **steady progress** in the number of countries that have **peaked their GHG emissions** or have pledged to do so in the future, the 49 countries that have so far done so, and the **36% share of global emissions** they represent, is not large enough to enable the world's emissions to peak in the near term.



Context:

- Climate negotiators from around the world have **gathered in Poland** to renew their efforts **towards finalising a global action plan** to prevent adverse impacts of climate change.
- The annual meeting, informally called **COP24** (short for the **24th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change**), is being organised this time in **Katowice**, an important city in **southern Poland's coal belt**.
- The Summit will **focus on delivering three key outcomes**:
 - 1) Raising real ambition;
 - 2) Transformative action in the real economy; and
 - 3) An unprecedented citizen and youth mobilization.
- The Summit will focus **on driving action in six areas**:
 1. Transition to renewable energy;
 2. Funding of climate action and carbon pricing;
 3. Reducing emissions from industry;
 4. Using nature as a solution;
 5. Sustainable cities and local action; and
 6. Climate change resilience.

Paris Agreement "Rule Book" Deadline:

- Two years ago, at the **COP22 meeting in Marrakech**, countries had set themselves a **2018 deadline for the completion of the "rulebook"**.
- That is because most of the issues to be dealt with and agreed upon, notably those relating to **finance, technology, and MRV, are highly contentious**, and the negotiators face an uphill task in their attempt to wrap it up in the next two weeks.
- The **World Meteorological Organization** reported that **global average surface temperatures** in 2018 was all set to be the **fourth highest ever recorded**. The 20 warmest years have all been in the last 22 years, with the top four being the last four years.

Agenda for COP24:

- The **main task** on the hands of negotiators gathered in **Katowice (locate in map as well)** would be to **finalise the "rulebook" for the implementation of the Paris Agreement**, and came into effect the following year after the required number of countries had ratified it.
- For the last two years, negotiators have been working on **formulating the rules, procedures, guidelines, and institutional mechanisms** through which the provisions of the Paris Agreement would be implemented.
- These include such things as **agreeing on accounting standards**:
 - To **measure** emissions,
 - Processes for **monitoring**,

- **Reporting and verification** (commonly referred to as **MRV in climate negotiation circles**) of actions being taken by individual countries, mechanisms to raise financial resources and
- Ensure the **flow of funds for climate projects**, and
- Institutions to **facilitate the diffusion** of appropriate technologies to countries and regions that need them.
- At the same time, there is a growing noise about the **need to aim for a 1.5°C target instead of 2°C**. Countries would need to do much more to achieve that.
- A recent **special report** by the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** on the pathways to the **1.5° target is an important item** on the agenda for discussions in Katowice.

Conclusion:

- Without **zero emission transport**, holding the increase in global average temperature to well **below 2 degrees C** and pursuing efforts to limit warming to 1.5 degrees C will simply be impossible.
- It is being held amidst a **series of fresh warnings** that current measures announced by countries, some already under way and others to be implemented in the coming years, were **hugely inadequate** for achieving the **agreed objective of keeping the rise in global temperatures within 2°C from pre-industrial times**.
- Countries go into the meeting with the realisation that they are under tremendous pressure, more than at any other time, to **enhance the scope and ambition of their climate actions**.

Way Ahead: The race to “Net zero”:

- The climate talks are taking place amid calls for **more ambition to keep temperatures within 1.5 degrees C of pre-industrial levels**.
- In a report by the **UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** warned the planet could reach that level by as early as 2030, based on current levels of greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Global net emissions of carbon dioxide** would need to **fall by 45% from 2010 levels by 2030 and reach “net zero” around 2050** in order to keep the warming around 1.5 degrees C.
- IPCC notified how global temperatures would respond to a **sudden and drastic reduction of greenhouse gas emissions**. Even with immediate action, global temperatures will still overshoot the **goal of 1.5 degrees C**, but could reduce back to the target over time.

7. CUTTING THROUGH THE SMOG

Introduction:

- **Air pollution** is a worry especially in **north India**.
- **Stubble burning** is said to be a key factor behind the **formation of a dense cover of smog** in this part of India though its **contribution is less than 20%**.
- Farmers are held responsible for the crisis but what is at fault are the **flawed and short-sighted policies of the Central and State governments**.
- **Incidents of stubble burning** following the **harvest of paddy crop in Punjab and Haryana** cannot be averted by **imposing fines, or giving notice** or giving farmers capital subsidy.
- Burning leads to the ground temperature **rising and the soil drying up**, necessitating additional water for irrigation. And last, but not the least, **livestock is impacted by crop burning**, with milk yields reducing up to 50 per cent during the two months. This results in less earnings through selling milk.
- Instead, the issue requires **long-term vision and strategic policy interventions**.

Reasons for failure for current methods (using Policy of rotation):

- The sowing of paddy is incentivised in Punjab and Haryana whereby the **share of paddy (rice)** in the gross cropped area **in Punjab has increased** from 6.8% in 1966-67 to almost **36.4 % in recent years**, while it has increased from 4.97% to **20% in Haryana**.
- The **policy of minimum support price for crops**, in tandem with their assured procurement and input subsidy, have left farmers with no option but to follow this **wheat-paddy rotation** which has **caused the increase at the cost** of other crops such as maize, cotton, oilseeds and sugarcane.
- Punjab has enacted a **water conservation law in 2009** which mandates paddy sowing within a **notified period**(June instead of earlier practice of May).

- A **shorter period of sowing days** prohibits transplantation before a notified date, which in turn limits the **window available for harvesting paddy** to between 15 and 20 days.
- As a result, farmers who are **pressed for time to sow wheat** and to maintain crop yield, farmers find **stubble burning to be an easy and low-cost solution**.
- Haryana and Punjab face labor shortage for removal of stubble and therefore find stubble burning an easier option.
- The **purchase of the 'happy seeder'** which mechanically removes the paddy stubble adds to the cost incurred by farmers, wherein stubble burning is a much cheaper option.

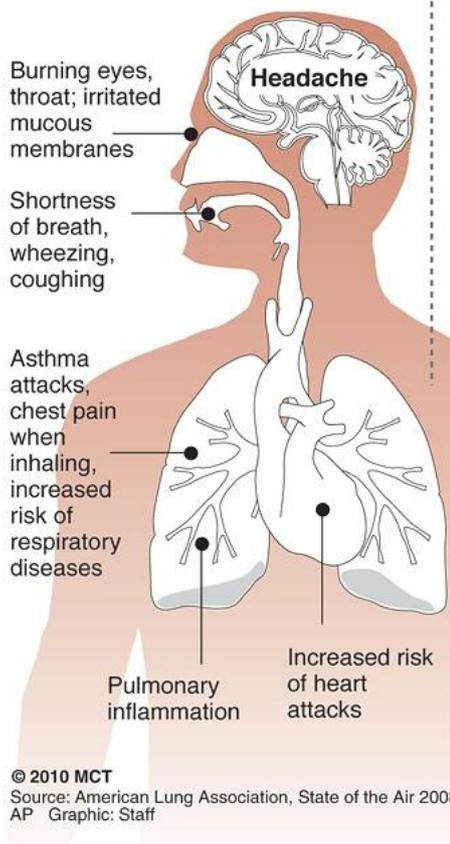
Happy Seeder: A solution to agricultural fires in north India: A 'happy' solution:

- A machine called the **'Happy Seeder'** has been developed in the last few years that can **plant the wheat seed without getting jammed by the rice straw**.
- The Happy Seeder is a **tractor-mounted machine** that cuts and lifts rice straw, sows wheat into the bare soil, and **deposits the straw over the sown area as mulch**.
- Happy Seeder is a **zero-tillage technology**. Research shows that Happy Seeder is a **viable alternative to conventional tillage**.
- What is needed for its **rapid adoption is a major government push** to publicise and popularise the Happy Seeder.
- Currently the Happy Seeder machine costs **about Rs. 1.3 lakh with a subsidy of 33%**.
- There is a need to propose at least that the **subsidy on Happy Seeder machine be raised to 50%** because it would then be significantly more profitable than the conventional practice.

Why smog is harmful

Ozone, the main ingredient in smog, is one of the most widespread air pollutants and among the most dangerous.

Effects on health



How ozone forms

- 1 Oxygen in the atmosphere O2
- 2 Nitric oxide, byproduct of combustion NO
- 3 Sunlight breaks up nitric oxide
- 4 Ozone formed by three oxygen atoms O3

U.S. ozone limits

In parts per billion

• 1997-2008	84
• 2008-present	75
• New EPA proposal	60-70

© 2010 MCT
Source: American Lung Association, State of the Air 2008, AP Graphic: Staff

- The **No Burn Farm campaign** is also trying to **communicate to farmers** that crop burning is not the best method to **remove stubble** and has negative implications for the food system.
- For one, the **nutrients** present in the stubble are wasted in burning and farmers have to spend on chemical fertilisers **to maintain soil quality**.

Happy Seeder should not be another burden:

- Farmers have already made investments in **seed drill machines** for sowing wheat after paddy harvest.
- Increasing pressure by the government on farmers to purchase **the 'happy seeder' to abate stubble burning** adds to the cost incurred by farmers.
- Even if the machine is available at a subsidised rate of nearly ₹1 lakh, it would remain idle the whole year and become a **liability in terms of maintenance**. It is not a viable option for small and marginal farmers who hardly earn ₹60,000 in a year.
- **Imposing a fine for burning straw is again unreasonable**. The fine imposed per hectare is much lower than the **cost incurred on a 'happy seeder'**.

Way Forward: A road map

- A feasible remedy could lie in the **setting up of custom hiring centres** or inviting companies to make investments **for rental purposes**.
- If the state provides an **app-based support system**, to rent out tractors and farm implements and earn additional income as **there are examples** of this in Nigeria and also in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
- It would be akin to **the 'Uberisation of agriculture'**. It would **avoid stubble burning** and at the same time make farming **more mechanised, cost effective** and a **source of employment**.
- Another **far-sighted approach** could be in **effective use of paddy straw**.
- Farmers, who have already been sensitised to refrain from burning residue, should be given options **such as biomass generation**. Now, hardly **20% of straw is managed through biomass power plants, paper and cardboard mills**.
- The government should **use geospatial techniques** to identify areas where **stubble burning is severe** and encourage **installation of biomass plants** at such locations.
- Farmers can also be **incentivised to sell the residual for additional income**.
- The residual has uses, such as in paper, cardboard and packing material making and also hydroseeding (defiberised rice straw can be used in hydroseeding for erosion control).
- This will not only **reduce transportation costs** for the firm or village entrepreneurs but also help the government **achieve its target of generating 227GW based on renewable energy sources by 2022**.

8. SHIELDING WITNESSES: ON PROTECTION SCHEME**Context:**

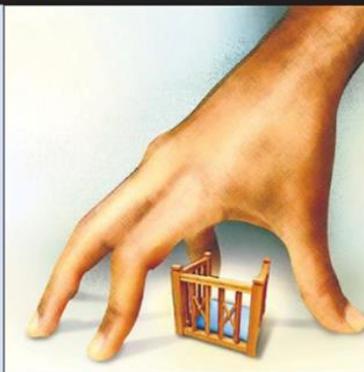
- The Supreme Court approved the **Centre's draft witness protection scheme** and asked all the states to implement it till Parliament comes out with a legislation.
- The **issue of witness protection scheme** had cropped up earlier when the top court was hearing a **public interest litigation (PIL) seeking protection for witnesses in rape cases involving Asaram Bapu**.
- The witnesses, being **eyes and ears of justice**, play an important role in bringing **perpetrators of crime to justice**.

Draft Witness Protection Scheme:

- The draft witness protection scheme, finalised in consultation with the **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)** and **Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD)**, has **three categories of witnesses** based on the threat perception.
- The court had asked the Centre to **finalise the scheme** after getting response from the states and Union Territories.
- The court had said that **witness protection scheme** can be implemented **for at least sensitive cases** and the Ministry of Home Affairs could come out with a **comprehensive plan**.
- Further, the scheme envisages that there should be safeguards that witnesses and accused **do not come face to face** during investigation or trial and **adequate security measures** should be there for the **safety of the witnesses** and all possible steps should be taken for **expeditious completion of the trial of cases**.
- The scheme provides for **identity protection** and **giving a new identity** to the witness.

Witness Protection Scheme framed by Centre

- The witness protection measures shall be proportional to the threat
- Steps to be taken to ensure that witness and accused do not come face to face during investigation or trial
- Mail and telephone call to witness to be monitored
- Arrangement to be made to provide unlisted telephone number to witness
- Security devices like CCTV camera, alarms to be installed at residence of witness
- Close protection and regular patrolling around witness's house
- Witness to be escorted to and from court in



- government vehicle
- Ensuring expeditious recording of deposition on day to day basis without adjournment in trial proceedings
- Holding of in-camera trials and concealing identity of witness by referring her with changed name

- The **need to protect witnesses** has been emphasized through various **Law Commission Reports** and Court Judgments for years.
- **Witnesses turning hostile** is a major reason for most acquittals. It is first attempt at the national level to holistically provide for the protection of the witnesses.
- This attempts at ensuring that witnesses **receive appropriate and adequate protection**.

Delhi scores a first in protecting witnesses:

- Delhi has become the **first state in the country** to announce a **scheme for witness protection**. The state government notified the Delhi Witness Protection Scheme, 2015.
- The government will **make budgetary provisions** in its annual budget for implementation of the scheme.
- Witnesses under **three categories** will be **provided protection, depending on the threat perception**.
- The categories have been draw up based **on type of threat and duration** for which the protection has to be given. For instance, if **there is a threat to life** and it **affects the day-to-day activities** of a **witness for a substantial period** during the investigation.

Previous Recommendations on protecting witnesses:

- **Law Commission's recommendation in 2006** that the Centre and the States share the cost equally.
- **Basic features** such as in camera trial, proximate physical protection and anonymising of testimony and references to witnesses in the records are not difficult to implement.
- The real test will be the **advanced forms of identity protection**: giving witnesses a new identity, address and even 'parentage', with matching documents.
- All this needs to be done without undermining their **professional and property rights and educational qualifications**.
- The introduction of the scheme **marks a leap forward**.
- Until now, there have been ad hoc steps such as those outlined for concealing the **identity of witnesses in anti-terrorism and child-centric laws**.
- It is gratifying that the **court has played a proactive role** in getting the Centre and the States to come up with a concrete proposal.
- The Centre deserves credit for coming forward to suggest that its draft witness protection scheme be **introduced by judicial mandate** instead of waiting for formal legislation.

Conclusion:

- However, expanding such facilities and **implementing a comprehensive and credible witness protection programme** will pose **logistical and financial challenges**.
- It will be well worth the effort, as the scheme could help **strengthen India's tottering criminal justice system**.
- **Section 195 A of the Indian Penal Code** deals with witness protection.
- Countries such as USA, United Kingdom, China, Italy, Canada, Hong Kong and Ireland have **witness protection scheme**.
- In **2003, Justice V Malimath Committee on criminal justice system** had recommended enacting a **separate witness protection law**.
- In **2006, the Law Commission of India, in its 198th report**, provided for a draft witness protection law.
- The **draft of the Witness Protection Scheme, 2018** states that it is the first attempt at the **national-level to holistically provide for the protection** of the witnesses, which will go a long way in **eliminating secondary victimization**.
- This scheme attempts at ensuring that witnesses **receive appropriate and adequate protection**.
- This will go a long way in **strengthening the criminal justice system** in the country and will consequently **enhance national security scenario**.

9. IS SOCIAL MEDIA POLARISING SOCIETY?

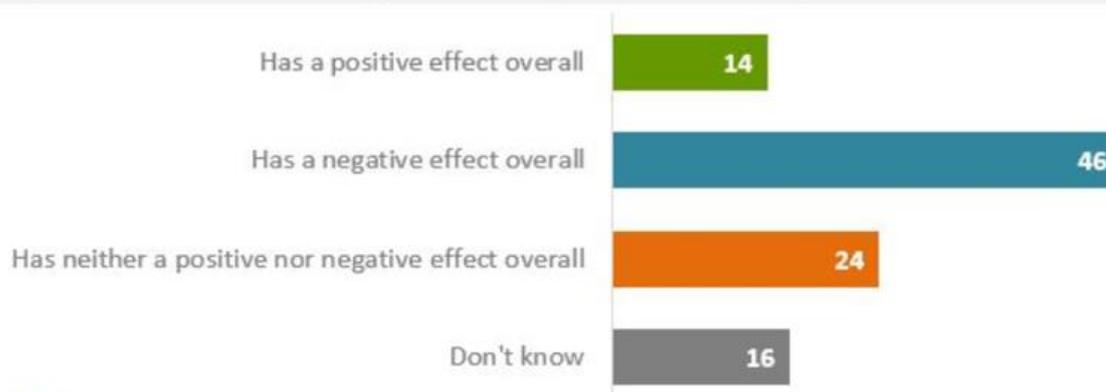
Introduction: Think about it:

- We live in a world where we **aren't only consumers of information but creators as well**, which gives us a **misplaced sense of control**.

- It is misplaced because we live today on social media in filter bubbles and echo chambers, and our experiences are dictated by algorithms.
- Around **1.49 billion people on average** log onto Facebook daily; every second, on average, around **6,000 tweets** are tweeted on Twitter; and since its inception, **over 40 billion photographs** have been posted on Instagram.
- As we approach the end of the second decade of this century, social media and the Internet have drifted from their promise of closing distances and exposing us to the views of those who **existed beyond our personal networks**.
- Instead, we find ourselves to be **more rigid versions of our former selves**.

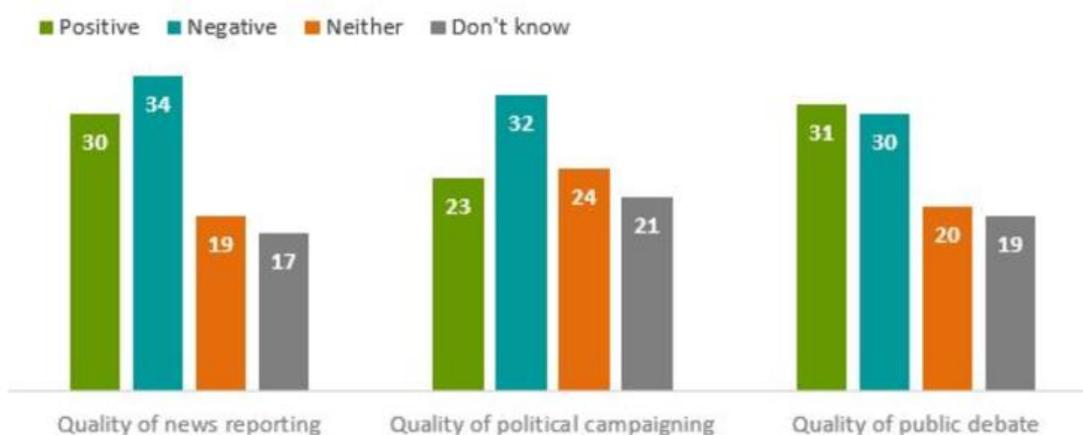
Social media effect on society

Do you think social media has a positive or negative effect on society overall? %



Internet effect on civic life

Do you think the Internet has had a positive or negative effect on the following? %



Fake News entered into Social Media:

- **Fake news is an industry today** and finds great **resonance with people**. Its rise corresponds with a growing distrust in the mainstream media.
- Fake news has now even **slipped into traditional media outlets** and is often circulated by prominent individuals. This has contributed to the echo chamber phenomenon.
- "Echo chamber" is a term widely used in today's lexicon, that describes a situation where **certain ideas, beliefs or data points** are reinforced through repetition of a closed system that does **not allow for the free movement** of alternative or competing ideas or concepts.

How Social Media evolved in Polarising Society?

- In the 1950s, a **series of psychological experiments** called the Asch Conformity Experiments were carried out by the social psychologist Solomon Asch, to determine the extent to which a person's opinion is influenced by a group.
- Asch found through a series of trials that an individual was willing to go to the extent of giving a wrong answer just to conform to the majority view.

- Although **means of communication and engagement have evolved** since the 1950s, the human instinct to fit in hasn't changed. To some extent, this also explains the **impact of fake news online**, which is said to **contribute to a polarised society**.
- A study carried out by **Aalto University, Finland**, on **increasing polarisation on social media found that factors** like:
 - **User homophily** (users in a social system tend to bond more with ones who are similar to them than to ones who are dissimilar) and
 - **Algorithmic filtering** have created the cycle of enforcing and reinforcing belief systems and ensuring that we don't open our minds to diverse opinions.
 - Over the last couple of years, there has been a **growing trend of misinformation** (due to biases or human errors),
 - **Disinformation** (fake news created intentionally) and
 - Even **"fake accounts"**, the latter directly targeted at pushing a **political agenda or harassing somebody online**.
- People seek **"informed" opinions through filters** only from people they trust and look for news that confirms their worldview. This results in **people cultivating rigid opinions of issues**.
- Social media sites are **more than willing to play abettors**. Twitter, for example, will routinely prompt you to follow people who hold a viewpoint that is similar to yours.
- The **features of openness, obscurity, and anonymity** that once gave strength to marginalized communities are now giving room for mean intentions to grow.

Use of Social Media by terror groups:

- Since the IS has been able to **successfully recruit Indians via social media** for the war in Syria it is a matter of time before they find recruits willing to employ violence in India itself.
- The head of **Al-Qaeda Indian Subcontinent** called on Indian Muslims to follow the example of **lone wolves in Europe** and kill officers in India.

However, views that Social Media is not the only reason for polarization:

- **Social media is a mechanism** comprising of multimedia and other platforms that are **multilingual, multicultural and are inclusive**, and **allow equal opportunities** for all, irrespective of class, creed, race, religion, sex, age or financial resources.
- The first **Greek printing house set up in 1627** printed a booklet targeting Jews. Books were only a medium, just like social media. **Banning books and blaming social media** are results of the same flawed logic.
- If **social media** had an **inherent bias towards evil**, the **#MeToo stories** wouldn't have found an outlet. There are many stories of lost children being found, dogs being adopted, money being raised for various causes, and other similar stories of good being done, is found on social media.
- According to **the BI-2018 survey (Broadcast Audience Research Council of India – BARC –** periodically conducts a research study to ascertain television viewing habits in India):
 - The number of **individuals with access to TV** has gone up to 835 million; **smartphone penetration** in the country is at around 300 million.
 - The number of daily active users on **WhatsApp** is 200 million; on **Facebook**, it is 194 million, and on Twitter, it is 7.83 million.
- By all accounts, social media in India is still a **niche phenomenon**.
- **Blaming social media** for every (online and offline) misconduct **doesn't seem to have any logical base to stand upon**.
- In short, there is **much good in social media**, which holds enormous power to keep people informed or to spur civic engagement and community action. But **societal repercussions abound**, for which there are few easy solutions.

Conclusion:

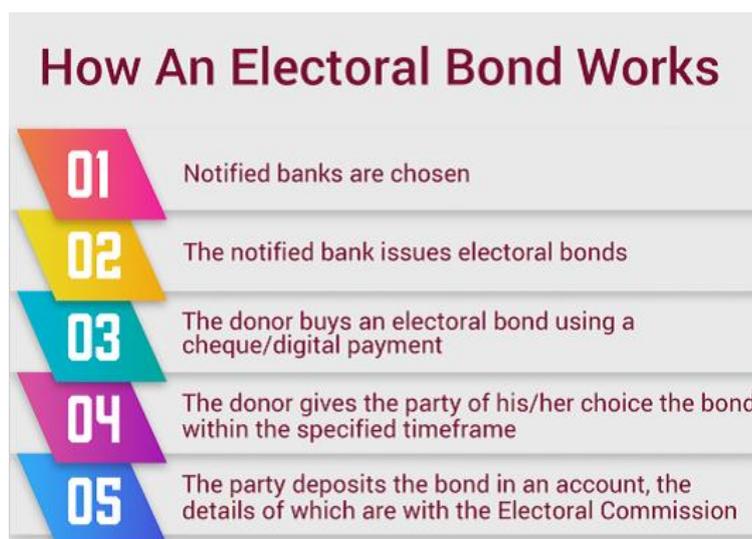
- It is true that **social media** was used to garner support for a man who burnt a Muslim man on video in Rajasthan, but it was the **same social media** that was also used to raise funds for the parents of a child who was gang-raped and murdered in Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir.

- This shows that **social media is only just a tool, which on the hands of a user can easily do as much good as bad.**
- Because of the **influence of social media**, people are getting **trapped in narrower worldviews** that are seeping into not only **voter behaviour** but **everyday personal interactions.**
- This is something we must be alarmed about. Log in or log out, the world is a far more opinionated place today but it need not be a rigid one.
- **Social media is a tool for empowerment**, especially for a country like India where **70% of the population is yet to get online** and leverage the opportunities it has to offer.
- While social media is definitely facing **the global challenges of information bombardment** (both factual and fake), it is also **enabling communities** to access their **rights and voice their opinion.**
- Hopefully, over time, **people will learn to take more responsibility** for what they share and social media platforms shall **regain their lost trust. let us hope for the better.**

10. AN INVENTION TO CORRUPTION?

Introduction:

- The government introduced an **Electoral Bond Scheme** purportedly with a view to cleansing the **prevailing culture of political sponsorship.**
- But the programme's failings have been so blindingly obvious, and its consequences so utterly **devastating to rectitude and transparency** in government.
- Even **O.P. Rawat**, who just retired Chief Election Commissioner, thought it fit to deliver a **damning indictment** of the scheme.
- "There are **many grey areas** in this because when there **is no ceiling on party expenditure** and the **EC (Election Commission) cannot monitor it**, how can you be sure that what is coming in is not black money as there is a secrecy of the donor".



ELECTORAL BOND:

- Electoral Bond is a **financial instrument for making donations to political parties.** These are **issued by Scheduled Commercial Banks** upon authorization from the Central Government ("the CG") to the intending donors, but **only against cheque** and other **digital payments** (in other words, it cannot be purchased using cash).
- These bonds shall be **redeemable in the designated account** of a registered political party prior to the expiry of the life of the bonds.
- The bonds are **open for purchase by all citizens of India.**
- Only registered political parties that have secured not less than 1 per cent of the votes polled in the latest general election to the Lok Sabha or a State Assembly are eligible to receive them.
- The bonds have to be **deposited within 15 days of issue in the authorised bank** branch of the party; it can be encashed only through the same account.

The process of how electoral bonds are proposed to be rolled out:

Electoral bond was announced in the Union Budget 2017-18.

- **Selection of notified banks**– The CG **after precise review** selects a panel of scheduled banks which shall be eligible to issue such electoral bonds in consultation with the respective bank's management.
- **Issue of bonds**– The banks once notified shall be permitted to issue electoral bonds in **specified denominations** to the intended parties / customers ("the donor").
- **Subscription**– The donor buys electoral bonds **using cheque or through digital banking channel.**

- **Tenure** – The donor gives such bonds to the party of his / her choice within the specified time during which the bond shall be valid. However, it is proposed to **choose 30 days as the tenure** of the bond by the CG.
- **Encashment**– On receipt of electoral bond from the donor, the party deposits the bond into an account, the details of which are with the Electoral Commission.

Role of Reserve Bank of India:

- Required amendments to the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934** (“the RBI Act”), specifically **to Section 31(3) and the Representation of People Act, 1951** were made through Section 133 to 136 of **Finance Bill, 2017**.
- CG is in the process of **framing a Scheme in this regard**. Section 31 of the RBI Act gives power to issue bearer bonds to RBI and government. The bearer bond has the characteristic of a currency.
- The RBI Act states that other than the Central Bank and the CG, nobody can issue notes which have the **characteristic of a banknote or a currency note**.
- Hence, the government’s move to amend the Act to allow commercial banks to issue such bonds is **leading to some discomfort** among RBI officials who feel it will erode some of the Central Bank’s authority.

Drawbacks of Present Electoral Bond Scheme:

- Even **foreign money can come** and even a dying company can give money. So, prima facie it appears the scheme **cannot really deliver** whatever it was intended to.
- The fact that the scheme allows for **complete anonymity of the donor** and neither the purchaser of the bond nor the political party receiving the donation is mandated to **disclose the donor’s identity**.
- Through the **Finance Act, 2016**, FCRA rules were amended to allow political parties to accept donations from foreign companies.
- **Cash donation from one source is limited to Rs. 2,000 per year**. As usual, there will be no requirement to disclose contributions by cheque or through digital means up to Rs. 20,000.
- There is **no cap on the expenditure of the political parties** during elections.
- Therefore, not only will say, the shareholders of a corporation be unaware of the company’s contributions, but the voters too will have no idea of how, and through whom, a political party has been funded.
- For instance, the programme **removes an existing condition** that had prohibited companies from **donating anything more than 7.5%** of their average net-profit over the previous three years.
- **This now means that even loss-making entities can make unlimited contributions**.
- Additionally, the requirement that a corporation ought to have been **in existence for at least three years** before it could make donations a system that was meant to stop shell companies from being created with a **view purely to syphoning money into politics** has also been removed.

The scheme also **suffers from at least two foundational defects**.

- One, that it was incorporated on the **back of a series of amendments** made to legislation, including the Representation of the People Act, the Income Tax Act, and the Companies Act, which were **introduced in the form of a money bill**.
- Two, that the **scheme flouts a number of fundamental rights**. The Finance Act, through which these amendments were introduced, **therefore did not deal with only those matters contained in Article 110**.

Two Judgements with respect to Electoral Funding:

- Even as early as in 1957, in a pair of judgments outstanding in their lucidity and prescience, the **Bombay and the Calcutta High Courts** warned **Parliament of the perils in allowing companies to freely add to party coffers**.
- Bombay High Court said it is something which is likely to **“grow apace and which may ultimately overwhelm and even throttle democracy in the country”**.
- The **Calcutta High Court** had made an almost identical appeal.
- “To the cynic it appears to be a plea of the company **to have a legal sanction to bribe the Government of the day**, to induce policies that will help the company in its business”.
- If amendments of this kind were allowed, and if joint stock companies serve as adjuncts to political parties, the Court added, the **“man who pays the piper will then call the tune”**.

Conclusion:

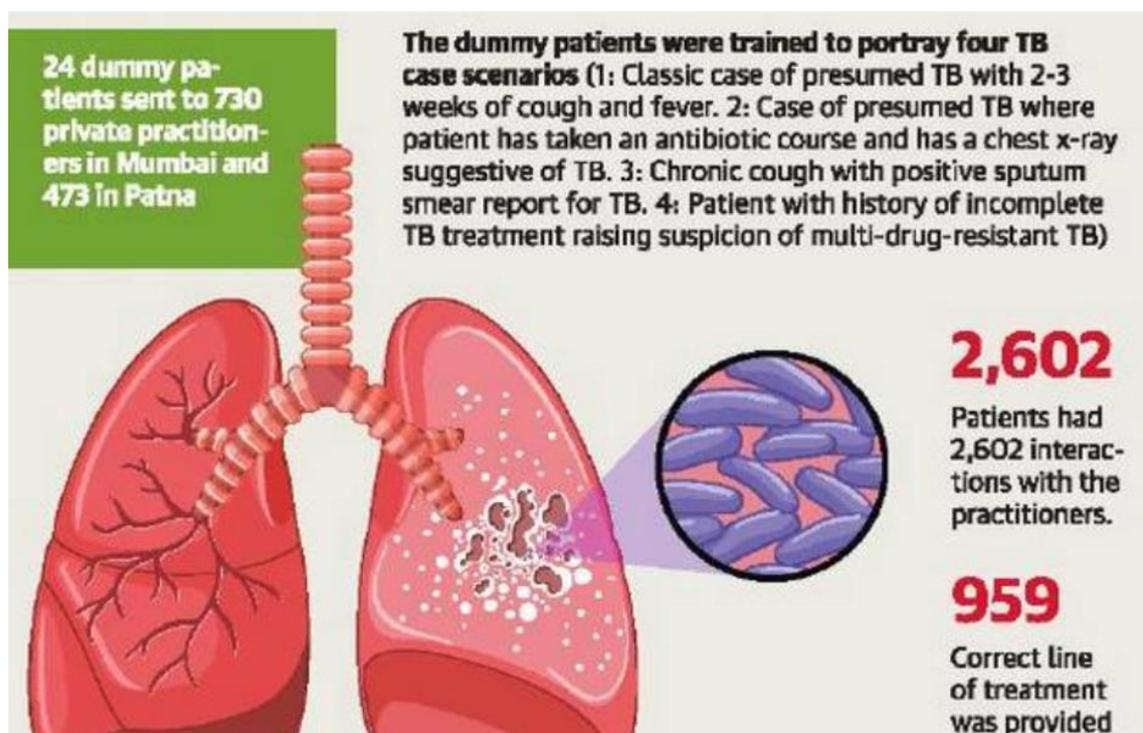
- The above two judgments clearly recognised the **bedrock principle of democracy**.
- Over the years, efforts have been made **to endorse opacity in political funding. Electoral Bonds Scheme**, which represents the latest such assault, may well irredeemably damage India's democratic edifice.
- There's no doubt that the Constitution does **not contain an explicitly enforceable right to vote**. But implicit in its **guarantees of equality and free speech is a right to knowledge and information**.
- Our courts have nearly consistently seen **"freedom of voting"** as distinct from the right to vote, as a facet of the **right to freedom of expression and as an essential condition of political equality**.
- In the absence of complete knowledge about the identities of those funding the various different parties, it's difficult to conceive how a citizen can **meaningfully participate in political and public life**.

11. ANCHORED IN HUMAN RIGHTS

Introduction:

- Decades of **global neglect** have resulted in **tuberculosis (TB) becoming the leading cause of adult deaths in most of the global south**.
- It kills nearly **two million people** a year. This is shocking given that **TB is curable and preventable**.
- The **United Nations Declaration of September 2018** titled **"United to End Tuberculosis: An Urgent Global Response to a Global Epidemic"**, where heads of state and government have **"reaffirmed their commitment to end the global TB epidemic by 2030"**.

Private clinics off mark in TB care

**Status in India:**

- Despite the efforts of health systems, about **40% of Tuberculosis (TB) patients in India** go undiagnosed or if diagnosed, are **not reported**.
- Moreover, even among those reported and/or diagnosed with TB, many do not **turn up follow up treatment**, both in cases of **drug sensitive and drug resistant TB**.
- **Social factors** such as **stigma and discrimination** push many to opt for treatment at private hospitals.
- However, the downside of this is:
 - **Inadequate financial support**.
 - **Availability and access** to services at a convenient time,
 - **social factors** like work, migration, gender, etc. and
 - other **economic barriers** such as cost of transport, ancillary medicines and

- investigations in **private sector** are other major deterrents.

There are **two areas of concern**:

- The **diagnostic delay** can contribute significantly to **deterioration** of the patient's condition and
- Lengthen the time during which the **patient remains contagious**.
- The findings suggest that there are **systematic deficits in the management** of TB in the private sector.

Best Way Forward Possible to eliminate TB:

- We cannot beat TB through a response rooted **in control and coercion**. Therefore, we suggest **three interventions** to which the funding for **surveillance technology** should be redirected.

The first is new treatment:

- In contrast to the dozens of whirring and chirping surveillance gizmos are **bedaquiline and delamanid**, the **only new TB drugs** to have **come to the market in 50 years**.
- These drugs are far **more effective against drug-resistant TB** than prevailing treatments made up of toxic drugs and painful injections that only work about half the time and often **cause disability and psychosis**.

New guidelines by the World Health Organization (WHO) recommend:

- The **use of bedaquiline and delamanid** against drug-resistant TB. But to date, only about 30,000 people have received the new drugs; compare this to the **over 500,000 people** who get sick with **drug-resistant TB every year**.
- In other words, we mount an **arsenal of cutting-edge technology** to corral people into taking torturous, **ineffective drugs** even while we fail to use available drugs that work far better.
- If **adherence is the goal**, providing drugs that work would be a good place to start.
- International institutions, donors and countries **need to focus and collaborate** on the urgent production and distribution of affordable generics of bedaquiline and delamanid.

The second is the human touch:

- Employ and deploy **community health-care workers**.
- Many domestic TB policies envision **community health-care workers** as the backbone of the response, yet, in practice, these front-line workers remain **shockingly underused**.
- In sufficient numbers equipped with **proper training and dignified conditions of employment** they would lead the response by bringing care to those furthest from the **reach of traditional health-care systems**.
- WHO should focus on recommendations around this cadre of workers and donors should **focus funding to programmes** that make the most of them.

The last is accountability:

- The TB response can only be as good as the **health-care systems** through which it is implemented, and health-care systems are only as good as the **structures that hold them to account**.
- **Community-based structures** such as "clinic committees" ensure **accountability** while also fostering partnership and trust between communities and their health-care systems.
- **Grassroots civil society** and **community-based organisations** also ensure accountability. Such organisations are indispensable and would thrive on comparatively small amounts of funding.
- **Accountability is a necessary condition for success**. We must recognise that it is owed to communities, not donors or international institutions, and fund their efforts to ensure it.

Conclusion:

- To mitigate these factors through **community engagement**, the State Health and Family Welfare Department has planned to set up **State and District TB fora**. A Government Order in this regard was issued.
- Recently, the Union Ministry had also directed all States **to expand TB diagnostics services** at all Primary Health Centres (PHCs).
- This follows a directive from the Union Health Ministry that **aims to meet its ambitious target of eradicating TB by 2025**, five years ahead of the target fixed by the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**.
- People with TB do not need to be watched, **they need to be heard**. People with TB are saying they want what anyone wants **including health and dignity**.

- The shiny allure of **surveillance technology** threatens to distract us from the real work of the TB response and work that involves partnering with communities to **employ human-rights based strategies to beat TB.**

12. BECOMING A CITIZEN COULD BECOME EASIER FOR SOME

Context:

- The **winter session of Parliament** may see the government push for the **Citizenship (Amendment) Bill of 2016.**
- The proposed law, which **amends the original Citizenship Act of 1955**, mandates that Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from **Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan** will **not be treated as illegal immigrants** despite having entered India **without valid documents.**
- They will **not face deportation** as illegal immigrants under the Passport (Entry into India) Act of 1920 and the Foreigners Act of 1946.
- Illegal immigrants from these six communities from these countries are assured a **smooth sail to citizenship** over Muslims.

THIS WINTER SESSION...

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016

Tabled in the LS by Rajnath Singh in 2016, it seeks to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955 and grant citizenship to illegal migrants, especially those from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, and are of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian extraction

Highlights of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill of 2016:

- Under the Act, one of the requirements for **citizenship by naturalisation** is that the applicant must have resided in India during the last 12 months, and for 11 of the previous 14 years. **The Bill relaxes this 11 year requirement to six years for persons belonging to the same six religions and three countries.**
- The Bill amends the **Citizenship Act, 1955** to make illegal migrants who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, eligible for citizenship.
- The Bill provides that the **registration of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders** may be **cancelled if they violate any law.**

Key Issues and Analysis:

- The Bill makes **illegal migrants eligible for citizenship** on the **basis of religion.**
- This may **violate Article 14 of the Constitution** which guarantees **right to equality.**
- The Bill allows **cancellation of OCI registration for violation of any law.** This is a wide ground that may cover a range of violations, including minor offences (eg. parking in a no parking zone).

Critics Views of Citizenship (Amendment) Bill of 2016:

- Critics say it **violates the basic tenets of the Constitution.**
- Here, illegal immigrants are distinguished on the **basis of religion.**
- It goes against the fundamental **right to equality under Article 14.**
- Article 14 applies **equally to both citizens and foreigners.**
- The Bill would hamper, what the **Assam National Register of Citizens** seeks to achieve in the State.
- NRC does **not distinguish** on the basis of religion/faith.

Whether differentiating on grounds of religion is a violation of Article 14?

- The Bill provides that **illegal migrants** belonging to **specified minority communities** from **Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan** will not be treated as illegal migrants under the Act, making them **eligible for Indian citizenship.**
- These minority communities are **Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians.**
- This implies that illegal migrants from these countries who are Muslims, other minorities who do not belong to the above groups (eg. Jews), or Atheists who do **not identify with a religious group will not be eligible for citizenship.**
- The question is whether this provision violates the right to equality guaranteed under **Article 14** of the Constitution because **it provides differential treatment to illegal migrants on the basis of their religion.**

- **Article 14 guarantees equality to all persons, citizens and foreigners.**
- It only permits laws to differentiate between groups of people if the rationale for doing so serves a **reasonable purpose**.
- The Statement of **Objects and Reasons of the Bill** does not explain the rationale behind differentiating between illegal migrants on the **basis of the religion** they belong to.

Wide ground for cancelling OCI registration:

- Under the 1955 Act, an **Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholder's registration** may be cancelled if he violates a law for which he is:
 - sentenced to imprisonment for two years or more, and
 - within five years of his OCI registration. The Bill adds another ground for cancelling OCI registration, which is violation of any law of the country by an OCI.
- This means that even offences with:
 - lesser penalties, or
 - which have been committed after five years of registration could be covered under the Bill. This makes the earlier provision redundant.
- This provision also grants the central government **wide discretion to cancel OCI registration for a range of violations**.
- This will include **serious offences** like murder, as well as **minor offences** like violation of a traffic law (such as parking in a no-parking zone or jumping a red light).
- The question is whether **minor violations** should **result in cancellation of OCI registration**, which may require an OCI who is staying in India to leave the country.

Way Forward: What lies ahead?

- The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), believes that the Bill is a **threat to the cultural and linguistic identity** of the people of Assam.
- The Bill, if passed as law, would be **challenged in the Supreme Court** on the **grounds of Article 14** and as a move to **disturb the NRC process**.
- All Opposition parties, have **opposed the idea** of granting citizenship to an individual **on the basis of religion**.
- It is also argued that the Bill, if made into an Act, will **nullify the updated National Registration of Citizenship (NRC)**.
- Instead of simply saying that members belonging to **particular religion** will be eligible for **differential treatment**, the bill should have laid down some general **secular criteria** (persecution history, history of migration etc.) which could, in principle, at least, be applied to all groups.
- But the **direct exclusion of Muslims** from being eligible for this pathway under any circumstances makes the **constitutional form and citizenship communal**.

13. THE MICHEL TEST CASE: ON INDIA'S EXTRADITION TRACK RECORD

Context:

- The **extradition to India of British** businessman Christian Michel, alleged to be the middleman in the **AgustaWestland helicopters case** who **bribed officials** to secure the deal, is a **diplomatic success** for a number of reasons.
- India's track record with **securing the extradition of fugitives from justice** is modest, with **only about a third of all requests** since 2002 being accepted.
- Amongst the **44 countries**, India has extradition treaties with, the **United Arab Emirates** has been the most amenable and it has deported or extradited 19 of 66 fugitives to India in the past decade and a half.
- A reason for the low success rate in the past is the perception that **India's criminal justice system delivers too slowly**.

What is extradition?

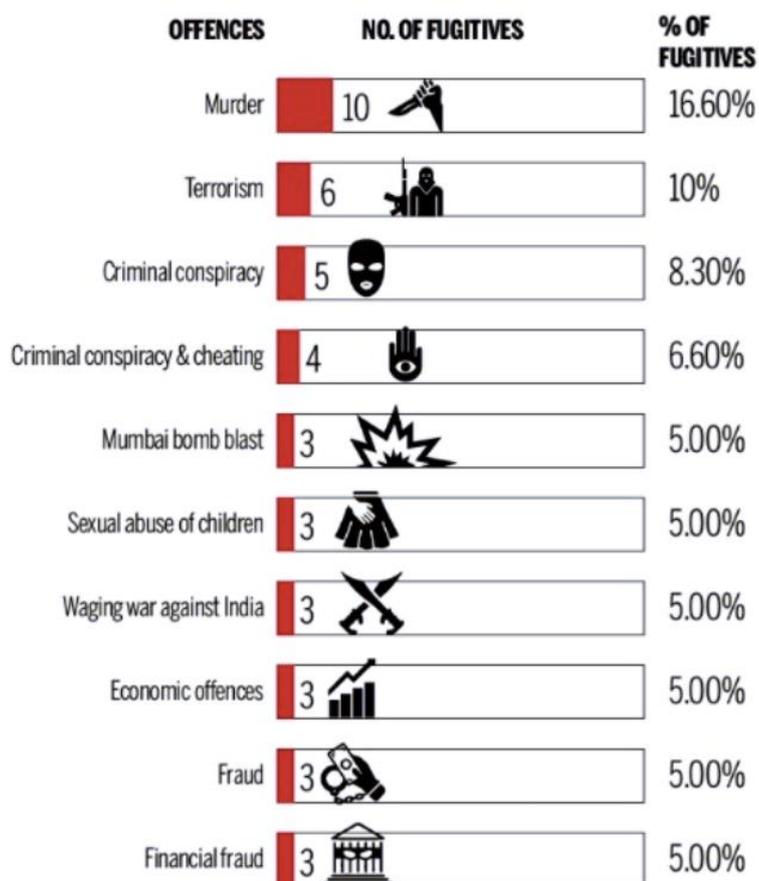
- **Extradition** is simply the **surrender of a criminal to one country by another**.

- It also helps in **maintaining the territoriality of the penal code**, which says that a country should not apply its criminal law to a person who committed an offence outside its territories except when the crime is related to a **particular country's national interest**.
- The process is regulated by treaties between the two countries.
- Extradition is governed by the **Indian Extradition Act, 1962** India has extradition treaties with 44 countries. So, this means these countries generally accept that the offender will be treated **as criminal in both countries**.
- India also has extradition arrangements with 9 countries, which means India and these countries agree to **assist mutually each other in "legal procedures"**.

What are India's extradition laws?

- In India, **the Extradition Act, 1962** regulates the surrender of a person to another country or the request for arrest of a person in a foreign land.
- The Act specifies a list of **extradition offences** –an offence provided for in the extradition treaty with that state. The process has to be initiated by the **central government**.
- As we have **extradition treaties** with only 44 countries and extradition arrangements with another 9 countries, where there is no treaty the central government is **empowered to take action by releasing a notification and treating** any convention to which India and the foreign country are parties as the extradition treaty.
- Between 2002 and 2016, **62 fugitives have been extradited by the Foreign Governments to India**.
 - The majority of them were Indian citizens.
 - 25 persons **Violent crimes** like murder, kidnapping.
 - 17 persons **Economic Offences** like fraud, cheating.
 - 13 persons **Terrorism**

CRIMES OF FUGITIVES BROUGHT BACK



What are the internationally accepted extradition conditions?

- There is a general consensus about a few conditions of extradition. The crime should **fulfill the criterion of dual criminality** it's a punishable offence in both countries.
- **For instance, homosexuality** might be a crime in a country while it is accepted in another.
- In that case, the first country cannot request the second to extradite a person who is charged with a **homosexuality related offence**.
- **Political criminals are generally not extradited**. Some countries refuse to extradite if the kind of expected punishment is abolished or is not administered in their own territories.

In what situations can the government deny extradition?

- If the government finds the case trivial and if it thinks that surrendering of the person is **not being made in good faith** or in **the interests of justice** or for **political reasons**, it can deny the request.
- If the surrender according to the requesting country's own law is barred by time, the person cannot be extradited from India.
- If the government feels that the person will be charged with an offence not mentioned in the extradition treaty, it can stop the process.

- If the person is **serving a jail term or is accused of an offence on Indian soil**, which is different from the offence for which he or she is wanted abroad, the extradition process can be stopped.

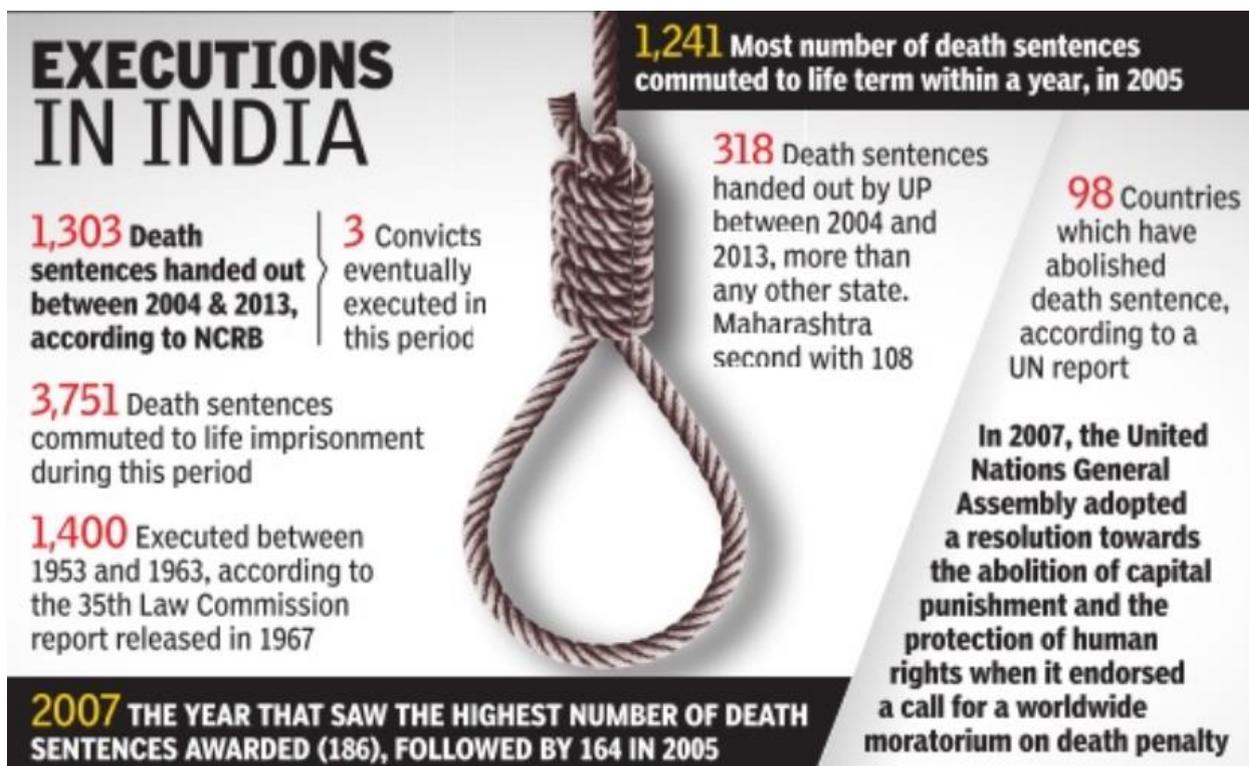
Conclusion:

- India has about **150 pending requests at present**. Therefore, CBI must resort to **internationally accepted norms of interrogation**, otherwise, it gives other fugitives reasons to oppose the request for extradition to India.
- India's record in fulfilling its **diplomatic obligations** may impact high-profile cases in U.K. Courts, including Vijay Mallya's and Nirav Modi's.
- Extradition arrangements **work on the basis of trust** and any failure to abide by the assurances would doubtlessly affect the trust between this court and the GoI.
- If properly dealt with Michel case could **bolster India's reputation** as a Country serious about **ensuring that justice is served, and expeditiously also**.
- No doubt measures such as **The Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018** are steps in the right direction as far as dealing with such fugitives is concerned.
- But what we need to do, if we really want to put an end to this menace, is sign **extradition treaties with more countries**. That is the best way forward.

14. IS IT TIME TO ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY?

Introduction: About Death Penalty:

- As a **punishment**, the death penalty makes no sense: *how does killing a person who has killed a person show that killing is wrong?*
- Most of the **civilised world has abolished it**. India certainly does not need it as it serves no purpose.
- The evidence is all to the contrary. For deterrence to work, the **severity of the punishment has to coexist with the certainty and swiftness of the punishment**.
- The **death penalty has not deterred terrorism, murder or even theft**.
- For over a century, stealing attracted the death penalty in England, where spectators at public hangings often had their pockets picked!
- **No study has shown that the death penalty deters murder more than life imprisonment.**



Problems with death penalty:

- The **death penalty is error-ridden**.

- For Instance, Between January 1, 2000 and June 31, 2015, the Supreme Court **imposed 60 death sentences**. It subsequently admitted that it had **erred in 15 of them (25%)**.

What is Reality:

- The death penalty **unfairly targets the poor and marginalised**.
- Those **without capital get the punishment**. Penurious prisoners on legal aid get it the most, while others with *private lawyers remain untouched*.
- The death penalty is *impossible to administer fairly or rationally*. The Supreme Court has repeatedly admitted that it has arbitrarily imposed this most extreme punishment.
- Executions occurred in 5.2 cases for every 1 lakh murders. Such a selection cannot but be freakish.
- ✓ **Constitutional, legal and policy issues** cannot be determined by the victim's understandable hunger for revenge without leading to a frenzy where the death penalty is demanded, as it often is, for wholly inappropriate cases (accidental deaths, cheating, etc.).

Supporting Arguments for Death Penalty:

- The **punishment is not arbitrary** because, it comes out of a **judicial process**. To call it arbitrary, one has to necessarily prove the process as flawed.
- It is being **implemented in the "rarest of the rare" cases** and the fact is during the last 13 years, **only four people** have been executed.
- The hanging of Ajmal Kasab and Yakub Memon strongly **affirms India's commitment to the protection of life**.
- People criticise it on **arbitrariness, irreversibility and human rights** and these are not valid arguments.
- Its **constitutionality is upheld**, even in liberal democracies like U.S. It is not reflection of uncivilised society.
- India's **neighbourhood is not peaceful**, unlike Scandinavia.
- It is **not in a group of countries**, like European Union.
- India has **got troubled borders**. Several forces are trying to destabilise the very idea of our Nation from across the Border.
- The sacredness of life can only be seen to be protected, if those who take it away are **proportionately punished**.

Countering Arguments to abolish Death Penalty:

- It **unfairly targets poor and marginalised**, that means, those **without money & power**.
- Executions occurred in around **five cases for every 1 lakh murders** and it looks **quite arbitrary**. It depends on judges personal beliefs.
- **India's murder rate has declined** continuously since 1991 and at present the lowest, except for 1963.
- Punishment should **not imitate crime**.
- As per the recent **Death Penalty India Report by the National Law University, Delhi**, the **structural flaws in our criminal procedure and criminal justice system** are most pronounced in death penalty cases.
- Most of the **civilised world abolished it**. Death penalty has **not deterred terrorism, murder or even theft**.
- From 200-2015, Supreme Court **imposed 60 death sentences** and subsequently admitted that it had **erred in 15 of them**. So, it clearly admitted that it has **arbitrarily imposed the most extreme punishment**.
- The Police is not known for **its probity or efficiency** in our Country.
- **Delays in the Criminal Justice System** disproportionately affects those, who suffer the tyranny of the uncertainty of their life.

A safer country than before:

- **India's murder rate** has declined continuously since 1991 and is at present the **lowest in our recorded history** except for 1963.
- Fearmongering aside, we are safer today than our parents or grandparents ever were. **Studies show that a more equal sex ratio has more to do with declining murder rates than killing murderers**.

- Nobody wants to undergo the trauma of administering the death penalty not the higher courts and not the hapless prison staff who have to see a human being die gasping at the end of a rope.
- Governments kill prisoners to show that they are tough on crime. **There is nothing muscular or tough about killing a man who is at your mercy.**

Conclusion:

- The **Law Commission of India** has attempted to analyse the **need for the death penalty**.
- In its **35th Report** correctly **called for its retention** in order to see its impact on a new republic, the more recent **262nd Report could not recommend the punishment's absolute abolition**.
- Cases of violent terror are **constant reminders of the need to protect national stability** by ensuring **appropriate responses** to such actions, and the death penalty forms part of the national response.
- It is in this idea that there **exists a moral support for the death penalty**. A punishment cannot be judged by its impact on criminals but by its impact on those who are still innocent etc.
- In **2015**, the **Law Commission** called for **abolition of the death penalty for ordinary crimes**, and activists continue to argue for abolishing it altogether. Political will in India is still bound by populism.
- However, the **provision of hanging to death may be re-considered** as “the Constitution of India is an **organic and compassionate document** which recognises the **sanctity of flexibility of law** as situations change with the flux of time.”
- **The fundamental right to life and dignity enshrined under Article 21** of the Constitution also means the **right to die with dignity**.
- However, the **constitutionality of the death penalty** will continue to be challenged and, sooner or later, the Supreme Court will have to answer whether absence of political will is sufficient ground to override the right to life.

15. THE FEAR OF EXECUTIVE COURTS

Context:

- Justice S.R. Sen of the **Meghalaya High Court** observed in a judgment that “anybody opposing **Indian laws and the Constitution** cannot be considered citizens of the country.”
- The case involved the **denial of a domicile certificate**. Justice Sen, however, thought it fit to further note that in 1947 India “should have been declared a Hindu country”.

Judicial Activism
Loosely interpret and apply the Constitution based on ongoing changes and values.

Judicial Restraint
Follow a strict interpretation of the Constitution
Believe judges should also follow precedent

Why this statement made by High Court Judge:

- The Legislature ought to legislate to **grant automatic citizenship to (non-Muslim)** religious minorities “who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan”.
- Justice S.R. Sen also noted that “**our political leaders**” in 1947 “were too much in a hurry to get the independence and thus, creating all the problems today”, and that “nobody should try to make India as another Islamic country”.

The meaning of judicial independence in reality:

- General meaning of **judicial independence** as **independence from the government**.
- Our Constitution is designed to **ensure that judges** can do their work “**independent**” of **government influence**:
 - fixed salaries, security of tenure, and an appointments process that through the Supreme Court’s judgments is **insulated from executive control**.
- However, in reality, Independence, means **something more**:
 - It also requires that judges perform their **constitutional role independent of personal biases, political and moral beliefs, and partisan ideologies**.

- Of course, adjudication is a political task, and there is no doubt that a **judge's political vision will inform her work.**
- That, however, does not authorise **the judge to turn into a politician.**
- At all times, she is bound to **maintain primary fidelity to the law and the Constitution:** to the text of **legal instruments,** to the **canons of legal interpretation,** and to the body of **judicial precedent** that holds the field. These are ***crucial checks upon judicial power.***
- Judicial independence, therefore, **depends on judges recognising that law,** while being influenced by politics, is not reducible to it.
- **Law and adjudication** must **remain autonomous** from partisan politics in important ways.
- And the more we **strengthen judicial independence** in its first sense independence from the government the more attention we must pay to independence in this second sense.
- **This is because control brings with it accountability.**
 - Politicians, for example, **remain "accountable" to the people** in at least some sense, because they depend upon them in order to continue in office **after five years.**
 - Judges who are **insulated from any external control are accountable only to themselves,** and their own sense of the limits of their constitutional role.
- Accountability only to oneself, however, is a **very weak form of constraint.** The temptation to overstep is always immense, more so when such immense power has been placed in one's own hands.
- Therefore, it is here **that "legal culture" plays a critical role in establishing judicial accountability.**
- **A Legal Culture –**
 - which has a set of **unwritten, but clearly established, norms** that determine what is or is not acceptable in the process of adjudication.
 - which has **not sprung up out of a vacuum,** but **created and nurtured** by judges, lawyers, legal academics, the press and the citizenry.

Judicial Review or Judicial Activism: Where the line has been differentiated ?

- The record of the courts in **protecting civil rights has been a mixed one.** In far too many cases, courts have tended ***to defer to the executive and the government.***
- However, ***judgments like*** the national anthem order, the Tirukkural order, the NRC process, and Justice Sen's recent foray raise an altogether more frightening prospect: **that of an "executive court".**
- By an executive court, I mean a court whose **moral and political compass** finds itself in alignment with the **government of the day,** and one that has no compunctions in navigating only according to that compass.
- Instead of checking and limiting government power, **an executive court finds itself marching in lockstep with the government,** and being used to set the seal of its prestige upon more controversial parts of the government's agenda.

Conclusion:

- Each organ of our democracy must **function within its own sphere** and must not take over what is assigned to the others. Courts should be wary of making rules on their own, as it would amount to **transgressing into the policy domain.**
- The people of India and their representatives should **explore ways of addressing judicial activism in the country.**
- Equilibrium in the exercise of authority must be maintained at all times with the powers of the legislature and executive **subject to judicial review.**
- The only check possible in the exercise of powers by the **judiciary is self-imposed discipline and self-restraint by the judiciary itself.**
- The **faith and confidence** of people in the judiciary must always be maintained. The judiciary must **provide accessible, affordable and quick justice** to the people.

Way Forward:

- we urgently need the return of a **thriving legal culture,** one that uncompromisingly calls out political posturing of the kind we have recently.

- And this legal culture cannot pick and choose, criticising regressive orders like Justice Sen's, while exempting judgments that equally cross the line, but nonetheless seem to have **achieved a "right outcome"**.
- Only a **principled consistency** in requiring that judges must always **give reasons for their judgment** can halt the **transformation of the constitutional court into an executive court**.

16. THE SPECTRE OF DEPORTATION

Context:

- Assam government moved the Supreme Court for extension by a month of the deadline to **file claims and objections** for inclusion in the **National Register of Citizens (NRC)**.
- The last date for filing **claims and objections** for **Assam's National Register of Citizens (NRC)** has been extended by the Supreme Court to December 31, from December 15.
- There was some disquiet in Bangladesh when the Indian Army Chief, General Bipin Rawat, **lent support to the NRC drive**, claiming that those settled in Indian territory **without legal jurisdiction** posed a **threat to national security**.
- This exercise of compiling the NRC in the first place has sparked a debate around its **political, economic and humanitarian consequences**, and its implications for **India's relationship with its neighbours**, particularly Bangladesh.



India adopted Neighbourhood first?

- Mr. Modi came to power with proclamation of a **'Neighbourhood First' policy**. But the reality speaks quite differently.

How Relation strained with Nepal:

- Nepal, once a time-tested ally, **has tilted towards China** since the 2015 **Nepal blockade** barring the entry of fuel, medicine and other vital supplies and holding the state to a literal siege.
- Nepal now has been given **access to four Chinese ports at Tianjin, Shenzhen, Lianyungang and Zhanjiang** in addition to its **dry (land) ports at Lanzhou, Lhasa and Xiqatse**, as well as roads to these facilities, ending India's monopoly to its trading routes.

India's recent with Bhutan:

- The India-Bhutan relationship has also been strained ever since India temporarily withdrew **subsidies on cooking gas and kerosene** in 2013, constraining bilateral ties.
- The **Doklam stand-off** in the summer of 2017 reinforced **Bhutan's scepticism** towards Chinese expansionist plans across the region.
- Simultaneously, Thimphu has been underlining the **landlocked kingdom's aspiration to affirm its sovereignty**.
- It has, for instance, stepped out of India's diplomatic influence, as evidenced by its withdrawal from the **Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) motor vehicles agreement**.
- The **India-China power play** has also cast its shadow over Sri Lanka and the Maldives in the last few years.
- Against this backdrop of China making inroads into South Asia and India's backyard, **Bangladesh has so far been the most trusted ally of India**.

India With Bangladesh:

There are legal as well as illegal Indian immigrants in Bangladesh too.

- According to the latest available Bangladesh government estimates of 2009, **more than 500,000 Indians were working in Bangladesh**.
- More recently, **Bangladesh** was reported to be among the **highest source of remittances to India**, behind the **United Arab Emirates, the U.S., Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the U.K.**

- Many Indian citizens are securing coveted employment opportunities in Bangladesh through multinational companies, non-governmental organisations, and trading activities.
- To put things into perspective, most of them are employed in **advantageous jobs in Bangladesh** while Bangladeshis in India are largely employed in **low-paying jobs**.
- On the **security front**, it has cooperated in **India's crackdown on insurgents**. **Border Security Force (BSF)** said that because of close cooperation with Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) "the number of training places and hideouts of these **insurgents (in Bangladesh)** has been reduced to almost zero."
- **Annual bilateral trade** is set to cross the **\$9 billion mark**, making it **India's biggest trading partner in South Asia**.
- In addition, Bangladesh has facilitated **connectivity with the Northeast** by allowing the use of **Chittagong and Mongla ports**.
- However, the **Teesta water-sharing issue** remains unaddressed, non-tariff barriers on Bangladeshi exports persist and border killings are yet to become a thing of the past.
- The NRC issue threatens to disturb the **equilibrium in India-Bangladesh ties**.
- Plans for deportation of those not on the NRC list are not only politically imprudent but also risk inciting **unrest across the region**.
- The State asked the court to direct the **Application Receipt Numbers (ARN)** of those already included in **the final draft NRC** to be made available online to enable filing of objections against wrongful inclusions.
- Yet, some **remain apprehensive**, pointing out that Bangladesh had been similarly unconcerned about the **Rohingya issue**, which did not prevent the country from ultimately hosting **more than a million Rohingya**.
- It has also sought an **"intensive sample re-verification of 20% inclusions in the final draft NRC."**
- Previous similar exercises have not been effective and only resulted in **alienating individuals from their natural rights**.

Conclusion:

- The **primary goal of India's external engagement** has been to seek **peace and stability**, enabling a supportive environment for pursuing our **nation's multifarious development needs**.
- This approach of **foreign policy for economic progress and development** is nowhere more relevant than in our South Asian neighbourhood and the extended neighbourhood, including Central Asia.
- Both South and Central Asia face enormous challenges with regard to **development as well as security**.
- These range from **ensuring economic growth and stability** to dealing with trans-national security threats such as the scourge of drug-trafficking and terrorism.
- Our approach to both the regions has been **to build bridges of friendship and cooperation**, establish greater physical and **people-to-people connectivity** and foster closer **integration for overall progress and well-being**.

17. HOT AIR AT KATOWICE

Context:

- The **Global Climate UN – COP24 in Katowice** ended in success. Negotiators from **196 countries and the European Union** worked on the Katowice Climate Package, implementing the Paris Agreement.
- More than a dozen intense meetings enabled negotiations to be successful on different topics regarding **principles aimed at implementing the Paris Agreement**, which was signed in 2015.
- A wide range of issues were discussed some fundamental, others very detailed and technical which gave birth to a **complex and difficult document**. **Finance, transparency and adaptation are some of its aspects**.

Expected Outcome of COP24:

- The **main objective** of the Polish Presidency at COP24 is **to adopt a decision ensuring full implementation of the Paris Agreement** (the so-called implementation package – **the Katowice Rules**).
- The implementation package will give the Paris Agreement a **realistic shape** by setting out a path that each country will decide to follow in terms of intensifying its **climate protection efforts**.

- The ambition of the Polish Presidency is **to adopt rules and tools** that will **create a systemic solution** for the whole world, replacing the point-based discussion on fragmented objectives, which doesn't allow for a **comprehensive approach to all important areas of emissions**:
 - such as transport, energy, buildings, agriculture, removals balancing emissions (forests, soils)
 - **Implementation measures** (including financing) and measures to adapt economies to expected changes in the future (the so-called adaptation measures).
- The success of Katowice will be to make progress in the mechanisms without which the Paris Agreement will not be able to function in real terms.
- To put it simply, **“there is no Paris Agreement without Katowice”**.

FIVE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT COP24 AND IPIECA

1. The 24th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC is set to finalise the implementation guidelines of the Paris Agreement, which committed all parties to take action on climate change
2. IPIECA welcomed the Paris Agreement - significant policy action, technology development and business response will be needed to achieve its aims
3. The oil and gas industry provides more than half of the world's energy and is committed to serve as an essential partner in sustainable development. It is using its skills, capabilities and resources to play a key role in helping to transform energy systems
4. IPIECA attends the annual COPs as an official observer and provides informative summaries to our members. We have participated in the UNFCCC for over 20 years
5. IPIECA will be holding a side event at COP24 on low-emissions transport - to discuss how transport could be transformed to help reach climate goals

UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE COP24
KATOWICE, POLAND DECEMBER 2018

IPIECA

Focus of Attention:

- During COP24, the Polish Presidency plans to **focus its attention on three key topics**:
 - **Technology** – to show that there are **climate-friendly modern solutions**, such as electromobility allowing for **sustainable urban development**, clean air and an opportunity for modern jobs,
 - **Human** – emphasizing the need to lead change together with people through the **solidarity and fair transformation of regions** and industrial sectors,
 - **Nature** – including **multifunctional and sustainable forest management** as part of climate neutrality and the role of forests as greenhouse gas sinks, and support for a **synergic view of the three UN key conventions: on climate, on biodiversity and on desertification**.
- It will be an opportunity for Poland to highlight its **positive contribution to climate protection**, underlining the scale, importance and effectiveness of national policies, especially in the areas of clean air, electromobility and increasing forest resources. It will also be a forum to discuss **the level of global ambition**.

However, Contentious Issues: Disregard of equity:

- There is **little to no finance available** for poor and developing nations. The details on **funding and building capacity** have been postponed.
- **References to “equity”** in the draft rule book **were erased** by the U.S. delegation, leaving one Indian negotiator to remark that they would have to go back to the original language of the Convention if differentiation between the developed and industrialised countries.
- **Article 9** (the provision of financial support to developing countries from industrialised nations) was ignored; instead, there was an **emphasis on carbon markets and insurance mechanisms**.
- **Finance was not even considered** until the Africa Group of Nations forced open the issue by boycotting the discussions. Still, with name-calling from Switzerland and backtracking from the U.S., there was a lot of tension at the negotiations.

- In spite of these problems, a **single rulebook for all countries** has been produced and will serve as a foundation for more detailed rules and structures.
- Many international civil society groups **expressed utter dismay over the disregard of equity**.
- Whether or not funds will be replenished even for the **implementation of the current NDCs is unclear**.
- **Funds for finance, better terms for new technologies** to be transferred to developing and vulnerable countries, and economic and non-economic support for loss and damage and their equitable moorings in the text have been eliminated, minimised or footnoted.

Enhancing Transparency and Monitoring:

- Countries were looking to establish an **enhanced transparency framework to monitor, verify and report** actions taken in a **systematic, standardised manner**.
- As reported in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), all countries would **carry out mitigation**. But adaptation is a significant portion of many developing countries' plans.
- Transparency what would be done to reduce emissions, **how countries would measure and report progress**, and how much support industrialised countries would provide was an important aspect of the discussions.
- This will inform stocktaking of progress on the Paris Agreement and how much more is **needed to cut emissions and raise ambition**.
- **Technology transfer and capacity building support** are also issues of importance to vulnerable countries and poor, developing countries that need help to **transition from high to low carbon economies**.

Conclusion:

- In Katowice, within the **framework of COP24**, many heads of state, government and almost 100 Ministers of the Environment and of Foreign Affairs from all over the world were present.
- In Katowice, majority views that interests of all the parties have been taken into account in the Katowice Package in a sustainable and honest way.
- But, more importantly, its impact on the world will be positive. Thanks to it, we have taken a **big step towards achieving the ambitions set in the Paris Agreement**.
- Ambitions thanks to which our children will look back at some point and consider that their parents made the **right decisions** in an important historical moment.
- Thanks to the consensus, which has been agreed on by the Parties because of their commitment, Katowice has become, after Kyoto and Paris, another **milestone on the way towards a sustainable global climate policy**.
- In the Katowice Rules, different parties adopted a path that will be followed by each of them when it comes to **stepping up actions for climate protection**.

18. MAKING EVERY CITIZEN AN AUDITOR

Context:

- **"A good auditor is a good listener"** said President Ram Nath Kovind during his recent speech at the **29th Accountants General Conference**.
- You will not only see the accounts in their books, but also listen to their accounts.
- In 2017, the Supreme Court mandated social audits under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) to be conducted using the machinery that facilitates the **social audits of MGNREGA**.

What is an Social Audit:

Social audit is the process of **reviewing official records**. It is with a view to look at whether the State reported expenditures **reflect actual money spent** on the ground.

- Civil Society Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, political representatives can participate in the social audits.
- Social audits show **how people's participation in the planning, execution and monitoring of public programmes leads to better outcomes**.
- They have strengthened the **role of the Gram Sabha**.
- Social audits were first mandated by law in 2005 under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (**MGNREGA**).

- Subsequently, Parliament, the Supreme Court and many Central ministries mandated them in other areas as well.
- The Comptroller and Auditor General in 2016 laid down **auditing standards for social audit**.
- CAG also says that this is the first ever such exercise for the **formulation of standards for social audit in the World**.
- As efforts are being made to **extend social audits to new areas**, it is important to look at how well they are **actually implemented** based on parameters specified in the **auditing standards** jointly pioneered by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) and the Ministry of Rural Development.
- The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj recently conducted a study comparing **ground realities with the specified standards**, and **identified key issues** that need to be addressed.



Importance of Social Audit in every Department:

- Social Audit is considered as a mechanism to **foster transparency** and improve the **delivery of public programmes**. It holds public officials **accountable**.
- It empowers beneficiaries to **scrutinise expenditures** and **keep track of delivery**. They are considered as low cost and powerful participatory tools.
- Individuals and communities get empowered and they experience the practical **potential of participatory democracy**. It is often a dramatic process of redistribution of power based on evidence and fact.
- It is only when this conception is accepted that audits will return to their **democratic roots**, and social audits in India will get the **space and attention** they deserve in becoming an **integral and robust part of the formal audit process**.

Shortcoming in the social audits programme:

- The **governing bodies** of most social audit units (SAUs) are **not independent**.
- Some SAUs have to **obtain sanction** from the implementation agency **before spending funds**.
- More than half the States have not followed the **open process specified** in the **standards for the appointment** of the SAU's director.
- Some States have conducted **very few audits** and a few have not conducted any.
- Several states do **not have adequate staff** to cover all the panchayats even **once a year**.

- The action taken by the State governments in response to the social audit findings has been **extremely poor**.
- **Adequate disciplinary action** against people responsible for the irregularities are **not being taken**.

The way forward:

- Social audits of the NFSA have failed to take off **due to lack of funds**.
- Like the Rural Development Ministry, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution should **give funds to the SAUs** and ask them to **facilitate the social audits of the NFSA**.
- Social audit units should have an **independent governing body and adequate staff**. Rules must be framed so that implementation agencies are mandated to play a **supportive role in the social audit process** and take **prompt action** on the findings.
- Also, a **real time management information system** should track the calendar, the social audit findings and the action taken, and reports on these should be made publicly available.
- Social audit processes **need mentoring and support** as they expand into newer programmes.
- As the President said “The social audit to account whether the money was spent properly, and made the intended difference, is **mostly conducted by the scheme beneficiaries**.”
- The **CAG as an institution** could **partner with local citizens** and state audit societies to train them, **build capacities** and issue advisories **on framing of guidelines, developing criteria, methodology and reporting for audit.**”

19. WIDENING GULF

Context:

- Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani’s decision to stay away from the December **Gulf Cooperation Council summit in Riyadh** is the latest reminder of the growing **disunity among the Gulf countries**.
- **Qatar, blockaded by three GCC countries, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain**, and their non-GCC allies, has said it will not discuss a compromise unless the blockade is lifted.

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC):

- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), **political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman**.
- The GCC was established in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in May 1981. The purpose of the GCC is to **achieve unity** among its members based on their **common objectives** and their similar **political and cultural identities**, which are rooted in Arab and Islamic cultures.
- GCC agreements typically focus on either **security or economic coordination**.
- Qatar is a **major point of contention**. On 5 June 2017, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain cut diplomatic ties with the tiny emirate.
- Egypt, not part of the GCC, also joined the **Saudi-led blockade**. Saudi Arabia justified the move by claiming that **Qatar was supporting extremist groups** such as al-Qaeda and Iranian-sponsored militias in the region.

Now the gulf is widening between GCC Countries:

- Oman continues to keep **ties open with Qatar and Iran**. The blockade made Qatar **more independent in foreign policy decisions**.
- The **cold-blooded murder** of Jamal Khashoggi created ripples. The **blockade** last year **triggered tensions** among the GCC countries.
- Qatar also strengthened **its alliance with Turkey**, which stepped in **as provider of security for Doha**.



- And Turkey checkmated any plans that Saudis and Emiratis might have had to use force to bring the Qatari emir down on his knees.
- Saudi Arabia is upset that Oman and **Kuwait did not join the embargo**. Kuwait is in fact trying to mediate.
- Qatar stepped up assistance for **Hamas in Gaza strip**. It accelerated a plan to allow Turkey **to set up military camp in the country**.
- Qatar also resisted calls to cut ties with Iran.

Level of US influence in the Middle East:

- The disarray within the GCC undoubtedly calls attention to ***the decline of US influence in the Middle East region***.
- At the end of the day, the Gulf states have ***not paid heed to repeated US entreaties for GCC unity***.
- Ideally, GCC should have provided today for the US strategy a **strong platform** for launching the regime change project **against Iran**.
- On the contrary, GCC is split down the middle, with **Qatar, Oman and Kuwait getting along just fine with Tehran**.

India's priorities in the Gulf: Energy security and Trade & Investment:

- Securing **long term energy supply** is of primary importance for India in the region.
- India is currently the **fourth largest energy consuming country** in the world and it may go up to third position in next couple of decades.
- **India's annual GDP growth** at the rate of eight per cent would require further industrial growth which would demand more energy supply for the country.
- The **growing energy necessity** has undoubtedly dictated India's initiative of **building up a 'strategic energy partnership'** with the region to secure long-term energy supply for the country.
- The Gulf countries look at India as a **fast growing economy** which holds the potential to compete with the major world economies.
- Realising the trade potential of the Gulf countries, India has entered into a negotiation **with the GCC to finalise a Free Trade Agreement**.
- The Gulf countries have huge potential for **investing in different sectors in India as FDI for mutual benefit**.

Conclusion:

- Once upon a time, it talked about **a common Gulf currency and robust connectivity projects**. Now, after the GCC Summit, it merely issued a customary statement.
- If the **GCC disintegrates** due to these contradictions, Saudi Arabia will be the big loser, because it will be a **reflection on its regional leadership**.
- After the summit, the GCC issued a customary statement, **emphasising regional stability and economic challenges**.
- The **decision of Qatar to quit OPEC** and the absence of Emir at the GCC points to increasingly confident Qatar. **Intra-Gulf quarrels** dampened hopes for the integration of the region.
- While addressing the summit in Riyadh, the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad hit the nail on the head when he said, **"The most dangerous obstacle we face is the struggle within the GCC."**

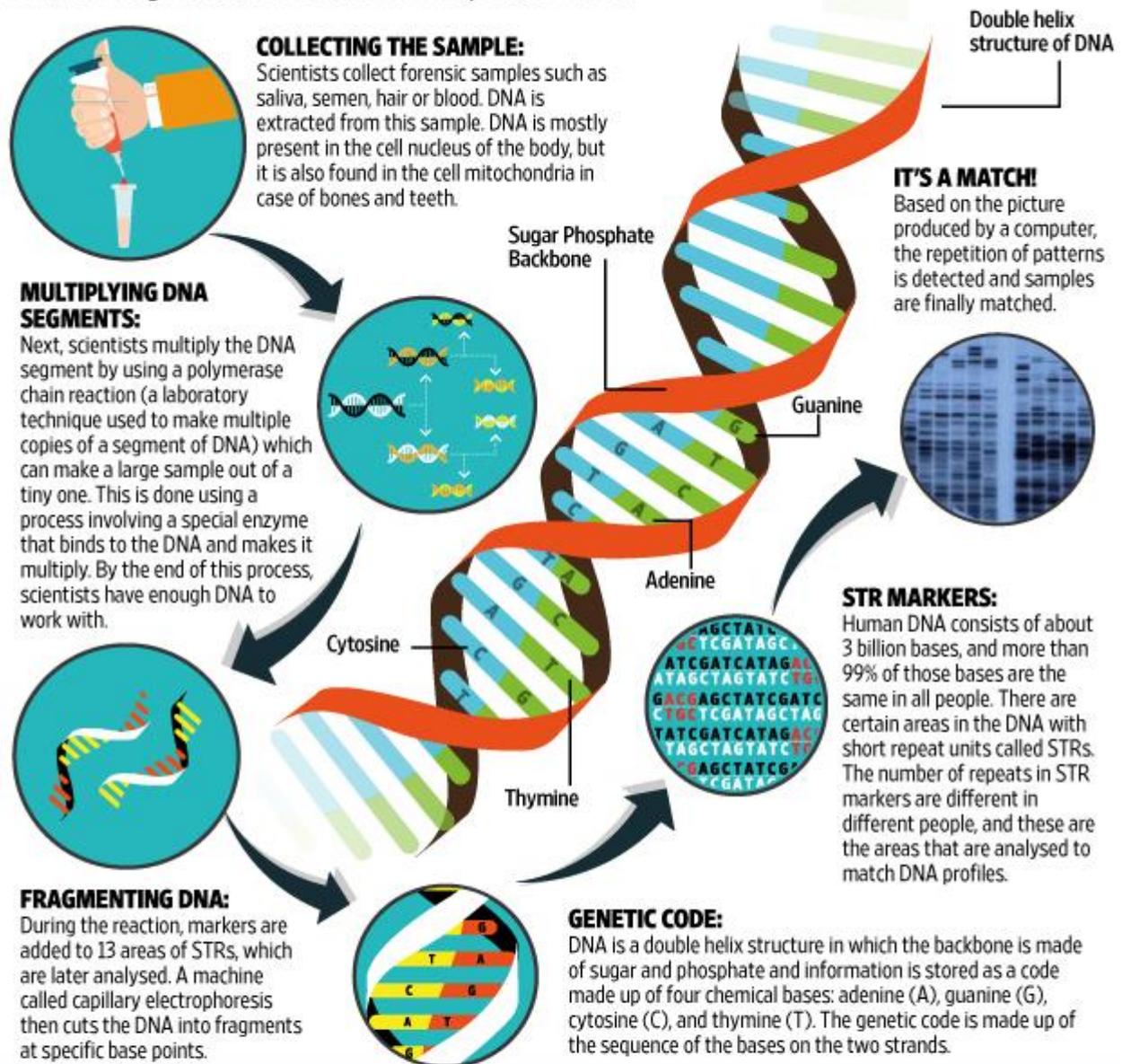
20. TOWARDS A GENETIC PANOPTICON

Introduction:

- The government's rejection for dissent, though, makes the potential introduction of the **DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018**, for consideration by the **Rajya Sabha** an especially discriminatory proposition.
- The Bill regulates the **use of DNA technology** for establishing **the identity of persons** in respect of matters listed in a Schedule.
- These include **criminal matters** (such as offences under the Indian Penal Code, 1860), and civil matters such as **parentage disputes, emigration or immigration, and transplantation of human organs**.

MAKING A DNA PROFILE

The STR (short tandem repeat) technique used today can make a DNA profile using, say, saliva on a cigarette butt. Here is how the process works:



FAMOUS CASES AND DNA PROFILING

FIRST CASE:

The first time DNA profiling was used to solve a case was when two teenage girls were found raped and murdered in Narborough, Leicestershire, in the UK, in 1983 and 1986 (the same person was responsible for both murders). Alec Jeffreys at Leicester University, who had developed a technique for creating DNA profiles, helped solve the case when his technique showed that the prime suspect the police had was innocent. Eventually, the murderer was found and his DNA profile matched with the one at the murder scene.

40-YEAR NAZI HUNT:

After nearly 40 years of hunting Nazi prison doctor Joseph Mengele who escaped from the Allies after World War II, police received a tip that Mengele had drowned and was buried in Brazil. DNA samples were taken from the decomposed remains and blood samples from Mengele's wife and son were used to confirm his identity.

9/11 REMAINS:

After the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York City on 11 September 2001, DNA profiling techniques were used to identify body parts belonging to more than 2,000 people who died in the attacks. DNA profiling has also been used for the identification of victims after the tsunami in 2004 and the 2013 Uttarakhand floods.

Source: Mint research

The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018:

- The Bill regulates the use of DNA technology for **establishing the identity of persons** in respect of matters listed in a Schedule.
- The Bill establishes a **National DNA Data Bank** and **Regional DNA Data Banks**.

- Every Data Bank will maintain the following indices:
 - (i) crime scene index,
 - (ii) suspects' or undertrials' index,
 - (iii) offenders' index,
 - (iv) missing persons' index, and
 - (v) unknown deceased persons' index.
- The Bill establishes a **DNA Regulatory Board**. Every DNA laboratory that analyses a DNA sample to **establish the identity** of an individual, has to be accredited by the Board.
- **Written consent by individuals** is required to collect DNA samples from them. Consent is not required for offences with punishment of more than *seven years of imprisonment or death*.
- The Bill provides for the **removal of DNA profiles of suspects** on filing of a police report or court order, and of undertrials on the basis of a court order.
- Profiles in the crime scene and missing persons' index will be removed on a written request.

Benefits of DNA based technologies:

- The utility of DNA based technologies for solving crimes, and to identify missing persons, is well recognized across the world.
- By providing for the mandatory **accreditation and regulation** of DNA laboratories, the Bill seeks to ensure that with the proposed expanded use of this technology in the country.
- There is also the assurance that the DNA test results are **reliable** and the **data remain protected from misuse or abuse** in terms of the privacy rights of our citizens.
- Speedier justice delivery.
- Increased conviction rate.
- Bill's provisions will **enable the cross-matching** between persons who have been reported missing on the one hand and unidentified dead bodies found in various parts of the country on the other, and also for establishing the **identity of victims in mass disasters**.

DNA Profiling in Solving Aggregate Incidence:

- **Forensic DNA profiling** is of proven value in **solving cases** involving offences that are categorized as **affecting the human body** (such as murder, rape, human trafficking, or grievous hurt), and those **against property** (including theft, burglary, and dacoity).
- The aggregate incidence of such crimes in the country, as per the **statistics** of the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for 2016**, is **in excess of 3 lakhs per year**.
- Of these, only a very small proportion is being subjected to **DNA testing** at present.
- It is expected that the expanded use of this technology in these categories of cases would result not only in **speedier justice delivery** but also **in increased conviction rates**, which at present is **only around 30%** (NCRB Statistics for 2016).

However, there are Problems with the draft Bill:

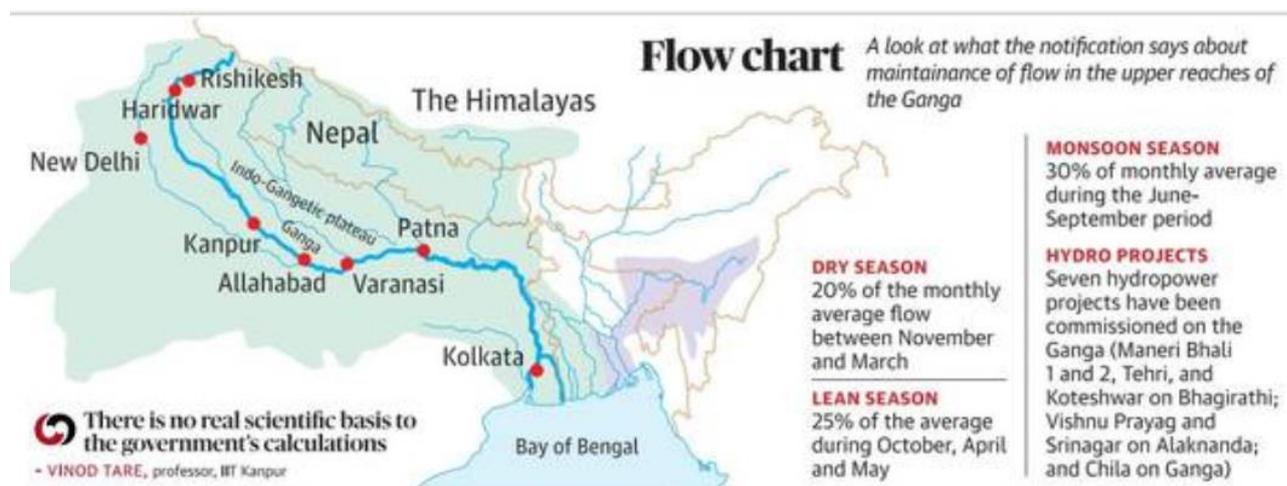
- The Bill not only disregards the **serious ethical dilemmas** that are attendant to the creation of a **National DNA database**, but also, contrary to established **wisdom, virtually treats DNA as infallible**, and as a solution to the many problems that ail the criminal justice system.
- Any **infringement of civil liberties**, caused by an **almost indiscriminate collection of DNA**, is seen as a legitimate trade-off made in the interests of ensuring superior justice delivery.
- But what the Bill fatally ignores is that the **disproportionality of the DNA bank** that it seeks to create, and the **invasiveness of its purport** and reach, imposes a limitless desire for knowledge or power on the citizen.
- The proposed law, however, is not only **decidedly vague** on how it intends to **maintain this DNA Bank**, but it also **conflates its objectives** by allowing the collection of DNA evidence not only in aid of criminal investigations but also to aid the **determination of civil disputes**.
- In all other cases other than imprisonment for a term exceeding seven years, a person refusing to part with genetic material can be compelled to do so if a Magistrate has **reasonable cause** to believe that such evidence would help **establish a person's guilt**.
- Therefore, there's no end to the **state's power in coercing a person to part with her DNA**.

Consider the consequences:

- A person wrongfully accused of a crime, say, for **speeding a vehicle** over permissible limits, who might have been **compelled to give her genetic material** may well see this evidence being **used against her** in an altogether different proceeding of a purely civil nature.
- Given that in India, even **illegally obtained evidence** is admissible in a court of law, so long as the relevance and genuineness of such material can be established.
- The **Bill's failure to place sufficient checks** on the use of DNA evidence collected in breach of the law makes the process altogether more frightening.
- The Bill potentially allows DNA evidence to be **used for any other purpose** that may be specified through subsequent regulations, thereby according to the state **a potential power to create a "genetic panopticon,"**.
- As a result, the state will effectively have at its disposal the ability to profile every one of its citizens.
- It's been reported previously, for instance, that the Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics, whose director will occupy an **ex-officio place in the DNA Regulatory Board**, already seeks information on a person's caste during the collection of genetic material.

Conclusion:

- To enact the law in its present form, therefore, would only add a **new, menacing weapon** to the state's rapidly expanding **surveillance mechanism**.
- We cannot allow the benefits of science and technology to be privileged over the grave risks in allowing the government **untrammelled access to deeply personal and penetrating material**.
- In countries like UK, DNA data of a **recordable offence** can **be kept for only six year**. This can also be adopted in India for better results.
- The **Law Commissions report** related to scientific collection of data need to be incorporated. **Maintenance of strict confidentiality** with regard to keeping of records of DNA profiles and their use as **recommended by Malimath report** can be followed.

21. A RIVER RUNNING DRY**Introduction: Ganga River Basin:**

- Today, **several hydropower projects** are mushrooming at the source of the river Ganga, which is the **Garhwal range** of the Himalayas. Unlike other ranges, the **Garhwal is narrow**.
- It is from here that many rivers and tributaries of the **Ganga basin emerge**. These **spring or glacier-fed rivers** join one another at different points to form an intricate **riverine ecosystem** in the Himalayas.
- The **entire basin falls in the seismic zone 4-5, and is highly prone to landslides and land subsidence**.

How Hydropower Projects in River Basin will results in Destruction:

- The understanding that hydropower projects mean development needs to change. To construct a hydropower project, **large sections of land are cleared of forests**.
- **But what happens when such deforestation takes place in an already fragile mountain area?**
 - Many studies have been conducted **near the existing dams** along the course of the Ganga.

- The immediate impacts of these projects have been **loss of agriculture, drying of water sources, and landslips.**
- As construction in such projects progresses, there is also **dumping of muck**, which can pose severe threats.
- Muck dumping during construction of the **Alaknanda hydropower project** caused devastation downstream in **Srinagar in the 2013 flash floods.**
- After all the massive deforestation, muck dumping, blasting and tunnelling, the hydropower projects thus constructed eventually **dry up the river bed** as the **water is diverted into tunnels.**
- This causes **severe distress to aquatic life,** and the **river bed is no longer even wet** in certain stretches. This is a far cry from the promise of development.

Is Hydro projects in this region are Fruitful ?

- The irony is that even after all this devastation, **electricity is not generated** as per the intended capacity.
 - For example, the installed capacity of the **Maneri dam is 90 MW** but it only works at **below 40% of its capacity.**
 - This is because there is **too much silt during the monsoon** and reduced flow of water in winters.
- As glaciers continue to retreat, the **silt in the rivers** is only going to increase.
- As the reason for **diminished output is natural** and not technical, and therefore cannot be remedied, this is only going to cause more problems for future projects.
 - For example, the **flow of debris** was stopped by barrages in the **Alaknanda hydropower project.** This escalated the **impact of the 2013 disaster,** according to the expert committee of the Supreme Court.
- In the case of the Ganga, these projects also **prevent sediments** from going **downstream.**
- This **affects the fertility of the delta downstream** and also **destroys the unique self-purifying properties of the Ganga.**

Approach to clean ganga:

- While the government has promised to **reduce pollution in the Ganga by 70% by March 2019,** environmentalists say that this relies on **setting up sewage plants** rather than **ensuring that the natural flow of the river** isn't blocked and thereby hobbling its propensity to clean itself.
- Among the sharpest critics of the government's approach led by the **National Mission for Clean Ganga** was the late G.D. Agrawal, a seer and formerly a scientist, who'd undertaken a fast since June.
- **Mentioned key demands were:**
 - **To stop all under-construction dams** in the **upper reaches** of the Ganga, and
 - **Modify the design of existing ones** to ensure that flow in the lower reaches of the river was at **least 50% of the monthly average flow.**

Reports of various committees in recent past:

- Twenty government committees and reports warn about the **anthropogenic activities in these fragile areas** and recommend **conservation of these areas** for **food and water security.**
- When the late G.D. Agarwal, crusader of the Ganga, fasted to invoke the government to act against these projects.
- The government proposed an **e-flow notification for the Upper Ganga River Basin.**
 - It specified that during the **dry season (November-March),** 20% of monthly average flow has to be maintained, and during the monsoon season, 30% has to be maintained.
 - The notification stated that **existing hydel projects that do not meet e-flow norms must comply within three years.**
- The 20% recommendation is less than the **scientific recommendation of 50%** (only for existing projects).
- If the government intended to **rejuvenate the river,** it would have specified that **e-flows are only for existing projects.**
- Instead it has opened the floodgates for several such projects as long as the compromised e-flows are maintained.
- The result of such a relentless push for hydropower projects is that **only 80 km of a 2,500 km-long river** now remains in the Aviral-Nirmal state. Unless we question these projects now, we will not be able to save the Ganga, the **lifeline of millions of people.**

Conclusion:

- As the Ganga is diverted into **long tunnels, de-silted**, and directed to powerhouses to **churn turbines and generate power**, the barren landscape, dried water sources and the obscene muck slopes **narrate a story of destruction**.
- From aiming for **Aviral Dhara (uninterrupted flow) of the Ganga to Nirmal Dhara (unpolluted flow)**, the government is now simply focussing on a **Swachh Ganga (Clean Ganga)**.
- While the whole focus of the **Clean Ganga project** has been on **setting up sewage treatments plants and cleaning ghats** and banks, the **main issue**, which is that the **river does not have adequate flow of water, has been ignored**.
- With severe pollution destroying the river, and developmental projects critically affecting its flow, the **Ganga is in a dire strait**.
- For **Pollution abatement and cleaning exercise** in river Ganga, the policy making authorities at higher level have emphasized **the need of close monitoring**, focus on **minimizing waste generation** and disposal of waste in **eco- friendly manner** and publicizing the use of electric crematoria for enhancing its acceptability among the masses. **Uploading the monitoring reports in public domain** has been recommended.

22. WHAT IS ALTRUISTIC SURROGACY?

Introduction: LS passes Bill banning commercial surrogacy:

- The Lok Sabha passed a Bill **banning commercial surrogacy** with penal provisions of **jail term of up to 10 years** and fine of up to ₹10 lakh.
- The Bill, which will become law once the Rajya Sabha approves it, **allows only close Indian relatives to be surrogate mothers and purely for "altruistic" reasons**.
- It states an Indian infertile couple, married for **five years or more**, can go in for '**altruistic surrogacy**' where the surrogate mother will not be paid any compensation **except medical expenses and insurance**.

What is an altruistic surrogacy arrangement?

- According to the **new Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill**, approved by the Lok Sabha, it includes **contracting a 'close relative'** as a surrogate by a heterosexual married couple who have been **childless for five years** of their marriage.
- This line, in gist, separates altruism from the **commercial tinge** that surrogacy carries with it.
- In the **K.**, laws on surrogacy allow **only altruistic arrangements** where the surrogate can be paid **only 'reasonable expenses'**.
- The fluidity in defining reasonable expenses means that this should ideally include payment for medical treatment, and in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) but may include other 'expenses'.
- Altruistic surrogacy **entails restricted** in different parts of the world, varying levels of legal restrictions, or complete bans are practised pre-approved payments to the surrogate, including for diet during the pregnancy, and/or for the medical treatment.
- However, altruism also entails the provision that **the surrogate is the legal mother of the child**, which can be transferred to the parents through a legal process, including adoption.
- In many countries in Europe, the **act of gestation defines motherhood**, even though the egg used for the pregnancy through IVF may belong to the couple entering the arrangement.

Role of the surrogate mother:

- As per the new Surrogacy Bill, the surrogate in India continues to **fulfil her role as a gestate**.



Who can opt for surrogacy?

- Indian citizens who have been married for at least five years
- Woman should be aged 23-50 and the man, 26-55 years
- Couple shouldn't have any surviving child (biological, adopted or surrogate), except one who is mentally or physically challenged or suffers from a life-threatening disorder or fatal illness.

Who can be a surrogate mother?

- A close relative of the couple
- A married woman with a child of her own, aged 25-35
- She can be a surrogate mother only once in her lifetime
- Should be certified as medically and psychologically fit

- **Motherhood did not belong to the surrogate** and she was trained to think of herself as a gestate and the relinquishment of the child was an absolutely essential clause within the draft bills on commercial surrogacy, and in practice in the surrogacy contract.
- The commercial surrogacy arrangement in India was an **exchange of money for services** and yet, clinics and surrogacy agents went to great lengths to transform the *commercial element of the surrogacy arrangement*, primarily identified as the surrogate's fees, into gift-giving, and sacrifice.
- **That motherhood could be for sale is a matter of distress and shock.**

Serious Concerns about the Bill:

- Altruism ignores the **physical and emotional labour of the surrogate mother**, and does not take into account **post-partum problems**, whether **mental or physical**.
- In India, women have to be fully informed about the **nature of the invasion their bodies** will experience for surrogacy and the possible **emotional cost** of letting a **gestational child go** before they agree to the procedure.
- The bill is **silent about this aspect of exploitation**. All it does is suggest an insurance and assume that bearing a child is a labour of love which **it is women's 'nature' to do 'free'**.
- The real elephant in the room is the **prohibition of payment**. Eliminating the possibility of 'wombs for rent', though, cannot stop exploitation families, at least in India, **exploit women most**.
- Making the surrogate mother a 'close relative' not only increases the difficulties for **intending parents** but also **reinforces familial, patriarchal networks**, not least by undermining women's autonomy of will and body.
- Without working out the issues involved, and revising its interfering habit, no regulation will be acceptable.
- Similarly, it lays bare its **discriminatory approach** by banning live-in couples, homosexual and trans people, and singles from opting for surrogacy.

Conclusion:

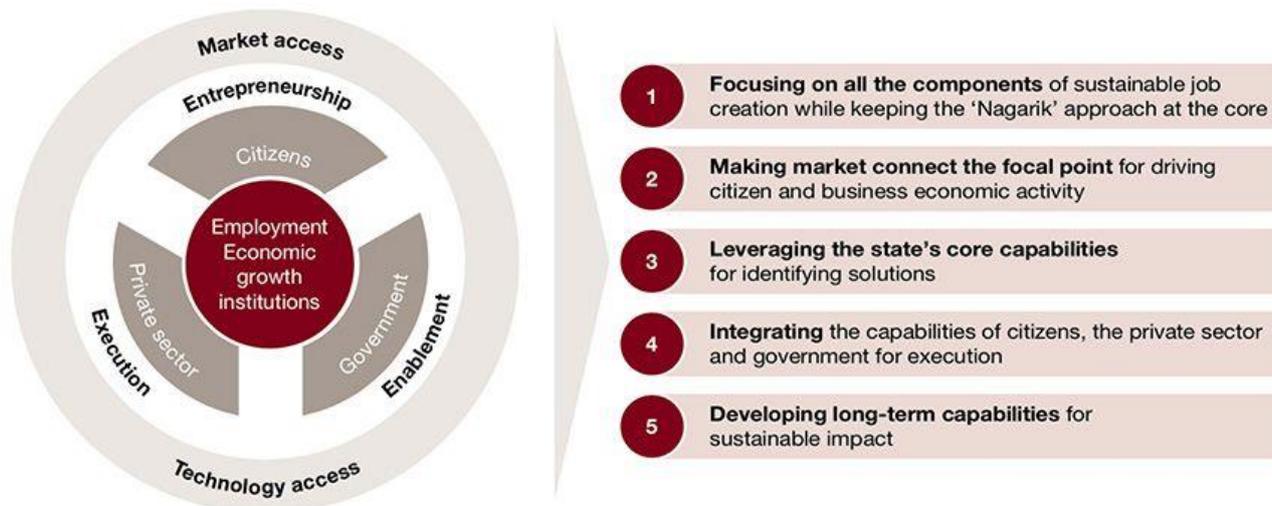
- The definition of a **close relative** will be clearly given in the **rules of the Bill**.
- It should be clear that **only a defined mother and family** can avail of surrogacy and it won't be permitted for live-in partners or single parents.
- In an **overtly patriarchal society**, women are always at **the receiving end of ostracism and exploitation**.
- In facilitating altruistic surrogacy among close kin, we have to be wary of the kind of **exploitation we are fostering**.
- The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016, does not only **violate the Articles 14 and 21 of the Indian Constitution**, it's **regressive nature** also reinforces the **moralistic notion of purity of the womb and family**.
- It also takes away the **rights and the bodily autonomy of women** who might consensually want to become surrogate mothers.

23. CITIZEN-LED EMPLOYMENT GENERATION IS WHAT'S NEEDED

Introduction:

- As one of the **youngest countries** in the world, India often feels secure in the **growth of its demography** and a **decreasing dependency ratio**.
- On the other hand, every time we observe a group of young men loitering on a side street or the outskirts of a village, we are reminded of the **dark shadow of a demographic liability**.
- China is going through the pains of a **working-age population** that has **peaked at 1 billion citizens** and starting to **decline rapidly**.
- In 15 years, a similar process will happen in India, as **our dependency ratio peaks and then declines**. The next decade will be decisive for India to use its growing demography **to foster inclusive growth**. This next decade is a **"do or die" moment** for slaying unemployment.

The 'Nagarik' methodology has five key principles that guide the approach to employment creation.



Emerging of Two India's in view of Demographic Perspective:

Social tensions are rising as “two India's” emerge from a demographic perspective.

- The north and east have **high fertility rates, low labour force participation and high marginal employment.**
- In contrast, the **west and south** have **low fertility rates** and, in some instances, is showing shortage of manpower.
- This is resulting in **interstate migration, creating social tensions.**
- The west and south are resentful when they see “**outsiders**” stream in on packed trains.
- The north and east are likely to experience **increasing social strife** when a digitally alive population fails to fulfil their aspiration.
- Of every 100 additional employment requirements for the country in the coming decade, **80 will be in the 10 large states in the north and east where demography is still in its surge phase.**

A bottom-up approach is essential to prevent jobless growth in India:

- At the current rate of growth in the **country's GDP**, India risks what is termed as ‘**jobless growth**’ in a **new report** from PwC's strategy consulting arm Strategy.
- The firm recommends a **bottom up approach**, wherein concerted efforts should be made to promote employment in rural areas.
- PwC itself has begun to engage in concerted efforts to solve this **issue of unemployment**, not least through its **comprehensive Nagarik strategy.**
- “**Nagarik is a platform** that addresses this **challenge as a strategic opportunity,**” says the new report. At its core, the firm lays emphasis on **promoting growth at the grassroot level.**
- To this end, Nagarik is focused in the **smaller regions of the country** with relatively low economic output.
- The majority of India's population is situated in rural areas, which indicates **tremendous economic potential**, given that these regions have rampant unemployment levels.

Large-scale local employment will be Solution:

- **Creating large-scale local employment** will be essential for **inclusive growth**, and is a key agenda for the country over the coming decade.
- Employment opportunities will require **focus on smaller districts** that house a majority of our population and still remain **rural or semi-urban** and in some cases tribal.
- Even if large-scale manufacturing and traditional information technology services can be relocated to these districts, automation is reducing the number of jobs they produce.
- Employment generation requires **district-level effort for job creation** that **link local entrepreneurs to markets, with solutions that use local resources.**
- A **new approach to large-scale employment** has to understand that employment generation is the task of citizens, society, and the private sector, not just the government.

How Nagarik Approach will work?

- Most narratives for our **3 billion democracy see citizens as passive consumers**.
- Nagarik starts by looking at **citizens and local entrepreneurs as producers** not mere consumers.
- **Connecting local entrepreneurs to the market** using local capabilities of that district is a key feature of Nagarik.
- It then **creates an enabling ecosystem** that shifts the **focus of economic value** creation from larger cities to smaller towns using local resources from that area. It **uses market connects as the starting point**.
- Our **smaller towns and districts** are *rich in resources and talents*, but are not connected to the national or international market, an issue directly addressed by Nagarik.
- The approach takes **local leaders, local resources** as the starting point of employment generation.
- **For instance**, agro-processing, dairy, non-timber forest product, local tourism are resources that are specific to a region or a district and should be a starting point for employment generation.
- *Local resources, production units, have to be better connected to the market for creating employment*.
- Employment generation starts with **strengths, resources and capabilities** of that region.
- These resources require **market connects**, which **generate revenues for a local entity**, or which can highlight local assets, as with tourism.
- This approach Nagarik to highlight its focus on **citizen leaders as job creators**.
- This approach addresses the challenge of **creating large-scale employment** as an opportunity for **inclusive growth**.
- The nature of the processing, manufacturing or in some cases services interventions are identified given this market connect.
- The platform also **identifies local entrepreneurs** who are able to create and man the units, and strong finance connects are also facilitated.
- In some cases, **“mega themes” like a tourist circuit** would necessitate project management and intervention from the regional or state government, although this is rare.
- The result is **local direct job creation in those local enterprises** as well as indirect job creation as local produce is **collected, processed and exported**.

Conclusion:

- A number of private sector companies are taking part in this approach as part of **mainstream business, not CSR**.
- This approach can drive efficiency in the economy **with lower cost, wider sourcing structures** while providing **employment** to a large number of people in smaller districts.
- However, given the **complex, 360-degree relationships** and stakeholder partnership, the structures, processes and outcomes from this approach requires committed partners guided by **a strong convening agency**.
- The adoption of this approach in different states and districts is gaining momentum as a **citizens’ movement**.
- It’s a once-in-a-lifetime **opportunity** to build India, keeping the citizen at its centre and **utilizing the bountiful resources** of our smaller districts where employment is most needed.

24. ON A SHAKY FOUNDATION

Context:

- The Union Home Secretary promulgated an order authorising **10 Central agencies to monitor, intercept and decrypt information** which is transmitted, generated, stored in or received by any computer.
- Under the order, an individual who fails to assist these government agencies with technical assistance or extend all facilities can face up to **seven years of imprisonment or be liable to be fined**.
- The government order is based on:
 - **Section 69 (1) of the Information Technology Act, 2000**, and
 - **Rule 4 of the Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring and Decryption of Information) Rules, 2009**, which enables government agencies to **intercept personal information of citizens** under certain conditions.

THE TYPES OF SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGY



ANALYSIS

Use data to map relationships, recognise patterns, and analyse words' meaning

Example: Relationship mapping software



AUDIO SURVEILLANCE

Record and transmit audio

Example: Speaker identification software which compares recordings against target voice samples



VIDEO SURVEILLANCE

Use video cameras

Example: Wide Area Persistent Surveillance systems



PHONE MONITORING

Gather data communicated across mobile, fixed or next generation networks

Example: IMSI catchers



LOCATION MONITORING

Monitor the location of a target using phone identifiers or tracking devices

Example: GPS tracking devices



INTERNET MONITORING

Technologies that gather information communicated across the internet

Example: Optical Fiber Cable taps



MONITORING CENTRE

Combine different surveillance technologies (internet, phone etc) into one suite

Example: Monitoring Centres offered by surveillance companies



INTRUSION

Remotely installed on communication devices to extract data & control functions

Example: Commercial "spyware"



BIOMETRICS

Identify individuals on distinctive physiological or behavioral characteristics

Example: Facial recognition software



COUNTER-SURVEILLANCE

Detect and counter surveillance

Bug detection tools



EQUIPMENT

Aids the operation of surveillance and counter surveillance capabilities

Example: Vans or vehicles in which surveillance technology can be installed



FORENSICS

When attached to a device, extract and visualise data from it

Example: Commercial software packages offered by surveillance companies

The problem of present Surveillance Framework:

- The debate, therefore, is not about '**whether surveillance at all**', but about '**how, when, and what kind of surveillance**'.
- The existing surveillance framework is **complex and confusing**. Simply put, two statutes control the field:
 - Telephone surveillance is sanctioned under the **1885 Telegraph Act** (and its rules),
 - Electronic surveillance is authorised under the **2000 Information Technology Act** (and its rules).
- The procedural structure in both cases is broadly similar, and flows from a **1997 Supreme Court judgment**: surveillance requests have to be signed off by an official who is at least at the level of a Joint Secretary.
- There are **three features about the current regime**.
- **First, it is bureaucratised**:
 - Decisions about surveillance are taken **by the executive branch** (including the review process), with **no parliamentary or judicial supervision**;
 - Indeed, the fact that an individual will almost never know that she is being surveilled means that finding out about surveillance, and then challenging it before a court, is a near-impossibility.
- **Second, the surveillance regime is vague and ambiguous**:
 - Under **Section 69 of the IT Act**, the grounds of surveillance have been simply lifted from **Article 19(2) of the Constitution**, and pasted into the law.
 - They include very wide phrases such **as "friendly relations with foreign States" or "sovereignty and integrity of India"**.
- Third, and flowing from the first two features, **the regime is opaque**:
 - There is almost **no information available** about the bases on which **surveillance decisions** are taken, and how the **legal standards are applied**.
 - Indeed, evidence seems to suggest that there are none: a 2014 RTI request revealed that, on an average, **250 surveillance requests are approved every day**.
 - It stands to reason that in a situation like this, approval **resembles a rubber stamp more than an independent application of mind**.

The illusion of a trade-off:

- There is a stock response: **the right to privacy is not absolute.**
- **Surveillance** is essential **to ensure national security** and pre-empt terrorist threats, and it is in the very nature of surveillance that it must take place outside the public eye.
- Consequently, the regime is justified as it strikes a pragmatic **balance between the competing values of privacy and security.**
- In this context, the evidence demonstrates clearly that a **heavily bureaucratized and minimally accountable regime of surveillance** does nothing to enhance security, but does have **significant privacy costs.**
 - For example, while examining the U.S. **National Security Agency's** programme of **mass surveillance**, an American court found that out of more than **50 instances** where **terrorist attacks had been prevented.**
 - Not even a single successful pre-emption was based on material collected from the NSA's surveillance regime.
 - Indeed, such a system often has **counterproductive effects:** a government that is not checked in any meaningful way will tend to go overboard with surveillance and, in the process, gather so much material that actually **vital information can get lost in the noise.**
 - In the **famous 'privacy-security trade-off'**, therefore, it is exceedingly important to assess the balance on the **basis of constitutional principles and fundamental rights**, rather than blindly accepting the government's rhetoric of national security.
- After the **Supreme Court's 2017 judgment in K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India ('the right to privacy case')**, the constitutional contours within which the questions of **'how, when, and what kind'** have to be answered have been made clear.
- The same goal **i.e., protecting national security** can be achieved by a smaller infringement upon fundamental rights, then the government is constitutionally bound to adopt the method that does, indeed, involve minimal infringement.

Way Forward:

- Under these parameters, there is little doubt that on the **three counts described above:**
 - Its bureaucratic character,
 - Its vagueness, and
 - Its opacity the existing surveillance framework is unconstitutional, and must be reconsidered.
- To start with, it is crucial to acknowledge that **every act of surveillance**, whether justified or not, involves a **serious violation of individual privacy;**
- Further, a system of government surveillance has a **chilling effect upon the exercise of rights, across the board, in society.**

The Right Parameters can be as follows:

- Given the seriousness of the issue, a surveillance **regime cannot** have the **executive sitting in judgment over the executive:** there must be parliamentary oversight over the agencies that **conduct surveillance.**
- They cannot simply be authorised to do so through **executive notifications.**
- Equally important, all surveillance requests must necessarily **go before a judicial authority,** which can apply an **independent legal mind** to the merits of the request, in light of the **proportionality standards** discussed above.
- Second, **judicial review** will not achieve much if the grounds of surveillance remain as **broad and vaguely worded as they presently are.**
 - Therefore, every surveillance request must **mandatorily specify a probable cause for suspicion,** and also set out, in **reasonably concrete terms**, what it is that the proposed target of surveillance is suspected of doing.
 - As a corollary, evidence obtained through unconstitutional surveillance must be statutorily stipulated to be inadmissible in court.
- And last, this too will be insufficient **if surveillance requests are unopposed:** it will be very difficult for a judge to deny a request that is made behind closed doors, and with only one side presenting a case.

- There must exist, consequently, **a lawyer to present the case on behalf of the target of surveillance** even though, of course, the target herself cannot know of the proceedings.

Conclusion:

- To implement the suggestions above will require a **comprehensive reform** of the **surveillance framework in India**. Such a reform is long overdue.
- This is also the right time: across the world, there is an **increasingly urgent debate** about **how to protect basic rights** against encroachment by an **aggressive and intrusive state**, which wields the **rhetoric of national security** like a sword.
- In India, we have the **Supreme Court's privacy judgment**, which has taken a firm stand on the **side of rights**.
- In 2017 Privacy Judgement, SC ruled that **"right to privacy is an intrinsic part of Right to Life and Personal Liberty** under **Article 21** and entire **Part III** of the Constitution".
- The **privacy judgment** has already asked the government "to be sensitive to the needs of and the opportunities and dangers posed to **liberty in a digital world**".
- Citizens' initiatives such as the **Indian Privacy Code** have also proposed **legislative models for surveillance reform**. We now need the parliamentary will to take this forward.

25. THE SHAPE OF GROWTH MATTERS

Introduction:

- A **growth rate of 9%** is essential to generate **enough jobs** and achieve **universal prosperity**, according to a **vision document** released by NITI Aayog.
- Towards this, the **'Strategy for New India @75' document** recommends a number of steps, including increasing the **investment rate, reforming agriculture, and codifying labour laws**.
- "This will raise the economy's size in real terms from **\$2.7 trillion in 2017-18 to nearly \$4 trillion by 2022-23**".

Weakness of Indian Economy:

- A big weakness in the Indian economy's industrial infrastructure is that **middle-level institutions are missing**.
- Rather than formalising small enterprises excessively, **clusters and associations of small enterprises should be formalised**.
- Small enterprises cannot bear the **burden of excessive formalisation** which the state and the banking system need to make the informal sector 'legible' to them.
- **Professionally managed formal clusters** will connect the informal side of the economy with its formal side, i.e. government and large enterprises' supply chains.
- It is not the size of the manufacturing sector that matters but its shape.
- **Labour-intensive industries** are required for job creation. If the manufacturing sector is to grow **from 16% to 25% of the GDP**, which the strategy states as the goal, with **more capital-intensive industries**, it will not solve the employment problem.
- **NITI Aayog's plan for industrial growth** has very rightly highlighted **the need for strong clusters of small enterprises** as a principal strategy for the growth of a more competitive industrial sector.

NITI Aayog emphasized the meaning of growth (Shape of the Growth matters than Size):

- **Employment and labour reforms**, mentioned in the strategy, have rightly been given the **highest priority**.
- **Indian statistical systems** must be improved quickly to measure employment in various forms, formal as well as informal.
- **Overall growth** is also **emphasised by NITI Aayog**:
 - "Besides having rapid growth, which **reaches 9-10 per cent by 2022-23**, it is also necessary **to ensure that growth is inclusive, sustained, clean and formalised.**"
- However, it is the **shape of growth** that matters more than size:
 - The **employment-generating capacity** of the economy is what matters more to citizens than the overall GDP growth rate.

- There is no joy for citizens if India is the fastest-growing economy and yet does not **provide jobs and incomes**.
- The growth of industry and manufacturing is essential to **create more employment**, and to provide **bigger opportunities to Indians** who have been too dependent on agriculture so far.
- The strategy does say that **labour-intensive industries must be promoted**, but the overall goal remains the size of the sector.
- Therefore, the goal must be clearly set in terms of **employment, and policies and measurements of progress** set accordingly.

New India @75

Niti Aayog sets goals for 2022, the platinum jubilee of India's independence

BIG TARGET

- ▶ Average GDP growth of **8%** between 2018-23
- ▶ Economy grows to **\$4 trillion**



HOW TO BE ACHIEVED

- ▶ Raise investments rate to **36%** by 2022-23 from 29% now
- ▶ Increase tax-GDP ratio to at least **22%** by 2022-23



DETAILED STRATEGY

41 sectors identified for action

Industry and infrastructure

- ▶ Enhance skills and apprenticeships 
- ▶ Complete codification of central labour laws into four codes by 2019 
- ▶ Enhance female labour force participation

To address rural/farm stress

- ▶ Better ecosystem for innovation 
- ▶ Augmentation of industrial infrastructure
- ▶ Promote MSMEs, improve ease of doing business
- ▶ Double the mining area explored from 10% to 20% 

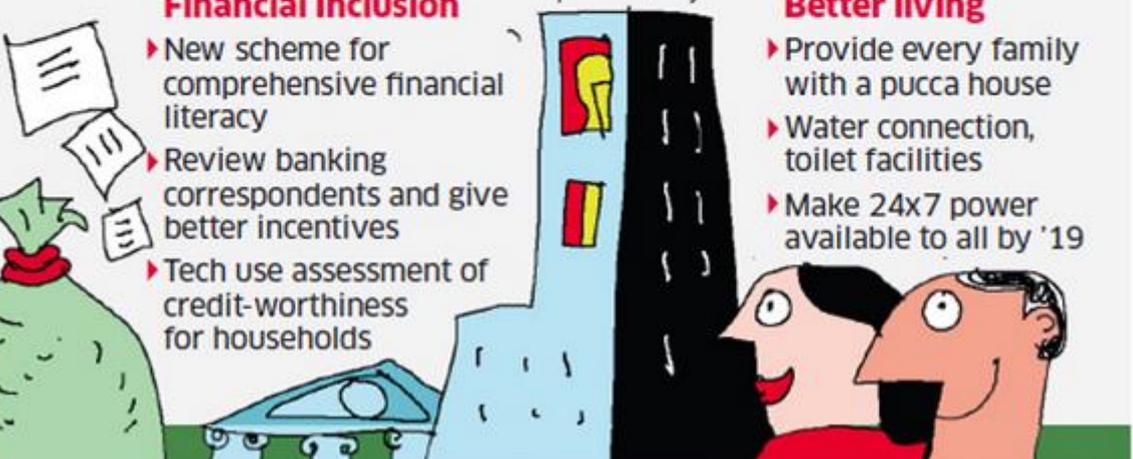
- ▶ Modernise agricultural technology, increase productivity
- ▶ Crop diversification & reorientation of fertiliser subsidy
- ▶ Adopting the Model Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing Act
- ▶ Amend the Essential Commodities Act, stable export policy
- ▶ Infrastructure status for agriculture value chains
- ▶ Link production to processing, village level procurement centres

Financial Inclusion

- ▶ New scheme for comprehensive financial literacy
- ▶ Review banking correspondents and give better incentives
- ▶ Tech use assessment of credit-worthiness for households

Better living

- ▶ Provide every family with a pucca house
- ▶ Water connection, toilet facilities
- ▶ Make 24x7 power available to all by '19



Increasing Tax Base much more for Human Development:

- The strategy highlights the urgency of **increasing the tax base** to provide more resources for human development.
- It also says **financial investments** must be increased to **strengthen India's production base**.
- If tax incentives must be given, they should **favour employment creation**, not more capital investment.

Reorienting labour laws:

- The **strategy on labour laws** appears pedestrian compared with the ambitious strategy of uplifting the lives of millions of Indians so that they share the fruits of economic growth.
- It recommends complete **codification of central labour laws** into **four codes by 2019**.
- While this will enable easier navigation for investors and employers through the Indian regulatory maze, what is required is a fundamental reorientation of the laws and regulations they must fit **emerging social and economic realities**.
- First, the **Nature of work and employment is changing**, even in more developed economies.
 - It is moving towards **more informal employment**, through contract work and self-employment, even in formal enterprises.
 - In such a scenario, **social security systems** must provide for all citizens, not only those in formal employment.
 - Indeed, if employers want more flexibility to improve competitiveness of their enterprises, the state will have to provide citizens the fairness they expect from the economy.
 - The **NITI Aayog strategy** suggests some contours of a **universal social security system**. These must be sharpened.
- Second, in a world where workers are atomised as individuals, they must have associations to aggregate themselves to have **more weight in the economic debate with owners of capital**.
 - Rather than weakening unions to give employers **more flexibility**, **laws must strengthen unions to ensure more fairness**.
 - The **NITI Aayog strategy** mentions the **need for social security for domestic workers too**.
 - This will not be enforceable unless domestic workers, scattered across millions of homes, have the means to collectively assert their rights.
- Third, **all employers in India should realise that workers must be their source of competitive advantage**.
 - India has an **abundance of labour as a resource**, whereas capital is relatively scarce. Human beings can learn new skills and be productive if employers invest in them.
 - Employers must treat their workers whether on their rolls or on contract as assets and sources of competitive advantage, not as costs.

Conclusion:

- The shape of the **development process** matters more to people than the size of the GDP.
- Development must be **by the people** (more participative), **of the people** (health, education, skills), and **for the people** (growth of their incomes, well-being, and happiness).
- How well India is doing at 75 must be measured by the **qualities of development**, as experienced by its citizens, along **these three dimensions**. GDP growth will not be enough.

26. LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD FOR ONLINE VENDORS**Context:**

- The government announced **new e-commerce rules**:
 - Restricting players from **selling the products** of companies in which they have a stake.
 - **Capping the percentage of inventory** that a vendor can sell through a marketplace entity (IT platform of an e-commerce entity) or its group companies.
- **To curb the practice of deep discounts**, the government said they cannot directly or indirectly influence the price of goods and services, and also brought in a new set of rules that bar the sale of products exclusively in one marketplace.

What are the new rules, and what do they mean for companies, vendors and customers?

- From **February 1, 2019**, e-commerce companies running marketplace platforms such as Amazon and Flipkart **cannot sell products through companies**, and of companies, in **which they hold equity stake**.
- While foreign direct investment is **not permitted** in the **inventory-based model** of e-commerce, the clarification put a **cap of 25% on the inventory** that a marketplace entity or its group companies can buy from a vendor.
- Inventory of a vendor will be deemed to be **controlled by e-commerce marketplace entity** if more than **25% of purchases** of such vendor are from the marketplace entity or **its group companies**.

What is the difference between marketplace model and inventory model in ecommerce?

- The **new FDI policy regulation** in the ecommerce sector has **allowed 100% FDI** in **marketplace model of e-commerce** under **automatic route**. Correspondingly, no FDI is allowed in the inventory model.

Marketplace model:

- According to the FDI policy guideline, “Marketplace model of e-commerce means providing of an **information technology platform by an e-commerce entity** on a digital and electronic network to act as a **facilitator between buyer and seller**.”
- Marketplaces are platforms that **enable a large, fragmented base of buyers and sellers** to discover price and transact with one another in an environment that is **efficient, transparent and trusted**.

The **main feature of the marketplace model** is that:

- the e-commerce firm like flipkart, snapdeal, amazon etc. will be providing a **platform for customers** to interact with a **selected number of sellers**.
- When an individual is purchasing a product from flipkart, he/she will be actually buying it from a registered seller in flipkart.
- The product is **not directly sold** by flipkart. Here, flipkart is just a website platform where a consumer meets a seller.
- Inventory, stock management, logistics etc are not supposed to be actively done by the ecommerce firm.

Marketplace	Inventory-led
Pros	
Highly scalable	Speedier delivery
Wide product portfolio & large number of sellers	Better quality control – seller & product, both
Investor friendly model	Best customer experience and trust
Cons	
Difficult to conduct quality check	Difficult to scale
Shipping costs are higher	High fixed costs
Difficult to build customer's trust and loyalty	Restricted cash flow

Inventory model:

- According to the FDI policy, “Inventory model of ecommerce means an ecommerce activity where **inventory of goods and services is owned by e-commerce entity and is sold to the consumers directly**.”
- **The main feature of inventory model** is that:
 - the customer buys the product **from the ecommerce firm**.
 - He/she manages an inventory (stock of products), interfaces with customers, runs logistics and involves in every aspects of the business.
 - **Alibaba of China** is following the inventory model.

How are consumers and small retailers likely to be impacted?

- Consumers may no longer enjoy the **deep discounts offered by retailers** that have a close association with marketplace entities.
- The **absence of large retailers** will, however, bring **relief to small retailers selling on these platforms**.

- Traders running **traditional brick-and-mortar stores**, who now find it difficult to compete with the large e-commerce retailers with deep pockets, could gain. Small vendors should get enough chances to **participate in the online business**.
- Many **small and medium enterprises** have been of late selling through e-commerce portals fatalistically in the realization that if you cannot beat them, join them.
- But they lose out to competitors supported by the e-commerce portal both by way of equity stakes and otherwise.

Conclusion:

- The government has said that e-commerce entities will have to **maintain a level playing field**, and ensure that they do not directly or indirectly **influence the sale price** of goods and services.
- The policy mandates that no seller can sell its products exclusively on any marketplace platform, and that all vendors on the e-commerce platform should be provided **services in a “fair and non-discriminatory manner”**.
- Services include fulfilment, logistics, warehousing, advertisement, payments, and financing among others.
- Marketplaces are meant for **genuine, independent sellers**, many of whom are MSMEs (Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises). These changes will **enable a level playing field for all sellers**, helping them leverage the reach of e-commerce.

Way Forward:

- In order to keep a track of such compliance, a **new compliance** has now been introduced wherein an e-commerce portal is now required to furnish a **certificate** along with a **report of statutory auditor** to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), confirming compliance of above guidelines, **by 30 September of every year** for the preceding financial year.
- This will ensure that the RBI is completely aware of the extent of compliance by the major e-commerce players swearing **by the marketplace model**.
- The e-commerce reforms comes hot on the heels of **better and improved consumer protection** ushered through a fresh **Consumer Protection Bill 2018** passed by the Lok Sabha that also seeks to discipline online sales.
- The presented e-commerce reforms is to provide a **level-playing field for bricks and mortar stores by and large owned by the desis**.

RSTV, LSTV, AIR - SYNOPSIS

1. GAS GRID: FUEL FOR ALL

Link: <https://youtu.be/T9BqhXq1Grs>

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone in New Delhi for City Gas Distribution projects across **129 districts** which won under the ninth CGD bidding round held recently. At each of the Geographical Areas across 19 states in India, the authorized entities also held their event locally. The projects, recently awarded by the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB), **would cover 65 GAs** to bring gas to around half of the country's population in 26 states and Union Territories.
- As part of a larger plan to shift towards an environment friendlier gas-based economy, the development of CGD networks will increase the availability of clean cooking fuel or Piped Natural Gas (PNG) and transportation fuel Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) for consumers. The project has covered 96 cities and districts covering 46.5 lakh households and 32 lakh CNG vehicles so far.

Analysis:

- The City Gas Distribution Project is a very timely exercise and should have come a little earlier because the present mode of delivering gas to consumers with cylinders is a highly energy intensive exercise. It includes a retailer and transportation leading to harassment of the consumer. A consumer also does not know when the cylinder is going to end leading to anxiety of booking the next one. On the contrary, pipelines bring gas to the consumer directly, there is assurance of a continued supply and is more cost efficient.
- While **CNG is 60 per cent cheaper as compared to petrol and costs 45 per cent less than diesel, PNG is 40 per cent cheaper than the market price of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) used for cooking.**

Short term or immediate implications:

1. The extent to which consumers in urban areas will get access to gas through pipelines will allow taking these released gas cylinders for clean cooking to rural areas to **rollout UJJWALA Scheme far more effectively.**
 2. If there is gas grid covering urban areas, then the whole range of industrial activities which today use dirty fuels and pollute the air can switch on to gas **reducing air pollution to some extent.**
- As the rollout takes place, it is very important to see that the consumers who need gas for industrial and other commercial purposes get it very easily and the pricing issue is handled in such a way that it does not create distortions or rationing issue. It should be readily available for everyone at an affordable price. Hence, concurrent planning is needed.
 - PPP might be a right way forward but Government needs to take leadership (viability gap funding) in order to see that the whole value chain moves in a synchronized manner and ensures commercial viability. There should be enough LNG terminals, infrastructure, imports and pipelines, which bring gas from the coast.

Challenges:

1. Pipeline connectivity needs a right way for **uninterrupted supply and affordability.**
2. **Laws with respect to pipelines are quite unfair which need to be revisited.** The amount of compensation given to the person under whose land the pipeline is being laid is very less as the land cannot be used further for agriculture or construction which of reasonable width.
3. **Safety issues** and consumer education.
4. Good outreach of distributor companies to all states and rural areas as petroleum is a central subject.

Conclusion:

- It is good that the gas network is being laid but it also depends on the consumers to pay for the pipeline connection. The government is doing well by fixing the City Gas Distribution network and simultaneously extending the pipeline infrastructure.
- But the limits of this outreach will depend on India's limits to be able to import those quantities of gas in terms of availability of exchange in times to come. To some consumers, gas could be a bridge fuel before they move on to electricity for clean cooking.

2. 13TH G-20 SUMMIT

Link: <https://youtu.be/heOCNq1NtwQ>

(TOPICS COVERED: MAINS: GENERAL STUDIES II – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PRELIMS: CURRENT EVENTS OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE)

- For the first time, **India will host the annual G-20 Summit in 2022** coinciding with the country's 75th anniversary of independence. Prime Minister Narendra Modi made the announcement at the closing ceremony of the **13th G-20 Summit in the Argentinian capital Buenos Aires on 1st December 2018**. Other than G-20 Summit, PM Modi also participated in the first trilateral meeting with his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe and United States President Donald Trump.
- The second Russia-India-China 'RIC' Trilateral Summit also took place in the Argentinian capital after a gap of 12 years. Meeting was mainly characterized by warmth and positivity; the leaders also discussed cooperation and coordination in various areas, which could contribute to global peace and stability.

Group of Twenty (G 20)

- It is an international forum for the **governments and central bank governors** from 19 countries and the European Union.
- It was **formed on 26 September 1999** to discuss policies relating to financial stability.
- Its agenda was **expanded since 2008** including heads of governments / heads of states as well as finance ministers and foreign ministers.
- It thus, brings important **industrialized and developing countries** to discuss important issues in the **global economy**.

Takeaways for India:

1. JAI

- It was the first meeting among the three leaders of Japan, India and USA. Currently, India's relation with Japan and America are the best that they have ever been. **All the three countries are democracies therefore, in terms of values; they are on the same page**. What really brings them together at the moment is the **convergence of interests** such as ensuring stability, prosperity and security in the Indo-Pacific region. Greater importance was also given to India in terms of economic, political and security architecture by both the countries.
- Free, open, inclusive and rules-based order is essential for the regional peace and prosperity. The Prime Minister also offered some ideas on how JAI countries should take forward on the **concept of Indo-Pacific** and how the three countries can work together to promote this concept. These meetings were useful and they should continue on the margins of subsequent G-20 meetings.
- Japan, India and USA are also engaged in Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (initiated in 2007 and reestablished in 2017) in parallel with joint military exercises of an unprecedented scale, called Exercise Malabar. Such dialogues are important in providing a counterbalance to tensions created in South China by specially China.

2. China issue

- In the last few years, China has expanded its influence and assertiveness in the region particularly in the South China Sea. It continues to create and occupy more islands and militarize them in the South China Sea despite opposition from the neighboring countries like Philippines and ASEAN as well. This has also brought India, US and Japan together.

3. Action on economic offenders

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented a nine-point programme on ways to take action against fugitive economic offenders. India managed to push through a clause in the final communiqué **which calls for a universal law which allows the assets of economic offenders in other nations to be frozen, and their repatriation expedited**. This is significant given that some defaulters have fled the country after transferring assets abroad.
- **RIC**
- Leaders of India, China and Russia called for **reforming multilateral institutions, including the United Nations (UN) and the World Trade Organization (WTO)**, as they understood the benefits of a multilateral trading system and an open world economy for global growth.
- They also agreed to have regular consultations to jointly promote international and regional peace and stability, to strengthen cooperation through BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), the SCO

(Shanghai Cooperation Organization) and the East Asia Summit (EAS) mechanisms, to address global challenges such as terrorism and climate change.

Conclusion:

- These trilateral meetings among the leaders where 'I' is the common factor is recognition of several facts including, "India as a global engine of economic growth and will be in top five economies of the world; stability in the region and recognition of India assuming leadership role on global issues of people's concerns such as climate change, renewable energy, corruption and disaster resilient infrastructure.
- Hunger, sanitation, health, higher education, skill, indigenous manufacturing base, environment and renewable energy might be some of the key areas where India can do something concrete till 2022 when G20 summit is hosted.

QUESTIONS

MAINS 2016

(Q) South China Sea has assumed greater **geopolitical significance** in the present context. Explain. (12.5 marks, Question is to be answered in not more than 200 words)

3. MILITARY SATELLITES

Link: <https://youtu.be/VxStUxuT8mM>

(TOPICS COVERED:

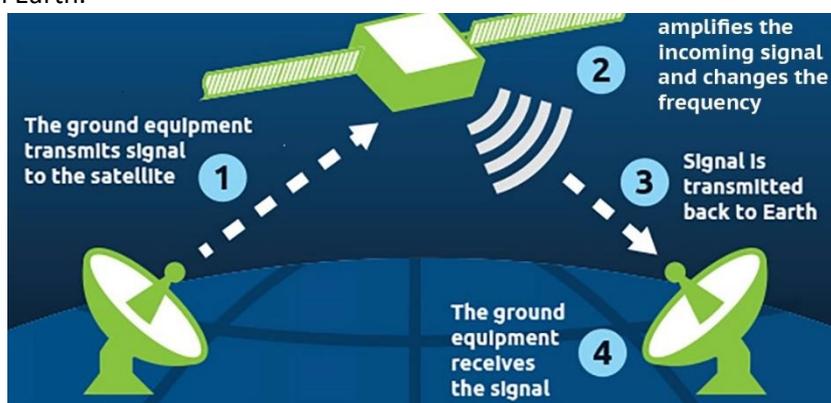
PRELIMS: Current events of national and international importance

MAINS: GENERAL STUDIES III: Technology and Security, Awareness in the field of space)

- **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** launched **GSAT-7A** on **19 December 2018** which is a **dedicated communication satellite for defence purposes**.
- The satellite will connect all assets of **Indian Air Force (IAF)** such as fighter planes, Airborne early warning control system (AWACS) and drones with each other and ground stations giving IAF network centric warfare capability.
- **Indian Navy** already has a satellite **GSAT 7 (Rukmini)**, launched in **2013**, which provides it **real time secure communications over the Indian Ocean Region**.

COMMUNICATION SATELLITES:

- An **"artificial" satellite** (different from "natural" satellites like Earth's Moon) is an artificial object intentionally **placed into orbit** using a launch vehicle (rocket).
- **Various types of artificial satellites** include civilian and military Earth observation satellites, communication satellites, navigation satellites, weather satellites, and space telescopes.
- A communications satellite is an **artificial satellite** that **relays and amplifies radio telecommunications** via a It creates a **communication channel** between a **source transmitter** and a **receiver at different locations** on Earth.
- They can be used for **television, telephone, radio, internet and military applications**.
- They use a range of wide range of **radio and microwave frequencies**.
- Much of the world's data, TV, and telephone communications are **transmitted long distances by microwaves** between ground stations and communication satellites.
- Frequencies in the microwave range are referred as **S, C, X, Ku, K, or, Ka**
- An artificial satellite used for military purpose is called a **'military satellite'**. They can be used for **intelligence gathering, navigation and military communications**.
- There are more than 300 **military or dual-use satellites** (in December 2018), **mostly owned by USA, Russia, China and India**.

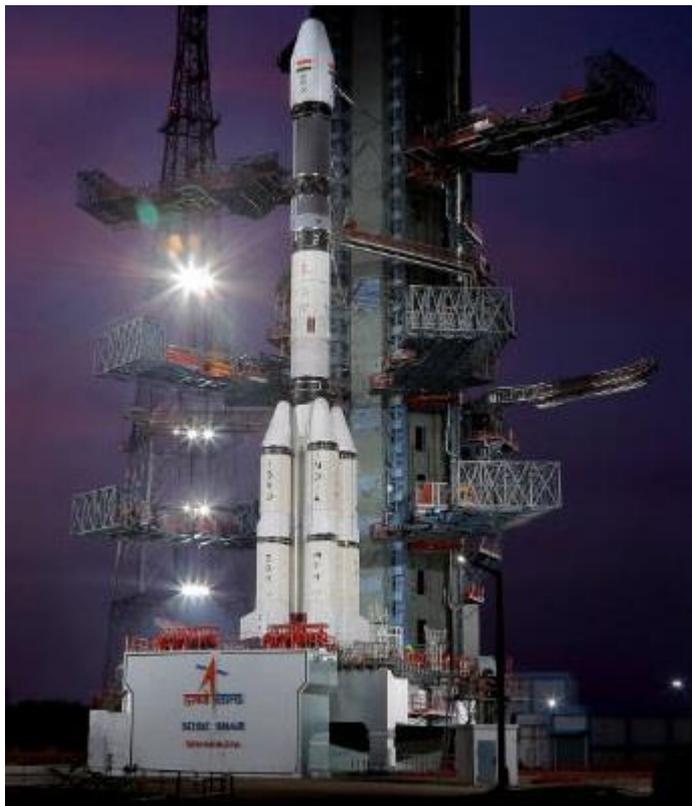


GSAT SATELLITES:

- The GSAT satellites are **India's indigenously developed communication satellites**, used for **digital audio, data and video broadcasting**.
- Satellites like GSAT-6 (INSAT-4E), GSAT-7, GSAT-7A, GSAT-8 (INSAT-4G), GSAT-9 (South Asia satellite), etc are in service.

GSAT-7A:

- It is a **military communication satellite** for the **Indian Air Force (IAF)**. It will provide connections to various assets used by IAF uninterrupted in real time.
- It will enhance **global operations** of IAF.
- It will operate in **K_u band** (frequencies ranging from 12-14 gigahertz) **transponder** which has **several advantages over C-band** (frequencies ranging from 4-8 gigahertz) like more powerful satellite signals, smaller antennas, and non-interference of communication signals with terrestrial microwave systems.
- Predecessor of GSAT-7A is **GSAT-7** that provided secure connections for Indian ships in the vast Indian Ocean Region.
- **GSAT-6** (launched in August 2015) is another sophisticated communication satellite gives an edge to Central Forces of India like CRPF when operating in Naxal-prone areas.
- India also has, in addition, which can do **Earth imaging** like the **Cartosat series**. They have special cameras that can constantly view over India and Indian Ocean Region. So, **all such satellites provide India an edge in warfare**.
- For navigation purposes, India has **Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS)** or **NAVIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation)**. It covers India and a region 1500 km around it.
- 7 operational satellites of IRNSS series = 3 Geostationary orbit satellites + 4 Geosynchronous satellites.
- As a competitor, **China** also has **developed its space program** and it offers services to Pakistan too. For example, like India's NAVIC, China has its **BeiDou navigation system** that has been offering services to customers in **Asia-Pacific Region**.

**CONCLUSION:**

- **Satellites** are useful in providing various **inputs for both civilian and military** purposes. India has **borders which have difficult terrains and weather conditions** and so, inputs in various forms are needed through satellites.
- India needs to keep improving its space programs for military uses and create a space command in coming days. **Remote sensing, communication and navigation** are the three fields which will increase the capabilities of the defence forces.

QUESTIONS**PRELIMS 2018**

(Q) With reference to the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), consider the following statements

1. IRNSS has three satellites in geostationary and four satellites in geosynchronous orbits.
2. IRNSS covers entire India and about 5500 km² beyond its borders.
3. India will have its own satellite navigation system with full global coverage by the middle of 2019

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 1 and 2 only
- 2 and 3 only
- None

PRELIMS 2011

(Q) An **artificial satellite** orbiting around the Earth does not fall down. This is so because the attraction of Earth

- Does not exist at such distance
- Is neutralised by the attraction of moon
- Provides the necessary speed for its steady motion
- Provides the necessary acceleration for its motion

MAINS 2008

(Q) What do you know about Indian National Satellite Systems (**INSAT**)? Describe its important features.

MAINS 2010

(Q) Comment on '**CARTOSAT 2B**'.

MAINS 2015

(Q) What do you understand by 'Standard Positioning Systems' and 'Precision Positioning Systems' in the **GPS era**? Discuss the advantages India perceives from its ambitious **IRNSS programme** employing just seven satellites.

4. INDIA'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Link: <https://youtu.be/YZqSgguqnXE>

(TOPICS COVERED)

MAINS: GENERAL STUDIES III – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT

PRELIMS: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT)

- The **United Nations** adopted the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. 193 countries, including India, are committed to the **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)** that require to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one was left behind.
- Just 3 years later, the **SDG Index released by the NITI Aayog and the United Nations** show that **India has a score of 58** (out of 100), a little beyond halfway mark in meeting the target set for 2030.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

- The idea of SDGs arose with the realisation that in the **pursuit of development extensive damage** has been done to the
- The targets of **SDGs (17 Goals and 169 targets)** set by the United Nations in 2015 that have to be achieved by 2030. It is called the "**2030 Agenda**".
- Setting of targets to achieve the goals **puts a pressure on governments** to work on them. Citizens should also get involved in achieving it.
- These goals complete what the **Millennium Development Goals (set in 2000 and targeted for the year 2015)** could not achieve earlier.
- The **Sustainable Development** and tackling **climate change** go parallel.
- Increasing population, expanding cities, disappearing forests, and shrinking natural habitats has increased the focus on development that is also sustainable in the last few decades. **Growth has to be inclusive** and shall focus on **maintaining environment**



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



SDG INDEX

- The SDG Index aims to promote **healthy competition among states and Union Territories (UTs)** by evaluating their progress in **social, economic and environmental terms** which will help India achieve the UN SDG goals by 2030.
- The Index aims to **provide a tool** to policy-makers and policy-implementers in the states and UTs so that they get to know their performances for SDG targets.
- Based on their performances across **13 of the 17 identified SDGs**, states and UTs were given **scores ranging from 0 to 100**. Goals like health-care, gender equality, clean energy, infrastructure, etc are measured.
- India has become the **first country** in the goal to measure the goals at a **sub-national level**.
- **Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu** have emerged as the **top performing states** in the country with score of 69 on the SDG India Index. **Chandigarh** has topped the list among the UTs.
- **Assam, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh** are at the **bottom of the SDG Index**. Such states need to focus a lot on the goals to improve.
- To achieve the SDG Index **Government of India has launched many programmes** focussed on Gender Equality, climate change and resource mobilisation. **But still there are several issues** like unequal distribution of resources in several regions, high air pollution in several cities, gender inequality, etc.
- **Efforts are being done** to get cleaner fuel, eliminate all single-use plastic by 2022, explore solar energy under International Solar Alliance, improving health and sanitation, ending open defecation by 2019 through the Swachh Bharat programme in India. All such efforts will help in making progress towards achieving the SDGs.

CONCLUSION:

- The SDGs are multi-dimensional and interconnected. It requires deep commitments by countries in achieving them.
- India is making progress towards achieving the goals and efforts shall be continued by every state and UTs in this regard.

QUESTIONS

PRELIMS 2016

(Q) Consider the following statements

1. The **Sustainable Development Goals** were first proposed in 1992 by a global think tank called the 'Club of Rome'.
2. The SDGs have to be achieved by 2030.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?

- a) Only i
- b) Only ii
- c) Both I and ii
- d) Neither I and ii

PRELIMS 2015

(Q) What is **Rio+20 Conference** ?

- a) It is the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
- b) It is a Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organisation
- c) It is a conference of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change
- d) It is a Conference of the Member Countries of the Convention on Biological Diversity

MAINS 2018

(Q) How are the principles followed by **NITI Aayog** different from those followed the erstwhile planning commission in India ?