



INSIGHTSIAS

SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

INSIGHTS into EDITORIAL

MARCH 2019

INSIGHTS IAS

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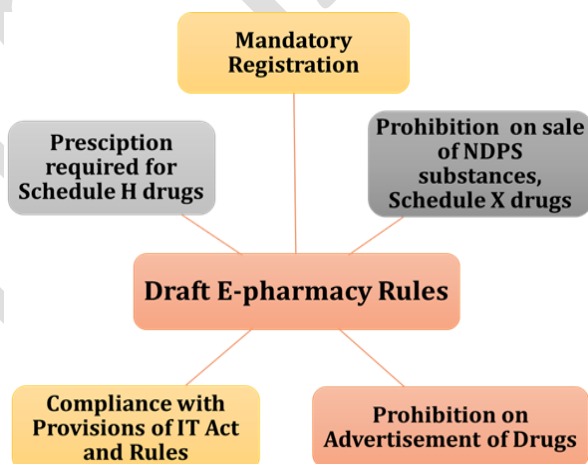
1. THE CORRECT PRESCRIPTION

Introduction:

- The increasing popularity of e-commerce, including **e-pharmacies**, is undeniable.
- E-Pharmacies, operate through websites or smartphone apps on the Internet. **E-pharmacies** offer the **comfort** of shopping from home, **privacy**, and **price discounts**. It also **allows access to drugs, not available locally**.
- They offer medicines for sale at a **discount of at least 20%**, when compared to traditional pharmacies.
- **For scheduled drugs**, patients can submit photographs of prescriptions, while placing orders.
- In India, in the **absence of any legislative framework**, existence of e – pharmacies are per-se illegal. The **Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI)** banned sale through e – pharmacies on 30th December, 2015.
- Yet, e-pharmacies have grown rapidly as against the traditional “brick-and-mortar” or offline pharmacies.
- On Dec.12, the **Delhi high court** ordered a **complete ban on online pharmacies** across the country with immediate effect, asking the central government to implement the order.
- The court order is in response to a petition which stated that the sale of drugs and prescription medicines online was illegal and **without any mandate of law** and, therefore, a **health risk**.

Opponents to E-Pharmacies:

- The fiercest opponents of e-pharmacies are **trade associations** of existing pharmacists and chemists.
- They argue that **their livelihoods are threatened by venture capital** backed e-pharmacies and that jobs of thousands are on the line.
- There is enough evidence on record to demonstrate how existing pharmacies contribute generously to **drug abuse and sale of sub-standard medicine**. There is no reason to suspect that e-pharmacies are going to worsen the situation in anyway.



Defects in Brick-and-Mortar Pharmacies:

- The history of India’s trade associations of pharmacists is one of **rampant, unabashed cartelisation** that has resulted in an **artificial inflation of medicine prices**.
- This practice of two competitors **colluding to fix the sale price and area of operation** is called **cartelisation**, and is illegal under India’s Competition Act.
- The premise of this law is that a **free market is efficient** only if all sellers are **competing with each other** to offer the lowest price to the customer.
- A second, **more insidious strategy** is the practice of requiring pharmaceutical companies to **apply for a no-objection-certificate (NOC)** from the regional trade association before they **appoint new stockists in a region** to sell a particular drug.
- This has the effect of **artificially restricting competition** in certain markets because more stockists mean more competition.
- By creating such **artificial, extra-legal barriers** to the free trade of medicines within India, these trade associations **create huge distortions** in the Indian market. It is suspected that these practices continue despite multiple restraining orders by the Competition Commission of India.

Risks Associated with E-Pharmacies:

- India’s pharmacy laws are derived from the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, Drugs and Cosmetics Rule, 1945, and the Pharmacy Act, 1948.
- These laws predate the advent of online commerce in India, **leaving the business out of the purview**.

- Unlike common items, drugs are **highly potent and its misuse or abuse** can have **serious consequences** on human health, not just for the one person consuming it but for humanity at large as some drugs can be addictive, habit-forming and harmful to the body.
- A large number of children/minor or people from uneducated rural background use the internet and can **be victims of wrong medication** while ordering medicines online.

The risks exist in buying drugs online:

- Supply of fake and illegal drugs;
- Abuse on account of fake or forged or no prescriptions;
- Lack of verification of the ultimate user;
- Unhealthy competition;
- Abuse of critical health data generated online; and
- Mishandling during transport; are some of them.

Making draft guidelines is the need of the hour:

- E-pharmacies market is **\$18 billion** and will grow to **\$55 billion by 2020**.
- Industry experts estimate the market to be generating 3,000-4,000 orders on a daily basis.
- According to the draft guidelines that are **yet to be formalised**, e-pharmacies have to register for a licence with the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI), which will **be valid for three years**.
- They do not allow e-pharmacies to sell narcotic drugs, tranquilisers, and Schedule X drugs, and neither are they allowed to advertise.
- These draft guidelines are along **the lines of laws in the US**, where the regulators monitor e-drug sales.
- The National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP), the apex pharmacy body in the US, gives registration and certification for e-pharmacies and they have to **display the certification logo** on their website.

Conclusion:

- **Specific and clear-cut rules** should be made for selling, prescribing, dispensing, and delivering prescription drugs through e-pharmacies.
- In its recent policy note on **“Making markets work for affordable healthcare”**, the CCI noted, “One major factor that contributes to **high drug prices in India** is the unreasonably **high trade margins**.”
- One of the culprits for this phenomenon identified by the CCI was **“self-regulation by trade associations** also contributes **towards high margins** as these trade associations **control the entire drug distribution system** in a manner that **mutes competition**”.
- One of the solutions proposed by the CCI was **encouraging more e-pharmacies**.
- As stated by the CCI in its policy note, **“Electronic trading of medicines** via online platforms, with **appropriate regulatory safeguards**, can bring in **transparency** and **spur price competition** among platforms and among retailers, as has been witnessed in other product segments.”
- The fact that the government has come out with **draft regulations** means it is not keen on killing it. It is a **regular course of evolution of an industry** which is very nascent. It is important to weed out the unruly players.

2. DE-ODOURISING SEWAGE

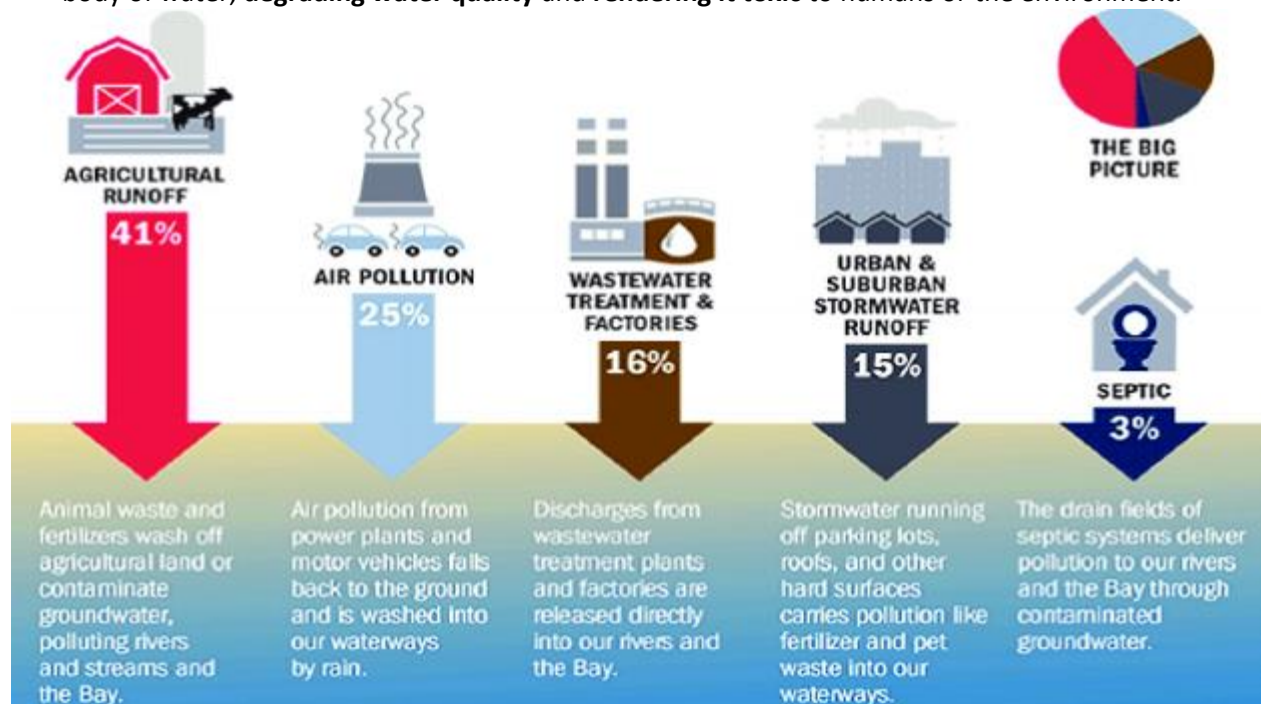
Introduction: Present status of Water Pollution:

We all know **water is crucial for life**, we trash it anyway. Some **80 percent** of the **world’s wastewater is dumped** largely untreated back into the environment, polluting rivers, lakes, and oceans.

This **widespread problem of water pollution** is jeopardizing our health.

- Unsafe water **kills more people each year than war** and all other forms of violence combined.
- Meanwhile, our drinkable water sources are finite: **Less than 1 percent** of the **earth’s freshwater** is actually accessible to us.
- Without action, the challenges will only increase by 2050, when global demand for freshwater is expected to be one-third greater than it is now.
- The **World Bank** estimates that **more than a fifth of all communicable diseases in India (21%) are caused by contaminated water**.

- It attributes **one in ten deaths in India** to diseases or infections directly or indirectly transmitted **through water**.
- **Over 500 children die every day in India** due to diarrhoeal diseases. Water pollution occurs when harmful substances often chemicals or microorganisms contaminate a stream, river, lake, ocean, aquifer, or other body of water, **degrading water quality** and **rendering it toxic** to humans or the environment.



Accessing water in Future implies Careful Usage of water in Present:

- According to NITI Aayog's composite water management index report released last year, **75% of households do not have access to drinking water** on premises, 70% households lack piped water (potable or otherwise) and as many as 20 cities will effectively use up all available water resources by 2020.
- **Sewage and waste need to come centre stage** in our policy debates.

Water Pollution: Reactive Nitrogen, a growing pollutant:

- According to a study by the Indian Nitrogen Group, a task force of scientists tracking the issue, the **amount of reactive nitrogen in a bulk of the water bodies** in India is already **twice the limit prescribed by WHO**.
- **Nitrogen pollution from untreated sewage**, the study found, now outstrips nitrogen pollution from the **Indian farmer's urea addiction**. Now, add nitrogen pollution to the list.
- The centre and state Government efforts has managed to **make toilets** top of the mind in our country, with its **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan**.
- Toilets are being **built in mission mode** and there is enough anecdotal evidence to suggest that there has been a **measurable reduction** in the number of people **defecating in the open**, which stood *at over 500 million or half the population* a few years ago.

How is India's nitrogen pollution different from that of the world?

- Nitrogen pollution **differs from country to country**, depending on the **sources of contribution**, which can be anything from agriculture, domestic and municipal sewage to fossil fuel burning, vehicles, industries and residue burning.
- The biggest human-made source of nitrogen pollution is **unused fertiliser in the farms**, whether chemical or biological in origin.
- In India, due to the **unaffordability of precision agriculture or labour costs** for frequent **application of fertilisers in small doses**, farmers apply fertilisers in fewer but **larger doses**.
- But since crops cannot use the fertilisers fully, they **contribute to the reactive nitrogen pollution in India**.
- Most of it comes **from cereal cultivation**, whereas in other countries, it may come mainly from horticultural crops or cash crops as in China, or even from forage crops and livestock or animal farming as in Europe.

- **Africa has a negative balance of nitrogen**, which means due to lack of sufficient fertiliser/manure, farmers in the continent are mining away whatever little nitrogen is left in the soil, **causing soil degradation**.

Clean India Missions- but scarcity of Waste and Sewage Treatment Missions:

- India's latest, largest and most significantly scaled attempt at cleanliness the **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan** is likely to add to this problem.
- Under the mission, **over nine crore toilets** have been constructed. Of these, **only 60 lakh are in urban areas**, where one assumes they are connected to some sort of sewage system (even this assumption is a stretch).
- A study done by the **Centre for Science and Environment in 30 cities in Uttar Pradesh found that only 28% of toilets** in these cities were connected to a sewage system). **The rest will be generating fecal sludge, sewage and septage which has no place to go.**
- Which means that that too will simply get dumped, polluting land, surface and ground water and killing our rivers and ponds.
- According to the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**, 63% of urban sewage flowing into rivers is **untreated**.
- All this, one would have presumed, prodded policymakers and governments into action.
- Just like the nation is building toilets in mission mode, one would have thought civic administrations would be **building drains and sewers and treatment plants** with the same zeal.
- Of the **99 cities in the 'Smart Cities' mission**, which are collectively spending **2 lakh crore over five years** (from 2015), **only 2.4% of the money is going to be spent on waste management**.
- Other schemes like the **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)** also fund such schemes. AMRUT covers a much larger spread 500 so-called 'mission cities' across the country. Of these, only 217 pitched for a **sewage treatment plant** as an AMRUT project.

Way Forward:

Can we maintain a balance between the use of fertilisers to achieve food security and limiting nitrogen pollution?

- Yes. Firstly, India's food grain production is not growing at par with the **increase in fertiliser consumption**. In fact, the **role of nitrogen in cereal production has fallen** sharply in the last two decades.
- Continuous increase in fertiliser usage without addressing the limiting factors will only result in **diminishing returns** in terms of yield, besides imposing environmental costs.
- We need to **rationalise the unbalanced usage of nitrogen fertilisers in irrigated areas** that grow multiple crops in a year and **ensure need-based usage of nitrogen fertilisers** in all areas, even if it means a slight increase in its usage in rain-fed areas.
- But most importantly, we need to put the **clamps on non-agricultural sources of nitrogen**, which are spewing the pollution at a much faster rate.

Conclusion:

- we have all the **scientific capacity** needed to **assess our reactive nitrogen** loads, sources, sinks, flows and future scenarios, as well as identify possible interventions.
- **Reducing the use of nitrogen fertilisers** and increasing that of **recycled manures** offers the prospect for Indian farmers to **produce food more securely and profitably**, while saving the government a huge amount of money.
- Elections may be fought on '**bijli, sadak, paani**' (**power, roads, water**) but no election is **fought over naali (drain)**. Unless that happens, we run the real risk of eventually either choking or being **poisoned by our own waste**.
- If only we leverage this **scientific and environmental soft power** to tweak our environmental diplomacy with the changing times, geopolitics and economics, we can easily demonstrate our potential for **global environmental leadership**.

3. COMING HOME: ON THE RELEASE OF INDIAN PILOT WG. CDR. ABHINANDAN

Context:

- Indian Air Force's Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, in Pakistani custody after his plane was shot down, will be governed under the **Geneva Convention of 1929**.
- With Pakistan's decision to release **Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman**, tensions between India and Pakistan may finally wind down.
- The gesture, which Pakistan Prime Minister called an offer of peace and goodwill, must be appreciated, although there is evidence to suggest that there was **pressure from other countries** on Islamabad to make such an announcement to **prevent further escalation** from India.

Does the captured pilot count as a prisoner of war?

- The provisions of the **conventions apply in peacetime situations**, in declared wars, and in conflicts that are not recognised as war by one or more of the parties.
- Even though India and Pakistan have been **careful not to use the 'w' (war) word** for the operations each has conducted on the other's territory over two successive days India has said its **airstrikes were a "non-military" intelligence-led operation** both sides are **bound by the Geneva Conventions**.
- This means the IAF officer is a **prisoner of war**, and his treatment has to be in accordance with the **provisions for PoWs under the Geneva Conventions**.
- **After 1971 war**, India had more than **80,000 Pakistani troops**, who had surrendered to the Indian Army after the liberation of Dhaka. India agreed to release them under the **Shimla Agreement of 1972**.

What are the Geneva Conventions?

- The **1949 Geneva Conventions** are a **set of international treaties** that ensure that warring parties conduct themselves in a humane way with non-combatants such as civilians and medical personnel, as well as with combatants **no longer actively engaged in fighting**, such as prisoners of war, and wounded or sick soldiers.
- **All countries are signatories to the Geneva Conventions**. There are four conventions, with three protocols added on since 1949.
- The provisions of the conventions apply in:
 - **Peacetime situations, declared wars and in Conflicts** that are not recognised as war by one or more of the parties.

Geneva Convention III

Prisoners of War Must be

- Allowed to inform next of kin and International Red Cross of their capture
- Allowed to correspond regularly with relatives and to receive relief parcels
- Allowed to keep their clothes, feeding utensils and personal effects
- Supplied with adequate food and clothing
- Provided with quarters not inferior to those of their captor's troops
- Given the medical care their state of health demands
- Paid for any work they do
- Repatriated if certified seriously ill or wounded (but they must not resume active military duties afterwards)
- Quickly released and repatriated when hostilities cease.

Prisoners of war must NOT be:

- Compelled to give any information other than their name, age, rank and service number.

Torture or inhumane treatment of prisoners-of-war (Geneva III, arts. 17 & 87) or protected persons (Geneva IV, art. 32) are grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, and are considered war crimes

Rules that are to be followed according to the Convention:

- The way a **country's armed forces treat enemy soldiers** speaks volumes about the ethos and traditions upheld by them.
- It is the responsibility of every soldier **to honour and respect the men in uniform** irrespective of the army and the country they belong to.
- **Article 13** of the third Geneva Convention states that POWs must at all times be **humanely treated**.
- **Any unlawful act or omission** by the country, under whose captivity, the Prisoners of war (POW) is in, which leads to death or seriously endangers the **health of a prisoner of war** in its custody is prohibited. This will also be as a **serious breach** of the Convention.

- The **POWs cannot** be subjected to **physical mutilation or to medical or scientific experiments** of any kind which are not justified by the medical, dental or hospital, which is treating the POW in question.
- It also prohibits POWs from being intimidated and insulted and be subjected to public curiosity.

Who monitors whether the Geneva Conventions are being followed?

- The **Geneva Conventions** have a **system of “Protecting Powers”** who ensure that the provisions of the conventions are being **followed by the parties** in a conflict.
- **During the Kargil War**, Pakistan returned Flt Lt Nachiketa, who was captured after ejecting from his burning Mi27, after keeping him for eight days.
- This was after **intense diplomatic efforts** by the Vajpayee government and by ICRC. Another PoW, Squadron Ldr Ajay Ahuja, was killed in captivity.
- In theory, each side must designate states that are not party to the conflict as their “Protecting Powers”. In practice, **the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** usually plays this role.

Conclusion:

- ❖ Significantly, it was a time of **economic growth and stability** too for Pakistan.
- ❖ New Delhi must be ready to show **both flexibility and a determined focus** on Pakistan’s action against terror groups, including the Jaish-e-Mohammad.
- ❖ Releasing our pilot early will give him a **moral victory** and he may be eager to grab that accolade. The important thing is that the custody of the pilot may lead to **dialling down of tension** between the two countries.
- ❖ But there also voices within the Government and in the public that feel the pilot is safe now that Pakistan has told the world about him and so the government’s next steps should be delinked from this issue.
- ❖ Moreover, they argue, Pakistan has to be **sent a signal that the pilot’s capture hasn’t tied India’s hands**.
- ❖ This is the **best way to build constructively on the international consensus** built post-Pulwama in India’s favour.

4. INDIA INVITED AS ‘GUEST OF HONOUR’ TO OIC MEET

Context:

- In a **major diplomatic victory for India** and a setback for Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates has invited foreign minister Sushma Swaraj to attend the **foreign ministers’ meet of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) States**, set to take place in **Abu Dhabi**, the first such invite in five decades.
- Finance Minister Sushma Swaraj will be the **“guest of honour”** at the inaugural plenary **46th meeting of OIC foreign ministers**.
- The move is seen as a major blow to Pakistan that has consistently **opposed India’s entry into the grouping** despite having the **third-largest Muslim population in the world**.
- **India is not a member of the OIC**, but was invited to the Abu Dhabi meeting as the guest of honour.

Indian views in OIC meeting:

- India see this invitation as a **milestone in our comprehensive strategic partnership with the UAE**. We also see this invitation as a **welcome recognition of the presence of 185**

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) States:

- The OIC is a **57-member grouping of Muslim majority nations**.
- The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the **second largest inter-governmental organization** after the United Nations with a membership of 57 states **spread over four continents**.
- The Organization is the collective voice of the Muslim world. It endeavours to **safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world** in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.
- **Permanent Secretariat is in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia**.
- Like NAM again, the **OIC is a toothless tiger** when it comes to dealing with squabbles among member states.
- Since everyone has a veto on what is said, **nothing serious** can be said, let alone done, about the **many serious disputes** between the member states that are now shaping the Middle East.
- In its statement, the **UAE government** said the theme of the **46th ministerial meet** was **“50 years of Islamic cooperation: The road map for prosperity and development,”** coinciding with the celebration of the **50th anniversary** of the organisation.
- In a strong statement, the Pakistan Foreign Minister protested the OIC’s decision to grant a **“guest of honour” status to India**.

million Muslims in India and of their contribution to its pluralistic ethos, and of India's contribution to the Islamic world.

- Ms. Swaraj said the **fight against terrorism and extremism** does not amount to a clash of cultures and instead described it as a **fight between ideas**.
- She presented **India's pluralism and diversity as a source of strength** and said Indian Muslims are a "microcosm" of India's larger diverse culture.
- Besides, India has worked overtime to **increase its stakes in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt**.
- While **secular Central Asian states** which are also OIC members are seeking deeper ties with India, Delhi despite pressure from the USA, has continued to engage in a **concrete fashion with Iran**, another OIC state.
- In the **Gulf region and wider West Asia** all other five states, Jordan and Iraq besides UAE have strategic partnership with India that helped Delhi's entry as a guest in OIC.

Spheres of Influence

Indonesia, Syria & Algeria have been opposing moves by Organisation of Islamic Conference during its annual meets to issue strong statements on Kashmir



India has worked overtime to increase its stakes in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt



Central Asian states, which are also OIC members, are seeking deeper ties with India

OIC Countries: Economic and Energy Independence with India:

- The present situations created a **new framework for India's engagement with the Muslim world and the Middle East**.
- Equally important has been the **region's growing economic and energy interdependence with India**, which is emerging as the **world's third-largest economy** and one of the **biggest hydrocarbon importers and labour exporters**.
- As the region's geopolitics enters a turbulent period, the potential for India as a **military partner** is also coming into view.
- That India has one of the **world's largest Muslim populations**, of course, is the immediate explanation of the surprising invite for Swaraj to address the OIC.
- **India's observer status** at the OIC does not appear to be around the corner.
- Swaraj's participation in the Abu Dhabi ministerial, therefore, must be viewed as a **diplomatic opening** for a **sustained and long-term political engagement** of the Islamic world as a collective.

Conclusion:

- ❖ India has been consistently **criticised by the OIC** for its alleged human rights violations in Kashmir, often seen at the behest of Pakistan.
- ❖ Pakistan on its part had objected stating that any country wishing to **get observer status** should **not be involved in any dispute with an OIC member state** the reference being to the India-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir.
- ❖ With India moving to **recraft and consolidate its ties** with major Muslim countries in recent years, countries such as the UAE and Turkey besides Saudi Arabia have responded to New Delhi's overtures.
- ❖ Elaborating on **India's vast Muslim community**, Foreign Minister highlighted about Muslim in India speak Tamil and Telugu, Malayalam and Marathi, Bangla and Bhojpuri or any of the numerous languages of India.
- ❖ They have **diverse culinary tastes, myriad choices of traditional attire**, and they maintain **strong cultural and linguistic heritage** of the regions they loved and have lived for generations.

5. BLUE REVOLUTION THAT WILL BE

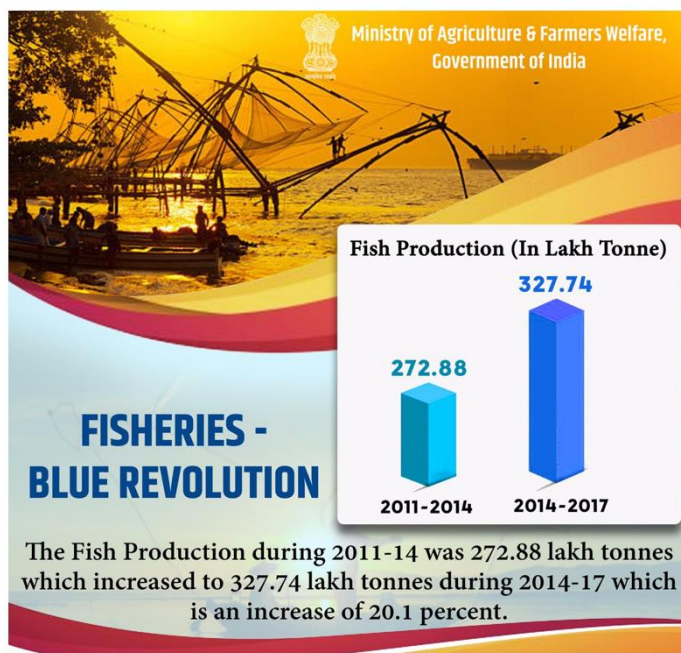
Context:

- Creating a **separate department for fisheries** in the Union government is a significant step.
- **Fisheries are the primary source of livelihood** for several communities. A concentrated effort by an **independent department** could help the government **achieve its objective of doubling farmer's income**, provided its policies address the challenge of sustainability.

- The fisheries and aquaculture production contribute **around 1% to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** and **over 5% to the agricultural GDP**.
- According to **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report "The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2018"** apparent per capita fish consumption in India [average (2013-15)] lies between a range of 5 to 10 Kg.

India in Fish Production:

- **India is the world's second-largest fish producer** with exports worth more than **Rs 47,000 crore**.
- Fisheries are the **country's single-largest agriculture export**, with a growth rate of **6 to 10 per cent** in the past five years.
- Its significance is underscored by the fact that the growth rate of the farm sector in the same period is around 2.5 per cent.
- **India's long coastline** has the potential of becoming the strength of the economy, particularly through **exploitation of the Blue Economy**, to ensure better standards and quality of life for a large number of **people living in the coastal areas**.
- Our efforts in the **Sagarmala programme** will be scaled up and we will develop other inland waterways faster.
- The **Blue Revolution mission aims at doubling the income of farmers** and in the last four & half years, Rs. 1915.33 crore has been released for the implementation of Blue Revolution Schemes.



Fish Consumption must not lead to Exploitation which affects Sustainability:

- However, like in rest of the world, India's fisheries sector faces the **challenge of sustainability**.
- The **Food and Agriculture Organisation's State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture reports** note that **nearly 90 per cent** of the global marine fish stocks have either been fully-exploited, or over-fished or depleted to an extent that recovery may **not be biologically possible**.
- In order to meet the **ever-increasing demand** for animal protein, global fish production should **touch 196 million tonnes by 2025** and it currently stands at 171 million tonnes.
- Taking into account the current depletion rate of marine fish stocks, that seems **next to impossible**.
- But **India has the potential to bridge this gap** provided it concentrates on **aquaculture fish farming**.

Harnessing these resources sustainably will bring immense benefits:

- The **new National Policy on Marine Fisheries**, therefore, talks of introducing deep-sea fishing vessels and assisting fishing communities to convert their vessels and gears for the waters beyond.
 - We, however, need to be cautious of falling prey to the temptation of introducing **large-scale industrial fishing**.
 - We must factor in the **sustainability challenges** and acknowledge that fishing is a **primary livelihood activity** for a large number of communities and individuals.
 - The policies framed by the new department should **aim at enhancing productivity, better returns and increased incomes**.
 - The policy envisages **intensive fish farming** through increased stocking of seed, better feed quality and diversification of species.
 - Innovative practices such as **re-circulatory aquaculture system** aim to realise the **goal of more crop per drop**.
- Productivity of **brackish water coastal aquaculture** has touched 10 to 12 metric tonnes per hectare a **sharp increase** from the previous two to four tonnes per hectare.
 - However, the performance of this sector in India is **impressive** when one compares it with the **average growth of the fisheries sector** all over the world.
 - The **Blue Revolution scheme** launched a few years ago seeks to **make fishery and aquaculture a viable and rewarding vocation**.

The scheme adopted a **two-pronged approach**:

- **Sustainable capture fishery** to harness marine and inland water resources
- **Expanding the horizon of fish farming** through increased coverage, enhanced productivity, species diversification and better market returns.

Conclusion:

- ❖ India has a comparative advantage in the sustainable usage of Fisheries. It has a **marine fisher population of 3.5 million; 10.5 million people** are engaged in inland fishery and fish farming.
- ❖ The **new department** will give undivided attention to **creating and strengthening infrastructure facilities** in **marine and inland fisheries** and give a boost to aquaculture and post-harvest activities.
- ❖ The country should be producing **more than 15 million tonnes** fish by the end of 2019. It should be on its way to become a **hub for sustainable fish production**.
- ❖ The **expansion of aquaculture** would **increase this demand exponentially**. Future policies must prioritise seed production in order to attain self-sufficiency in the sector.
- ❖ Our **coastline** and our **ocean waters** powering **India's development and growth** is the **New Dimension of our Vision**.
- ❖ An integrated approach towards **agro and food processing, preservation, packaging and maintenance of the cold chain** will be our focus of attention.

6. ALARMING SPREAD: ON H1N1 CASES

Context:

- **Swine influenza is a respiratory infection** common to pigs worldwide caused by type A influenza viruses, principally subtypes H1N1, H1N2, H2N1, H3N1, H3N2, and H2N3.
- In a short span of 55 days till Feb 24, this year, the **number of influenza A (H1N1)** cases and deaths reported from India **reached an alarming** 14,803 and 448, respectively. There appears to be no let-up, with the number of cases and deaths steadily rising.
- The highest numbers were from Rajasthan (3,964), Delhi (2,738) and Gujarat (2,726). Uttar Pradesh was next, with 905. While **Rajasthan and Gujarat** had the highest number of deaths, at 137 and 88, respectively.
- The *Sporadic H1N1 Swine Influenza virus (SIV) infection* that people can experience has the potential to produce a number of clinical signs and symptoms.

Number of H1N1 Cases has been rapidly rising:

- The **H1N1 virus**, which caused a **pandemic in 2009**, has since become a **seasonal flu strain globally**, including in India, and causes fewer deaths.
- According to **the WHO**, in 2009 the number of laboratories confirmed deaths **caused by the pandemic strain** was at least 18,500.
- But a **2012 paper in Lancet Infectious Diseases** mentioned 2,84,000 deaths, which was 15 times more than the number of laboratories confirmed deaths.
- What is more disturbing is that the **number of cases** reported till February 24 is nearly the same as that **recorded in the whole of 2018** (14,992).
- The actual number of cases and deaths this year is likely to be higher as West Bengal has not reported the **data to the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme**.
- Moreover, the **IDSP data** are based **only on laboratory confirmed cases and deaths**.

Spreading of Seasonal Influenza (H1N1)

- Seasonal influenza viruses **circulate and cause disease** in humans every year.
- In tropical climates, disease tends to occur seasonally as well as regular virus spreading from person-to-person *through sneezing, coughing, or touching contaminated surfaces*.

About H1N1 Virus:

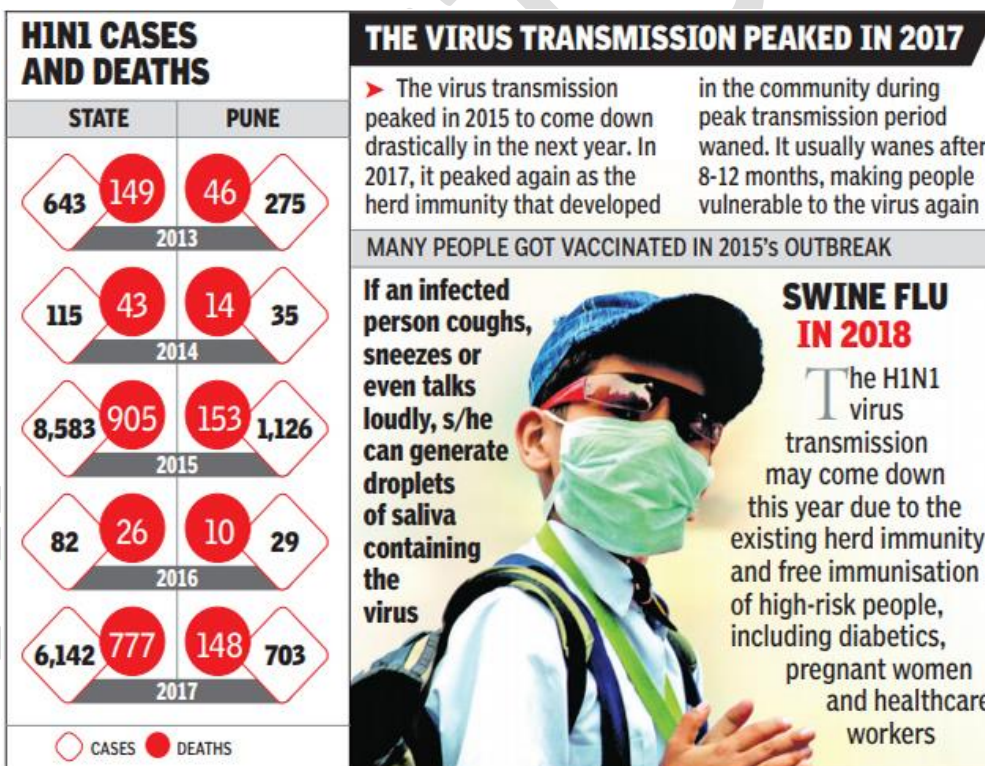
- **Swine flu is a highly contagious respiratory disease** in pigs caused by one of several swine influenza A viruses.
- Transmission of **swine influenza viruses** to humans is uncommon. However, the swine influenza virus can be transmitted to humans **via contact with** infected pigs or environments contaminated with swine influenza viruses.
- Now, a **new virus emerged** that spread among the people, who had not been near the pigs. Swine-flu symptoms are *cough, fever, soar throat, stuffy or runny nose, headache, body ache etc*.
- The sub-types are based on: The host of the origin, Geographical origin, Strain in number, Year of isolation etc.

- **Seasonal influenza viruses evolve continuously**, which means that people can get **infected multiple times** throughout their lives.
- Therefore, the components of **seasonal influenza vaccines are reviewed frequently** (currently biannually) and updated periodically to ensure continued effectiveness of the vaccines.
- The **Centres for Disease Control and Prevention** recommend **real-time polymerase chain reaction** as the method of choice for diagnosing H1N1.
- **Antiviral drugs** are the mainstay of clinical treatment of swine influenza and can make the illness milder and enable the patient to feel better faster.

Reasons for rapid spreading of Virus:

- Every alternate year, the **virus changes its pattern and comes in a stronger form**.
- The next year, it is in a milder form, but in 2017 and 2018, the virus continued to stay strong and recorded not only many positive cases, but also deaths in large numbers.
- Blaming **climate change** for the difficulty in controlling the disease is also one of the important factors.
- Due to **less rain and more wind**, we saw the **virus spread quickly**. Hence, in recent years, due to **unexpected climate changes**, we still kept seeing a rise in positive cases of this virus.
- There are **41 Virus Research Diagnostic Laboratories in India** and they can study the nature of infections to provide genetic insights to the peer scientists.
- **Upgrading the existing vaccines** is also another aspect, because constantly **viral mutations** may take place.

- ✓ **Prevention** of swine influenza has **3 components**: prevention in swine, prevention of transmission to humans, and prevention of its spread among humans.
- ✓ Because of **limited treatment options**, high risk for secondary infection, and frequent need for intensive care of individuals with H1N1 pneumonia, environmental control, including vaccination of high-risk populations and public education are critical to control of swine influenza out breaks.

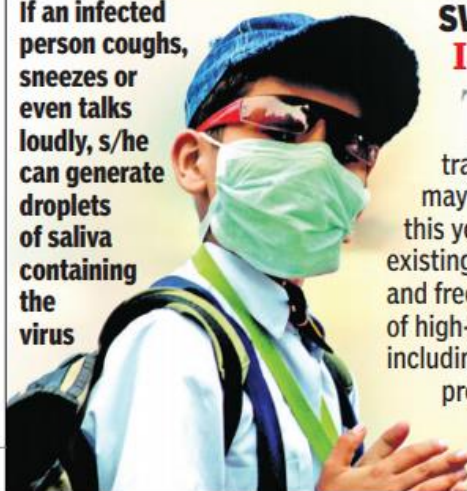


THE VIRUS TRANSMISSION PEAKED IN 2017

► The virus transmission peaked in 2015 to come down drastically in the next year. In 2017, it peaked again as the herd immunity that developed in the community during peak transmission period waned. It usually wanes after 8-12 months, making people vulnerable to the virus again

MANY PEOPLE GOT VACCINATED IN 2015'S OUTBREAK

If an infected person coughs, sneezes or even talks loudly, s/he can generate droplets of saliva containing the virus



SWINE FLU IN 2018

The H1N1 virus transmission may come down this year due to the existing herd immunity and free immunisation of high-risk people, including diabetics, pregnant women and healthcare workers

Conclusion: Ways to avoid Spreading and Moving towards Prevention:

- ❖ With **H1N1 becoming a seasonal flu virus strain in India** even during summer, it is advisable that health-care workers and others at risk get themselves **vaccinated**.
- ❖ Recommendations for **use of antivirals** may **change** as data on antiviral susceptibilities become available.
- ❖ It is important to **initiate the treatment** as soon as possible after the onset of symptoms.
- ❖ **Confirmed and suspected cases of SIV** should be monitored for fever and respiratory symptoms for a period of seven days after their last known exposure to a person with a confirmed case of SIV infection.
- ❖ **Long-term climate change** might have an **impact on the spread of H1N1 virus** in a unique way.

- ❖ **Winters are bound to be warmer than usual** due to **global warming** like the current season has been predicted to be due to an **ongoing El Nino event** and continuous warming from greenhouse gas emissions.
- ❖ This will reduce the spread of the virus in these months to some extent. But it will make people **more vulnerable to the virus** just after the cold season ends.
- ❖ This would require states to be **ready to anticipate and tackle the spread of the disease**.
- ❖ Availability of **anti-viral drugs such as Oseltamivir** in the Public Health System should be ensured.
- ❖ Despite the sharp increase in cases and deaths, the vaccine uptake has been low. Besides vaccination, there **needs to be greater awareness** so that people adopt **precautionary measures** such as *frequent handwashing, and cough etiquette*.
- ❖ **Large-scale vaccination** covering high-risk groups such as health workers, lung, kidney, liver and heart disease patients is the need of the hour.

7. SOLAR POWERHOUSE

Context:

- The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs** approved phase 2 of the **grid-connected rooftop solar programme**, with a focus on the **residential sector**.
- **India has set an ambitious target of achieving 40 GW of rooftop solar capacity by 2022**.
- However, while there has been progress on **rooftop solar installations** among industries and commercial consumers, the uptake among residential consumers has been slow.
- The **Phase II programme** provides for **central financial assistance** (for residential rooftop solar installations) up to **40% for rooftop systems up to 3kW** and **20% for those with a capacity of 3-10kW**.
- The second phase will also focus on increasing the involvement of the **distribution companies (DISCOM)**.
- **Raising awareness and building consumer capacity** to engage with the sector are crucial for ensuring access to **affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy** for all and for India to achieve its rooftop solar targets.

ABOUT THE TECHNOLOGY

Solar system is a photovoltaic system in which electricity generating panels are installed on the roof of any residential, commercial, institutional or industrial building

IS THERE ANY GOVERNMENT SUBSIDY?

Subsidy of 30% is being given by the central government. Those interested to install solar plants can avail the subsidy from the ministry of new and renewable energy (MNRE) through CREST. The subsidy is released to the applicant after commissioning of the project and receipt from the MNRE based on the rates of different categories

HOW MUCH AREA IS REQUIRED?

A rooftop solar plant generally requires around 100 square feet shadow free area per kilowatt

THE COST OF INSTALLATION

Chandigarh Renewal Energy, Science and Technology Promotion Society (CREST) has fixed rates at which residents can get solar plants from empanelled agencies

Category (in kWp)	Rate per kWp
1-5	₹60,000
5-10	₹59,000
10-20	₹58,000
20-50	₹55,000
50-100	₹52,000

IS FINANCE OPTION AVAILABLE?

Banks do provide loan for solar plant installations. The loan will cover up to 80% of the project cost at a fixed rate of interest for a 5-year tenure

HOW MUCH ENERGY IS GENERATED?

1 kW system can generate upto 4.5 kWh per day depending upon the location and maintenance of the plant

WHAT IS THE LIFE OF THE SYSTEM?

The life span of a solar panel is around 40 years but the manufacturers give a warranty for a period of 25 years

Rooftop Solar Capacity:

- Rooftop solar installations as opposed to large-scale solar power generation plants can **be installed on the roofs of buildings**.
- As such, they fall under **two brackets**: commercial and residential. This simply has to do with whether the solar panels are being installed on top of commercial buildings or residential complexes.
- Since the **market for residential rooftop solar power** is nascent, there are opportunities to learn from more mature consumer durable markets.

- For example, RWAs can tie up with vendors to **organise demonstration** programmes, so that consumers can **observe, operate and understand** how the system works.

Potential of Rooftop Solar Capacity:

- The **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** has pegged the market potential for **rooftop solar at 124 GW**.
- However, **only 1,247 MW** of capacity had been installed as of December 31, 2016. That is a little more than 3% of the target for 2022, and 1% of the potential.
- **Imports of cheap solar panels** are continuously placing a downward pressure on prices and so this scenario could change in the future. Commercial applications of rooftop solar are already viable in most states.
- The Programmes will have **substantial environmental impact** in terms of savings of **CO2 emission**.
- Considering average energy generation of **5 million units per MW**, it is expected that addition of 38 GW solar rooftop plants under Phase-II **by year 2022** will result **in CO2 emission reduction** of about 45.6 tonnes per year.
- The programme has **directed employment potential**.
- Besides **increasing self-employment**, the approval is likely to generate employment opportunity equivalent to 9.39 lakh job years for skilled and unskilled workers for **addition of 38GW capacity** under Phase-II of the scheme by the year 2022.

Issues that are underlying in Installation of Rooftop Solar:

- One of the major problems with rooftop solar and what affects solar energy generation in general is the **variability in supply**.
- Not only can the efficiency of the solar panels vary on any given day depending on how bright the sunlight is, but the **solar panels also produce no electricity during the night**.
- Many states have **adopted a net metering policy**, which allows disaggregated power producers to sell excess electricity to the grid.
- However, the subsidised tariffs **charged to residential customers** undermine the economic viability of installing rooftop solar panels. The potential profit simply does not outweigh the costs.
- Urban residential electricity consumers are **still hesitant** to consider rooftop solar power for their homes.
- This is because they **don't have enough information about it**, according to a 2018 study by the **World Resources Institute in five cities** of Bengaluru, Chandigarh, Chennai, Jaipur and Nagpur.
- For **residential urban consumers**, one of the **key barriers** to installing rooftop solar systems is that **they do not know who to contact to understand the processes to be followed and permissions required**.
- There is **no single source to access information**, evaluate benefits and disadvantages, and examine if any government support (such as a financial subsidy) is available.
- Most of the technical information **provided by various sources**, including the government, tends to be Internet-based.
- The study shows that **less than 20% of respondents rely on the Internet** to make a decision concerning rooftop solar systems.
- A significant majority of consumers **seek face-to-face discussions and recommendations from friends and family**.

Way Forward to achieve 40 GW of rooftop solar capacity by 2022:

- ✓ **Performance-based incentives** will be provided to **DISCOMs** based on RTS capacity achieved in a financial year over and above the base capacity, i.e., cumulative capacity achieved at the end of previous financial year.
- ✓ Devising **simple, well-designed and creative ways** to disseminate **information** is important to help consumers make informed decisions on issues like:
- ✓ On the amount of **shadow-free roof area needed** for generating a unit of electricity and pricing; **operating** the system, **after-sales maintenance** and support; and **reliable rooftop solar vendors**.
- ✓ The **DISCOMs** like local electricity linesmen, electricity inspectors, and other nodal officials in the electricity department also have key roles to play.
- ✓ **Objective information** must be put out through various avenues, so that it is **accessible to all segments of the population** and in **local languages**.
- ✓ Information kiosks can be **set up in public institutions** like banks to offer information on the technology, as well as on practical issues such as guidance on selecting vendors.

- ✓ A **robust feedback mechanism** can be put in place for consumers to share their experiences with others.

8. STUDY PUTS ANNUAL LOSSES FROM STUBBLE BURNING AT \$30 BN

Context:

- The study by researchers at the **University of Washington** and the **International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)** was published online in the **International Journal of Epidemiology**.
- **India loses \$30 billion or Rs 2 lakh crore every year from crop fires**, especially in the northern states of **Punjab, Haryana, and Delhi**, a new study estimates amid growing concerns over air pollution.
- This is more than **thrice the amount** the Union government spent in its budget for the **health sector**.
- Researchers **used satellite data** from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for **crop fires** and merged it with the results of the fourth round of **National Health Survey** conducted in Haryana between September 2013 and February 2014 to measure the health impact.

What does the International Journal of Epidemiology Study find?

- Study gives evidence that it is **not only the residents of Delhi**, but also the farmers and their families in **rural Haryana** who are the **first victims of crop residue burning**.
- The findings showed a **threefold increase in risk of acute respiratory infection**, especially in children below five years of age, in districts that reported the highest number of crop fires.
- There was a spike in **asthma-related emergency-room visits** and hospitalizations in October and November, when farmers clear their fields for the next crop.
- The study that estimates for the first time the **health and economic costs of intense crop residue burning (CRB)** in northern India also found that CRB leads to an estimated economic loss of over **USD 30 billion annually**.

Briefly about Stubble Burning:

- Stubble burning was **banned by the National Green Tribunal** in November 2015, but continues unabated in the northern states.
- **Delhi**, one of the **most polluted cities** in the world, witnesses a spike in air pollution in winter because of the **high level of PM2.5** (tiny particulate matter that settles in the lungs).
- The pollution is **about 20 times higher** than the World Health Organization's threshold for safe air.
- It is a **public health emergency**. If immediate steps are not taken, it is only going to **increase the healthcare costs** over time.
- The **productivity of residents** would go down and there would be adverse impacts on the **economy and health**.
- The **relation between pollution and mortality** is well-established. **Nearly 12.5% of the total deaths in India** in 2017 were attributable to **air pollution**, which remains the **third leading risk factor** for mortality in the country.

Sources of Stubble burning:

- Researchers noted that **crop burning** is a widespread global practice and in India is concentrated in **northwest India**, though has **spread to other regions** of the country in the past decade as new crop harvesting technology is adopted.
- **Rice cultivation** is the primary source of stubble burning. It not only contributes to **air pollution**, but also leads to **severe water depletion**.
- The researchers highlight that this is the only study to systematically estimate the **effect of exposure to crop fires on respiratory infections in India** and measure the **economic impact**.
- The study warns that in **next five years** economic loss because of burning of crop residue is likely to be **around \$190 billion**, which is nearly **1.7% of India's gross domestic product (GDP)**.
- The economic loss from **exposure to air pollution** emanating from burning firecrackers is estimated to be around **nearly \$7 billion a year or nearly Rs. 50 thousand crore a year**.
- Farmers try to maximise their yields by **planting the next crop as soon as possible** after the previous crop has been harvested (generally wheat after rice).

- Among other factors, smoke from the burning of agricultural crop residue by farmers in Haryana and Punjab especially contributes to **Delhi's poor air, increasing the risk of ARI three-fold for those living in districts with intense crop burning**
- To quickly clear the field for the next crop, they **burn the leftover stubble** rather than using the traditional method of clearing it by hand.



HOW BIG IS THE PROBLEM IN PUNJAB

One tonne of straw, on being burnt, releases
3 kg particulate matter
60 kg carbon monoxide
1,460 kg carbon dioxide
199 kg ash
2 kg sulphur dioxide

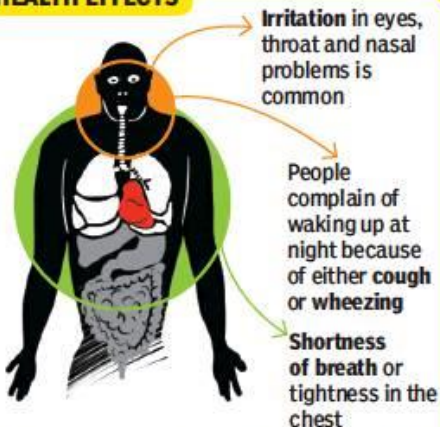


Burning of **130 to 150 lakh tonnes** of paddy straw in a span of **20 days** generates pollution equal to what the Punjab industry generates in a year

REASONS WHY PUNJAB FAILS IN CHECKING THE MENACE

- Farmers are demanding **Rs 50,000** per acre as relief for not burning stubble
- Most farmers feel there is little time to prepare for next season and setting fields on fire is an easy way out
- Subsidised equipment given so far inadequate to cover all districts
- Productive use of stubble with bio-gas plants or fuel for industry still at a small scale

HEALTH EFFECTS



Stubble burning affects the health of **84%** people in Punjab. The problem is **more widespread in rural areas**, finds a survey by Department of Medicine, Adesh Institute of Medical Sciences and Research

SCALE OF RESIDUE GENERATION IN 2017



ACTION PLAN

Punjab plans to spend **Rs 665 crore** on providing straw management machinery

24,315 machines will be given to farmers and co-op societies this season

Machinery given at **80%** subsidy to cooperative societies and **50%** to individuals

Subsidising equipment
7,337 Total subsidised farm equipment given so far
2,819 Machines given to individual farmers
2,144 to cooperative societies
2,374 to Custom Hiring Centres (CHCs)

Long-term plans
 Producing **bio CNG** and **bio-ethanol** from paddy straw
 Using paddy straw as fuel at **Bathinda thermal plant**

Infographic: Manish Choure | Research: Vibhor Mohan | Source: Punjab Pollution Control Board

Way Forward:

- ✓ **Eliminating the practice of stubble burning** will not only help in improving **people's health** but will also contribute towards **soil and plant diversity**, and in reducing the **greenhouse gas emissions**, said the study.
- ✓ However, farmers continue to practice it due to **lack of convenient and affordable alternatives**.
- ✓ The study calls for further investment in crop burning abatement practices to **promote sustainable economic development**.
- ✓ The study recommends **investment in agriculture sector** in these states, and offering **alternative crop residue disposal solutions** to farmers which can also give them **economic returns**.
- ✓ The required step is to **Enabling Framework** for Implementation of Solutions. Even though there are **adequate technology options** and subsidies available to address the problem, there has always been a **lack of sensitivity and gravity towards the matter**, which has adversely affected the ongoing efforts to tackle the issue.

Conclusion:

- ❖ Even though **air pollution** has been linked to **numerous health outcomes**, and **respiratory infections** are a leading cause of death and disease in developing countries, none of the existing studies have **directly linked crop burning to acute respiratory infection (ARI)**.
- ❖ This study suggests that **targeted government initiatives** to improve crop disposal practices are worthy investments.
- ❖ Programmes and policies must **simultaneously address indoor and outdoor pollution** through a possible combination of bans and agricultural subsidies.
- ❖ Other important interventions for improving respiratory health are increasing household access to **clean cooking fuels, electricity, and improved drainage systems**.
- ❖ Only **high-value paddy** such as basmati should be preferred. However, this is expensive and its market is extremely competitive.
- ❖ The **best long-term solution** is shifting cropping pattern **away from paddy**. The government should encourage and **incentivize farmers** to grow other crops.

9. BACK TO LIFE: ON THE BELATED ACQUITTAL OF DEATH ROW CONVICTS

Introduction:

- A **nation's legal system** is integral to how its **citizens look upon issues** that concern the country in general and their individual lives in particular.
- Despite having the **world's longest Constitution** not to mention, one that has gone through numerous amendments and the many directives by the **Supreme Court** that have secured the stature of de facto law, the Indian law books have struggled to evolve at a pace commensurate with **the rapid change's society has undergone**.

Courts biased against poor

"Judicial system is conceived as blind to power, wealth & social status. Courts are supposed to offer a forum where the poor and powerless can stand with all others as equals before law.

"Many of our poor fellow citizens have chosen to avoid courts and other legal systems rather than face intimidation, cost and time-loss in legal proceedings."



S Rajendra Babu, former Chief Justice of India

- The judiciary is a co-equal branch of the government within India's democratic and constitutional framework, along with the legislature and the executive.

Context:

- Ten years after **condemning to death six nomadic tribe members** in a rape and murder case, the Supreme Court found them **innocent** and ordered the Maharashtra Police to hunt down the real criminals.
- In a **complete act of turning round so as to face in the opposite direction**, the apex court ordered the immediate release who had been claiming for the murder of five members of a family, rape of a woman and her 15-year-old daughter and dacoity in Nashik.
- They had **spent over 16 years in jail in anticipation of death**. The court said the six men were **falsely implicated** and roped in by the police.

- One of the six was a **juvenile at the time of his arrest**. Some of them have **developed psychiatric symptoms** due to the long years in **solitary confinement**. He was kept in isolation in solitary confinement with **very restricted human contact** and under perpetual fear of death.
- Therefore, all the accused remained under **constant stress and in the perpetual fear of death**.
- They had not been eligible for pardon or furlough as they were condemned men. The court ordered the Maharashtra government to pay each of the six men a **compensation of ₹5 lakh**.

Institutional bias is quite evident against the socially and economically weaker sections:

- People look up to the **judiciary as the last bastion** which corrects the **wrongs of the executive and legislature**.
- To a great extent, the **judiciary has acted as a vanguard**. But the biggest area where it has failed is the **criminal justice delivery system**.
- We must be **sensitive to the rights of human beings**, we forget that even people accused of brutal crimes have rights which must be upheld. Irrespective of the case, due process must always be followed. The judiciary doesn't follow due process in many cases.
- There needs to be a **serious understanding** of how badly the **justice delivery system works** in our country, for people who prosecute or defend.
- Victims of crimes who are prosecuted **don't get justice fast enough**, if at all. While people implicated in cases or facing trial have the **constitutional right to defend themselves** and those rights are routinely negated.
- Nobody talks about a rape case in Jharkhand or the rape and murder of a child in Chhattisgarh.
- Many of the opined that the **system is unfairly skewed** and a large majority of the Indian population is **poor and underprivileged** and **don't have access to justice**.
- There are so many cases where the quality of legal representation people receive is pitiable.

Are investigating agencies working effectively enough?

- Investigation agencies in the country are **given too long a rope by everybody**, including the media and the judiciary.
- If there is irrevocable evidence that I have not committed the crime, why should I face trial?
- Even people who are **arrested and prosecuted on valid grounds** get acquitted due to sloppy investigation.
- So instead of being neutral, courts tend to fill up the gaps that the **prosecution has created**. That's dangerous; we don't want courts that act as a **super prosecutor**, that's not their job.

Problems with death penalty:

- 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**. It depends overwhelmingly on the adjudicator's personal beliefs.
- **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.).
- The death penalty has been criticised for **far too long without an understanding of its nuances**. It is criticised mainly on three counts: **arbitrariness, irreversibility and human rights**. However, the punishment passes muster on all accounts. Its constitutionality has not only been upheld in India but also in the bastion of liberal democracy that is the U.S.
- If life imprisonment sufficed for the 99.99% of victims' families, why not for the minuscule fraction in whose name the death penalty is demanded?

Conclusion:

- ❖ The court turned its ire on the State Police force **for trauma it unleashed on the men**, who belonged to both **socially and financially backward communities**.

- ❖ The court highlighted how the police did not bother to even investigate the fact that an eye-witnesses had, immediately after the crime was committed, identified four other men from the rogue's gallery as the perpetrators of the crime.
- ❖ There has been **no effort from the side of the police** made to find these four men. The court ordered the Maharashtra Chief Secretary **to take disciplinary action against the probe officers within three months.**
- ❖ Between January 1, 2000 and June 31, 2015, Supreme Court **imposed 60 death sentences** and subsequently admitted that **it had erred in 15 of them** Every death sentence throws up a moral dilemma on whether the truth has been sufficiently established or not.
- ❖ The **Law Commission of India** has attempted to analyse the **need for the death penalty on two separate occasions.**
- ❖ While the **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** despite a rather desperate attempt to do the same for the first 240 pages. The **exception to abolition came in cases of terror.**

Way Forward: How do you fix accountability of the judiciary and agencies involved?

- ✓ The role of courts in society is not merely to adjudicate disputes between parties, but also **to protect the rights and liberty of individuals.** This is especially important in criminal matters, where an individual is pitted against the might of the State.
- ✓ There must be a **compulsory departmental enquiry**, particularly where acquittals happen and judgments are passed challenging the **findings of the investigating team**, either on grounds that somebody was framed or some evidence was **fabricated.**
- ✓ That departmental enquiry report and action taken report must be **placed before the court that passed the judgment.**
- ✓ I think judicial orders must be accompanied by a further direction that there must be **departmental enquiries against officers who have failed in recording proper evidence.**
- ✓ Courts must **call for records periodically** seeking action against these officers.
- ✓ Access to justice thus, assesses the **fulfilment of an individual's entitlement to justice** on these parameters to ensure that legal redress does not become the preserve of a few. It represents the ability of every person to **enforce the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by law.**

10. LIFE WITHOUT GSP

Context:

- The U.S. has ultimately acted on its threat to **withdraw concessions granted to Indian imports** under the **Generalised System of Preferences.**
- The Indian government confirmed that the **United States** has given a **60-day withdrawal notice to India** on the **Generalised System of Preferences (GSP)** benefits, which amount to **duty reduction of 190 million dollars a year.**

About Generalised System of Preferences (GSP):

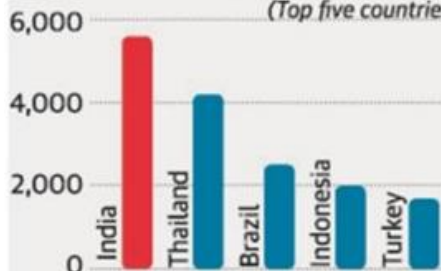
- The **Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)** is a U.S. trade program designed to **promote economic growth in the developing world** by providing preferential **duty-free entry** for up to 4,800 products from 129 designated beneficiary countries and territories.
- GSP was instituted **on January 1, 1976**, by the **Trade Act of 1974.**
- GSP has been given on **non-reciprocal basis** yet the US has linked it **with market access and tariff reduction** which is against the basic tenets of GSP.

Duty bound

In 2017, India was the biggest beneficiary of the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) programme, which allows duty-free export of some products

India exported products worth \$5.6 bn under the programme in 2017, the highest among all beneficiaries

DUTY-FREE EXPORTS IN \$ MN IN 2017
(Top five countries)



Withdrawal of GSP to India will have a minimal impact... benefits amount to \$190 million on overall exports [under GSP] of \$5.6 billion
- ANUP WADHAWAN
Commerce Secretary

- Often GSP authority lapses before it is renewed, in which case **duties on imports** that are normally covered are held in **escrow pending renewal**.
- US President has said he intends to **end the preferential trade status** granted to India and Turkey, asserting that New Delhi has failed to assure America of “**equitable and reasonable**” access to its markets, an announcement that could be seen as a major **setback to bilateral trade ties**.

BOOSTING BILATERAL TRADE

Widening trade gap a prime concern for Washington

FY18 FIGURES		2013-2014 (\$bn)	2014-2015 (\$bn)	2015-2016 (\$bn)	2016-2017 (\$bn)	2017-2018 (\$bn)
Exports to US rose by 13.42 %	Exports to US	39.14	42.44	40.33	42.21	47.87
Imports also jumped by an unprecedented 19%	Imports from US	22.50	21.81	21.78	22.30	26.61
As a result, India's trade surplus has continued to grow annually	Trade surplus for India	16.63	20.63	18.55	19.90	21.26

Source: Commerce and Industry Ministry

India says GSP concessions by US amount to duty reduction of \$190 million:

- Since the review initiated by the United States in April 2018 on **India's GSP benefits**, both countries have been discussing **various trade issues** of bilateral interest for a **suitable resolution** on mutually acceptable terms.
- GSP benefits are envisaged to be **non-reciprocal and non-discriminatory benefits** extended by developed countries to developing countries.
- In India's case, the GSP concessions extended by the United States amounted to **duty reduction of only 190 million dollars per annum**.
- The United States had initiated the review on the basis of representations by the **US medical devices and dairy industries**, but subsequently included numerous other issues on a self-initiated basis.

GSP duty benefit withdrawal by US will have marginal impact on few sectors:

- The US decision to withdraw duty benefits under its Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) programme will have a **marginal impact on few domestic sectors** such as processed food, leather, plastic, and engineering goods, exporters body FIEO.
- India is predominantly **exporting intermediate and semi-manufactured goods** to the US under the GSP, the same has helped in **cost-effectiveness and price-competitiveness** of American downstream industry.
- **Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President** said that as these sectors were availing higher GSP benefits, the government should look into **providing fiscal support to these segments**.
- The government should look into **providing fiscal support** to such sectors so that **exporters reduce their export prices** factoring in the fiscal support with a view that the landed price of such products remain more or less what was under the GSP regime.
- Therefore, the **GSP withdrawal** will also impact the **competitiveness** of many manufacturing sectors and will hit the consumers at the same time.
- Adding that the **import price** of most of the chemical products, which constituted a **large chunk of India's exports**, is expected to **increase by about 5 percent**.
- The **withdrawal of the benefits** will also hit the **import diversification strategy** of the US where it is keen to **replace China** as the main supplier to other developing countries. India's exports to the US will **remain unaffected despite withdrawal**.

Conclusion:

- ❖ The **issue of Indian tariffs** being high has been raised from time to time. It is pertinent that **India's tariffs are within its bound rates** under WTO commitments, and are on the average well below these bound rates.
- ❖ **India's trade-weighted average tariffs are 7.6 per cent**, which is comparable with the most open developing economies and some developed economies.

- ❖ On developmental considerations, there may be a few tariff peaks which are true for almost all economies.
- ❖ We hope that the exporters would be able to **absorb the duty loss** where it is 2-3 percent, we need to **provide fiscal support to those products** where GSP tariff advantage was significant particularly in the **labour-intensive sector**.

Way Forward:

- ✓ India said it was able to offer a **“very meaningful way forward”** on the issue of **market access** for various agriculture and animal husbandry products.
- ✓ Relaxation or easing of procedures related to issues like telecom testing, besides conformity assessment and tariff reduction on information and communications technology (ICT) products.
- ✓ India was agreeable to a very **meaningful mutually acceptable package** on the above lines to be agreed to at this time, while keeping remaining issues under discussion in the future.
- ✓ It is important to recognise that China, unlike India today, was **not browbeaten over tariffs** in the 1990s when it was at a **similar stage of development**.
- ✓ This is because the US besides not being led by a truculent President was **heavily invested in China’s economy**.
- ✓ India needs to ensure a **similar level of economic engagement** with the rest of the world.

11. PROBING THE PRESS

Context:

- **Attorney General KK Venugopal** kicked up a storm by telling the Supreme Court that the government was considering **criminal action against journalists** and the **petitioners against the judgement** of 18 December 2018 for **revealing top secret information about the controversial Rafale deal**.
- According to the attorney general, these documents, revealed by journalists and submitted to the Supreme Court with the **Rafale review petitions**, were **“stolen” from the Defence Ministry**, and disclosing them was a **threat to national security**.
- He said the government was investigating **how the documents were leaked**, and that those who’d published them as well as those who’d submitted them to the court were guilty of offences **under the Official Secrets Act 1923**.
- Attorney General also demanded **to know the source behind the leak of the documents**.
- These statements immediately caused consternation in the courtroom, and were the **subject of outrage on social media** and among journalists for the underlying threat they posed to the free press.
- **The Editors Guild of India** issued a statement, in which they condemned the A-G’s comments as **“threats”** and urged the government **“to refrain from initiating any action that might undermine the media’s freedom and independence.”**

What is Official Secrets Act, 1923 about?

- The **Official Secrets Act** was **first enacted in 1923** and was retained after Independence.
- The law, **applicable to government servants and citizens**, provides the framework for dealing with **espionage, sedition, and other potential threats to the integrity of the nation**.
- The law makes spying, sharing ‘secret’ information, unauthorised use of uniforms, withholding information, interference with the armed forces in prohibited/restricted areas, among others, punishable offences.
- If guilty, a person may get up to 14 years’ imprisonment, a fine, or both.

OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT, 1923

➤ Applicable to all Indian citizens residing inside or outside the country (inclusive of government servants)

➤ Official Secrets Act ,1923 is a comprehensive document relating to official secrets and defines a number of offences –

1. Spying
2. Wrongful communication of any secret official code , password or any such sketch, plan, model, article , note , document or or information.

Objective –Maintaining the security of the state against the leakage of information , sabotage, and like.

Has there been any effort to change provisions of OSA?

- The **information could be** any reference to a place belonging to or occupied by the government, documents, photographs, sketches, maps, plans, models, official codes or passwords.
- In 1971, the **Law Commission** became the **first official body** to make an **observation regarding OSA**.
- In its **report on 'Offences Against National Security'**, it observed that "it agrees with the contention" that "merely because a **circular is marked secret or confidential**, it should not attract the provisions of the Act.
- If the publication thereof is in the interest of the public and no question of national emergency and interest of the State as such arises".
- The Law Commission, however, did not recommend any changes to the Act.
- However, the **Second Administrative Reforms Commission (SARC) Report, 2006**, suggested that the Act should be **substituted by a chapter in the National Security Act** that incorporates the necessary provisions.
- **The reason:** it had become a **contentious issue** after the implementation of the **Right to Information Act**.

Contentious Issues with Official Secrets Act (OSA), 1923:

- The Official Secrets Act (OSA), 1923 **doesn't undergone any changes** over the years even after Independence also.
- The OSA does **not define "secret" or "official secrets"**. Public servants could deny any information **terming it a "secret" when asked under the RTI Act**.
- The **SARC report stated** that as the OSA's background is the **colonial climate of mistrust of people and the primacy of public officials** in dealing with the citizens, it created a culture of secrecy.
- It said that **Confidentiality** became the norm and **disclosure** the exception. This tendency was challenged when the **Right to Information Act** came into existence.

Do other nations have similar laws?

- Several countries, including the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Singapore, and New Zealand, continue to use the legislation **to protect state secrets**.
- In 2001, Canada replaced its OSA with a **Security of Information Act**. The "official secrets" come under the **Espionage Act in the U.S.**
- On September 2018, a Myanmar court awarded **seven years' jail to two Reuters journalists** for illegally possessing official documents on the military's alleged human rights **abuses against Rohingya Muslims**.
- Malaysia has also been accused of using the OSA to **silence dissidence**.

Conclusion:

- ❖ In 2008 however, a **group of ministers (GoM)** accepted **62 recommendations from the ARC report**, but did not allow for the OSA to be repealed.
- ❖ At the same time, it sought to make amendments to the Act **to remove ambiguities in terms of punishments**.
- ❖ In 2015, the Central government formed a **high-level panel** to look into the provisions of the OSA in the light of the RTI Act. **No action has been taken** on the panel's report, which was submitted in 2017.
- ❖ Even in 2017, the Home Ministry submitted a report to the Cabinet secretariat, after reviewing OSA to make it **more compatible with India's democratic setup**.
- ❖ It pointed out that the law came into being in the 20th century which was an **era of colonialism and secrecy**.
- ❖ Presently, **section 22 of the RTI Act** states that it can **override the OSA**.

Way Forward with respect to Official Secrets Act (OSA), 1923:

- ✓ There is undoubtedly a case for **distinguishing between** an act that helps the enemy or affects national security, and one that advances **legitimate public interest**.
- ✓ In times when **information freedom is seen as salutary for democracy**, laws such as the OSA should **yield to the moral imperative** behind the Right to Information Act.
- ✓ This reasoning is **embedded in Section 8(2) of the RTI Act**, which says that **notwithstanding** the provisions of the OSA, "a public authority may allow access to information, if public interest in disclosure outweighs the **harm to the protected interests**."

- ✓ The government **should refrain** from using its secrecy laws to contend with **embarrassing media revelations**. It would do well instead to respond responsibly to questions thrown up by the revelations.
- ✓ Journalists must be able to protect their sources. Whistle-blowers must not be discouraged. Plus, corruption in defence deals fester in the darkened labyrinths of officialdom.
- ✓ **Investigative journalism** can shine a valuable light here. Government should look to **reduce the scope of OSA**, which would also be congruent with the stated goal of **'minimum government, maximum governance'**.

12. SEEDS OF CHANGE

Introduction:

- With the **increase in global health consciousness**, organic food is set to knock every door and make its way in healthy kitchens worldwide.
- People the world over **use organic food as a hygiene factor** rather than a product by itself.
- Organic food is a **holistic approach** in the Indian environment which starts at the farm and ends at the fork of the consumer.
- The main stakeholder is the source, and challenges faced during organic farming can be overcome with a **smart strategy, scientific planning, responsible public activity and government support**.

Recent example from an Adivasi Farmer:

- Rahibai Popere, an **adivasi farmer** of Ahmadnagar district, who has conserved about **43 varieties** in the case of **17 crops** (paddy, hyacinth, millets, pulses, oilseeds, among others) by establishing a **germplasm conservation centre**.
- Having **resisted hybrid seeds** for two decades, she has emerged as an **ambassador for organic farming** in her State and beyond, observing that **traditional varieties** are better able to cope with pests and the vagaries of weather.
- Today, the wheel has come full circle, with organic farming finding its way into policy. This is because the introduction of hybrids on a large scale has led to **increased dependency on fertiliser, pesticides and water, contaminating the food chain**.

Study Report by Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations):

- According to a **study by ICRIER**, a number of companies and start-ups have entered the scene since 2006.
- They **perceive better returns** in the organic than conventional food business.
- **India's export of organic products** has been **rising** at above **15 percent** in volume terms in recent years and is expected to touch **20 percent** in the next five years, given the global shift in dietary preferences.
- According to the World of Organic Agriculture 2018 report, **India accounts for 30 per cent of the world's organic producers** but just **2.6 per cent of the global area** under organic cultivation, which is about 58 million hectares.
- At the same time, most organic farmers are **struggling due to poor policy measures**, rising input costs and limited market, says a study by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (**ASSOCHAM**) and global consultancy firm Ernst & Young.

Challenges that need to be overcome for Organic Farming:

- There are **regulatory and logistical challenges** that need to be overcome.
- Organic farming, as a whole, is **quite an expensive process** that involves constant expenditure.
- This keeps it away from the reaches of a nominalised farmer on the grounds of affordability.
- One can easily bring up the **instance of fertilisers and maintenance**. Sewage sludge and chemical fertilisers might not be something one envisions in his produce, but conventional farmers find constant companions, **owing to their cost-friendliness**.
- A major hurdle is the **loss of yield** in the two or three years of transition from conventional to **organic cultivation**, for which the State needs to step in.
- A **certification system** that meets global standards without being expensive or cumbersome is called for. At present, a **multiplicity of agencies and authorities** are involved in this process.

- Despite the **growth of Farmer Producer Organisations and other groups** to pool in marketing and input resources, **processing cost** can be brought down. Karnataka, with its arid tracts, has promoted organic farming through FPOs, with many of them growing millets and value-added products.

Here's how **organic farming** can benefit our planet and wellbeing:



Fresh Air

Switching to the use of organic farming practices across the US could help **eliminate carbon dioxide** from the air equivalent to at least **a third of the cars** in our world.³

Energy Savings

Organic practices could help **reduce the energy** used in farming up to **45%**.⁴



Nature's Ally

In a world where nearly **40% of the farming land** is suffering significant degradation, organic farming can help **protect soils and conserve wildlife**.⁴



Sources

- 1 www.kashi.com/natural-living/organic/kashi-and-the-nongmo-project
- 2 www.kashi.com/natural-living/organic
- 3 www.ota.com/organic/benefits/global.html
- 4 rodaleinstitute.org/our-work/farming-systems-trial/

Supply-Demand Disparity of Organic Food:

- Generally, the demand comes from the big metros, and these are exactly the areas where you would **not find clean farmland** to produce organic fruits and vegetables. This is the main reason for this disparity.
- The government has made a **certain framework to boost organic farming** and to promote the same through fairs and exhibitions, but that does not help on the ground until there is a **steady and sustainable market for organic produce**.
- However, **smart transport and dedicated channels of supply** are the solutions to fill this gap.
- Ultimately, when you start having the pull from the market, the local growers also start taking note and **shift towards organic**.
- Once the local demand is fulfilled by local supplies, the **supply-demand disparity is taken care of**.

Government support in Organic Farming not utilised in optimum manner:

- The Centre's **free organic certification programme "the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana"** has not picked up as most States have **failed to utilise** the funds set aside for the scheme.
- A **2018 report** on the implementation of PKVY highlights that all states, except Tripura, Odisha and Karnataka, have **failed to utilise even 50 per cent** of their funds under the scheme.
- While the Centre has **increased allocation** for the scheme by 44 per cent for the current year, corrective measures are needed to ensure that the **states become responsible and contribute toward "organic India"**.

Conclusion:

- ❖ The challenge is convincing farmers to **shift to organic**, which might result in an immediate **commercial impact** on their income.

- ❖ The solution is to support the change in a **gradual manner**. A **holistic and community-driven approach**, similar to the “Swachh Bharat” for “**Swachh Food**” **needs to be undertaken**.
- ❖ Rahibai like farmers exemplifies not just the **immense value of traditional knowledge**, but also the potential of India to become a **major organic producer and exporter**.
- ❖ Trained scientists and civil engineers **need to learn** from such farmers and **age-old water conservation practices** in Rajasthan.
- ❖ They should tap into the ingenuity of farmers in Bagalkot district who made a dam to deal with water shortage. The future of farming lies in **harvesting these energies**.

13. A MODEL POLICY FOR WOMEN IN THE POLICE

Present Context:

- **Women constitute about 7% of the police strength in India**. This number is expected to rise, with many States and Union Territories **providing for 30%** (and more) reservation for women in the police in specific ranks. However, this is not enough.
- Current data reveal that most women in the police are **concentrated in the lower ranks**. Efforts should be made to change this.
- Women in police. A recent phenomenon in a century’s old organisation with a colonial history and a **strongly masculine work culture**.
- It continues to be known as the police force. And being a force, it places a premium on exaggerated masculinity and valor more than on service.

Need for policies to increase the strength of Women in Police department as well:

- Women must be **encouraged and appreciated**. Female police officers are equal to men. Often, they are better than men in many aspects. One can feel female police officers perform better as undercover police.
- One way to **mainstream women** in the police is to **develop a model policy** that will challenge the **deep-rooted patriarchy** in the institution.



**WOMEN ARE
NATURAL
BRAVE HEARTS**

and all these qualities have given us very efficient female police officers who are breaking trends everywhere.

- Unfortunately, till now, not a **single State police department** has attempted to even draft such a policy.
- Thus, neither the Central nor State governments can get very far by merely adopting reservation to increase gender diversity without considering the need for policymaking.
- A **model policy**, while laying the foundation for **equal opportunities for women** in every aspect of policing, should also strive to create a **safe and enabling work environment**. Without this, all other efforts will remain piecemeal.
- One of the first steps to ensure a level playing field for women in the police is to **increase their numbers**.
- Merely providing reservation is not enough; police departments should develop an action plan to **achieve the target of 30% or more in a time-bound manner**.
- This also applies to States that have not provided a quota as yet. Departments should also **undertake special recruitment drives** in every district to ensure geographical diversity.
- To achieve the target, the police should reach out to the **media and educational institutions** to spread awareness about **opportunities for women** in the police.
- The impulse to create **women-only battalions** for the sake of augmenting numbers should be eliminated.

Second, the model policy should strive to ensure that **decisions on deployment of women** are **free of gender stereotyping** to facilitate bringing women into leading operational positions.

- At present, there appears to be a tendency to **side-line women, or give them policing tasks** that are physically less demanding, or relegate them to desk duty, or make them work on crimes against women alone.
- Women police officers should be **encouraged to take on public order and investigative crimes** of all types, and should be given duties beyond the minimum mandated by special laws.

- A **major burden of family and childcare** responsibilities falls on women. Yet, police departments still **lack proper internal childcare support systems**.
- Departments need to be mindful of this **social reality** and **exercise sensitivity** in making decisions on transfers and posting of women personnel.
- As far as possible, women should be **posted in their home districts** in consultation with supervising officers.

Preventing sexual harassment at even Police Work place:

- Police departments must also **ensure safe working spaces for women** and adopt a **zero-tolerance policy** towards discrimination and harassment, in order to make policing a **viable career option** for women.
- Departments are legally bound to **set up Internal Complaints Committees** to prevent sexual harassment at the workplace.
- Departments must operationalise the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act of 2013**.
- Most State police departments have received funds under the **Modernisation of State Police Forces Scheme** for providing **separate toilets** and changing rooms for women.
- For constructing **separate accommodation for women** with attached toilets in all police stations and units. Police departments must ensure the best use of this fund.
- Some of these suggestions have already been made by the **National Conference of Women in Police**.
- However, Central and State governments have not yet developed or adopted a **comprehensive framework towards achieving substantive gender equality**.

Normal Female citizen has to approach police station to give any complaints which are dominated by men:

- The issue gains prominence as the **Law & Order police stations** are the **first points of contact** between the department and the aggrieved public.
- But across most of the states, women who **approach police stations** to file complaints are **greeted by men**.
- In an average, there are three women constables per station. In cases of sexual harassment, a woman officer helps the victims record their statement.
- However, the situation is **worse at Cybercrime police stations** where men are an overwhelming majority, making it **difficult for women approaching the station** to file complaints of harassment through social media, cyberstalking, etc.
- Many women are **not posted in Law & Order positions**, thereby depriving them of opportunities. Many instances in states proved that **SHO positions** at a police station **needs lobbying and consent** of the local public representative, not just capabilities and a good track record.

Conclusion:

- ❖ The **discourse on mainstreaming women** in the police by making **policing inclusive, non-discriminatory and efficient in India** is missing in policy circles.
- ❖ Leading to the **vicious cycle** of non-reporting and non-action, perpetuating the culture of silence. **Desk work** too must be allocated evenly among men and women.
- ❖ For women in police to perform to their **full potential**, it would take **sustained increase in their strength, meaningful networking within themselves** and an institutionalised support system in the current social realities.
- ❖ Then, they will be the women that they are, the police officers that they are. It will allow them to be **their authentic selves, agents of change. To achieve. To lead. To serve the people.**

14. CAUTION: VACCINE MISINFORMATION COULD BE INJURIOUS TO PUBLIC HEALTH

Context:

- Recent Incident, Facebook said it would step-in to **curb misinformation on vaccines**. The move followed **anti-vaxx campaigners** using social media to spread the **fear of vaccines** and the **risk of links to autism**.

- **Mission Indradhanush** has given a booster shot to the Universal Immunisation Programme. The new **Measles-Rubella (MR) Vaccine component**, with a targeted 410 million children from 9 months to 15 years, is slated to be the **next big leap after polio eradication**.

Vaccine Hesitancy has been spread rapid in India:

- **Progressive states** like Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu too have witnessed instances of vaccine hesitancy. Parents have **expressed reservations** on the MMR vaccine and the **measles-rubella vaccines**, respectively.
- **Social media** has played a role in spreading **these fears and even panic**. Vaccinators have been **attacked in some districts** like Malappuram in Kerala.
- There was **even a rumour campaign** which claimed that vaccinations would make Muslim children infertile and that vaccines are pork-based.
- While it is right for parents to have a **healthy scepticism**, they should equip themselves with **information from the right sources** including doctors, Health Ministry representatives or authentic sources like the WHO website and not gather information **from social media**.
- Social media platforms like Facebook and Google have thought of steps to counter or block such and other misinformation.

Conclusion:

- ❖ Public health experts point to **India's success in tackling polio** through an **intensive immunisation programme**. The success of these programmes lies in **react quickly and honestly** in cases of vaccine related episodes. Remove apprehensions quickly.
- ❖ The WHO expects 2019 to see transmission of wild polio virus **being stopped in Afghanistan and Pakistan**, as well. Less than 30 cases were reported last year in both countries, the WHO says, casting its might behind **their vaccination programme**.
- ❖ **"trust in the vaccine, trust in Government, trust in the system and trust in the manufacturer."**
- ❖ Parents should raise questions on vaccines, **its necessity and safety**. But it is up to the Government and doctors to keep this communication with parents **ongoing, transparent and scientific** so that benefits to the child and larger community are not lost in misinformation.
- ❖ **Empower paediatricians** to project the value of vaccines and equip them to respond to concerns effectively and accurately. **Sensitise media to an evidence based** rather than sensational approach.

15. CHINA'S BLOCK: ON NOT LISTING AZHAR AS GLOBAL TERRORIST

Context:

- **China's decision to block** the listing of Jaish-e-Mohammad chief **Masood Azhar** as a **global terrorist at the UN Security Council** is both a setback to India's post-Pulwama diplomatic strategy and a reality check on ties with China at present.
- Despite weeks of a **diplomatic campaign** after the Pulwama terror attack, China's decision to place a **"hold" on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) listing** of Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar as a **global terrorist** has come as a setback to India.
- It will force New Delhi to **reconsider its strategy on the issue** and consider various options and priorities ahead.

India want designate Azhar as a global terrorist:

- After the February 14 attack, claimed by the JeM, the government had made the **listing of Azhar** a focus in its diplomatic efforts.
- It reached out to several governments, and shared a dossier on Azhar with each member of the Security Council, who are **all members of the 1267 ISIL and al-Qaeda sanctions committee**.
- A special effort was made with Beijing, which has blocked the Azhar listing in the past, including just after the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

Brief Background on the issue: How often has China blocked UN action against Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist Masood Azhar?

- In the last 10 years, China has repeatedly **blocked India's listing proposals** at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) **Resolution 1267 sanctions committee** to designate **Azhar as a global terrorist**.

- Beijing blocked it for the **first time in 2009**, after India had moved the proposal in the aftermath of the **26/11 Mumbai attack**.
- In February 2016, after the **Pathankot attack**, India put forward a fresh proposal. China intervened at Pakistan's behest and placed a **technical hold** on India's move, and did so again in October 2016.
- It subsequently **used its veto power to block the proposal** in December 2016, a day before the end of the technical hold.
- Following a proposal by the **US, the UK and France** on January 19, 2017 to designate Azhar as a terrorist China once again **employed a technical hold** and blocked the proposal in November 2017.

What does China gain by repeatedly frustrating India and the global consensus on fighting terrorism emanating from Pakistan?

- China has always used Pakistan, as senior Indian officials say, a **"strategic weapon" against India**. This is reflected in Beijing's blocking of the Azhar proposal.
- For China, Pakistan is an **"all-weather ally" and an "iron brother"**.
- It has **strategic investments** in Pakistan, including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. For its **all-weather friend**, it is ready to take a hit on its reputation, even if it means that it is perceived to be **standing on the wrong side** of the global fight against terrorism.
- Beyond the listing of Azhar, China has also been **blocking India's aspirations** to become a **member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group**.
- New Delhi took up this matter vigorously in June 2016, when then Foreign Secretary travelled to Seoul to held discussions with key NSG members.

BEIJING BATS FOR TERROR

2009: India moved a proposal at UN by itself to designate Jaish chief Masood Azhar

2016: India again moved the proposal with the P3 – the US, UK and France – in the UN's 1267 Sanctions Committee to ban Azhar

2017: P3 nations moved a similar proposal again



Masood Azhar

On all occasions, China, a veto-wielding permanent member of the UN Security Council, blocked India's proposal from being adopted by the sanctions committee

This is the first time such a proposal was brought immediately after a terror attack

WHAT IT WOULD HAVE MEANT

A UNSC ban would have subjected Azhar to an assets freeze, travel ban and an arms embargo

Present Better Alternative to deal with China: 'Go for a more transactional approach':

- If the Government of India wishes to make China change its stand, it must consider a **more transactional approach**, says former Ambassador to China and Pakistan who advocates identifying issues at the U.N., where **China will want India's support or that of the U.S., the U.K. and France in return**.
- Still others suggest that **India should work with other UNSC members** to ensure that China is **unable to stop the listing process** as it has been able to do in the past four attempts to list Azhar.
- The time has come to **focus on the veto power of China in the UNSC** being used cynically to **oppose global counter terrorism measures**.
- He advocated that the UN General Assembly resolution on five areas of UNSC reform, including the question of veto, be tabled now, especially in cases where the vast majority is held up by one or two members.
- **S. diplomat** at the Security Council expressed some frustration at the end of the fortnight's efforts by the U.S. to **convince China** on the Azhar question.
- S diplomats warned that If China continues to block this designation, responsible member-states may be **forced to pursue other actions at the Security Council**. It shouldn't have to come to that.
- After all, Lashkar-e-Taiba chief Hafiz Saeed remains a free man 10 years after he was added to the list after the Mumbai 26/11 attacks.
- Another track advocated by some is to shelve the Azhar plan entirely, and direct India's diplomatic efforts towards **effecting real actions by Pakistan against terror groups**.

Way Forward for Indian Diplomacy:

- This time, India not only got the significant **three countries** to move the proposal but also involved **10 more countries as co-sponsors**.
- Besides the **US, the UK and France**, which are **permanent UNSC members**, the other 10 countries included four non-permanent UNSC members – Germany, Poland, Belgium and Equatorial Guinea as well as Japan, Australia, Italy, Bangladesh, Maldives and Bhutan.
- This helps India's case that the listing of Masood Azhar is a global cause, and **a key element of the global fight against terrorism**.
- The technical hold gives India nine months to lobby with China, so that it lifts the hold and **allows the listing of Azhar**.
- India will also **need to work all its diplomatic levers** so that Pakistan takes concrete and verifiable actions against terrorism.
- The **FATF gives India an opportunity**; it can try and persuade the international community to **even blacklist Pakistan** by May-September this year, if Islamabad doesn't take action against terrorists and terror groups, including Azhar and Jaish.
- In 2017, when China wanted to become vice-president of the **Financial Action Task Force**, **India agreed to support** its candidature against Japan (a close strategic partner of India), in return for Beijing's support for **Pakistan's 'grey listing'**.
- That was a **major moment of transactionalism** with Beijing. India will need to find such **transactional points** in the next nine months and a trade-off on a vote or a crucial election, so that it can **influence Beijing's behaviour**.

16. THE WWW TURNS 30**Context:**

- Thirty years ago, **Tim Berners-Lee** and his colleagues at **CERN** began a project to **create an information retrieval service on the internet**.
- The result, **World Wide Web**, was a phenomenon. Today, **about half the world is online**. A key reason for the **web's growth is the idealism behind its creation**.
- Berners-Lee says the idea was the **web should be participatory, not disseminatory**.

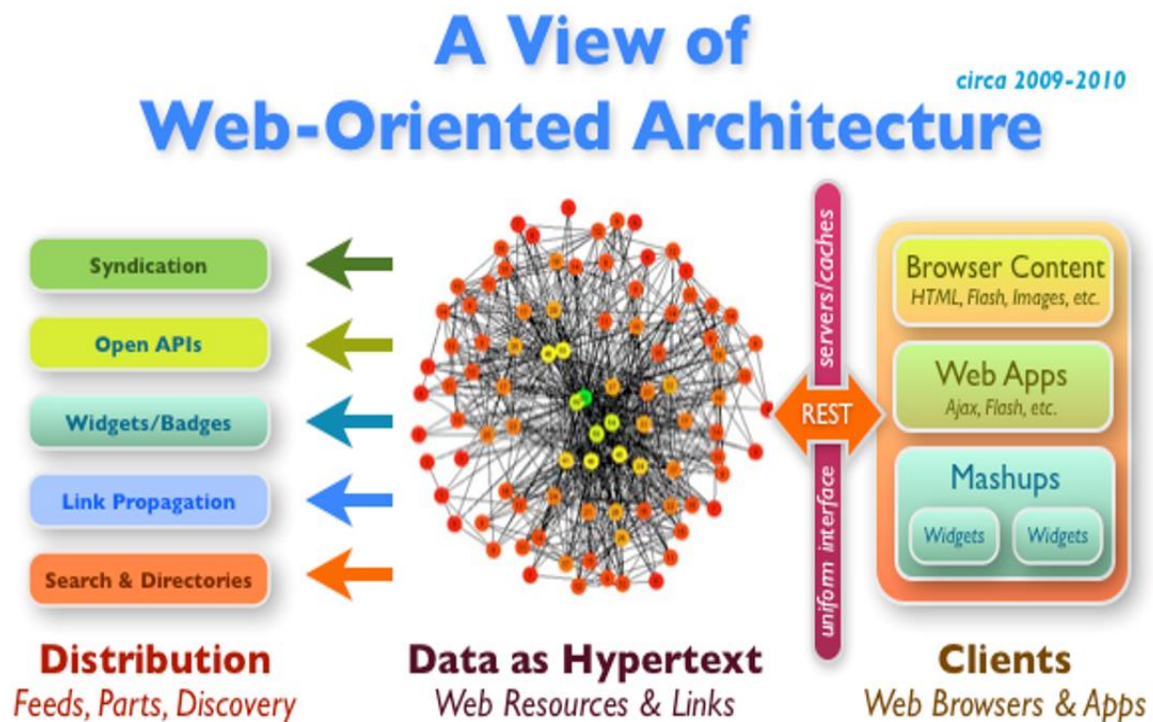
Revolution in Accessing Information:

- **Google** is celebrating **30 years of WWW** shared an adorable doodle showing an image of pretty old system loads the rotating globe, **occupying the O in Google**.
- This indicates **how important WWW is today in the history of mankind** where a tiny invention intended to share documents turned out to be **an artificial neural network of information** widely traveling around the globe in milliseconds.
- Consequently, not only can a child **access all online public information** from a remote home, citizens now directly engage heads of state.
- But the other side of the coin is, It is the **division of a multinational state into smaller ethnically homogeneous entities**. The term also is used to refer to ethnic conflict within multi-ethnic states.

Difficulties in accessing Transparent Information:

- The **web's scale and growth** have been accompanied by challenges. Some of them are **present offline too but online their negative impact is amplified**.
- The most dangerous threats emanate from **state-sponsored groups** which spread fake news to destabilise other countries.
- State-led response to the challenges posed by a seamless online world has been **to erect barriers or impose authoritarian regulations**. Consequently, the web today is balkanised.
- **Network neutrality** essentially occurs when Internet service providers allow access to all content and applications regardless of their source.
- The **neutrality is violated** when certain products or websites are favoured or blocked by these providers. At the moment, network owners are not allowed to discriminate against information by slowing, changing, or blocking the transfer of any data online.

- **Net neutrality has been a source of contention** between powerful governments around the world and the citizens they're meant to serve.
- A separate set of challenges come from internet companies which build business models that depend on **dubious exploitation of data**, triggering new problems centring on privacy.



However, Three challenges for the web, according to its inventor:

1) We've lost control of our personal data

- The current business model for many websites **offers free content in exchange for personal data**.
- Many of us agree often by **accepting long and confusing terms and conditions documents** but fundamentally we do not mind some information being collected in exchange for free services.
- But we're missing a trick. As our data is then held in proprietary silos, out of sight to us, we lose out on the benefits we could realise **if we had direct control over this data**, and chose when and with whom to share it.
- This **widespread data collection by companies** also has other impacts. Through collaboration with companies, governments are also increasingly watching our every move online, and passing extreme laws that trample on our rights to privacy.
- It creates a **chilling effect on free speech** and stops the web from being used as a space to explore important topics, like sensitive health issues, sexuality or religion.

2) It's too easy for misinformation to spread on the web

- Today, most people find news and information on the web through **just a handful of social media sites and search engines**.
- These sites make more money when we click on the links, they show us. And, they choose **what to show us based on algorithms** which learn from our personal data that they are constantly harvesting.
- The net result is that these sites show us content they think we'll click on – meaning that **misinformation, or 'fake news'**, which is surprising, shocking, or designed to appeal to our biases can spread like wildfire.
- And through the **use of data science and armies of bots**, those with bad intentions can game the system **to spread misinformation** for financial or political gain.

3) Political advertising online needs transparency and understanding

- Political advertising online has rapidly become a **sophisticated industry**.
- The fact that most people get their information from just a few platforms and the increasing sophistication of algorithms **drawing upon rich pools of personal data**, means that political campaigns are now **building individual adverts targeted directly at users**.

- One source suggests that in the **2016 US election**, as many as 50,000 variations of adverts were being served every single day on Facebook, a near-impossible situation to monitor.
- **Targeted advertising allows a campaign** to say completely different, possibly conflicting things to different groups. Is that democratic?

Conclusion:

- ❖ The **web needs rejuvenation** as part of its journey forward *from “digital adolescence”*.
- ❖ The touchstone or established standard for this journey should **continue to be the idea of openness**.
- ❖ Only then can its **full potential** be harnessed. Therefore, **net neutrality has to be the bedrock**.
- ❖ Yet, the evolution of the web makes the **creation of a regulatory framework inevitable**.
- ❖ We **need more algorithmic transparency** to understand how important decisions that affect our lives are being made, and perhaps a set of common principles to be followed. We urgently need to close the **“internet blind spot”** in the regulation of **political campaigning**.
- ❖ In India, this includes extending scope of some **offline regulations** as exemplified by **Election Commission’s** recent directions to Facebook to take down some political posters.
- ❖ Separately, we **need a comprehensive data protection law to actualise the fundamental right to privacy**.
- ❖ **Regulation** should be of **light touch variety** as that’s the only way to maximise the web’s transformational potential.

17. A FRESH WARNING: WHAT GEO-6 MEANS FOR INDIA

Context:

The sixth edition of the **Global Environment Outlook from the UN Environment Programme** has come as another **stark warning**:

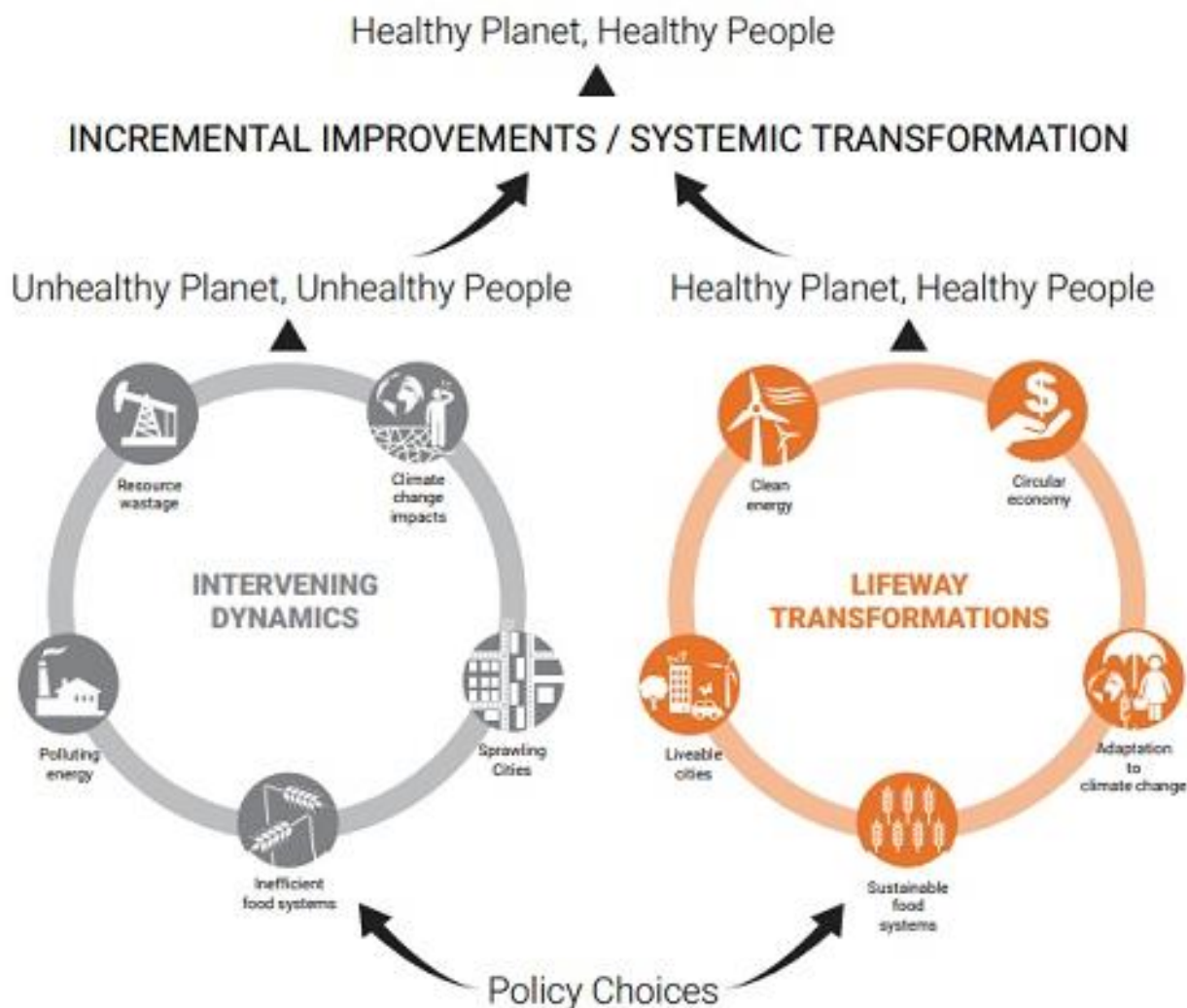
- The world is **unsustainably extracting resources and producing unmanageable quantities of waste**.
- The **linear model of economic growth** depends on the extraction of ever-higher quantities of materials, leading to chemicals flowing into air, water and land.
- This causes **ill-health and premature mortality**, and affects the quality of life, particularly for those unable to insulate themselves from these effects.
- **Top 10% of populations** globally, in terms of wealth are responsible for **45% of GHG emissions, bottom 50% are responsible for only 13%**. Pollution impacts are borne by the poorer citizens.

Global Environment Outlook (GEO): UN Environmental Report Formalises Link Between Health and Climate Change:

- The **Global Environment Outlook (GEO)** is a consultative and participatory process to prepare an **independent assessment of the state of the environment**, the effectiveness of the policy response to address **these environmental challenges** and the possible pathways to be achieve various internationally agreed environmental goals.
- The process also builds capacity for **conducting integrated environmental assessments** and reporting on the state, trends and outlooks of the environment.
- The Global Environment Outlook (GEO) is also a series of products that informs environmental decision-making for not only governments but also **various stakeholders** such as the youth, businesses and local governments and aims to facilitate the **interaction between science and policy**.

India’s Intended Nationally Determined Contributions:

- India’s stated commitment is to **lower emissions intensity of its GDP by 33-35% compared to 2005 levels by 2030**; increase total cumulative electricity generation from fossil free energy sources to **40% by 2030**.
- Create additional **carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tons** through additional forest and tree cover.
- India is on track to achieve **two of these goals: of emissions intensity and electricity generation**, according to independent **climate-watch site Climate Tracker**.
- However these actions are only enough and provided other countries to live up to their commitments **to limit temperature rise to 2 degrees**.



India could save trillions in healthcare costs if Paris climate goals are met: Global Environmental Outlook:

The sixth edition of the **Global Environmental Outlook (GEO)**, prepared by the **United Nations Environment Programme** highlighted:

- Damage to the planet is so dire that **people's health** will be increasingly **threatened** unless urgent action is taken.
- Unless environmental protections were **drastically scaled up**, cities and regions in Asia, the Middle East and Africa could see millions of premature deaths by mid-century.
- India could **save at least \$3 trillion (₹210 trillion approx.) in healthcare costs** if it implemented policy initiatives consistent with ensuring that the **globe didn't heat up beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius** by the turn of the century.

Suggestions to improve towards the "Circular Economy":

- The **GEO report**, for its assessment on health benefits to India relied on a modelling study by group of scientists and published by **Lancet Planetary Health in March 2018**.
- The report advises **adopting less-meat intensive diets**, and reducing food waste in both developed and developing countries, would reduce the need to increase food production by 50% to feed the projected 9-10 billion people on the planet in 2050.
- At present, **33% of global edible food is wasted, and 56% of waste happens in industrialised countries**.
- As the **leading extractor of groundwater**, India needs to make water part of a **circular economy** in which it is treated as a resource that is **recovered, treated and reused**.
- But water protection gets low priority, and State governments show no urgency in augmenting **rainwater harvesting**.
- **New storage areas** act as a supply source when monsoons fail, and help manage floods when there is excess rainfall.
- India should confirm to the older coal-based power plants to the emission norms at the earliest. Some of them **should shut down in favour of renewable energy sources**.

Conclusion:

- ❖ The **landmark Paris Agreement of 2015** aims to keeping a global temperature rise this century well to “**below 2 degrees Celsius** above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even **further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.**”
- ❖ However there has been **limited progress** by countries since then in committing to greenhouse gas emissions cut since then.
- ❖ **Climate Tracker’s** most updated analysis as of Dec 2018 mentioned that For India to leapfrog onto a **1.5-degree pathway** it would have to “**abandon plans to build new coal-fired power plants**”.

Way Forward:

- ✓ We need to get more serious **about tackling air pollution**. Rehashing the same action points with ***no real improvement in infrastructure, lack of inter-ministerial coordination and toothless enforcement of existing laws*** will not help.
- ✓ Documents like the GEO6 are important because they **validate the role of science, governance and stakeholder participation** in creating positive outcomes for air quality.
- ✓ It also highlights the fact that there is **no shortcut to improving air pollution**.
- ✓ For clean air and better health, the government needs to **enforce emission standards and mandate controls at sources**.
- ✓ In response to the urgent need for some respite, the environment ministry mooted the **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)** to improve air quality in 102 cities.
- ✓ All **case studies** including reducing transport emissions in Europe, economic incentives to promote use of improved cookstoves in Kenya, disseminating forecasts in the US, and multilateral agreements to reduce transboundary haze in Southeast Asia point to the **need for a government** that mandates **changes to improve air quality**.

18. DOWN, BUT DEFINITELY NOT OUT: ON FUTURE OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

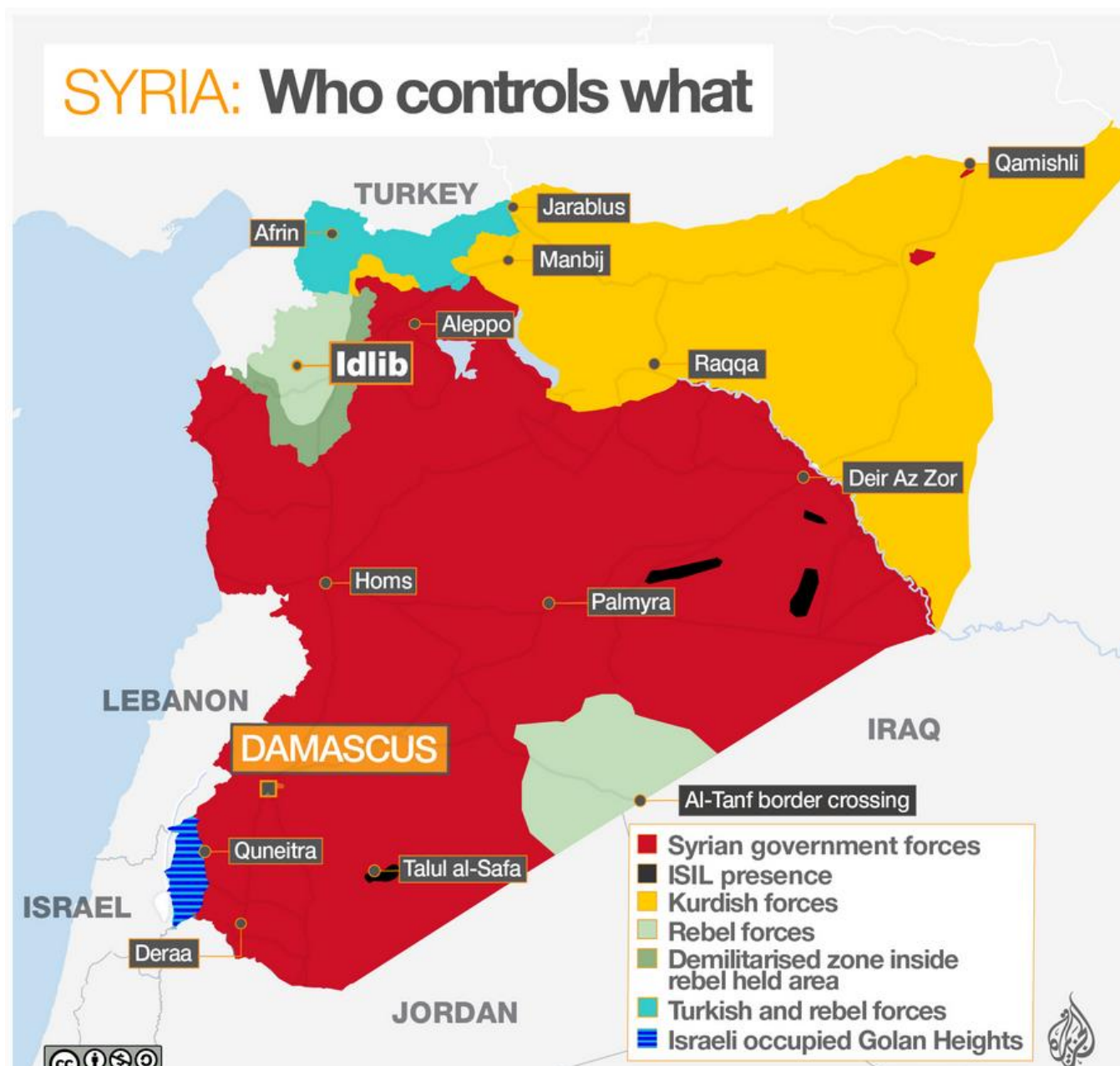
Context: About ISIS presence:

- The **Islamic State**, which at its peak controlled territories straddling the **Iraq-Syria border** of the **size of Great Britain**, is now fighting for half a square kilometre in eastern Syria.
- The **Syrian Democratic Forces, the Kurdish-led rebel group assisted by the U.S** has effectively laid **siege to Baghouz**, the eastern Syrian village where about 500 IS jihadists along with 4,000 women and children are caught.
- When the IS lost bigger cities such as **Raqqa and Deir Ezzor** in eastern Syria, militants moved to Baghouz and the deserts in the south.
- The **Syrian civil war** started as a largely peaceful uprising against the Syrian government in March 2011 but was brutally repressed and quickly morphed into a **complex, multi-faceted war**.
- The former United Nations special envoy to Syria, Staffan de Mistura, estimated at **least 400,000 people** had died over the first five years of conflict.
- Hundreds of thousands of others have been **displaced by the violence**.

How ISIS had emerged from destroyed remnants?

- **ISIS is a proto-state terrorist network** that can be traced back to a group called **al-Qaeda in Iraq**, which was started by a Jordanian terrorist named **Abu Musab al-Zarqawi**, and arose in response to the **S. invasion of Iraq in 2003**.
- When U.S. forces began to **withdraw from Iraq in 2010**, al-Qaeda in Iraq was a shadow of its former self because its leadership had largely been destroyed.
- However, the civil war in Syria, growing sectarian tensions and a degraded military in Iraq created an opening, the **remnants of AQI** found an opportunity for **revival and rebranded themselves** as the **Jabhat al-Nusra**, al-Qaeda’s branch in Syria.
- The IS was born when al-Nusra split, which breathed new life into the moribund organization.
- By mid-2012, it had grown so much that the **Defense Intelligence Agency warned** that ISIS could “declare an **Islamic State** through its union with other terrorist organizations in **Iraq and Syria.**”

- ISIS did just that, **declaring a caliphate in June 2014**. The caliphate, self-described as the Islamic State, functioned like a government: It provided courts, religious schools and social welfare services; maintained public order; and even collected hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes.



How this large Crisis has been slowly turning off:

- The **Syrian Observatory for Human Rights** estimates that nearly **59,000 people** have left IS-held territory since December, and at least 4,000 jihadists have surrendered since February.
- Both President Donald Trump and the SDF commanders say victory against the IS is imminent. Victory in Baghouz will also mean the **IS's territorial caliphate is shattered**.
- Since the **battle for Kobane in 2015**, which marked the **beginning of the end of the IS**, Syrian Kurdish rebels have been in the **forefront of the war**. Naturally, the SDF would claim the final victory against the IS.

Is really forces eliminated ISIS completely?

- However, the **liberation of Baghouz** or the destruction of the territorial caliphate does not necessarily mean that the IS has been defeated.
- It is basically an **insurgent-jihadist group**. It has **established sleeper cells**, especially in **Syria and Iraq**, which have continued to **carry out terror attacks** even as IS territories kept shrinking.
- The group has a presence in **Syria's vast deserts**, a tactic its predecessor, **al-Qaeda in Iraq**, successfully used when it was in decline during 2006-2011 after its leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was killed by the U.S.
- The presence, however, of **sleeper cells** alone may not be sufficient for terror groups to gain ground.

- Experience in West Asia is that an **unstable internal security situation** contributes greatly to the **growth of terrorism**.

Can it still organise or inspire attacks overseas?

- As Islamic State clung to its last scrap of land, the head of **Britain's spy agency MI6** warned that the group would **return to "asymmetric" attacks**.
 - Even after it **began losing ground militarily**, IS still claimed responsibility for attacks made in different countries, though often these have been blamed on **"lone wolves" without its direction**.
 - It started years ago to call on followers abroad **to plan their own attacks**, rather than focusing purely on ones staged by trained operatives supported by the **group's hierarchy**.
- In early 2018 the head of U.S. military central command said Islamic State was resilient and remained capable of **"inspiring attacks throughout the region and outside of the Middle East"**.

Conclusion:

- ❖ Thousands of **Islamic State insurgents** and civilian followers have also been killed and thousands more captured. An unknown number remain at large in both Syria and Iraq.
- ❖ It is important to understand that even though this **territory has been reclaimed**, the fight against ISIS and violent extremists is **not over**.
- ❖ The U.S., the Kurdish rebels, the Syrian government and other stakeholders in the region should be **mindful of the geopolitical and sectarian minefields** that groups such as the IS could exploit for their re-emergence.

Way Forward: Issues that need to be addressed to avoid ISIS:

- ✓ Mr. Trump has already announced the **withdrawal of U.S. troops from Syria**.
- ✓ The Turkish government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is **Openly distrustful and unwilling to confide of the rapid rise of the Syrian Kurds**, who are organisationally and ideologically aligned with **Kurdish rebels on the Turkish side**.
- ✓ The Syrian regime, on its part, has vowed to **re-establish its authority** over the **Kurdish autonomous region** in the northeast.
- ✓ If Turkey and Syria **attack Kurdish rebels**, who were **vital in the battle against the IS**, that would throw **north-eastern Syria** into chaos again, which would suit the jihadists.
- ✓ To avoid this, there must be an **orderly U.S. withdrawal and a political solution to the Syrian civil war**.

19. INDIA'S FIRST LOKPAL IS FORMER SUPREME COURT JUDGE PC GHOSE

Context:

- Retired Supreme Court judge **Pinaki Chandra Ghose is the country's first Lokpal**, or the **anti-corruption ombudsman**. His appointment has been cleared by President Ram Nath Kovind.
- Justice Ghose's name was finalised **and recommended by the Selection Committee** led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The selection was made weeks after the February-end deadline set by the Supreme Court.

Brief Background:

- A Lokpal is an **anti-corruption authority or ombudsman** who represents the public interest. The concept of an ombudsman is borrowed **from Sweden**.
- Many repeated demands for such an ombudsman, many attempts were made at legislation, **with Lokpal Bills** introduced in 1971, 1977, 1985, 1989, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2005 and 2008, but none of these was passed.
- It was four decades after the **introduction of the first Bill that the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act** was enacted in December 2013.

Eligible Conditions to become the Chairman of Lokpal:

- A person "Who is or has been a **Chief Justice of India**, is or has been a **Judge of the Supreme Court**, or an eminent person of **impeccable integrity** and **outstanding ability** having special knowledge and expertise of **not less than 25 years** in the matters relating to anti-corruption policy, public administration, vigilance, finance including insurance and banking, law and management".

- This was the fallout of a **public movement for a Jan Lokpal Bill**, initiated by activist Anna Hazare and others such as Kiran Bedi and Arvind Kejriwal.
- The term **“Lokpal”** was coined by **Dr. L.M.Singhvi in 1963**.
- Lokayukts are present in many states while many of the states still **do not have the Lokayukts**. The powers given to them relating to corruption, etc have **not been up to the mark**.

<p>A long-drawn debate</p> <p>A short history of the Lokpal Bill from the 1960s to the present</p>		<p>2005: The second ARC recommended that a Lokpal be established without delay</p>
<p>1963: The idea of an Ombudsman first came up in Parliament during a discussion on budget allocation for the Law Ministry</p>	<p>State level – to probe complaints against public functionaries, including MPs</p>	<p>2013: Lokpal Act, 2013, passed in Parliament</p>
<p>1966: The First Administrative Reforms Commission recommended two independent authorities – one at the Centre and one at the</p>	<p>1968: Lokpal Bill introduced in Parliament, but was not passed. Eight attempts were made till 2011 to pass the Bill, but all in vain</p>	<p>2016: Lok Sabha agreed to amend the 2013 Act</p>
	<p>2002: The Constitution review commission headed by M.N. Venkatachaliah recommended appointment of the Lokpal and the Lokayuktas. It also recommended that the Prime Minister be kept out of the Lokpal's ambit</p>	<p>2017: The SC on April 27 clarified that the Lokpal appointment process need not be stalled merely due to the absence of the Leader of the Opposition, who is a member of the Lokpal selection committee as per the 2013 Act</p>

Move to appoint Lokpal comes after pressure on government: Anna Hazare:

- On February 5, Hazare ended his **hunger strike** after seven days following **assurances from the government** on the Lokpal and Lokayukta issues.
- **Hazare was on a hunger strike from January 30** demanding the setting up of the Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayuktas in the states to address the issues related to corruption.
- Anna Hazare highlighted the issue that **Lokpal is being appointed 9 years after the movement**. The world is now seeing **how powerful the public is**. The **Supreme Court** is also very powerful.
- The apex court had earlier asked the government about the steps being taken to appoint the Lokpal to deal with complaints of corruption in high places.
- Anti-corruption crusader Anna Hazare has said that the government was “forced” to take the step under pressure of the **people’s movement and the apex court**.

Who all remain to be selected in Lokpal?

- Justice Ghose was selected by committee **headed by the Prime Minister**.
- The same selection committee will choose the Lokpal’s other members. Under the **2013 Act**, the Lokpal should consist of a **chairperson** and such number of **members, not exceeding eight**, of whom **50% should be judicial members**.
- The selection procedure for these posts is the same as that for the chairperson. A **search committee** will prepare a **panel of candidates**, a selection committee will recommend names from among this panel, and the President will appoint these as members.
- The Act states that **not less than 50% of the members of the Lokpal** should be from among persons belonging to the **SCs, the STs, OBCs, minorities and women**.
- The same rules apply members of the search committee. Salaries, allowances and service conditions of the **Lokpal chairperson** will be the same as those for the **Chief Justice of India** and those for other members will be the same as those for a **judge of the Supreme Court**.
- Regarding Lokayukta, Every State shall establish a body to be known as the **Lokayukta for the State**, if not so established, constituted, by a law made by the State Legislature.
- If not established, they have to be **established within one year** from the date of the commencement of the Act. This is as **per Section 63 of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act**.

- The establishment of Lokayukta and any appointment falls within the **domain of the States**.

Conclusion:

- ❖ The motive behind decades of struggle to implement the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 is to provide a **forum to the citizenry** where they can **raise their voice against corruption without any fear**.
- ❖ In the past governments had **enforced Institutions** like Central Vigilance Commission and Central Bureau of Investigation but despite a few historic cases these institutions have **mostly failed to prevent and/or curb** the widespread corruption which has become a part and parcel of the daily lives of the citizens.
- ❖ Such rampant corruption has necessitated the **creation as well as implementation of Lokpal and Lokayukta**.
- ❖ Looking at the low ranking of India in Corruption on global level, there is a need to check the corruption by strong institutions.
- ❖ Creation of the institution of Lokpal and Lokayukts by forming its members to function has come up as a welcome step.
- ❖ But it shall **function independent from any political influence** so that a proper system of checks-and -balance is maintained in the **federal and democratic system of India**.

Way Forward:

- ✓ Therefore, there is a **need for a mechanism** that provides for **simple, independent, speedy means of delivering justice** by redressing the grievances of the people without succumbing to the clutches of the executive.
- ✓ But if our past history is any proof India has several laws covering a plethora of subjects and area but has **failed to execute** the same effectively and in a timely manner and as we all know **justice delayed is justice denied**.
- ✓ Any new piece of legislation even when implemented becomes lengthy and time consuming and stretched over years.
- ✓ The **Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)** recommended the enacting of the **Office of a Lokpal**, convinced that such an institution was **justified**, not only for **removing the sense of injustice** from the minds of citizens, but also to **instill public confidence in the efficiency** of the administrative machinery.
- ✓ It is rightly said by Publius Cornelius Tecitus that **“the more corrupt the state, the more laws”**.

20. ON THE LEARNING CURVE: TRANSFORMING EDUCATION OUTCOMES IN INDIA

Introduction:

- With more than 1.5 million schools, 260 million enrolments and 12 million teachers, India has the **largest, most diverse and complicated learning systems in the world**.
- While **access to education** has been an enormous success story and is now nearly universal, children are not learning well, and the trend has been worrying as **52.2% of students in Class 5 cannot read** a Class 2 level text, and 74.1% cannot solve a division problem.
- Today, we are not only in the **middle of Industry 4.0**, but also wide-spread **disruption** due to other factors.
- Besides frontline service providers (teachers), there are a number of **other officials and administrators** who form an important part of the **educational set-up**.
- Of course, there is **automation** that is changing the **nature of jobs and learning**. There is climate change too, higher urbanisation, growing income equalities, and anti-globalisation resulting from hyper-nationalism.
- Among the lakhs of employees on the payrolls of State governments in India, the **education department**, unarguably, has the **largest share of employees**.

Context:

- According to the latest **third party assessment** in February 2019, 94 blocks out of a total of 119 in Haryana have been **declared ‘Saksham’ (abled/skilled)**, i.e. have 80% or more students who are grade level competent.
- The overall grade competence has been **assessed at 80%**, which is a giant leap in **learning outcomes** when compared to the overall grade competence of 40% in 2014.

- Under **Saksham Campaign**, If a block is **found to be 'Saksham'**, the block officials are recognised by no less than the Chief Minister, and a large-scale 'show and tell' event is organised to honour them.
- Further, when all blocks in a district are **declared as 'Saksham'**, the entire district is also accorded '**Saksham**' status.

About the NITI Aayog's Aspirational Districts Programme:

- The '**Transformation of Aspirational Districts**' programme aims to quickly and effectively transform these districts.
- The broad contours of the programme are **Convergence** (of Central & State Schemes), **Collaboration** (of Central, State level 'Prabhari' Officers & District Collectors), and **Competition among districts** driven by a mass Movement.
- With **States as the main drivers**, this program will focus on the **strength of each district**, identify low-hanging fruits for immediate improvement, measure progress, and rank districts.
- To **enable optimum utilization** of their potential, this program focusses closely on **improving people's ability** to participate fully in the burgeoning economy.
- The districts have been ranked in a transparent basis on **parameters across Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion & Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure through key performance indicators.**

HOW PROFICIENT ARE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN INDIA?

- **57%** of 14-18 year olds can't do a simple division
- **42%** of 14-18 age group students are working regardless of their schooling
- **40%** of 18 year olds can't read a simple sentence in English
- **76%** could count money
- **25%** in the 14-18 age group cannot read basic text in their own language
- **58%** cannot read their state map, 14% could not read India map
- Only **5%** school students are taking some kind of vocational education
- Female drop-out rate **rises** with age
- **75%** youth have their own bank account

Replication of above as Aspirational Districts and States programme in Learning Outcomes as well:

- Under Saksham campaign, State officials nominate their block for the '**Saksham Ghoshna**' once they are **reasonably confident** that their block has **achieved the 80% target** as a result of remedial programmes, teacher training and internal assessments.
- Most importantly, there is a **constant focus** on recognising and disseminating best practices of select districts to other States, which act as a reward for well-**performing local administrations** while providing impetus to other districts to adopt similar measures.
- This strategy has already shown success and districts that were ranked low in baseline surveys, have shown **remarkable progress** in subsequent rounds of assessment.
- Given the success of these initiatives, it is abundantly clear that the **right incentive structures for stakeholders** lead to **administrative efficiency**, which then improves the **quality of service delivery**.
- States therefore **need to induce competition** and give a boost to put all key actors in education in the driver's seat to **improve their learning levels**.
- Further, with encouragement from above, such campaigns lead to a **shift in the mindset of a State's education administrators**, many of whom otherwise believe that high learning outcomes are almost unachievable.

The Haryana case study: Visible Transformation in Learning Outcomes:

- A **successful example** of implementing such a road map can be seen in **Haryana**, which has created a **race among its administrative blocks** to be declared as '**Saksham**' (abled/skilled), i.e. **have 80% or more students who are grade level competent**.
- **Education transformation programmes** by States run the risk of falling flat, as they are often unaccompanied by a **single transformation change road map** that all key actors agree upon and work towards.
- Given the size of the education department, any effort to introduce education reforms must ensure that the **incentives of all stakeholders** are aligned throughout the system to **ensure their participation**.

Conclusion:

- ❖ The valuable lesson from Haryana example is that **inducing competition among administrative units** helps invigorate key stakeholders to work in tandem in order to **achieve intended outcomes**.
- ❖ Competition also makes abstract goals such as **'learning outcomes' more real** by defining exact 'actionable' metrics on which improvement is desired.
- ❖ Political commitment to improving the quality of education backed by **strong review and monitoring mechanisms** can spur meaningful activity in States.
- ❖ The successes that we are already witnessing in India **with the systemic approach to transforming education** are inspiring.
- ❖ **Improvement in learning outcomes** is an immediate goal for India to fulfil its aspirations of playing a greater role in the **global economy** and a **systemic transformation is the best solution that we have so far**.
- ❖ Districts and thereby States are prodded and encouraged to first catch-up with the **best district within their state**, and subsequently aspire to become one of the **best in the country**, by competing with, and learning from others in the **spirit of competitive & cooperative federalism**.

21. A SHORT HISTORY OF DATA

Recent Controversies about Indian National Statistics:

- Over the past two months, **Indian national statistics** and the organisations that administer them have faced a **volley of criticism**.
- In recent, **two independent members** of the **National Statistical Commission** resigned in protest, **over alleged suppression** of economic data by the government.
- More recently, amidst growing scepticism regarding **India's official statistics**, more than a hundred scholars comprising economists and social scientists released a statement decrying the **fall in standards** of institutional **independence**, suggesting **political interference as the cause**.
- Kaushik Basu, a former chief economist of the World Bank, also recently regret strongly the **declining credibility of India's official statistics**.
- There has been a **controversy over NSSO figures** not being released after a draft report had indicated that employment generation was slow.

Pioneering history the growth of India's vast National Statistical Infrastructure:

- The birth of a new nation led to an explosion of national statistics, based on the **need to plan the economy through Five Year Plans**.

These years would see the **establishment of**

- The office of the Statistical Adviser to the Government,
 - Bi-annual National Sample Surveys (NSS),
 - The Central Statistical Organisation (CSO), and
 - National Income Committees (that made the estimates similar to GDP measurements).
- While **declining data quality** has been an issue for a while, concern over institutional independence is new.
 - 'The Professor', as **Mahalanobis** was known to associates, was involved in the discussions that led to establishment of the **UN Statistical Commission in New York** (a body that he would be voted Chairperson of several times during the 1950s).
 - As a pioneer in the emerging field of large-scale sample surveys, he would also be the force behind creating the **UN Sub-Commission on Statistical Sampling in 1947**.

National Statistical Commission

Serve as a nodal and empowered body for all core statistical activities of the country to

- To ensure statistical co-ordination among the different agencies involved.
- monitor and enforce statistical priorities and standards

Evolution of National Statistics Commission:

- National Statistics Commission came in to existence through a **Resolution** dated **1st June, 2005** setup National Statistical Commission w.e.f 12th July, 2006. It is based on the **recommendations of Rangarajan Commission**, which reviewed the Indian Statistical System in 2001.

- It is supposed to **act as a nodal and empowered body** for all core statistical activities of the country. It will also **ensure statistical coordination** among the different agencies involved.
- The mandate is to evolve policies, priorities and standards in statistical matters.
- It is to have **chairperson and four members**. CEO, NITI Aayog is the Ex-officio Member and Chief Statistician of India and Secretary, **Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation** is the Secretary to the National Statistical Commission.

Issues that need to be resolved of Immediate Attention:

- It is well known for methods that keep a **tight control on errors**. That the statement of **NSS being “fake news”** comes from an authority-figure like a Union minister, only adds to the **merriment and is laughable**.
- India, with its **vastness and complexities**, poses tremendous challenges for data collection.
- The **dualistic nature of the economy** means a large unorganised sector coexists with the organised sector that the data collection systems are unable to fully cover.
- Despite rigorous methodologies, the NSSO data have **not been free from critical appraisals**.
- Apart from periodicity and timeliness, the NSSO has been criticised on several grounds such as the **estimated size of the population**.
- The NSSO survey **architecture** and the sampling designs are **complex and technical** and are not easily accessible to the general public.
- This **diminished status of statistics** today contrasts with the emphasis that was sought to be laid on **building sound statistical systems**.
- In the 1950 session of Indian Science Congress, Mahalanobis gave the famous speech, **‘Why Statistics?’** and in 1964, he delivered an **address on ‘Statistics as a Key Technology’** at the 125th Anniversary of the American Statistical Association.
- But, more significantly, he gave **newly independent India a sophisticated statistical system** with few parallels in the world at the time.

The National Sample Survey needs to be kept above the realm of politics:

- The Indian National Sample Survey is respected the world over. Not just because of its size, but also for its **sample design**, that **uses methods** make perfect by some of the **world’s most reputed statisticians**.
- This distinguished history, which India can claim with pride, makes the recent **undermining of the credibility** of our statistical output especially regrettable.
- We can, however, ensure that when we look back on this several years from now, it **represents an anomaly** rather than a lasting, irreparable loss of institutional credibility.

Conclusion:

- ❖ **Policy formulation** will become difficult and faulty in the absence of data or when the data is **wrong or insufficient**. Investment decisions can be made only on the basis of credible data.
- ❖ The **integrity and reliability** of the country’s statistical system and institutions have come to be questioned within the country and outside because of complaints that the government’s attempts to politicise and manipulate official data.
- ❖ This will do **long-term damage to the economy and the credibility of the entire system**.
- ❖ As many as 108 economists and social scientists alleged **“political interference”** in statistical data in the country and called for restoration of **“institutional independence” as well as integrity** of statistical organisations.
- ❖ The official given statement that government is committed to **maintaining** the **credibility** of our statistical organisations, not only that we have worked hard to **strengthen** these organisations and will continue to do so.

Way Forward:

- ✓ The moving spirit behind the developments was **Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis**, whom Jawaharlal Nehru described as the **“presiding genius of statistics in India,”** and the institute that he had **founded in Calcutta in 1931, the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI)**.
- ✓ There is an immediate need to dismiss the concerns about **alleged political interference** in statistical data.
- ✓ The government is committed to **maintaining the credibility** of statistical organisations and the **NSSO employment data** would be released by month-end.

- ✓ The economists have pointed out that economic statistics are a **public good** and are **essential for policy-making and informed public discourse**.
- ✓ They also underlined the need for the **use of scientific methods** for data collection and estimation and their timely dissemination, which form **vital public services**.

22. ANOTHER LOOK AT FISCAL TRANSFERS

Introduction:

- The Indian Constitution lays down the **functions as well as taxing powers** of the Centre and States.
- The Constitution of India has provided **provisions** which enable the Union and the States to **work in coordination** and to **levy and collect taxes through systematic arrangements**.
- In our country during the independence struggle, **provincial autonomy** was regarded as an **integral part** of the freedom movement.
- The **fiscal federal arrangements** that are provided in the Constitution adopted were largely the logical extensions of the **Government of India Act, of 1935**.

Actual gross tax revenues & devolution to States: 13th & 14th FCs (in ₹ cr) Table 2

	13 th FC actuals	14 th FC projections	14 th FC actual
	Total: 2010-11 to 2014-15	Total: 2015-16 to 2019-20	Total: 2015-16 to 2019-20
Gross tax revenues	5102103	10603748	9890784
Cess, surcharge & cost of tax collection	657409	1203303	1811601
Divisible Pool	4444694	9400445	8079183
Tax share to States	1422302	3948186	3393257
% of gross tax revenue			
Cess, Surcharge & Cost of tax collection	12.9	11.3	18.3
Divisible pool	87.1	88.7	81.7
Tax share to States	27.9	37.2	34.3

Source: Report of the Fourteenth Finance Commission & Union Budget Documents, Various Years

After Independence, Strong Centre: Centralisation Process:

- However, after Independence, several compulsions, which included **defence and internal security**, led to a **scheme of federalism** in which the **Centre** assumed greater importance.
- Also, in the immediate period following Independence, when the Centre and all States were **ruled by the same party** and when many of the powerful provincial leaders migrated to the Centre, the **process of centralisation** gathered further momentum.
- At that time, **Economic planning** at a nation-wide level helped this **centralising process**.

Fiscal Imbalance between States and Centre:

- Today, the Central government is held **responsible for everything** that happens, including, for example, agrarian distress.
- The **centrally sponsored schemes**, which have ballooned in recent years, have 'encroached' on the **territory of States**.
- Over years, the performance of the Central government is judged not only on the basis of actions taken which fall strictly in its jurisdiction but also on initiatives undertaken in the areas which **fall in the Concurrent and even State lists**. Centralised planning has something to do with it.
- For Instance, according to the **Finance Commission Reports**, In 2010-11, in the **combined revenue receipts** of the Centre and States, the share of the Centre was 64.68%.

- After transfer, the **share came down** to 40.20%. In the case of the States, their share before transfers was 35.32%. After the receipts of transfers the share of States **went up to 59.80%**. Thus, **the shares got reversed**.
- In **2016-17**, the share of the Centre after transfers was 33.37% and that of the States was 66.63%.
- In the **case of total expenditures**, the share of the Centre in 2014-15 was 41.14% and that of the States was 58.86%. The ultimate position appears reasonable. The question may be on the mode of transfers.
- At present **tax and grant transfer** is being determined by **both finance commission and central government**.
- There is **need of robust mechanism** through which **funds are allocated** or transfer to states.
- Therefore, while viewing the **responsibilities of the Centre and States** we must take a broader view than what is stipulated in the Constitution.

Problem of Fiscal Imbalances: Solution is Fiscal federalism:

- Fiscal federalism refers to the **division of responsibilities** with regards to public expenditure and taxation between the **different levels of the government**.
- In India, the Constitution recognises the **problem of fiscal imbalances**. It provides for the **appointment of the Finance Commission** by the President of India every five years to resolve them by making **recommendations on tax devolution and grants in aid of revenues**.
- The objective of transfers is to ensure **minimum standards of public services**.
- One important aspect of fiscal federalism is the determination of the **specific fiscal instruments** that would enable the different levels of government to carry out their functions.
- Having a Fiscal Federalism mechanism allows the government to optimize their costs on economies of scale, because in this manner, people will get public service which they prefer, and there will be no unnecessary expenditure.

Conclusion:

- ❖ There are issues relating to **horizontal distribution**. Equity considerations have dominated the allocations.
- ❖ However, the ability of bringing about equalisation across States in India has limitations. Even the **relatively richer States** have their **own problems** and they feel 'cheated' because of the **overuse of the equity criterion**.
- ❖ An appropriate **balancing of criteria** is needed particularly in the context of the rise in **unconditional transfers**.
- ❖ Of course, appropriate balancing is what all Finance Commissions are concerned about.
- ❖ The freedom given to the States must be limited. It is important to note that the levy by the Centre and States together **should be reasonable**.


Way Forward: Some suggestions

- ✓ The time has come for the **Constitution to be amended** and the proportion of shareable taxes that should go to the States **fixed at the desired level**.
- ✓ The **shareable tax pool** must also include **cesses and surcharges** as these have **sharply increased** in recent years.
- ✓ Fixing the **ratio at 42% of shareable taxes**, including cesses and surcharges, seems appropriate.
- ✓ Another possible route is to follow the **practice in the U.S. and Canada**: of allowing the **States to levy tax on personal income**, with some limitations.
- ✓ Since one of the concerns is that resources do not match functions, this may be a way out.
- ✓ But, as in the U.S., the scheme should be **simple and ride on federal income tax**, that is, just a levy on the income assessed by federal authorities.
- ✓ Adoption of any one of these alternatives will avoid friction between the Centre and the States. Perhaps the first alternative of **constitutionally fixing the ratio** is the easiest.

23. WHY TRUMP'S RECOGNITION OF THE GOLAN HEIGHTS AS ISRAELI TERRITORY MATTERS

Context:

- US President Mr. Trump's tweet marked a **reversal** of decades of **US policy**, which has refused to condone the **Israeli occupation of Golan**, and urged that the dispute must be resolved diplomatically.
- President Trump made new U.S. policy, with a tweet recognizing **Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights** on the border with Syria.
- The President has earlier recognised the **disputed city of Jerusalem as Israel's capital**, moved the American Embassy there from Tel Aviv, and **stopped aid to Palestinian refugees**.
- Last year, the US voted against a ritual annual **UN resolution** condemning Israel's continued **seizure of the Golan Heights**.
- Because nothing is happening on Golan and nobody expects Israel to pull back in any case, Trump's tweet does not change anything what it does, however, is **extend legitimacy to Israel's position**.




THE DISPUTED GOLAN HEIGHTS

WHY ARE THE GOLAN HEIGHTS SO IMPORTANT?

The 1,200sqkm plateau beside the Sea of Galilee offers expansive views over Syria and Israel, giving it **strategic military importance**

POPULATION
40,000 with Israeli Jewish settlers making up half of it. Arabs from Druze sect make the other half




HOW DID IT COME UNDER ISRAELI CONTROL?

Golan Heights were part of Syria until **1967**, when Israel captured most of the area in Six Day War. Israel fought against a joint force of Egypt, Jordan and Syria, almost decimating Egypt's air force. **Israel then annexed it in 1981, a move not recognised internationally**

WHY DOES ISRAEL WANT GOLAN

- **Security.** Israel says civil war in Syria demonstrates need to keep the plateau as a buffer zone. It also fears Iran is seeking to establish itself permanently on the Syrian side of the border in order to attack Israel



Both sides covet the Golan's water resources and naturally fertile soil

Golan Heights: A Political and Strategic asset:

- The Golan Heights is a **strategic high ground** at the southwestern corner of Syria with stunning, broad views of **both Israel and Syria below**.
- It is roughly about **1,200 square kilometres** (460 square miles) and **borders the Sea of Galilee**.
- Israel captured the territory in the **1967 Six-Day War** and applied Israeli law there in 1981 under then-Prime Minister Menachem Begin.
- **N. Security Council resolution 497** refers to Israel's action as **"null and void and without international legal effect."**

- The two sides of Israel and Syria appeared close to a deal in 2000, but disagreement over its fate ultimately **foiled the talks**.
- The **civil war in Syria** over the past eight years has been the priority and the areas adjacent to the Golan nearly fell to the **rebels at one point**.
- Having recovered those areas with Russia's help, Assad and his allies will likely seize on Trump's move to renew its claims to the Golan.
- The Golan Heights is a **strategically valuable high-altitude plateau** that overlooks Syria and the Jordan Valley.
- It is considered **militarily significant for both Syria and Israel**, and Israel also considers the territory a **"buffer-zone" that contributes to its self-defense**.
- In addition to its military value, the Golan Heights is also a strategic asset due to its **water resources and fertile land**.
- The area houses the Jordan River's drainage basin, Lake Tiberias, the Yarmuk River and underground aquifers.
- Israel extracts a **third of its water from the Golan Heights**. In a relatively parched region of the world, control over the Golan's water supplies is
- The Golan Heights may also **have oil**. Exploratory drilling suggests that the territory's reservoirs could potentially **yield billions of barrels**.

Present living Population in Golan Heights:

- According to some estimates, there are around **50,000 people**, with Israeli Jewish settlers making up nearly half.
- The rest are mostly people of **Syrian ancestry who are Druze**, a religion that has been described as an offshoot of Ismaili Islam.
- Druze residents of the Golan Heights have largely resisted obtaining Israeli citizenship and have **maintained a strong connection to Syria** for decades.
- But overall, life in the Golan Heights has been **relatively tranquil** compared with other places on Israel's frontiers.
- Israeli and Syrian armies are separated by a **400 sq. km demilitarized zone**, which neither side can enter and Israel argues that Golan Heights is a **security buffer against the war in Syria**.

What changed on recent Policy shift by US?

- For decades, the United Nations and the United States refused to recognize **Israel's seizure of the Golan Heights and the West Bank in 1967**, arguing that the contours of Israel must be negotiated diplomatically.
- Mr. Trump mentioned that, **after 52 years** it is time for the United States to fully recognize **Israel's sovereignty** over the Golan Heights, which is of **critical strategic and security importance** to the State of Israel and **Regional Stability**.
- Recognition of the Golan Heights could pave the way for US recognition of **Israeli sovereignty** in the Palestinian occupied territories.
- In a recent state department **report on human rights**, the administration changed its description of the West Bank and Gaza from "occupied territories" to **"Israeli-controlled territories"**.

Conclusion:

- ❖ Russian Foreign Ministry condemned the move, calling it a **"direct violation of UN decisions."**
- ❖ They highlighted that Changing the status of the Golan Heights bypassing the Security Council is in **direct violation of UN decisions**.
- ❖ Some analysts pointed out that Mr. Trump's gesture amounted to a form of **compensation to Israel**, since he has ordered American troops to withdraw from Syria **leaving Israel more vulnerable to attacks**.
- ❖ The Syrian government said in a statement it is now more intent on liberating the Golan, **"using every possible means."**
- ❖ The announcement was the latest in a series of steps under the Trump administration that have **reshaped the United States role** in conflicts between Israel and its Arab neighbors, to the benefit of **Israel's right-wing government**.
- ❖ Former diplomats said Mr. Trump's action was **unnecessary and would inflame** an issue that had been largely dormant.
- ❖ They also said it would embolden other world leaders who seized territory in **violation of international norms**.

24. REALITY OF IMPUNITY, RHETORIC OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Context:

- In recent issue in **Sitamarhi district, Bihar**, two families received the bodies of their two sons from the police.
- The two men were questioned at the **Dumra police station** for a case of theft and murder in the area.
- Instead, they came back dead. The ritual bathing revealed **torture tell-tale marks of nails** hammered into their thighs and wrists.
- Torture is a form of crudity and a barbarity which **appals modern civilisation**.
- The history of torture throughout the ages reveals that torture was employed by various communities either in their **religious rites or its code of punishment**.

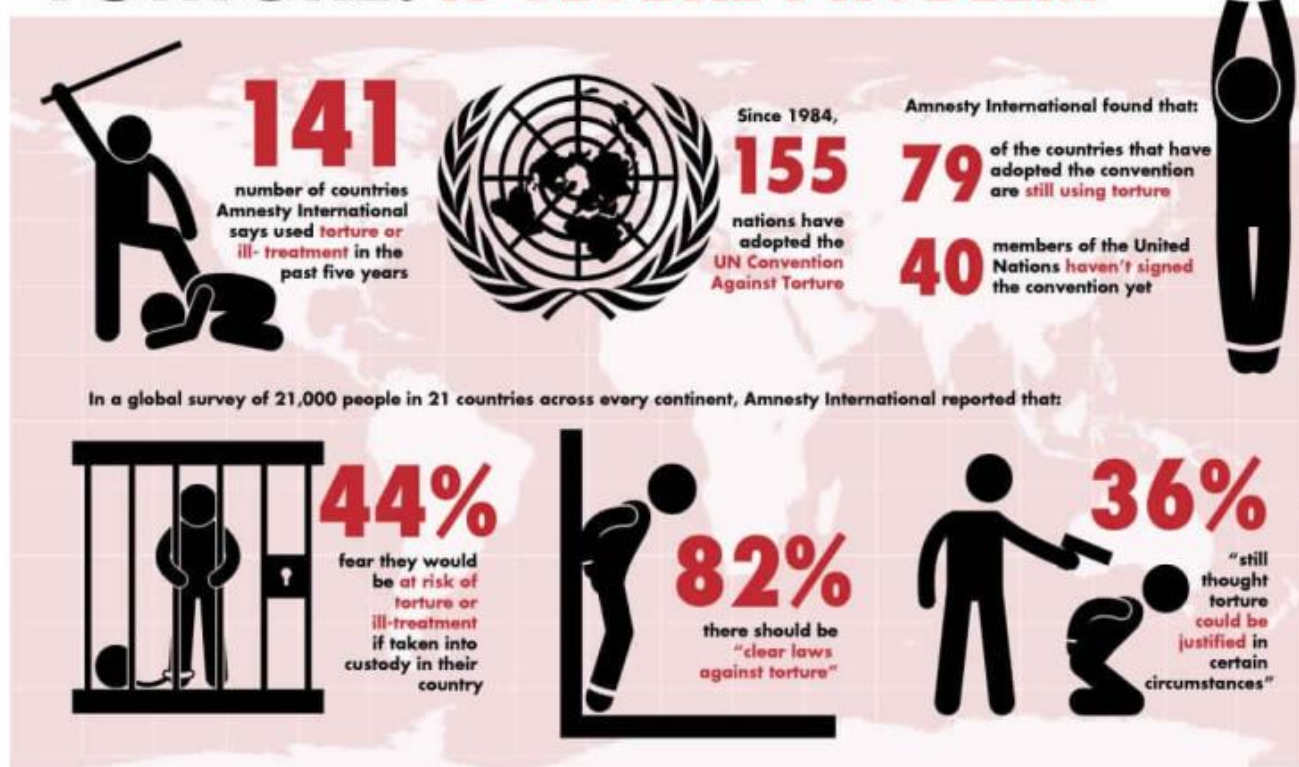
Absence of torture law endangers constitutional rights of people:

- The original petition submitted that “by virtue of **Article 51 of the Constitution of India**, an international obligation is cast upon India **to prevent custodial violence and torture**” since India was a signatory to the **1997 convention**.
- The Central Government vide its letter on 8th July, 2017 asked the **Law Commission** to examine the issue of **ratification of UN Convention against Torture** and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment and submit a report on the matter.

Data related to Police Custody and Physical Torture:

- Official statistics show that last year there were **144 deaths in police custody**.
- About **40% of complaints** received every year by the NHRC are **against the police**, mainly for custodial violence. It is **forbidden by law**. It makes people **to lose trust in police**.
- It destroys the process of decision making through **evidence-based means**, whether the accused is the real perpetrator or not.
- Centre should have a **comprehensive and stand-alone legislation against Torture**.
- **The Law Commission** has suggested that the State should **not claim immunity** from the actions of its officers or agents.

TORTURE: A GLOBAL PROBLEM



Custodial torture violated Human Dignity: Need for a Legislative Protection:

- The **Prevention of Torture Bill** was first introduced and passed in the **Lok Sabha in 2010**.
- In August 2010, it was referred to a select committee of parliament, which was chaired by Kumar and comprised 13 members of Rajya Sabha.
- Kumar submitted that “after **long and comprehensive deliberations**, we unanimously proposed a standalone legislation against torture so as to comply with the requirements of **UN Convention on Torture**.”
- Subsequently, the **Prevention of Torture Bill, 2017** was appended to the **Law Commission Report**.
- According to analysts, the proposed text largely followed the recommendations of the select committee of the Rajya Sabha. However, there were **some differences**, too especially in “**what constitutes torture**.”
- Recent petition before the Supreme Court stated that **custodial torture** was a **naked violation of human dignity** and degradation that destroys the self-esteem of the victim.
- It said: “Since there is **no scientific method of investigation**, torture remains integral to the investigation to obtain confessions from suspects.
- Despite the guarantee **under Article 21** and directions from the apex court, it pointed out there were “**no checks and balances** against the personnel who commit custodial torture” and thus “an intervention from Judiciary has become imperative.”
- However, despite the commitment, it charged, “the entire constitutional framework, the legislature and executive in India have **objectly failed** to discharge their **constitutional obligations**.”
- The absence of a **standalone, comprehensive and purposeful** municipal legislation for the prevention of custodial violence, “has resulted in a disturbing void in law **endangering the constitutional right of persons**”.

Need for “Comprehensive Torture Prevention Law”:

- The **right to freedom from torture** is enshrined in number of human rights instruments which provide for **protection of all individuals** from being intentionally subjected to **severe physical or psychological distress** by, or with the approval or acquiescence of, government agents acting for a specific purpose, such as to obtain information.
- The prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is enshrined in many regional and universal human rights instruments.
- The Supreme Court, in last month, reserved its judgment on former Union Law Minister and Senior Advocate Ashwani Kumar’s PIL for an **effective and purposeful legislation to check instances of custodial torture**.
- The **International Commission of Jurists** has criticized India’s failure to tackle **issues of torture and unaccountability of armed forces**.
- According to the **Report of the Working Group on Human Rights in India**, torture and ill-treatment are widespread in India. The report has also called for **immediate intervention by the government against torture**.

Conclusion:

- ❖ In May 2017, addressing representatives from countries at the **UN’s Human Rights Council**, the then **Attorney General of India** said, “The concept of torture is completely **alien to our culture** and it has **no place in the governance** of the nation.”
- ❖ The prohibition of torture is a **part of customary international law** and is a part of compelling law.
- ❖ **Inclusion of extradition prohibitions** in the Torture Convention enjoins more States to **ensure accountability** worldwide for acts of torture.
- ❖ Some of the **Isolated innovations** are happened here and there. But they are not enough and torture is embedded itself in the **sub-culture of policing**.
- ❖ For Instance, **Kerala Police Act** puts the onus on all police officers to report any physical torture they know of. **Prisons in Telangana** refuse to admit people brought into judicial custody, if they appear injured. Such persons are sent back to hospitals, forcing their injuries to be properly recorded.
- ❖ Therefore, there is a need for “**Comprehensive Torture Prevention Law**”, which puts certain bar on **physical and mental torture** especially for depressed sections of the society.

25. DELAYING BAD NEWS: ON PROPOSED BANKING REFORMS

Context:

- The Reserve Bank of India postponed the **implementation of the Indian Accounting Standards (Ind AS) norms for banks** indefinitely, citing the need for amendments to be made **by the government to the relevant banking laws**.
- The move will bring **huge relief to the banks** which are yet to recognise stressed assets and make necessary provisions as that would **require higher capital**.
- In 2011, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs announced **applicability of Indian Accounting Standards (IND AS)** to make reporting by Indian companies globally accessible.
- MCA had notified **Companies (Indian Accounting Standard Rules) 2015**, which listed out the applicability and adoption.



Implementation of Indian Accounting Standards (Ind AS) norms:

- **Ind AS or Indian Accounting Standards** govern the accounting and recording of financial transactions as well as the presentation of statements such as profit and loss account and **balance sheet of a company**.
- Ind AS has been evolved as a **compromise formula** that tries to **harmonise Indian accounting rules with the globally accepted International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)**.
- The **implementation of IndAS** for public sector banks requires an **amendment to the Banking Regulation Act**.
- The schedule in BR Act relating to financial statement disclosures needs to be changed to the **IndAS format**.
- **Section 29 of the Banking Regulation Act** deals with the accounts and balance sheets of public sector banks. Private sector banks are covered by the Companies Act, which is based on the **new accounting standards**.
- The RBI had initially planned to implement the norms **starting April 1, 2018** in order to bring **Indian accounting standards** in line with **international standards**.
- But the **Centre's delay** in enacting the necessary amendments had given breathing space for banks for another year.

Expected Consequences if Ind AS Norms comes forward:

- Given that **Ind AS is a principle based standard**, the Regulators could provide **simplified guidelines** for ease of implementation and **bringing consistency** in implementation amongst banks.

- It is believed that the adoption of the **accounting standard** could cause significant **credit losses to banks**, which will be forced to **prematurely recognise losses** on their loans and build up the necessary underlying capital required to **overcome the impact of such losses**.
- Under the proposed norms, financial institutions like banks will have to calculate **expected credit losses (ECL) on their loans** during each reporting period and make necessary adjustments to their profit-and-loss account **even before a borrower may default on a certain loan**.
- This is in contrast to the **present accounting norms** wherein banks incur credit losses in their books **only after outstanding loans** have been in a **state of default over a certain number of days** as stated in the rules **laid down by the RBI**.

Adopting the Accounting Norms results in Addition to pile up Bad Loans:

- For example, the impact of **expected credit losses** may be spread systematically over a five-year period, thereby allowing time for banks **to manage the increase in capital requirements**.
- According to estimates made by **India Ratings & Research**, public sector banks would have to make **additional provision of over a trillion rupees means of over Rs. 1 lakh-Cr** if the norms are adopted right away.
- Given the losses they would likely have to incur, it is understandable why banks would try to avoid **adopting the accounting norms** for as long as possible.
- So, the delay in the implementation of the Ind AS norms is not surprising at all.
- Further, to adjust to the new norms, banks will have to **improve their ability to forecast future credit losses with precision**.
- Until this happens, bank earnings could **experience volatility**. The Central government, which has been trying to bail out public sector **banks without carrying out the structural reforms** required to **clean up balance sheets**, might also prefer to delay the **enactment of the legislation**.
- For the new norms will cause **more outstanding loans** to be added to the huge **existing pile of bad loans** and cause further headaches to the government.

Conclusion:

- ❖ The Centre may not be able to foot the bill to go for legislation process, and may instead prefer to help public sector banks to **hide the true size of their bad loans**.
- ❖ The **backend system** and the **other ecosystem** probably were not ready. This required a thorough discussion with the auditors on what should be provided
- ❖ This does not sign of well for the **health of the banking system** as banks that do not recognise their problems might not resolve them.
- ❖ In recent times, the **banking regulator** had raised concerns over **'divergence' in asset classification and provisioning**, which means the reported numbers of a bank were lower than what RBI's inspection report had found.
- ❖ The **implementation of Ind AS** would have taken care of such issues. In the long run, moving to **internationally acceptable accounting standards** will help the Indian banking system in becoming **more resilient and tapping international pools** for their capital requirements.
- ❖ **Introduction of GST, Ind AS, ICDS, etc.**, are transformational changes, which are steps in the **right direction for the country's growth**.
- ❖ We have formed cross functional teams to prepare for the respective changes in regulations and have also sought external expert support, wherever required, to **ensure complete compliance and smooth transition**.

26. PARADIGM SHIFT FOR TB CONTROL

Introduction:

- **Tuberculosis (TB)** remains the **biggest killer disease in India**, outnumbering all other infectious diseases put together this despite our battle against it **from 1962**, when the **National TB Programme (NTP)** was launched.
- All hope was pinned on **mass BCG vaccination to prevent TB**.
- In 1978, the **Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI)** began, giving BCG to all babies soon after birth and achieving more than 90% coverage.
- Yet, when evaluated in 1990, the NTP and the EPI had **not reduced** India's TB burden.

- In 1993, the **Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP)** was launched, offering **free diagnosis and treatment for patients**, rescuing them from otherwise sure death.
- However, treatment is not prevention. **Prevention is essential for control.**
- True to the spirit of World TB Day theme, there is a need to laud Tamil Nadu for deciding 'It's time to take bold and imaginative initiatives **to create a TB control model**'.
- **Tamil Nadu**, an erstwhile global leader in TB research during the 1960s through the 1990s, will now become the **global leader in TB control.**

Landmark years in fight against TB:

- In many ways, TB has never been more visible than before. The years 2018 and 2019 have been landmark years in the **fight against TB, globally and in India**, with the first ever **High-Level Meeting on TB held at the United Nations** last year.
- In India, there is **high political will and commitment to end TB**, budgets are slowly increasing, new social support schemes have been announced and TB survivors are speaking up.

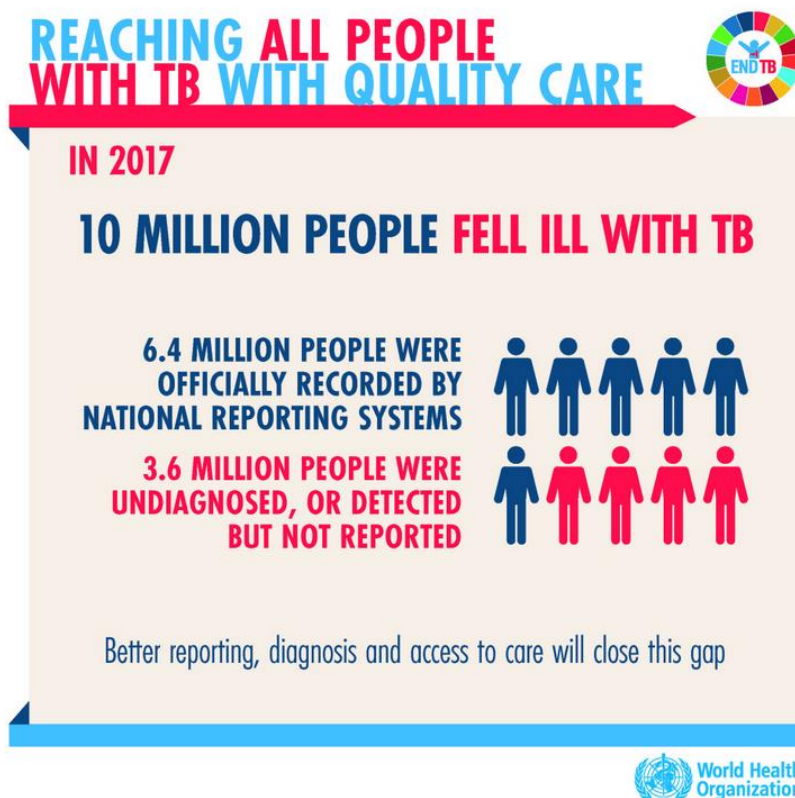
World TB Day is observed on **March 24**. The theme of **World TB Day 2019** – 'It's time' – puts the accent on the urgency to act on the commitments made by global leaders to:

- scale up access to prevention and treatment;
- build accountability;
- ensure sufficient and sustainable financing including for research;
- promote an end to stigma and discrimination, and
- promote an equitable, rights-based and people-centred TB response.

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has launched a joint initiative "**Find. Treat. All. #EndTB**" with the Global Fund and Stop TB Partnership, with the aim of accelerating the TB response and ensuring access to care, in line with WHO's overall drive towards **Universal Health Coverage**.
- But as yet another World TB Day comes around on 24 March, it is important to keep reminding ourselves that we cannot win the fight against TB **without ending stigma and discrimination**.
- Even as the government steps up **investment in new tools** and strengthens **service delivery systems**, we must make sure that stigma and discrimination are not left out of **global, national and local plans to end TB**.
- And we cannot end **stigma and discrimination** if we do not improve **public understanding of TB** that it is curable, that pulmonary or lung TB spreads through air, that a person with TB becomes non-infectious soon after starting treatment and that **extra-pulmonary TB** (TB that affects parts of the body other than the lungs) is **not infectious**.

Impact of stigma and discrimination:

- The impact of stigma extends **beyond the shame, fear and guilt** that a person with TB can feel.
- As many TB survivors have told us over the years, stigma is often **self-directed and internalised**, drawing on social misconceptions of TB.
- This is especially true of **women with TB**, who bear the brunt of criticism from their families and whose biggest fear is of infecting their children.



- **TB is a curable disease yet the impact of stigma can be long-lasting**, often resulting in the breakdown of relationships. Stigma can be **more devastating** than the disease itself.
- From the health system's perspective, stigma is a powerful deterrent at every step along the care cascade the pathway from when someone develops symptoms of TB to until after they are declared cured.
- Stigma can prevent someone with symptoms of TB **from accessing services** as we have seen that the fear of **being diagnosed with TB** often outweighs the anxiety associated with feeling ill or in poor health.
- Stigma and discrimination also come together to inhibit someone with TB from continuing their treatment or seeking preventive therapy for their family.
- As the Legal Environment Assessment report of TB recommends, **adopting a rights-based, community-led, gender-sensitive and person-centred approach** is central to reducing stigma and discrimination.
- This means ensuring that all persons with TB receive respectful and high-quality treatment, including adequate information about TB and counselling.
- For this, we **need to sensitise healthcare providers** to issues faced by those with TB and ensure they act in a non-discriminatory manner.
- We must provide **both treatment and legal literacy to people with TB**, so that they understand their rights and can speak up if these are violated.

Conclusion:

- ❖ On March 13, 2018, the Prime Minister, who was inaugurating **the End TB Summit**, declared that **India would end TB by 2025**.
- ❖ In September 2018, the first ever United Nations High Level Meeting on TB declared the urgent agenda **"United to end TB an urgent global response to a global epidemic"**.
- ❖ Rhetoric and declarations cannot control TB. A strategy of simultaneously using **all biomedical and socio-behavioural interventions can**.

Four sub-themes under the "Unite to End TB" theme that WHO is promoting are:

- Together we will tackle TB by stamping out poverty.
- Together we will better test, treat, and cure.
- Together we will stop stigma and discrimination.
- Together we will drive research and innovation.

Way Forward:

- ✓ We must develop a **robust system** to ensure that they not only have a seat at the table but also have a **say in decision-making** that impacts the everyday lives of those living with TB.
- ✓ It is the active involvement of these TB survivors and champions that can give an impetus to our collective efforts to improve public understanding of TB, reduce stigma, prevent discrimination and end TB in India.
- ✓ Ending TB by 2025 is impossible but pulling the **TB curve down by 2025** and sustaining the decline ever after is in the realm of reality.
- ✓ The ultimate impact of this **national strategic plan** will be transformational improvements in the end TB efforts of India. It plans to take a **"detect-treat-prevent-build approach" in its war against TB**.

RSTV, LSTV, AIR - SYNOPSIS

1. MELTING OF HIMALAYAN GLACIERS

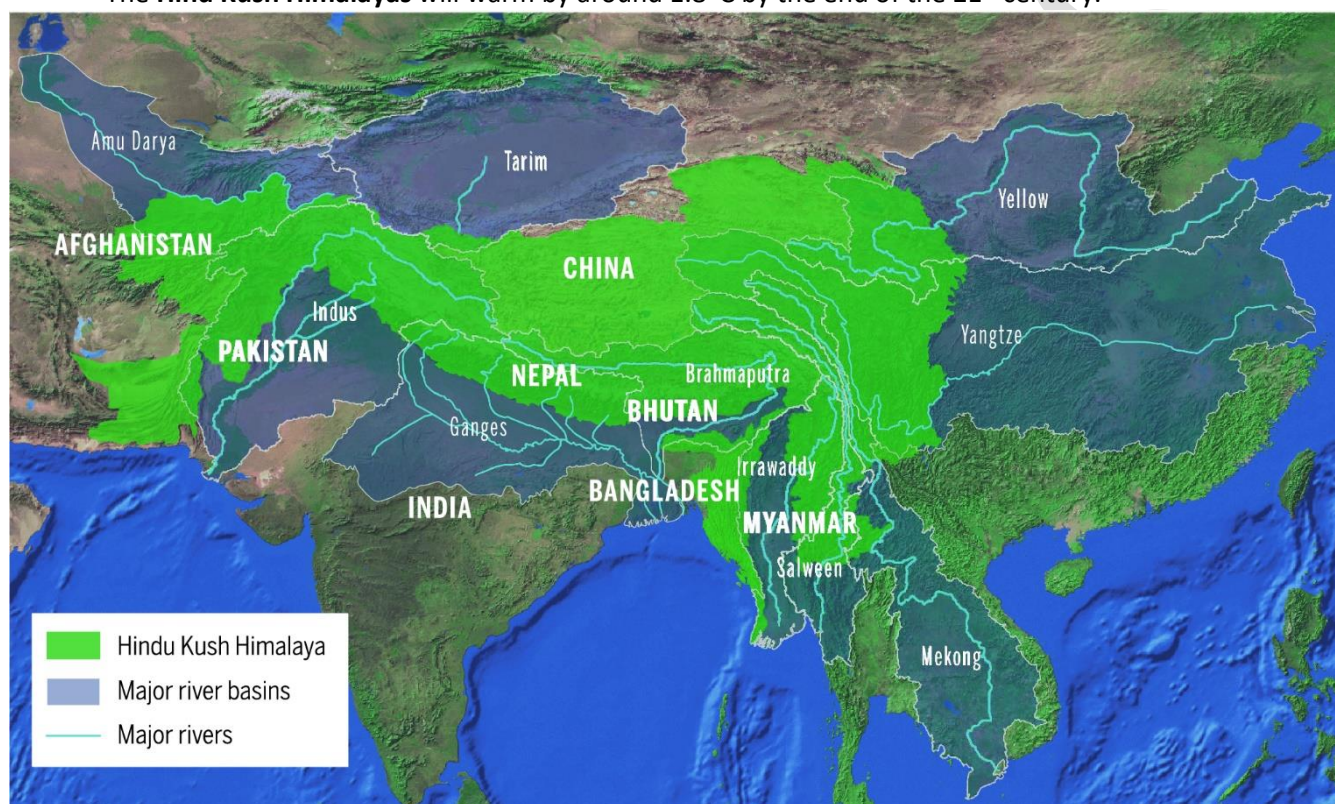
(TOPICS COVERED:

PRELIMS: General issues on Environmental Ecology, Bio-diversity and Climate Change

MAINS: GENERAL STUDIES – BIO-DIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENT)

Link: <https://youtu.be/JpbOIAtcT8o>

- At the Paris climate conference in December 2015, 195 countries adopted the first-ever universal, legally binding global climate deal. This set out a global action plan to limit global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C. But despite the global efforts, there are forecasts that the world global temperature may rise above 1.5°C.
- The **Hind Kush Himalayas** will warm by around 1.8°C by the end of the 21st century.



The Hindu Kush Himalaya region and its river basins

THE HINDU KUSH HIMALAYA ASSESSMENT REPORT:

- The report was made together by researchers, experts and policymakers, brought by Hindu Kush Himalayan Monitoring and Assessment Report (HIMAP) and International centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)
- The Assessment has been titled **“Mountain, Climate Change, Sustainability and People”**.
- According to report, even the most ambitious goal set by the **Paris Agreement** to limit **global warming** would lead to a 2.1 spike in temperature in the **Hindu Kush Region**, leading to **melting of 1/3rd of the region’s glaciers by 2100**, potentially **destabilizing Asia’s rivers**.
- If the Green House Gas emissions continue at their current level, the region can loose up to 2/3rd of its ice. So, the amount of GHG emissions will determine the amount of glaciers melted in these mountainous ranges.
- The melting of these glaciers will put a **threat on 1.9 billion people**.
- **Hind Kush, the world’s third pole** is 3,500 km long spread over **8 countries in South Asia** and home to **10 major river basins** is under **severe threat of climate change**.
- **8 Countries covered by Hindu Kush Himalayas (HKH region):** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan.
- **10 Major river basins in HKH region:** Amu Darya, Brahmaputra, Ganges, Indus, Irrawaddy, Mekong, Salween, Tarim, Yangtze, Yellow rivers.

- The HKH region form the largest area of **permanent ice cover** outside of the North and South Poles, and so are often referred to as **“Third Pole”**.
- HKH region is home to 4 global biodiversity hotspots, several important bird areas, and hundreds of mountain peaks. It provides ecosystem services (water, food, energy, etc) to nearly 2 billion people through its river basins.
- Melting of glaciers can be a **threat to water and food security** and increase the risks of disasters.
- **Elevation Dependent Warming** is a phenomenon of more increase in temperature in mountains than at lower altitudes.
- Since the 1970s, about 15% of ice in the HKH region has disappeared as temperature have risen.
- **Water supply** in the region is closely dependant on **rainfall during monsoon** and trickling **meltwater from glaciers during dry season**.
- **Lower flows of river water** due to glacial melting will **cut power from hydro dams** that generate much of the region’s electricity.
- **Farmers** in the foothills and downstream will face a serious impact.

Impacts of climate change globally:

- Climate change is bringing **rising incidents of disasters** like wildfires, cyclones, hurricanes, droughts, floods, etc.
- **Rising human development and industrial progress** are held responsible for the climate change occurring today. Natural resources like trees are being cut for urbanization and non-renewable resources (like fossil fuels) are being used at a very high rate.
- **Global temperatures are rising** and **extreme weather conditions** are being witnessed.
- **Mountain glaciers and ice sheets** covering Antarctica, Greenland and Arctic Sea are vanishing.
- **Rapid rise in sea level** in recent years has **threatened low-lying islands** and coastal cities.
- **Wildlife and their habitats** are affected. Some species are being pushed towards extinction.
- **Ocean acidity** is increasing that threatens shellfish, including crustaceans, **affecting marine food chains**.
- **Agriculture** is facing a threat.

Initiatives done by the Government of India in recent years to save the environment:

- Formation of **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**
- Focus on increasing **forest cover**.
- **National Clean Air Program (NCAP)**
- Launch of **National Air Quality Index in 2015**
- **Namami Gange Program** for cleaning Ganga river.
- **Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan**.
- **Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojana** to increase LPG connections.
- **Waste management** has emerged as a priority issue.
- Focus on **electrical vehicles**.
- Reducing the use of single use

CONCLUSION:

- The **United Nations** had focussed on environment in the famous **Rio Summit in 1992**. The development today has to be ‘sustainable’ as mentioned in the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals** that along with socio-economic and other factors focusses on climate and environment as well.
- But, even after several efforts and talks at various national and international levels, 2014-2023 was predicted to be the hottest decade in 150 years. The world **needs to control the Green House Gas emissions** as targeted by the **Paris Agreement** otherwise, the consequences of increasing global temperature can be threatening.

2. BORDER SURVEILLANCE

(PRELIMS: Current events of national and international importance

MAINS: GENERAL STUDIES III – Security challenges and their management in border areas)

Link: <https://youtu.be/qsec9SdUpfA>

- India’s **land border covers around 15,106 km** sharing boundaries with Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. Varied terrains, climatic conditions and hostile neighbours make its borders complex and border management an important part of its security. Home Minister,

Rajnath Singh inaugurated the electronic border surveillance project on 5th March 2019 along the India-Bangladesh border.



Map showing Indo-Bangladesh border

International borders of India:

- The **Northern borders** of India are defined by **Himalayan mountain range**.
- The **Western border** contains mainly the **Thar desert**.
- The border with **Bangladesh Khasi and Mizo hills** and regions defined by **River Ganga and Brahmaputra**.
- Mountains in the Northern part consist mainly ice while those in the North-East may be deeply forested.
- The **total coastline of India is about 7500 km** along the **Indian Ocean** that connects it to various nations in its southern part. These include Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan Thailand, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Safeguarding the borders of India:

- **Effective border management** requires proper planning and measures that safeguard India's frontiers and safeguard it from the risks involved in the movement of goods and people across the borders.
- **Smart border management** with technological solutions is a step towards improving border security.
- **Central Armed Police Forces** including Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), Border Security Force (BSF), Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), etc and Indian Army are responsible for securing India's international borders.
- The **maritime borders of India** that are recognised as per **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea** are secured by the **Indian Navy**.
- All states in India except Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Delhi and Haryana have an international border or a coastline.



Security forces guarding India's borders

New electronic surveillance project along Indo-Bangladesh border:

- Bangladesh shares 4,096 km of international border with India which are guarded by **Border Security Force (BSF)** on the Indian side.
- A new electronic surveillance was inaugurated by Rajnath Singh in **Dhubri district of Assam**. This 61 km long border is formed mainly by **Brahmaputra river and consist of vast char lands and various river channels** makes border surveillance a tough task.
- A char is a tract of land surrounded by the waters of an ocean, sea, lake or stream.
- The project is called **BOLD-QIT** (Border Electronically Dominated Quick response team Interception Technique) under **CIBMS** (Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System).
- Wide range of **electronic gadgets** have been installed along the Indo-Bangladesh border in the Dhubri district of Assam.
- This consists of Microwave communication, OFC (Optical Fibre) cables, DMR (Digital Mobile Radio) communication, day and night surveillance cameras, and intrusion detection systems. These **modern gadgets provide feedback to BSF control rooms** and enables **Quick Reaction Teams** to prevent any possibility of Illegal Cross Border Crossings/ Crimes.
- A 'Virtual Fence' for human-less real-time investigation of borders is created by CIBMS. These include – infrared and laser-based intrusion alarm systems, thermal imagers, aerial surveillance, sonar and ground systems, satellite imagery, etc.
- CIBMS provides an all-weather and round the clock surveillance system.
- **Round the clock surveillance** is needed along the riverine border check illegal immigration, smuggling of arms & ammunition, etc.
- Using e-surveillance will save time and energy loss of security personnel in doing continuous patrolling physically.



Map showing Dhubri district of Assam

- Some of the **challenges for using CIBMS in India** include –
 1. Operation and maintenance cost
 2. Lack of technical expertise
 3. High cost of devices
 4. Lack of easy availability of spare parts
 5. Erratic power supply
 6. Adverse climatic and terrain conditions.
- A mix of well-trained personnel and use of modern technological methods can yield better results.

Space technology in Border Management:

- ISRO is set to launch a **satellite** exclusively for **Home Ministry**.
- The satellite will be used for improving communication and navigation, managing security, operational planning and border management.

- The Navy and the Air Force have dedicated satellites for themselves. Now the Ministry of Home Affairs is also planning to get a satellite dedicated for their own purposes for securing India's borders.
- These satellites will help the security forces to know any activity occurring on border with the help of **satellite imagery**.

CONCLUSION:

- Keeping a strong vigil on its border is very important for any nation to check any kind of illegal activities or intrusion through them. For India, the task becomes difficult where terrain and climate is very complex across some of its border areas. Focussing on improved technology will help in making the task easier for the security forces and make its borders more secure.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS**UPSC MAINS 2017, GS III**

(Q) The north-eastern region of India has been infested with insurgency for a very long time. Analyse the major reasons for the survival of armed insurgency in this region.

UPSC MAINS 2017, GS III

(Q) The scourge of terrorism is a grave challenge to national security. What solutions do you suggest to curb this growing menace? What are the major sources of terrorist funding?

UPSC MAINS 2016, GS III

(Q) Border management is a complex task due to difficult terrain and hostile relations with some countries. Elucidate the challenges and strategies for effective border management.

3. AK-203**(TOPICS COVERED****PRELIMS: CURRENT EVENTS OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE****MAINS: GENERAL STUDIES III – SECURITY)**

Link: <https://youtu.be/PnpHevm-JVg>

- The first lot of about 7.5 lakh **AK-203 rifles** is expected to roll out from Korwa Ordnance Factory in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh until the end of year 2019 and **eventually replace INSAS rifles** being used by the Army and Paramilitary forces.
- AK-203 is the **latest and most advanced version of the AK-47 rifle** which is considered as the **most reliable** firearm in its category.

INSAS RIFLE:

- **INSAS (INDIAN Small Arms System)** is a family of infantry arms consisting of an assault rifle and a light machine gun.
- **Manufacturer:** Ordnance Factories Board.
- **ORDINANCE FACTORIES BOARD:** It is an **industrial organisation** under the **Ministry of Defence, Government of India** founded in 1802. It is engaged in development, production, marketing, etc of a **wide product range** (small arms, missile, military vehicles, etc) in the areas of **air, land and sea systems**. Examples- MCIWS, Rocket propelled grenade launcher, Arjuna tank, IAS Su-30 MKI's rockets, bombs, missiles, etc. It is often called the "**Forces behind the Armed Forces**" of India.
- **INSAS was adopted in 1990** and its first combat use was in **Kargil War, 1999**.
- But during the **Kargil War, INSAS faced many issues**. At the high altitudes of the Himalayas complaints of jamming, magazine cracking due to cold, oil spray, injuries during firing practise, going into automatic mode by itself, etc were received.
- A **rifle being used shall be reliable** and shall work in a **range of climatic and terrain conditions** ranging from extreme cold (like in Siachen glaciers) to extreme hot (like in the Thar deserts). It needs to fire instantly when needed and issues like jamming, etc must not be there in a combat situation.



An INSAS rifle

AK 203:

- **AK series** (known in Russia as '**Avtomat Kalashnikova**) of rifles are a series of **automatic rifles of Russia** (erstwhile Soviet Union) based on the design of **Mikhail Kalashnikov**.
- The AK series of rifles are known for **not getting jammed** and they **can work in extreme climatic and terrain conditions**. They are effective in sand, soil and water.

AK 203 rifle

- Forces in India are using variants **AKM and AK-103 at present**.
- AK 203 are going to replace the INSAS rifles in India. In the initial phase, 7.5 lakh units of AK-203 will be supplied to the defence forces. It is planned to be provided to state police forces in the next phase.
- AK-203 rifles will be produced in India under '**Make in India**' This can make the production of these rifles a profitable industry in future and India may export it to other nations as well.
- AK-203 has an **effective range of 400 metres** and is considered to be **100% precise**.
- The **bullet of AK-203 has 7.62 mm calibre** as against **56 mm of INSAS bullets**. So, bullets of AK-203 are more powerful. A 'calibre' is the approximate internal diameter of a gun barrel.
- The **metallurgy of AK-203 is better** than the INSAS rifles. It is also **light in weight** even after having a high calibre.
- The AK-203 rifle is **designed in a nation which is close to the Arctic**. So, it is designed to function at **sub-zero temperatures**. It shall work effectively in Siachen glaciers. AK-series of rifles also work in **desert conditions**.
- AK-203 can function in **extreme conditions with low maintenance**.
- Using better equipment improves a person's **ergonomics** (efficiency in working environment). So, AK-203 will improve ergonomics of the security forces.

CONCLUSION:

- AK-203 is an upgraded and very advanced weapon which is being inducted in the Russian forces simultaneously. It carries with it the reliability of AK series of rifles. The future use of AK-203 for security forces in India is a **very welcome step** and modernisation of the security forces is the need of the hour.

4. TERROR: WORLD STANDS WITH INDIA

(TOPICS COVERED:

PRELIMS: Current events of national and international importance

MAINS: General Studies III – Security challenges; linkages of organized crime with terrorism)

Link: <https://youtu.be/8SLFouXF0eE>

- External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj has said that although **China blocked banning JeM chief Masood Azhar**, India has a worldwide support on the issue of terror. The Minister asserted that **India had secured "unprecedented support"** from the international community for listing the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief under the **UN Sanctions Committee**.
- China for the fourth time on 13th March 2019 blocked the bid in the UN Security Council to designate the chief of the Pakistan-based terror group as a "global terrorist" by putting a 'technical hold' on the proposal. The Chinese move was termed "disappointing" by India.

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL:



Flag of the United Nations

- It is one of the **6 principal organs** of the United Nations (UN), charged with the maintenance of **international peace and security**.
- Its powers include the establishment of **peacekeeping operations**, **international sanctions** and the authorization of military actions through Security Councils resolutions.
- It was **formed in 1945** and held its **first session in 1946**.
- **Members** = 5 permanent members + 10 non-permanent members.
- Permanent members = China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States.
- Any one of the 5 permanent members have the **power of veto**, that enables them to prevent the adoption of any “substantive” draft council resolution, regardless of its level of international support.

ANALYSIS:

- **In case of Masood Azhar**, there have been 4 attempts to put him in the UN Security Council’s **counter-terrorism list**. But all the **attempts were vetoed by China** stating ‘lack of evidence’.
- A possible **reason for China’s veto** in Masood Azhar case may be its **relations and growing investments in Pakistan**. China has the project of “China Pakistan Economic Corridor” (**CPEC**).
- But the **global opinion of tackling terrorism** and in particular declaring Masood Azhar as a global terrorist has been **getting stronger**. This as a process is a positive sign from India’s perspective.
- Pakistan is already in the Grey list of **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)**. This can be a pressure point for China as will seek for presidency of FATF this year.
- If Pakistan is put in the Black List of FATF, it can affect its economy a lot.
- India’s External Affairs Minister was recently invited at **Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** and Pakistan was seen absent in the meeting. It shows **India’s growing global influence and support** in its fight against terrorism.
- India’s recent air strike in the **Balakot** was a **strong signal to Pakistan** to control terrorism.
- India also has a strong Naval base and any strikes in Maritime domain can affect ports like Gwadar and Karachi. This will be a loss to China also due to its investments there.
- India had taken a strong stand during the **Doklam issue** and that put a pressure on **China**. India shall continue such stands firmly to protect its territories.

CONCLUSION:

- India’s support and stand at international forums has been increasing as a continuous process in its fights against terrorism. It shall continue to take a stand firm to control the menace.

5. A-SAT MISSILE

(TOPICS COVERED)

PRELIMS: Current event of national and international importance

MAINS: GENERAL STUDIES III – Achievements of India in Science and Technology, indigenisation of technology and developing new technology)

Link: https://youtu.be/WEKzNH09Vqs?list=PLVOgWA_DiGzpAFPXUHGalPSNvmwd8zEzQ

- On **March 27th 2019**, India joined the **elite club of nations** who possess an **anti-satellite technology**.
- The technology mission (Mission Shakti) was led by **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** to **strengthen India’s overall security**.

- The capability of attacking a satellite in an orbit closer to Earth shall give a tactical edge to the country.

Anti-Satellite Weapons (ASAT)



An illustration showing ASAT technology

- ASAT are **space weapons** designed to **incapacitate or destroy satellites for strategic military purposes**.
- Space weapons can attack space weapons in orbit (ASAT), attack targets on the earth from space or disable missiles travelling through space.
- ASAT missiles are of two types – Kinetic or Non-Kinetic.
- **Kinetic A-SAT** physically strikes an object and destroys it like ballistic missile.
- **Non-Kinetic A-SAT** use non-physical means to disable/destroy a space object like frequency jamming.
- The theoretical range of A-SAT weapons is limited to 20,000km.
- The capabilities of ASAT have been demonstrated by **United States, Russia, China and India**.
- Israel is said to be on the path of developing its ASAT technology.
- An ASAT can:
 1. Intercept, jam communication or military satellites of enemy countries.
 2. Access critical information about troop movements or incoming missiles.
 3. Launch cyber-attacks on space systems and direct laser-based weapons.
- ASAT weapons technology is complicated involving highly reliable surface-to-air ballistic missiles and long-range radar and tracking systems.

Previous ASAT missions:

- **1959: USA** performs first anti-satellite test. An air-launched ballistic missile was fired from B-47 bomber at Explorer VI satellite.
- **1963: Soviet Union** acquires ASAT technology.
- **1985: America** tested AGM-135, launched from a F-15 fighter jet and destroyed its own satellite Solwind P 78-1.
- **2007: China** enters anti-satellite arena. It destroyed old weather satellite in a high, polar orbit.
- **2008: USA** carried out Operation Burnt Frost to destroy a defunct spy satellite.
- **27th March 2019: India** became the fourth nation to acquire ASAT technology.

MISSION SHAKTI

- It showed India's Anti-Satellite capabilities by shooting down a live satellite.
- The ASAT missile shot down a pre-determined target orbiting an altitude of 300 km within 3 minutes of its launch. This proved its **remarkable precision and technical capability**
- The interceptor was launched from **Integrated Test Range (ITR) in Chandipur, Odisha** and hit its target **Microsat-R**. Microsat-R was an earth observing satellite manufactured by DRDO and launched by ISRO on 24 January 2019.
- India became the fourth nation in the world to test an ASAT weapon after US, Russia and China.
- The **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** of India has explained that **India has no intention of entering into arms race in outer space**. The test was carried out to verify India's space capabilities to safeguard space

assets. The test was not intended any country and the test was done in Low Earth Orbit to ensure that there is no space debris.

- **Low Earth Orbits (LEOs)** are geocentric orbits with altitude below 2000km.
- **India did not violate any international space treaty** through Mission Shakti. It destroyed its own satellite flying in a LEO.



A derivative of an interceptor from Indian Ballistic Missile Defence Program being launched for ASAT test on 27th March 2019

OUTER SPACE TREATY:

- It forms the basis of the **international Space Law**.
- It was signed in **1967** and is effective since then.
- It has **108 parties** at present including India. **India** had ratified it in
- It **bars state parties** to the treaty from placing **weapons of mass destruction (WMD)** in earth orbit, installing them on moon or any other celestial body, or otherwise stationing them in outer space.
- The treaty exclusively limits the use of moon and other **celestial bodies to peaceful purposes**.
- A **weapons of mass destruction** is a **nuclear, radiological, chemical, biological** or any other weapon that can cause a **great damage to humans and biosphere**.
- But the treaty **does not prohibit the placement of conventional weapons** in orbit.
- It also says that **space should be free for exploration** and use by all the States.
- Everyday activities from telecommunications to financial markets civilian navigation rely heavily on space infrastructure. **Protecting these assets is important**.

CONCLUSION:

- The successful development of ASAT technology has **improved India's space power**. It has demonstrated its **capability to intercept any satellite**.
- So, it has created a **deterrence mechanism** for its space satellites which are doing various military and civilian services.