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1. Rights, duties and the Constitution

Introduction:

- Indian Constitution provides its citizens with the **Fundamental Rights** and lists the **Fundamental Duties** to be followed by them. The Constitution covers a broad spectrum of domains to protect the rights of the common man by introducing six rights as **Fundamental Rights (Part III of the constitution)**. Similarly, the Fundamental Duties are also emphasised upon by the Constitution (Part IVA of the constitution).
- Gandhi equated freedom with self-rule because he wished to build into the concept of freedom the notion of obligation to others as well as to oneself, while retaining the element of voluntariness that is the very basis of freedom. The notion of self-rule implies the voluntary internalization of our obligation to others which will be obstructed by our placing ourselves at the mercy of our selfish desires.

42nd Amendment Act, 1976:

1. At the height of the Emergency, Indira Gandhi’s government enacted sweeping changes to the Constitution, through the 42nd Amendment.
2. These changes were intended to **entrench the supremacy of the government**, permanently muzzle the courts, and weaken the constitutional system of checks and balances which was designed to avoid concentration and abuse of power.
3. Due to the large number of amendments this act has brought to the Indian Constitution, it is also known as ‘Mini-Constitution.’
4. Through the 42nd Amendment, **Preamble**: Words ‘Socialist’, ‘Secular’ and ‘Integrity’ added.
5. **Article 51A**: 10 Fundamental Duties added for the citizens. (The Fundamental Duties of citizens were added upon the recommendations of the Swaran Singh Committee that was constituted by the government in 1976).
6. **DPSPs**: Four new DPSPs were added to the existing list of DPSPs:
   - To secure opportunities for the healthy development of children (Article 39)
   - To promote equal justice and to provide free legal aid to the poor (Article 39 A)
   - To take steps to secure the participation of workers in the management of industries (Article 43 A)
   - To protect and improve the environment and to safeguard forests and wildlife (Article 48 A)
7. And in the Amendment’s Statement of Objects and Reasons, one line stands out: “It is also **proposed to specify the fundamental duties of the citizens** and make special provisions for dealing with anti-national activities.

Webs of duties:

1. The first thing to note is that as citizens, there exists a wide range of duties that bind us in everyday life. These duties are owed both to the state, and to other individuals.
2. We have a legal duty to pay our taxes, to refrain from committing violence against our fellow-citizens, and to follow other laws that Parliament has enacted.
3. Breach of these legal duties triggers financial consequences (fines), or even time in jail.
4. At any given time, therefore, we are already following a host of duties, which guide and constrain how we may behave.
5. This is the price that must be paid for living in society, and it is a price that nobody, at least, in principle, objects to paying.
6. Our duties and the consequences we bear for failing to keep them therefore exist as a self-contained whole.
7. They follow a simple logic: that **peaceful co-existence requires a degree of self-sacrifice**, and that if necessary, this must be enforced through the set of sanctions.

**Constitution will lose importance if fundamental rights not protected, says SC:**

- **Fundamentals rights** such as right to life and equality and freedom of speech enshrined under the Constitution are enforceable against the State and its instrumentalities and the private parties, performing state actions, have been taking the plea that they cannot be held accountable for breach of such rights of the citizens.
• The Constitution will lose its importance, if there are no redressal for the violation of fundamental rights (of citizens) by private parties performing government functions. With the progress in the society, the role of the state has shrunk and the government authorities have lesser roles in our lives and our jurisprudence has to change accordingly.

Rights and Duties Go Hand in Hand:
1. Mahatma Gandhi in Hind Swaraj observed that “Real rights are a result of the performance of duty”.
2. The CJI also referred to “incredible technological advancement” and said now the entire world was interconnected and a small change in one corner of the world can result in changes in different parts of the world.
3. Rights and duties are closely related and cannot be separated from one another. For every right, there is a corresponding duty.
4. The State protects and enforces rights and it is the duty of all citizens to be loyal to the state. Thus, a citizen has both Rights and Duties.
5. Terming India as “a melting pot of myriad cultures and traditions”, the CJI said, “We have assimilated legal cultures of all the civilisations that have come to our shores – the Mughals, the Portuguese, the French, the Dutch and finally the English.

Conclusion:
• Democracy is very fragile and it depends on the “faith of public on the system” and “the law of contempt is used not for protection of an individual but for protecting the public faith in an institution”. Government investment will have to recognize and address the changing needs of citizens over their entire lifetimes, provide platforms to help them get the resources and make the connections they need, and see a whole set of public goods created by the sum of their deliberately many parts.
• Without the moral compass of rights and their place in the transformative Constitutional scheme the language of duties can lead to unpleasant consequences. It can end up entrenching existing power structures by placing the burden of “duties” upon those that are already vulnerable and marginalised.
• It is for this reason that, at the end of the day, the Constitution, a charter of liberation, is fundamentally about rights. It is only after guarantee to all the full sum of humanity, dignity, equality, and freedom promised by the Constitution, that we can ask of them to do their duty.

2. Course correction for the Speaker’s office

Context:
• Recently, the Supreme Court of India while adjudicating upon the matter relating to the disqualification of MLAs in the Manipur Legislative Assembly under the Tenth Schedule in Keisham Meghachandra Singh vs.
the Hon’ble Speaker Manipur Legislative Assembly & Ors. made a significant suggestion. The office of the Speaker occupies a **pivotal position** in our **parliamentary democracy**.

- It has been said of the office of the Speaker that while the members of Parliament represent the individual constituencies, the Speaker represents the **full authority of the House itself**. She symbolises the **dignity and power of the House** over which she is presiding.
- Therefore, it is expected that the holder of this office of high dignity has to be one who can represent the House in all its manifestations. The responsibility entrusted to the Speaker is so onerous that she cannot afford to overlook any aspect of parliamentary life.
- Her actions come under close scrutiny in the House and are also widely reported in the mass media. With the **television of proceedings of Parliament**, the small screen brings to millions of households in the country the day-to-day developments in the House **making the Speaker’s task all the more important**.

**Importance of Speaker in Indian Democracy:**

**Article 95 and Article 180** deals with the Power of the Deputy Speaker or other person(s) to perform the duties of the office of or to act as the Speaker of the Lok Sabha/ Legislative Assembly.

- The Speaker is looked upon as the **true guardian of the traditions of parliamentary democracy**.
- Even though the Speaker speaks rarely in the House, when she does, she speaks for the House as a whole.
- Her **unique position** is illustrated by the fact that she is **placed very high in the Warrant of Precedence** in our country, standing next only to the President, the Vice-President and the Prime Minister.
- The Constitution of India provides that the Speaker’s salary and allowances are not to be voted by Parliament and are to be **charged on the Consolidated Fund of India**.
- The Speaker represents the House. He/she represents the **dignity of the House**, the **freedom of the House** and because the House represents the nation, in a particular way, the Speaker becomes a **symbol of nation’s freedom and liberty**.
- In India, through the Constitution of the land, through the **Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha** and through the practices and conventions, adequate powers are vested in the office of the Speaker to help her in the **smooth conduct of the parliamentary proceedings** and for protecting the **independence and impartiality of the office**.
- Therefore, that should be an **honoured position, a free position** and should be occupied always by persons of outstanding ability and impartiality.

**Upholding neutrality by the Speaker’s office:**

- It is the **freedom from interference and pressures** which provide the necessary atmosphere where one can work with **absolute commitment** to the cause of neutrality as a **constitutional value**.
- Reference can be sought from the **United Kingdom** where the ‘main characteristic of the Speaker of the House of Commons is neutrality’.
- In practice, once elected, the Speaker gives up all-partisan affiliation, as in other Parliaments of British tradition, but remains in office until retirement, even though the majority may change.
- She does **not express any political views** during debates and is an election candidate without any ticket, says an IPU report.
- In **Ireland**, parliamentary systems close to ours, the position of Speaker is given to someone who has **built up credibility** by relinquishing his or her political ambitions.
- Only the **S. with its rigorous separation of powers** between the judiciary, executive and legislature, allows the Speaker to openly engage in active politics.
- Offering **future rewards for performance as a Speaker** has made the position a stepping stone for political ambition Speaker rulings.
- At a time when India’s fall in ranks in the latest **Democracy Index** has evoked concern, it is expected that Parliament will pay heed to the reasoning of the Supreme Court and take **steps to strengthen the institution of the Speaker**.

**Where the Problem lies in Indian Speaker’s office:**

- Since the electoral system and conventions in India have ‘not developed to ensure protection to the office, there are cogent reasons for Speakers to retain party membership.
- A member is appointed to the office of the Speaker if a motion nominating her is carried in the House.
• Elections are not always by consensus and there have been cases when different parties have fielded their own candidates. All political parties campaign in the constituency of the Speaker.

• Even if the Speaker is re-elected to the House, the office of the Speaker in India is still open for elections’, according to a paper published by The Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy.

• Therefore, what is required is not merely incidental changes in the powers of the Speaker; rather a major revamp in the structure of the office itself is necessary.

• It is suggested that a scheme should be brought wherein Speakers should renounce all political affiliations, membership and activity once they have been elected, both within the Assembly and in the country as a whole.

Conclusion:

• The office of the Speaker in India is a living and dynamic institution which deals with the actual needs and problems of Parliament in the performance of its functions. The Speaker is the constitutional and ceremonial head of the House.

• She is the principal spokesperson of the House. It is in her that the responsibility of conducting the business of the House in a manner befitting the place of the institution in a representative democracy is invested.

• The founding fathers of our Constitution had recognised the importance of this office in our democratic set-up.

• It was this recognition that guided them in establishing this office as one of the prominent and dignified ones in the scheme of governance of the country.

• Impartiality, fairness and autonomy in decision-making are the hallmarks of a robust institution.

3. Crime and Politics: On Political Candidates with Criminal Records

Context:

• The Supreme Court has taken a timely decision by agreeing to hear a plea from the Election Commission of India (ECI) to direct political parties to not field candidates with criminal antecedents.

• The immediate provocation is the finding that 46% of Members of Parliament have criminal records.

• While the number might be inflated as many politicians tend to be charged with relatively minor offences “unlawful assembly” and “defamation” the real worry is that the current cohort of Lok Sabha MPs has the highest (29%) proportion of those with serious declared criminal cases compared to its recent predecessors.

A third of Indian MPs have criminal cases pending:

• About 30 per cent of members in the lower house of parliament have criminal cases pending against them.

• The report by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and the National Election Watch (New) is based on affidavits filed by candidates during elections since 2004.

• The analysis found that a candidate with a clean record has 12 per cent chance of winning the election whereas for a candidate with a criminal record, the chance of winning is 23 per cent.

• The report found that 162 (30 per cent) of the 543 current Lok Sabha (lower house) members face “criminal cases” and 76 others (14 per cent) “serious criminal cases”.

• About 40 (17 per cent) of the 232 members from the upper house, the Rajya Sabha, have “criminal cases” and 16 others (7 per cent) have “serious criminal cases” filed against them.
• The independent agencies also analysed the records 62,847 candidates who stood for either parliamentary or state assembly elections since 2004, including 4,181 who contested more than one election.
• Out of 4,181 repeat candidates, 1,072 had a criminal case the first time they contested an election and 788 cases had the second time also.
• This goes to show that political parties gave tickets to 74 per cent of candidates with criminal records second time despite knowing their criminal background.
• India’s supreme court ruled earlier that elected politicians would be disqualified from office immediately upon being convicted of a crime.
• Convicted politicians were earlier allowed to stay in office while their appeals were being heard in higher courts.

Supreme Court rulings with respect to Criminal records in Politics:
The Supreme Court has come up with a series of landmark judgments on addressing this issue.
• Supreme Court removed the statutory protection of convicted legislators from immediate disqualification in 2013, and in 2014, directed the completion of trials involving elected representatives within a year.
• In 2017, it asked the Centre to frame a scheme to appoint special courts to exclusively try cases against politicians, and for political parties to publicise pending criminal cases faced by their candidates in 2018.
• But these have not been a deterrent to legislators with dubious credentials.
• Perhaps what would do the trick is a rule that disallows candidates against whom charges have been framed in court for serious offences, but this is something for Parliament to consider as an amendment to the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
• This denouement, however, is still a pie in the sky given the composition of the Lower House with a number of representatives facing serious cases.
• Ultimately, this is a consequence of a structural problem in Indian democracy and the nature of the Indian state.

Narrow prism views by some voters:
• Researchers have found that such candidates with serious records seem to do well despite their public image, largely due to their ability to finance their own elections and bring substantive resources to their respective parties.
• Some voters tend to view such candidates through a narrow prism: of being able to represent their interests by hook or by crook.
• Others do not seek to punish these candidates in instances where they are in contest with other candidates with similar records.
• Either way, these unhealthy tendencies in the democratic system reflect a poor image of the nature of India’s state institutions and the quality of its elected representatives.

‘Cleansing Parties’ is the need of the hour:
• The judgment had urged Parliament to bring a “strong law” to cleanse political parties of leaders facing trial for serious crimes.
• The ruling by a five-judge Bench led by then Chief Justice of India concluded that rapid criminalisation of politics cannot be arrested by merely disqualifying tainted legislators but should begin by “cleansing” the political parties.
• The court had suggested that Parliament frame a law that makes it obligatory for political parties to remove leaders charged with “heinous and grievous” crimes like rape, murder and kidnapping, only to a name a few, and refuse ticket to offenders in both parliamentary and Assembly polls. The nation eagerly awaits for such a legislation.
• It had also issued guidelines, including that both the candidate and the political party should declare the criminal antecedents of the former in widely-circulated newspapers.

Conclusion:
• Electoral reforms refer to the initiatives undertaken with an objective to strengthen the electoral processes. They are necessary due to the dynamism displayed in the politics of India.
• Bringing about reforms from time to time is necessary in order to establish India as a democratic republic as outlined in the preamble and other constitutional principles.
• While formally, the institutions of the state are present and subject to the electoral will of the people, substantively, they are still relatively weak and lackadaisical in governance and delivery of public goods, which has allowed cynical voters to elect candidates despite their dubious credentials and for their ability to work on a patronage system.
• While judicial pronouncements on making it difficult for criminal candidates to contest are necessary, only enhanced awareness and increased democratic participation could create the right conditions for the decriminalisation of politics.

4. Changes in 1971 abortion law, and why India feels it necessary

Context:
• The Union Cabinet cleared a long-pending change to the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 that raises the legally permissible limit for an abortion to 24 weeks from the current 20 weeks.
• The Union cabinet has done well to approve a Bill that seeks to amend India’s outmoded abortion law.
• Following the efforts of the Health Ministry, the change also accepts failure of contraception as a valid reason for abortion not just in married but also in unmarried women.
• Significantly, this provision applies to unmarried women and therefore, relaxes one of the regressive clauses of the 1971 Act — single women couldn’t cite contraceptive failure as a reason for seeking abortion. It also has a provision to protect the privacy of the person seeking abortion.

Background:
• The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare proposed the amendments in the termination of pregnancy bill after extensive consultation with various stakeholders and several ministries.
• The move aims to increase the access of women to safe abortion services, taking into account the advances made in medical technology.
• Recently, several petitions were submitted to the Courts, seeking permission for aborting pregnancies at a gestational age beyond the current permissible limit on grounds of foetal abnormalities or pregnancies due to sexual violence faced by women.

What changes does the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 bring in?
• It increases the maximum permissible gestation age for abortion to 24 weeks, with the provision that for pregnancies that are between 20-24 weeks opinions will be required from two doctors rather than one.
• This has been specially done keeping in mind “vulnerable women including survivors of rape, victims of incest and other vulnerable women (like differently-abled women, Minors) etc”.
• The upper gestation limit will not apply in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities diagnosed by a Medical Board.
• The composition, functions and other details of the Medical Board are to be prescribed subsequently in Rules under the Act.
• This clause has been put to keep such cases out of courts; the government deemed a Medical Board should examine the various aspects of the case and take a call.
• The original draft of the Bill had included the contraceptive failure clause only for married women, which, the Health Ministry has now felt, would have left unmarried women, on whom social pressures to abort are more acute, at the mercy of quacks.

Why is the change in law significant?

• Despite a sustained government push over years, contraceptive use in India is not very popular.
• According to a 2018 study by the Guttmacher Institute, 50% of pregnancies in six of the larger Indian states — Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh — are unintended.
• Data from the National Family Health Survey 4 show that just 8% of couples in the country use modern contraceptive methods; only 53% use any method at all.
• It found that 55% pregnancies in Assam, 48% in Bihar, 53% in Gujarat, 50% in Madhya Pradesh, 43% in Tamil Nadu and 49% in Uttar Pradesh are unintended.
• According to a 2016 study published in The Lancet by the Guttmacher Institute and the World Health Organization, an estimated 56 million abortions took place globally each year between 2010 and 2014.
• In 2015, a study in The Lancet Global Health, also by Guttmacher Institute and IIPS, estimated that 15.6 million abortions were performed in India in 2015.
• This translates to an abortion rate of 47 per 1,000 women aged 15-49, which is similar to the abortion rate in neighbouring countries.
• The number of pregnancies ranged from 1,430,000 in Assam to 10,026,000 in Uttar Pradesh.
• Estimation of unintended pregnancies is important because many of them result in abortions and the availability of cheap and safe abortion services is one of the indicators of a robust health system.

Its Matter of her right:

• The MTP Act, 1971 was replete with unclear language, which resulted in doctors refusing to perform abortions even within the stipulated 20-week gestation limit.
• Women had to seek the approval of the judiciary, which, by most accounts, did not always come in time.
• “As a result”, notes a 2015 study in the India Journal of Medical Ethics, “10 to 13 per cent of maternal deaths in India are due to unsafe abortions”.
• Introducing the proposed law, the MTP Bill 2020 “will help reduce maternal mortality”. Extending the gestation period to 24 weeks is a significant step in this regard.
• The proposed amendments include substitution of certain sub-sections, insertion of certain new clauses under some sections in the existing Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971, with a view to increase upper gestation limit for termination of pregnancy under certain conditions and to strengthen access to comprehensive abortion care, under strict conditions, without compromising service and quality of safe abortion.

Concerns in the proposed Bill:

• One of the criticisms of the MTP Act, 1971 was that it failed to keep pace with advances in medical technology that allow for the removal of a foetus at a relatively advanced state of pregnancy.
• Moreover, a number of foetus abnormalities are detected after the 20th week, often turning a wanted pregnancy into an unwanted one. The proposed MTP law intends to address such medical complications.
• But matters related to women’s agency over her womb get complicated by the social milieu in parts of the country: The ante-diluvian preference for a male child keeps sex determination centres in business in spite of their illegal status.
• There are concerns that a more liberal abortion law can aggravate this state-of-affairs. The litmus test of the proposed MTP law’s claims to being women-centric lies in addressing all such concerns.
• According to 2017 data, 59 countries allowed elective abortions, of which only seven permitted the procedure after 20 weeks like Canada, China, the Netherlands, North Korea, Singapore, the United States, and Vietnam.

Conclusion:

• The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 is for expanding access of women to safe and legal abortion services on therapeutic, eugenic, humanitarian or social grounds.
• It is a step towards the safety and well-being of the women and many women will be benefitted from this.
Recently several petitions were received by the Courts seeking permission for aborting pregnancies at a gestational age beyond the present permissible limit on grounds of foetal abnormalities or pregnancies due to sexual violence faced by women.

The proposed increase in gestational age will ensure dignity, autonomy, confidentiality and justice for women who need to terminate the pregnancy.

5. ‘Only 82 trafficking survivors awarded relief in last 8 years’

Context:

- Highlighting the poor status of compensation awarded to survivors of human trafficking in the country, response obtained through RTI queries from 25 States and seven Union Territories reveal that between March 2011 and April 2019 only 82 such victims were awarded compensation.
- 3 out of 5 people trafficked were children. However, between 2011 and 2018, the total number of cases of human trafficking recorded in the country, according to NCRB reports, was 35,983.
- This means, only 0.2% of all survivors of human trafficking received the compensation announced by the government in the last eight years.
- The Section 357-A of Code of Criminal Procedure has provisions to compensate victims who suffered because of a crime.
- In 2012, following the national outrage over the Nirbhaya gang-rape and murder case, the government announced Rs.1,000 crore fund to be used to combat sexual violence against persons – children or adults.

What are the constitutional & legislative provisions related to Trafficking in India?

1. Trafficking in Human Beings or Persons is prohibited under the Constitution of India under Article 23 (1).
2. The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA) is the premier legislation for prevention of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation.
3. Criminal Law (amendment) Act 2013 has come into force wherein Section 370 of the Indian Penal Code has been substituted with Section 370 and 370A IPC which provide for comprehensive measures to
counter the menace of human trafficking including trafficking of children for exploitation in any form including physical exploitation or any form of sexual exploitation, slavery, servitude, or the forced removal of organs.

4. **Protection of Children from Sexual offences (POCSO) Act, 2012**, which has come into effect from 14th November, 2012 is a special law to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.

5. It provides precise definitions for different forms of sexual abuse, including penetrative and non-penetrative sexual assault, sexual harassment.

6. There are other specific legislations enacted relating to trafficking in women and children Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, Transplantation of Human Organs Act, 1994, apart from specific Sections in the IPC, e.g. Sections 372 and 373 dealing with selling and buying of girls for the purpose of prostitution.

7. State Governments have also enacted specific legislations to deal with the issue. (e.g. The Punjab Prevention of Human Smuggling Act, 2012).

**Gap in data and under-reporting:**

1. The World Vision report said that existing prevalence data from secondary sources for human trafficking for CSE do not exist as victims are a hidden population and there is no valid survey method to track it.

2. Estimates of women and girls in CSE vary from 70,000 to 3 million in India.

3. NCRB data reveal only reported cases that not all cases are reported, simply because parents are very hesitant to report or parents themselves are involved."

4. Insufficient data hinder work for organisations such as World Vision India.

5. Government agencies’ work also suffers—lack of data makes it difficult to detect and target high-prevalence areas, making it difficult to focus prevention and law enforcement efforts effectively.

6. Lack of data makes it very difficult to track the gravity of the situation and the scanty numbers indicate that there is no immediate problem.

7. There is a global data gap in reporting trafficking. It is not easy for trafficking victims to report because many of them are from some of the most vulnerable and marginalised sections of society but a lot of data is lost due to lack of an integrated data collection system.

8. Integrated reporting and use of digital databases by police would result in more accurate national collation of data.

9. Once first information reports and charge-sheets are entered into a digital system, there would be more accurate reports of trafficking crimes.

**Nirbhaya fund:**

- The part of the Nirbhaya fund is being used in the Victim Compensation Scheme – a national scheme to compensate survivors of rape, acid burns and trafficking among other forms of violence for the last few years.
- The amount of compensation to victims of trafficking varies from State to State, adding that in 2018, the Supreme Court directed NALSA (National Legal Services Authority ) to frame a standardised victim compensation scheme.
- The study also reflects the number of trafficking survivors who applied for the victim compensation scheme to their respective legal services authority.

**International Conventions on Trafficking:**

- **UN Convention:** India has ratified the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organised Crime (UNCTOC) which has as one of its Protocols Prevention, Suppression and Punishment of Trafficking in Persons, particularly Women and Children.
- **SAARC Convention:** India has ratified the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution.
- A Regional Task Force was constituted to implement the SAARC Convention.
- A study tour for SAARC Member countries was conducted to learn from the experiences of the Anti Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) established in various districts of the country. Representatives of Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Afghanistan participated in the study tour.
- **Bilateral mechanism:** For dealing with cross border trafficking and to address the various issues relating to prevention of Trafficking, victim identification and repatriation and make the process speedy and victim-friendly between India and Bangladesh, a Task Force of India and Bangladesh was constituted.
Lack of awareness in victims regarding compensation:

- The study also suggests that there remains a lack of information provided to survivors on victim compensation, lack of initiative on the part of legal services authority, low investment on part of legal aid that results in very few survivors having access to compensation.
- In their study the researchers tracked the details of at least three case studies where the trafficking survivors had received compensation.
- Survivors were able to apply only when they were informed and a private lawyer was involved in assisting them in filing application for victim compensation, highlighting that from their rescue till rehabilitation, the survivors are in touch with multiple agencies but none of them take any steps to help them get compensation.

Conclusion: Measures to avoid Trafficking:

- **Strengthening the capacity building:** To enhance the capacity building of law enforcement agencies and generate awareness among them, various Training of Trainers (TOT) workshops on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for Police officers and for Prosecutors at Regional level, State level and District level were held throughout the country.
- **Judicial Colloquium:** In order to train and sensitize the trial court judicial officers, Judicial Colloquium on human trafficking are held at the High court level.
- The aim is to sensitize the judicial officers about the various issues concerning human trafficking and to ensure speedy court process.
- So far, eleven Judicial Colloquium have been held at Chandigarh, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Odisha.
- Officials tend to dismiss or undermine the problem. Having accurate data on such a serious issue is critical to evolve effective strategies.
- Police should be proactive in booking the cases under trafficking provisions. Often cases are booked as kidnapping or missing person cases even though there is clear evidence of trafficking.
- Many NGOs are now in the process of compiling data about child trafficking. Though this is not official data, it is useful as a pointer.

6. Reservation as right: The Delhi model of education
Introduction:

- **Mahatma Gandhi** secured the participation of thousands of households in the freedom struggle when he launched the *civil disobedience movement*. For every household today, rich or poor, education has the same relevance as salt did in 1930.
- This is seen in the resounding verdict given by the Delhi electorate in the Assembly election to the present government, which **built its governance model around education**.

Importance of Education:

- Education is an important aspect of society which plays a very important role in the modern and industrialized world. Many scholars view education as an *indispensable means to maintain their existence* in the current competitive era.
- Education not only helps us to find **better and innovative solutions to our problems** but it is also helpful in **improving the standard of living of a person** and in running the society systematically and smoothly. By eliminating poverty through education, it can be ensured that **every citizen of the country can play its role in the development of India**.

Delhi model of education: Quality education is a necessity, not a luxury:

- In the last five years, the Delhi model of education has caught the attention of people in Delhi and beyond. It built a model which essentially has **five major components** and is supported by nearly **25% of the State Budget**. The validation of this model now creates a pathway for the next set of reforms.
- For too long, there have been **two kinds of education models** in the country: one for the classes and another for the masses. The government in Delhi sought to **bridge this gap**. Its approach stems from the belief that **quality education is a necessity, not a luxury**.

Key components of the model recent Delhi model of education:

The first component of the education model is the **Transformation of school infrastructure**:

1. **Dilapidated school buildings** that lack basic facilities not only indicate the apathy of the government, but also significantly lower the **motivation of teachers and the enthusiasm of students**.
2. The government sought to change this by building new, **aesthetically designed classrooms** equipped with furniture, smart boards, staff rooms, auditoriums, laboratories, libraries, sports facilities and so on.

The second component is the **training of teachers and principals**:

1. Apart from the fact that a forum was created to encourage peer learning among them, several opportunities were given to teachers for their **professional growth**.
2. They visited Cambridge University; the National Institute of Education, Singapore; IIM Ahmedabad; and other models of excellence in India.
3. The **exposure to new pedagogy and leadership training** enabled Delhi to gradually move away from a **uniform training model** for all to learning from the best practices in India and abroad.

The third component involved engaging with the community by **Reconstituting school management committees (SMC)**:

1. The annual budget of each SMC is Rs.5-7 lakh. The SMCs can spend this money on any material or activity, such as **even hiring teachers on a short-term basis**.
2. **Regular dialogue between teachers and parents** was initiated through mega parent-teacher meetings.
3. Guidelines are provided on **how to engage with parents**. Invitations for meetings are sent through FM radio, newspaper advertisements, etc.

Four, there have been **major curricular reforms in teaching learning**:

1. In 2016, the government noted that there was a **nearly 50% failure rate in Class 9** and admitted that the **poor foundational skills of children** could be the reason for it.
2. **Special initiatives** to ensure that all children learn to read, write and do basic mathematics was launched and made **part of regular teaching learning activities** in schools.
3. Similarly, a ‘**happiness curriculum’ was introduced** for all children between nursery and Class 8 for their emotional well-being.
4. Further, an ‘entrepreneurship mindset curriculum’ was introduced to develop the problem-solving and critical thinking abilities of children in Classes 9 to 12.
5. Apart from these new curricular initiatives, the focus on existing subjects too ensured **better performance in Board examinations** by Classes 10 and 12.
Fifth, there was no fee increase in private schools:
1. While the first four components impacted nearly 34% of children in Delhi’s government schools, arbitrary fee hikes earlier impacted about 40% children who go to private schools.
2. In the past, almost all the schools increased their fee 8-15% annually.
3. The government not only ensured the refund of about Rs.32 crore to parents which was excessively charged by private schools, it also ensured that any fee hike proposal was examined by authorised chartered accountants.
4. Thus, for two years no school was allowed to raise its fee.

Way Forward: Agenda 2.0:
• The Delhi model of education from “having built the foundation of education”, the focus now will shift to “education as foundation”.
• Going forward, there will be three key areas of reform apart from consolidating the gains of the past.
• First, the syllabus of Classes 1 to 8 will be reviewed to emphasise foundational learning skills, the ‘happiness curriculum’ and the ‘deshbhakti’ curriculum.
• Thus, apart from ensuring that all children can fluently read, write and do mathematics, the focus will be to build emotional resilience in children and ensure that they internalise our core constitutional values by the time they complete eight years of schooling.
• Apart from that, early childhood care and education will be deepened further through Anganwadi. There will also be nurseries in all government schools.
• Second, a Delhi Education Board will be set up to promote learning that encourages critical thinking, problem solving and application of knowledge among children.
• This will prepare them to tackle the challenges of the 21st century with an entrepreneurial mindset.
• Additionally, for those who have graduated from Delhi schools in the recent past, programmes like spoken English, soft skills and so on will be initiated to raise their employability opportunities.
• Third, specialised schools will be created in each of the 29 zones of Delhi to nurture the aptitude and talent of children in the areas of science and technology, literature and language, visual and performing arts, and sports.
• Now that Delhi has decisively acknowledged education as a top agenda of governance, the natural expectation from the government would be to ensure that all children get education that passes the test of quality, opportunity and equity.

7. Nutrition and the Budget’s fine print

Context:
• In Recent, the Global Hunger Index, reported that India suffers from “serious” hunger, ranked 102 out of 117 countries, and that just a tenth of children between six to 23 months are fed a minimum acceptable diet.
• With the largest number of undernourished people in the world, India needs to hasten to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2 of ‘Zero Hunger’ by 2030.
• The Economic Survey notes that India should give special attention although the Budget has not explicitly spelt out nutrition in greater detail in many ways.
Malnutrition:
Malnutrition refers to deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person’s intake of energy and/or nutrients.
The term malnutrition covers two broad groups of conditions.
1. One is ‘undernutrition’—which includes stunting (low height for age), wasting (low weight for height), underweight (low weight for age) and micronutrient deficiencies or insufficiencies (a lack of important vitamins and minerals).
2. The other is overweight, obesity and diet-related noncommunicable diseases (such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer).

Plan and allocation in the Budget:
- There are multiple dimensions of malnutrition that include calorific deficiency, protein hunger and micronutrient deficiency.
- Existing schemes can well address India’s malnutrition dilemma.
- An important approach to address nutrition is through agriculture. The Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh which was launched in 2019 by Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani, and Microsoft founder Bill Gates is a recent attempt to bridge this gap.
- The urgency around nutrition was reflected in the Finance Minister’s Budget speech, as referred to the “unprecedented” scale of developments under the Prime Minister’s Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition, or POSHAN Abhiyaan, the National Nutrition Mission with efforts to track the status of 10 crore households.

However, where are the gaps in addressing this concern:

First calorific deficiency:
1. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme provides a package of services including supplementary nutrition, nutrition and health education, health check-ups and referral services addressing children, pregnant and lactating mothers and adolescent girls, key groups to address community malnutrition, and which also tackle calorific deficiency and beyond.
2. For 2019-20, the allotment was Rs.27,584.37 crore but revised estimates are Rs.24,954.50 crore, which points to an underutilisation of resources.
3. The allocation this year is marginally higher, but clearly, the emphasis needs to be on implementation.
4. Another pathway to address hunger is the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, to enhance nutrition of schoolchildren.
5. Here too, the issue is not with allocation but with expenditure. The 2019-20 Budget allocation was Rs.11,000 crore and revised estimates are only Rs.9,912 crore.

The second is protein hunger:
1. Pulses are a major contributor to address protein hunger.
2. However, a scheme for State and Union Territories aims to reach pulses into welfare schemes (Mid-Day Meal, Public Distribution System, ICDS) has revised estimates standing at just Rs.370 crore against Rs.800 crore allocation in the 2019-20 Budget.

One more important component is “Micronutrient” deficiency:
1. The Horticulture Mission can be one of the ways to address micronutrient deficiency effectively, but here too implementation is low.
2. In 2018-19, the Government of India launched a national millet mission which included renaming millets as “nutri-cereals” also launching a Year of Millets in 2018-19 to promote nutritious cereals in a campaign mode across the country.
3. This could have been further emphasised in the Budget as well as in the National Food Security Mission (NFSM) which includes millets.
4. As millets have the potential to address micronutrient deficiencies, the momentum given to these cereals needs to be sustained.
5. Moving to POSHAN Abhiyaan, the National Nutrition Mission which is a major initiative to address malnutrition, had 72% of total expenditure going into “Information and Communication Technology enabled Real Time Monitoring for development and setting up Common Application Software and expenditure on components under behavioural change” according to Accountability Initiative.
6. The focus of the bulk of the funding has been on technology, whereas, actually, it is convergence that is crucial to address nutrition.
7. The Initiative also found on average that only 34% of funds released by the Government of India were spent from FY 2017-18 to FY 2019-20 till November 30, 2019.

Impact of linkage schemes:
- With underspending, allocations for subsequent years will also be affected, limiting the possibility of increasing budgets and the focus on nutrition schemes.
- Next is the agriculture-nutrition link, which is another piece of the puzzle. While agriculture dominated the initial Budget speech, the link between agriculture and nutrition was not explicit.
- This link is important because about three-fifths of rural households are agricultural in India (National Sample Survey Office, 70th round) and malnutrition rates, particularly in rural areas are high (National Family Health Survey-4).
- Therefore, agriculture-nutrition linkage schemes have potential for greater impact and need greater emphasis.

Way Forward: The following are suggestions to move forward:
1. Focus on nutrition-related interventions, beyond digitisation;
2. Intensify the convergence component of POSHAN Abhiyan, using the platform to bring all departments in one place to address nutrition;
3. Direct the announcement to form 10,000 farmer producer organisations with an allocation of Rs.500 crore to nutrition-based activities;
4. Promotion of youth schemes to be directed to nutrition-agriculture link activities in rural areas;
5. Give explicit emphasis and fund allocation to agriculture-nutrition linked schemes;
6. Ensure early disbursement of funds and an optimum utilisation of schemes linked to nutrition.
7. Improving the overall nutritional status of girls and women during the preconception and pregnancy period and providing quality antenatal care can positively influence low birth weight indicators.
8. Focus is needed on major determinants like provision of clean drinking water, reducing rates of open defecation, improving women’s educational status, and food and nutrition security for the most vulnerable families.
9. It is important to plan the reduction in malnutrition in a manner that is suitable for the trends and context of each State.

Conclusion:
- Nutrition goes beyond just food, with economic, health, water sanitation, gender perspectives and social norms contributing to better nutrition.
- This is why implementation of multiple schemes can contribute to better nutrition.
- The Economic Survey notes that “Food is not just an end in itself but also an essential ingredient in the growth of human capital and therefore important for national wealth creation”.
- Malnutrition affects cognitive ability, workforce days and health, impacting as much as 16% of GDP (World Food Programme and World Bank).
- In that sense, while Budget 2020-21 looks toward an ‘Aspirational India’, fixing the missing pieces on the plate, can make a difference not just to better nutrition but to build a wealthier nation too.

8. Choice and candidacy: On crime and politics

Introduction:
- Criminalization of politics is a vital topic to be discussed in any democratic platform. This issue is on focus every now and then. The Government and the governance system’s credibility is questioned. Sometimes the government loses its legitimacy and authenticity due to the involvement of persons with criminal backgrounds.
- The frequency with which alleged or convicted criminals manage to gain public office threatens the ideals and the functioning of the Indian democracy. The entry of criminals in election politics must be restricted at any cost. If it is not checked, it will erode the system totally. The dearth of talented persons in politics may collapse the country internally as well as externally.

Context:
- With the Supreme Court ruling that political parties should publish details of candidates having criminal history on website and other platforms, experts are divided on whether the judgement will deter parties from putting up such candidates in the future.
While some say that the judgment will lead to elimination or deterrence of criminalisation of politics, a few others think that it is too early to say.

43% newly-elected Lok Sabha MPs have criminal record: ADR:

- Nearly half of the newly-elected Lok Sabha members have criminal charges against them, a 26% increase as compared to 2014, according to the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR).
- Of the 539 winning candidates analysed by the ADR, as many as 233 MPs or 43% have criminal charges. In 2014, 185 Lok Sabha members (34%) had criminal charges and 112 MPs had serious criminal cases against them.
- In 2009, 162 (nearly 30%) out of the 543 Lok Sabha MPs had criminal charges and 14% had serious criminal charges, it said.
- According to the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR), in the new Lok Sabha, nearly 29% of the cases are related to rape, murder, attempt to murder or crime against women.
- There is an increase of 109% [in 2019] in the number of MPs with declared serious criminal cases since 2009.

SC said that there should be Decriminalisation of politics:

1. The Supreme Court had adjudicated on the contempt petitions pertaining to the criminalisation of politics in India and the non-compliance of the directions of a Constitution Bench of Supreme Court in Public Interest Foundation and Ors. v. Union of India and Anr. (2019) with respect to decriminalisation of politics.
2. Mainly the contempt petitions were filed before the Supreme Court on the grounds that its directions were not implemented in the subsequent Assembly elections and the general elections since the Election Commission of India did not amend the Election Symbols Order and the Model Code of Conduct.
3. On this a point very interesting set of directions were issued by the court in exercise of Articles 129 and 142 of the Constitution of India.
4. As per the directions it is now mandatory for political parties to upload on their website about detailed information of the candidates which shall include pending criminal cases (including the nature of the offences, and relevant particulars such as whether charges have been framed, the concerned court, the case number etc.), along with the reasons for such selection and as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates.
5. According to experts, such disclosures might not achieve intended consequence, as the electorate is well aware about the criminal antecedents of the candidates contesting elections.

Divergent views from Central Government:

1. The Centre had contended that the judiciary should not venture into the legislative arena by creating a pre-condition which would adversely affect the right of the candidates to participate in polls as there was already the RP Act which deals with the issue of disqualification.
2. Referring to the concept of presumption of innocence until a person is proven guilty, the Centre had argued that depriving a person from contesting elections on a party ticket would amount to denial of the right to vote, which also included the right to contest.
3. It had said that the courts will have to presume innocence in view of the fact that in 70 per cent cases, accused are being acquitted.
4. Central government had said that Parliament has made a distinction between an accused and a convict and there has been a provision for disqualification in the **Representation of Peoples Act upon conviction of a lawmaker.**
5. The Election Commission of India had taken a view which was apparently opposite to the Centre and said that the **recommendations for decriminalising politics** were made by the poll panel and the Law Commission back in 1997 and 1998, but no action was taken on them.
6. It exhorted the court to issue the direction in the matter besides asking Parliament to make the suitable law.

However, it is important to **recognize that Constitutional Institutions** like the Election Commission (EC), the Supreme Court, the Central Information Commission, the bureaucracy, and the media contribute a lot to this work.

In some cases, Parliament and political parties have also played a role. Though the role of civil society has been significant, it needs to work with these existing democratic Institutions.

**Conclusion:**

- The underlining truth is, what the electorate fails to understand is that, criminal elements in politics may well represent some petty causes concerning them, but this has **adversely affected the quality of policy making**, and has **enhanced nepotism, cronism and corruption** which has a tremendous **regressive effect on national growth and development.**
- And at times, it creates an **atmosphere of intimidation** that **most undemocratically muzzles voices of dissent.** The members of the legislature are expected and directed to represent vicariously the **aspirations and concerns of the people** whom they represent.
- Hence it is important for the legislature of a representative democracy to be a **true reflection of the aspirations and dreams of the people** and also to be fair, honest and accountable to the people they represent.

**9. In political micro-targeting, the vulnerable Indian voter**

**Context:**

- In recent, there was a massive outcry against the hiring, by Indian political parties, of **Cambridge Analytica**, a data mining and analytics firm.
- The episode highlighted the **need for regulating social media platforms by way of a comprehensive data protection law** which takes issues such as **political micro-targeting seriously**.
- With the recently introduced draft of the data protection law, the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, the debate has again resurfaced.
- Although the digital revolution is being celebrated everywhere, the regulatory efforts regarding different spheres of its influence have only been reactionary.

**Citizens want social media platforms regulated in India**
Dark side of Social Media Platforms:

1. Fake news is often created and circulated for gaining electoral currency and political gains.
2. Often government’s own party and agencies (through the undisclosed purchase of political ads and IT cells) may be involved.
3. It is a rising trend seen in many countries led by China and Russia where internet manipulation and control are very high.
4. Misinformation and disinformation spread in media is becoming a serious social challenge. It is leading to the poisonous atmosphere on the web and causing riots and lynching’s on the road.
5. In the age of the internet (WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter,) it is a serious problem as rumours, morphed images, click-baits, motivated stories, unverified information, planted stories for various interests spread easily among 35 crore internet users in India.
6. There have been many instances of online rumours leading to killings of innocent people. In some cases, ministers have deleted tweets after realizing the fake news which they shared earlier.
7. In the recent Karnataka Assembly elections (2018) fake news about rival parties and candidates flooded the media.
8. It may not be a coincidence that India has the highest number of selfie deaths (person dying while trying to take a selfie) in the world (76 deaths out of 127 reported globally between March 2014 and September 2016). Use and abuse of mobile and internet remain a concern.

Unregulated zone:

- The informational autonomy of the voter is under serious threat because the entire business of collecting personal data continues to remain unregulated and is also proprietary in nature.
- It is extremely difficult to trace the methods used by such firms to scrutinise the personal life and intimate details of the individual.
- This threat becomes imminent in light of the rising number of political firms which are making most use of the right to freedom of speech and expression.
- The status of this right is near absolute with regard to political speech in most countries such as the U.S. It is but obvious that this can be misused by political entities. Profiling the potential voter has become a thriving industry.
- Therefore, there are extremely well-crafted techniques when it comes to electoral campaigning.

Need for regulation on social media:

1. The speed and reach of social media have meant that subversive rumours and fake news get aired with impunity.
2. This has resulted in serious law and order problems. In India, this phenomenon has assumed dangerous proportions. Fake news on WhatsApp has led to lynching’s and communal flare-ups in many parts of the country. This menace needs to be curbed.
3. In the Internet age, any data protection law must be alive to the potential impact of social media companies in shaping public opinion.
4. The current draft empowers the Central government to notify social media intermediaries as significant data fiduciaries if their user base crosses a certain threshold and whose actions are likely to have an impact on electoral democracy.
5. This provision merits serious discussion to ensure that digital tools are used for enhancing democracy through citizen engagement, and not for harvesting personal data for voter targeting.
6. There is serious harm to the country’s democratic nature resulting on account of loss of informational autonomy.
7. The liberating and anti-establishment potential of the Internet are considered as a promise for the health of a liberal democracy.
8. At the same time, it can have serious ramifications if this potential is used by demagogues to spread fake news and propaganda.

While innovators have continued to develop more advanced technologies, the regulators have never been able to catch up with it. There are infinite contours of this information age; Hence, the scope of a data protection framework also needs to be sensitive towards the magnitude of a variety of data usage.
Conclusion:

- Any conversation on additional regulation of social media brings up concerns about privacy and surveillance.
- Therefore, any bid at regulating expression online has to be proportional and concrete with adequate redressal mechanisms and without any blanket provisions.
- Any future legislation to curb fake news should take the whole picture into account and not blame the media and go for knee-jerk reactions; in this age of new media anyone can create and circulate new for undisclosed benefits.
- Controlling fake news is a tricky issue: not controlling trolls could lead to national and international instability while doing too much to control it could harm democracy.
- Countering content manipulation and fake news to restore faith in social media without undermining internet and media freedom will require public education, strengthening of regulations and effort of tech companies to make suitable algorithms for news curation. Italy, for example, has experimentally added ‘recognizing fake news’ in school syllabus. India should also seriously emphasize cybersecurity, internet education, fake news education in the academic curriculum at all levels.

10. By agreeing to Partition, Congress kept India united

Brief History about Cabinet Mission Plan:

- On 22nd January 1946, the decision to send Cabinet Mission was taken and on 19th February 1946, the British PM C.R Attlee Government announced in the House of Lords about the mission and the plan to quit India.
- A high-powered mission of three British Cabinet members- Lord Pethick-Lawrence, the Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade, and A. V. Alexander, the First Lord of the Admiralty reached Delhi on 24th March 1946.
Need and Necessity for Cabinet Mission Plan:

1. **To resolve political deadlock** between the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League at their stance to prevent a communal dispute whether British India would be better-off unified or divided.
2. The Congress party wanted to obtain a strong central government with more powers as compared to state governments.
3. All India Muslim League under Jinnah wanted to keep India united but with political safeguards provided to Muslims such as 'guarantee' of 'parity' in the legislatures.
4. On 16 May 1946, this plan was announced and preceded by Shimla Conference of 1945.

Recommendations of Cabinet Mission Plan:

1. The unity of India had to be retained.
   - There should be a Union of India, embracing both British India and the States which should deal with the following subjects: Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Communications; and should have the powers necessary to raise the finances required for the above subjects.
2. It proposed a very loose union of all the Indian territories under a centre that would control merely defence, the Foreign Affairs and the Communication. The Union would have the powers necessary to raise the finances to manage these subjects.
3. All subjects other than Union subjects and residuary power would vest in the provinces of British India.
4. The Princely Legislatures would then elect a Constituent Assembly or a Constitution making body with each province being allotted a specified number of seats proportionate to its population.
5. The proposed Constituent Assembly was to consist was to consist of 292 member from British India and 93 from Indian States.
6. The Mission proposed an immediate formation of Interim Government at the centre, enjoying the support of major political parties and with the Indians holding all the portfolios.

Cabinet Mission Plan for Muslim League and Congress:

- Moreover, documentary evidence, especially the resolution of the Muslim League Council in June 1946 that accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan, proves that the Muslim League's acceptance was premised on the belief that the Plan was a stepping stone towards the ultimate formation of Pakistan, which to quote the resolution was its unalterable objective.
- The League inferred this from the Cabinet Mission Plan’s provision that said that “any Province by majority vote of its Legislative Assembly could call for a reconsideration of the terms of the Constitution after an initial period of ten years and at ten-yearly intervals thereafter.” Hence the Plan did not rule out the dissolution of the Union if provinces made a demand.

Historical Reasons behind the acceptance of Cabinet Mission plan:

1. In his own famous words, “In order to keep India united it must be divided.” It was Patel who convinced Nehru that Partition was better than an eternally fragmented India.
2. Nehru, whose opposition to Partition was based on his unstinted commitment to secularism, which refused to encounter the idea of India bring divided on communal lines, finally realised that his vision of a modern and strong Indian state could not be achieved with the Muslim League, in power in Bengal and Punjab, thwarting it at every step.
3. With Patel and Nehru convinced of the necessity for Partition, the rest of the Congress Working Committee, except Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who voted against it, and Maulana Azad, who abstained, accepted the plan.
4. Historical evidence based on impartial scholarship demonstrates that had the Congress Party not accepted the Partition plan, India today would have been a weak state and a divided polity barely able to keep itself together and constantly teetering on the brink of collapse.
5. The Congress did a favour to the country by accepting its division in order to save it from collapse or dismemberment. This is a historically verifiable fact that cannot be refuted by partisan propaganda.

Conclusion:

- The Cabinet Mission Plan is critical to scholarly works that engage with various aspects of Indian constitutionalism, law, politics and history, particularly on partition and federalism. Recent work has paid close attention to British perspectives as well: Walter Reid in Keeping the Jewel in the Crown emphasises the British self-interest behind the setting up of the Cabinet Mission: ‘to secure Britain’s defence interests in India and the Indian Ocean Area’.
- Other scholars have taken to evaluating the Cabinet Mission and its Plan: Granville Austin argues that the Cabinet Mission (‘non-Indians’) should have never attempted to mediate between the Congress and the
Muslim league: ‘it was foredoomed to failure’. The Cabinet Mission Plan continues to be relevant to scholars and the general public in understanding and making sense of not only the origins of the Indian Constitution, but also the future of the Indian republic.

- The main objective of Cabinet Mission was to find out ways and means for the peaceful transfer of power in India, to suggest measures for the formation of a Constitution making machinery and also to set up the Interim Government.

11. Powering the health-care engine with innovation

Introduction:
- It has been close to 18 months since the central government, launched the country-wide implementation of Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), or the national health protection scheme. The initial momentum has been very encouraging. The scheme is currently being implemented in 32 of 36 States and Union Territories.
- It has provided 84 lakh free treatments to poor and vulnerable patients for secondary and tertiary ailments at 22,000 empanelled hospitals, countrywide. Under PM-JAY, there is one free treatment every three seconds and two beneficiaries verified every second.

Addressing the constraints for Mainstreaming Health care:

One challenge is non-uniform regulatory and validation standards:
1. Regulatory requirements, specifically for biomedical start-ups, are still evolving in India.
2. As a result, hospitals often rely on foreign regulatory certifications such as FDA and CE, especially for riskier devices and instruments.
3. In addition, it is difficult for a start-up to understand the minimum necessary validation requirements in order to qualify for procurement by hospitals.
4. Lack of standards in this area leads to a huge variation in validation requirements at States and hospitals, forcing the start-up into a spiral of piloting studies.
Another problem: In promoting start-ups is the operational liquidity crunch due to a long gestation period:

1. Health-care start-ups spend long periods of time in the early development of their product, especially where potential clinical risks are concerned.
2. The process of testing the idea and working prototype, receiving certifications, performing clinical and commercial validations, and raising funds, in a low-trust and unstructured environment makes the period unusually long thereby limiting the operational liquidity of the start-up.

A key area of focus is to expand the secondary and tertiary hospitals empanelled under PM-JAY and ensure their quality and capacity while keeping the costs down. At present, there is one government bed for every 1,844 patients and one doctor for every 11,082 patients.

Lack of incentives and adequate frameworks to grade and adopt innovations:

1. Health-care providers and clinicians, given limited bandwidth, often lack the incentives, operational capacity, and frameworks necessary to consider and adopt innovations.
2. This leads to limited traction for start-ups promoting innovative solutions.
3. Start-ups also face procurement challenges in both public and private procurement.
4. They lack the financial capacity to deal with lengthy tenders and the roundabout process of price discovery.
5. Private procurement is complicated by the presence of a fragmented customer base and limited systematic channels for distribution.

Need of Transformative solutions:

- India’s burgeoning entrepreneurial spirit combined with a systematic push for the development of a start-up ecosystem has led to a plethora of innovations in health care. It is estimated that there are more than 4,000 health-care technology start-ups in India.
- Today, start-ups are working to bring innovative technologies and business models that leapfrog infrastructure, human resources, cost-effectiveness and efficiency challenges in Tier-2 and -3 cities.
- Artificial Intelligence platforms that aid in rapid radiology diagnoses in low resource settings, tele-ICU platforms to bridge the gap in high-skilled critical care personnel, centralised drone delivery of blood, medicines and vaccines to reach remote locations cost-effectively and reliably are all no longer just theoretical ideas. They are real solutions that are ready to be tested on the ground and potentially implemented.

Way Forward:

1. To accelerate the process of mainstreaming innovations within the hospital system in India, we need to focus on identifying promising market-ready health-care innovations that are ready to be tested and deployed at scale.
2. There is a need to facilitate standardised operational validation studies that are required for market adoption, to help ease out the start-up procurement process such that these solutions can be adopted with confidence.
3. The government is now pushing ahead to overhaul Indian med-tech regulatory standards and product standards which will help bridge this trust-deficit.
4. This, in effect, will serve the entire ecosystem of health-care innovators by opening up health-care markets for all.
5. A strong theme in mature health-care systems in other parts of the world is a vibrant and seamless interface between hospitals and health-care start-ups.
6. Through Ayushman Bharat, India has the unique opportunity to develop a robust ecosystem where hospitals actively engage with health-care start-ups by providing access to testbeds, communicating their needs effectively and adopting promising innovations.
7. Start-ups can be effective collaborators for the most pressing health-care delivery challenges faced by hospitals, as opposed to being mere suppliers of technology or services.
8. It is high time for transformative solutions to make their way into our hospitals, especially in Tier-2 and -3 cities, to turbocharge the way health care is delivered at scale.

This mainstreaming of health-care innovations, is lined with challenges at every step. The friction in their path to market often stems from multiple reasons.
Conclusion:
- The launch and expansion of Ayushman Bharat-PM-JAY is a watershed moment for the Indian healthcare service delivery ecosystem. The government has taken a big step by rolling out world’s largest and most ambitious publicly funded health-care assurance programme.
- Government is now calling out to private sector health-care providers, health innovators, industry and start-ups to become equal partners in this movement.
- The dream of an accessible, affordable and high-quality health-care system for all, will be achieved when we work in alignment to complement each other and jointly undertake the mission of creating an Ayushman Bharat.

12. Youth can be a clear advantage for India

Introduction:
- A study on demographic dividend in India by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) throws up two interesting facts. One, the window of demographic dividend opportunity in India is available for five decades from 2005-06 to 2055-56, longer than any other country in the world.
- Second, and more interesting, is the fact that this demographic dividend window is available at different times in different states because of differential behaviour of the population parameters.

About Demographic Dividend:
1. Demographic dividend is said to be occurring when the ratio of the working age population is high and the dependency ratio in terms of proportion of children and elderly people low.
2. This advantage can create the space needed to increase investments in enhancing human capabilities, which, in turn, can have a positive influence on growth and development.
3. At present, India, overall as a country, has a large proportion of population that is young.
4. Close to 30% of India’s population is in the age group 0-14 years.
5. The elderly in the 60-plus age group are still a small proportion (8%) of the country’s population. The working age group 15-59 years accounts for 62.5% of India’s population.
6. The working-age population will reach the highest proportion of approximately 65% in 2036.
7. These population parameters indicate an availability of demographic dividend in India, which started in 2005-06 and will last till 2055-56.
8. **India’s population heterogeneity** ensures that this window of demographic dividend becomes available at different times in different States.
9. While Kerala’s population is already ageing, in Bihar the working age cohort is predicted to continue increasing till 2051.
10. **By 2031**, the overall size of our vast working age population would have declined in 11 of the 22 major States.
11. **Harnessing the demographic dividend** will depend upon the employability of the working age population, their health, education, vocational training and skills, besides appropriate land and labour policies, as well as good governance.

**Need for skills: In line with market demand:**

1. The **Economic Survey 2019** calls for additional jobs to keep pace with the projected annual increases in working age population.
2. **UNICEF 2019** reports that at least 47% of Indian youth are not on track to have the education and skills necessary for employment in 2030.
3. The projected demographic dividend would turn into a **demographic disaster** if an unskilled, under-utilised, and frustrated young population undermines social harmony and economic growth.
4. While over 95% of **India’s children** attend primary school, the National Family Health Surveys (completed up to 2015-16) confirm that poor infrastructure in government schools, malnutrition, and scarcity of trained teachers have ensured poor learning outcomes.
5. Even while India aspires to become a knowledge economy, millions of young people are getting left behind.
6. The national capital has now demonstrated that when meticulous attention is paid to equity and quality across government schools, huge numbers benefit, with encouraging learning outcomes.
7. **High quality education achieves gender parity** and propels people forward into more productive lives.
8. A **coordinated incentive structure** prompting States to adopt a broadly uniform public school system focusing on equity and quality will yield a knowledge society faster than privatising school education can accomplish.
9. Most districts now have **excellent broadband connectivity**. Irrespective of rural or urban setting, the public-school system must ensure that every child completes high school education, and is pushed into **appropriate skilling, training and vocational education** in line with market demand.
10. **Let geography not trump demography.** Modernise school curricula, systematically invest in teacher training so that they grow in their jobs to assume leadership roles, while moving beyond the tyranny of the syllabus.
11. **Deploy new technology** to accelerate the pace of building human capital by putting in place virtual classrooms together with **massive open online courses (MOOCS)** to help prepare this huge work force for next-generation jobs.
12. **Investing in open digital universities** would further help yield a higher educated workforce.

Flexible entry and exit policies for women into virtual classrooms, and into modules for open digital training, and vocational education would help them access contemporary vocations. A mushrooming of job portals and organisations are providing employment for trained women, even from home.

*Equal pay for women will make it worth their while to stay longer in the workforce.*

**On health care:**

1. In India, **population health** is caught between the rising demand for health services and competition for scarce resources.
2. The **National Sample Survey Office data on health (75th round, 2018)**, shows that a deep-rooted downturn in the rural economy is making quality health-care unaffordable.
3. People are availing of private hospitals less than they used to, and are moving towards public health systems.
4. That is all very well except for the fact that the central budget 2020-21 lays **emphasis on private provisioning of health care** which will necessarily divert public investment away from public health infrastructure.
5. The Ayushman Bharat Yojana links demand to tertiary in-patient care. This promotes earnings of under-utilised private hospitals, instead of modernising and up-grading public health systems in each district.

6. We need to assign 70% of health sector budgets to integrate and strengthen primary and integrated public health-care services and systems up to district hospital levels, include out-patient department and diagnostic services in every health insurance model adopted, and implement in ‘mission mode’ the Report of the High Level Group, 2019, submitted to the XV Finance Commission.

7. The elderly population in India is projected to double from 8.6% in 2011, to 16% in 2040.

8. This will sharply reduce the per capita availability of hospital beds in India across all major States, unless investments in health systems address these infirmities.

India will gain from its demographic opportunity only if policies and programmes are aligned to this demographic shift. Demography is not destiny.

Conclusion:
- India’s population is among the youngest in an ageing world. By 2022, the median age in India will be 28 years; in comparison, it will be 37 in China and the United States, 45 in western Europe, and 49 in Japan. India’s working-age population has numerically outstripped its non-working age population.
- A demographic dividend, said to have commenced around 2004-05, is available for close to five decades.
- We need a workforce that is well educated, and appropriately skilled. This is an extraordinary opportunity.
- The policies that we adopt, and their effective implementation will ensure that our demographic dividend, a time-limited opportunity, becomes a boon for India.

ECONOMY

1. Will Budget 2020 work in getting the Indian economy back on track?

Context:
- Union Budget of India is the country’s comprehensive Annual Financial Statement.
- The Union Budget consists of a detailed account of the government’s finances, its revenues from various sources and expenditures to be incurred on different activities that it will incur.
- As mentioned in the Article 112 of the Indian Constitution, the Union Government lays a statement of its estimated receipts and expenditure for that year, From April 1 to March 31, before both the Houses of Parliament.
- Finance Minister has an unenviable task ahead as she rises to present the Union Budget for the financial year 2020-21 (FY21).
- That’s because the Indian economy has been decelerating fast, the government cut the GDP growth rate for 2018-19 from 6.8% to 6.1%. The growth rate in the current year is already expected to be at a six-year low.

What is the problem with the economy?
- Broadly, there are four engines that provide the power to drive GDP growth in an economy.
- These are: Consumption of private individuals (C), Demand for goods from the government (G), Investments from businesses (I) and the net demand from exports and imports (NX).
  \[
  \text{GDP} = C + G + I + NX
  \]
- With each passing year, the Indian economy has been losing its engines of growth.
- The corporate investments (I) engine has been slowing sharply since 2011.
- The new businesses found that the financiers to the economy, that is the banks (especially the public sector banks, which accounted for 70 per cent to 80 per cent of all lending), were themselves struggling with non-performing assets.
- Many of these NPAs were the same loans that they had extended to the big businesses who were now hamstrung.
- Private consumption demand was first hurt in the rural areas with poor commodity prices.
- While this meant that retail inflation was under control, the purchasing power of farmers declined.
- This weakness in rural demand was compounded by a collapse in urban demand after credit flow from the non-banking financial sector companies stopped following the meltdown in IL&FS.
- This is being witnessed in the sales slump across the board — from cars to shampoo sachets.
Government demand carried the day for a considerable time. But with a sharp fall in revenues, thanks to a slowing growth, there is no way the government can spend without massively flouting the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act targets.

What were the options before the government?

- In the Indian context, **consumption demand** accounts for **roughly 57 per cent of total GDP**.
- **Investments (I)** are the next big chunk, accounting for **32 per cent**. Government spending (G) is the smallest contributor, with net exports (NX) being negative for India.
- Under normal circumstances, it would have been natural for the government to increase its expenditure and thereby provide a strong growth impulse to the economy. That is because what the government spends turns into someone’s personal income.
- This income when spent again, say on buying a car or a bar of soap, generates more economic activity, and further incomes.
- In the run-up to the Budget, many had argued that this is what the government should do. But these are not “normal” circumstances.
- A slowing economy has upset the government’s tax collections. As such, because the nominal GDP grew by just 7.5 per cent in 2019-20 instead of the Budgeted growth of 12 per cent, the gross tax revenues of the government fell from Rs 24,61,195 crore to Rs 21,63,423 crore that is a shortfall of Rs 3 lakh crore.
• The government could have still gone ahead and borrowed more money from the market, but here too there was a problem of supply.
• In other words, there weren’t enough savings in the market to fuel government demand.
• As such, the total expenditure of the government is slated to go up by just over 9 per cent over FY20’s budgeted figure.
• The other option was to boost investments.
• To a great extent, the government had already tried to do this outside the Budget, when it announced a sharp cut in corporate income tax last year.
• The tax cut cost the government over Rs 1.5 lakh crore in 2019-20, with little to show in terms of new investment activity.

Private Consumption demand requires more Investments:
• To be sure, investment decisions are not taken in a hurry and even though the corporate tax cut was a welcome decision, and one that is likely to benefit the Indian economy in the medium to long term, at present, in the immediate term, it has been ineffectual.
• That is because investments follow demand, and consumer demand has been declining sharply. This has resulted in high unsold inventories, and is reflected in capacity utilisation falling to an all-time low late last year.
• Still, the Finance Minister announced that there will soon be a scheme to encourage investments for the manufacturing of mobile phones, electronic equipment, and semi-conductor packaging.
• Similarly, she has allowed the electricity generating companies to benefit from the corporate tax cut.
• That left the biggest driver private consumption demand and by the looks of it, the government has tried its best to nudge people to consume more and, by that route, kickstart a virtuous cycle.
• The government has tried to do this by providing people with some options that enhance their disposable income. However, in the process, it has disincentivised savings.
• The best example of this is the option of a new Income Tax regime, which removes all exemptions and deductions, but also cuts the tax rates.
• The government likely hopes that taxpayers will be enthused to opt for this structure because it is likely to leave them with more money in hand.
• This is likely to be especially true for those taxpayers who are young and lie towards the lower end of the income brackets.
• That is because in that age and income brackets, the so-called marginal propensity to consume is higher. The richer and higher-salaried workers tend to save most of their income.

How does the government expect this strategy to work?
• The government’s strategy, or hope at least, is that leaving people with more money will help boost their consumption levels, which are at present quite subdued, as witnessed in the slump in sales of goods and services across the board.
• Higher consumption will bring down the inventories in the economy and incentivise businesses to invest again.
• The ground has been prepared to make investments attractive for businesses as the government has already cut the corporate tax rate last year.
• Once the business activity recovers, the government would have more taxes coming to it and would be in a better position in the coming years to spend more prolifically.

What are five things to watch out for in the Union Budget 2020?
1. Nominal GDP growth:
   • This is the most important number in a Budget and it forms the base of all other variables.
   • In the last full Budget that was presented in July 2019, the government expected nominal GDP to grow by 12% in 2019-20. As it turns out, the actual number is likely to be 7.5% or even lower.
   • This dip completely alters the likely real GDP for 2019-20; real GDP is derived after subtracting the annual inflation (roughly 4% for the year) from nominal GDP.
2 and 3: Fiscal and Revenue Deficit

- Given that there are no engines of growth left in the economy, many have argued that the government must not sit back under pressure from the fiscal hawks, and should instead **spend more to boost the overall demand** and rekindle the animal spirits in the economy.
- However, a crucial thing, if the government decides to relax or postpone fiscal responsibility norms, would be if the government **refocuses on revenue deficit as well**.
- In 2018, the government had **dropped targeting revenue deficit**. This had meant that India increasingly borrowed money to finance its everyday consumption at the cost of funding capital expenditure.
- Typically, Rs 100 spent on capital expenditure by the government results in Rs 250 being added to the overall economy.
- If the government spends on revenue such as salaries the overall impact on the economy is less than Rs 100.
- So, the crucial thing is not whether the fiscal deficit target is flouted or not, the crucial thing is **what is the revenue deficit and whether the government intends to reduce it to 0% in the next few years**.

4. An income tax cut:

There are **two reasons** why the government may want to cut the personal income tax rates or at least rejig its slabs.

- For one, the corporate income tax rates or the corporate tax rates have been cut sharply last year. It makes sense to offer that relief to the taxpayers in the economy.
- Two, people have been hoping for an income tax cut for long, and it may be one way to allay the concerns of the middle class in India.

5. Disinvestment Targets:

- The Prime Minister has been reiterating that the country cannot go forward without people looking at “wealth creators” with respect.
- The Economic Survey has already outlined the policies that need to be tweaked.
- A good way for the government to get out of the way of businesses in the country, and raise significant resources of its own in the process, is by divesting its stake in many public sector enterprises.

Conclusion:

- Union Budget also empowers the government to carry out its **constitutional duties** such as providing social justice and equality for all.
- **Resource allocation** in the best interest of the society and the country and allocating resources optimally for public welfare.
- Union Budget need to take **steps to control inflation, deflation and economic fluctuations** thus ensuring economic stability in the country. The Union Budget of any country is crucial as it has widespread implications on that country’s economic stability and general life as such.

2. Economic Survey 2020 takes a cue from China for creation of 8 crore jobs

Context:

- Finance Minister tabled the **Economic Survey 2019-20** in the Parliament after a **joint address** by President Ram Nath Kovind to both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.
- Prepared by Chief Economic Advisor, the Economic Survey gives a review of the developments in the economy over the previous 12 months and also **gives an outlook for the next financial year**.
- The Economic Survey for 2019-2020 seems an exercise driven by **20/20 hindsight**, combined with an optimistic 20/20 vision for the year to come, as it expects **GDP growth to revive from the 5% estimated for this year to a range between 6%-6.5% next year**.
- The Survey hints at going easy on **fiscal deficit targets** in a bid to shore up growth and makes a valiant attempt to evangelise wealth creation by entrepreneurs instead of demonising them.

About Economic Survey:

- **Ministry of Finance** presents an **annual document** known as **Economic Survey** which gives the details of various sectors of the economy and overall economic scenario of the country in the past years.
• The Economic Survey is a technocrat’s advice to the government. Not only this, it also provides an outline for the year ahead.
• The first Economic Survey of India was presented in 1950-51. It was presented along with the Union Budget up to 1964 and from 1964 onwards, it had been separated from the Union Budget.
• The Economic Division of the Department of Economic Affairs prepared the Economic Survey in the Finance Ministry under the overall guidance of the Chief Economic Adviser.
• When senior officers provide their inputs in the Ministry of Finance, the final version of the Economic Survey is scrutinized by the Finance Secretary and finally approved by the Union Finance Minister.

Aggressive Disinvestment Target:
• Economic Survey has recommended an aggressive target for disinvestment of the Central Public Sector Enterprises.
• The decision is intended to bring higher profitability and promote efficiency in the operations Public Sector Units.
• Furthermore, disinvestment will also bring in higher competition and promote professionalism in the operational culture of the organizations.

Calls for Urgent Reforms in Banking Sector:
• Economic Survey said that Indian’s Banking Sector needs urgent attention and reforms that can support the growing economy.
• The survey calls for a healthy banking sector that is led by Public Sector Banks.
• Among the three key recommendation for banking sector, the survey mentions use of Fintech across all banking functions, employee ownership to enhance efficiency and use of emerging technologies such as big-data, artificial intelligence and machine learning to improve operations.

Economic Survey on Employment Data:
• Economic Survey also talks about Employment Data which showcased that around 2.62 crore new jobs were created in rural and urban areas between 2011-12 and 2017-18.
• Of the total jobs created, around 1.21 crore in rural areas and 1.39 crore in urban areas under regular wage and salaried employees category.
• Of the total number of jobs created for regular wage and salaried employees; there has been around 8% growth in regular Employment of Women in 2017-18 over 2011-12.

The survey also adds that around 69.03 lakh people were trained under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY).
• Total Number of Jobs Created in 5 years: 2.62 crore
• Total Number of Jobs Created in Rural Areas: 1.21 crore
• Total Number of Jobs Created in Urban Areas: 1.39 crore
• Growth in Employment of Women wage earners: 8%
• Number of candidates trained under PMKVY: 69.03%

Infra Spend – Roadmap to UDS 5 Trillion Economy:
• As part of the roadmap to the ambitious target of achieving USD 5 Trillion Economy, the Economic Survey highlighted that India needs to invest UDS 1.4 Trillion on the development of Infrastructure.
• Lack of Infrastructure was cited as a ‘binding constraint’ on the economic growth ranging from power infrastructure, transport and poor connectivity.

Economic Survey said that India’s aspiration of becoming a $5 trillion economy depends on two things
1) Promoting ‘pro-business’ policy that unleashes the power of competitive markets to generate wealth.
2) Weaning away from ‘pro-crony’ policy that may favour specific private interests, especially powerful incumbents.

Chief Economic Advisor praised his team for “working hard” and having prepared the “second economic survey in the span of six months”.
• The government must use its strong mandate to deliver expeditiously on reforms, which will enable the economy to strongly rebound in 2020-21.
• It also called for improving governance in public sector banks and the need for more disclosure of information to build trust. It also talks about dwarfism in the banking sector.
Conclusion:

- Economic Survey calls for measures to make it easier to start new business, register property, pay taxes, enforce contracts.
- Government interventions seem to be ineffective in stabilising prices of commodities such as onions: Survey
- Economic Survey calls for more reforms for making it easier to do business in country.
• Weak global growth impacting India as well as investment slowdown due to financial sector issues had led to growth dropping to a decade low in current fiscal, the survey said, adding 5% growth projected for 2019-20 is the lowest it could fall for now.
• The Survey delves into texts from 4th century BC and cites Tamil poet Tiruvalluvar’s Thirukural and Kautilya’s Arthashastra to espouse the virtues of the invisible hand of the market combined with trust in wealth creation.
• The higher growth hopes for the coming year are actually based on ‘conservative’ estimates.
• By this time next year, there will be some clarity on whether it was wishful thinking or 20/20 vision.

3. Growing wealth inequality doesn’t bode well for India’s future

Context:
• The policy world has witnessed the ripples caused by Oxfam releasing its Annual Inequality Report ahead of the World Economic Forum in Davos.
• Every year, this report captures staggering increases in global wealth inequality over the years. This year, the report established that the richest 1 per cent in the world have more than double the wealth of 6.9 billion people combined.

• Within this 1 per cent, the world’s billionaires, just 2,135 people, have more wealth than that of the bottom 4.6 billion combined.
• In many ways, India has earned notoriety for its rampant inequality that seems to grow exponentially each year.
• Suffice to say, these figures point to a problem serious enough for the fiscally conservative International Monetary Fund to come out and call for resolving inequality, to protect long-term economic growth.
• We now know that nine of India’s billionaires own as much wealth as the bottom 50 per cent of the country’s populace and that it would take the average female domestic worker 22,277 years to earn the annual pay-out to India’s top tech CEO.
• Yet, while we have seen a lot of discussion around what this means for growth, there is a critical need to understand what this inequality means for the future of today’s youth.

Reasons for concern due to growing Inequality:
• If the Oxfam report is any indicator, an unequal present implies an exponentially more unequal future, that entrenches within it some of Indian society’s greatest failings.
• The burden of inequality continues to be borne by India’s women: They continue to be tasked with bearing the burden of care work, and spend — on average, 352 minutes a day for this purpose. In contrast, men put in only 51.8.
• By tasking women with unpaid care work, we simultaneously withhold their entry into the labour force.
• The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2017-18 showed a dramatic drop in women’s work participation rates, to only 16.5 per cent, while unemployment rates for the economy as a whole continued to climb.
This is a reason for concern primarily because it means that fewer and fewer women are participating in India’s labour force, and that even those who do now find themselves without work.

At a time when resolving the gender wealth gap is predicated on increasing women’s incomes, this economic outlook only points to the deepening of this divide as millennial women remain both underpaid and underemployed.

Growing wealth inequality is also symptomatic of the rise of an entrenched rentier class which looks to leverage their fixed assets in the form of land and property to extract the greatest possible rents from tenants and leases.

For our millennial professionals, this means that cities continue to grow unaffordable, and prospects of actually purchasing a home early in their career turns from optimistic to bleak.

With a 2019 study by the Reserve Bank confirming that housing affordability has significantly deteriorated over the last four years, it is unsurprising how millennials now choose to rent rather than bear the increasingly unaffordable burden of high EMIs.

However, the current drying up of demand may be symptomatic of income (if not wealth) inequality being pushed to its very limits.

Symptoms of growing Inequality:

- Current social unrest and student protests should be viewed as symptoms of this growing economic inequity.
- Lack of upward mobility and drastic economic slowdown has only exacerbated existing societal tensions.
- It is precisely for this reason that we must ensure that the campaign transcends just economics, and enters the public conscience.
- By increasing social spending, changing gendered attitudes towards care work, and ensuring the wealthy pay their share, we could take concrete action towards this goal.
- Doing so would be critical to resolving, not only the glaring inequities of the present, but also the threat of a more unequal future.
- Oxfam said governments are massively under-taxing the wealthiest individuals and corporations and failing to collect revenues that could help lift the responsibility of care from women and tackle poverty and inequality.
- Besides, the governments are also under-funding vital public services and infrastructure that could help reduce women and girls’ workload, the report said.

India’s richest 1% hold four times more wealth than 70% of poor: Oxfam:

- India’s richest 1 per cent hold more than four-times the wealth held by 953 million people who make up for the bottom 70 per cent of the country’s population, while the total wealth of all Indian billionaires is more than the full-year budget, a new study said.
- Releasing the study ‘Time to Care’ here ahead of the 50th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF).
- As per the global survey, the 22 richest men in the world have more wealth than all the women in Africa.
- It further said women and girls put in 3.26 billion hours of unpaid care work each and every day, a contribution to the Indian economy of at least Rs 19 lakh crore a year, which is 20 times the entire education budget of India in 2019 (Rs 93,000 crore).
- Besides, direct public investments in the care economy of 2 per cent of GDP would potentially create 11 million new jobs and make up for the 11 million jobs lost in 2018, the report said.
- As the report argues, increasing spending on social welfare could drastically reduce this burden. But there again, India continues to allocate a little over 5 per cent of its GDP to health and education.

Consequences of Inequality:

- The social and economic consequences of inequality are profound and far-reaching: a growing sense of unfairness, precarity, perceived loss of identity and dignity, weakening social fabric, eroding trust in institutions, disenchantment with political processes, and an erosion of the social contract.
- Inequalities tend to produce social conflict among the social groups e.g. caste groups like Jaats, Maratha, Patels are demanding reservations but this demand is opposed by caste groups already claiming the benefits of reservations, such clash of interest due to perceived inequality tend to produce violent conflicts between opposing caste groups.
- Inequalities among ethnic groups have led to various ethnic movements demanding separate states or autonomous regions or even outright secession from India. North East has been rocked by numerous such ethnic movement e.g. by Nagas for greater Nagalim etc.
• **Religious inequality** tends to generate feeling of exclusion among religious minority groups. This reduces their participation in mainstream, in India religious minorities have large population their economic exclusion compromises the GDP growth of nation as whole.

• **Poor development indicators** like IMR, MMR, low per capita income, lower education and learning outcomes at schools, high rate of population growth can be traced to existing socio-economic inequalities.

• **High economic inequality is detrimental to public healthcare and education.** Upper and Middle classes do not have vested interest in well-functioning public healthcare and education as they have means to access private healthcare and education.

**Conclusion:**

• The gap between rich and poor cannot be resolved **without deliberate inequality-busting policies**, and too few governments are committed to these.

• Women and girls are among those who benefit the least from today’s economic system.

• They **spend billions of hours** cooking, cleaning and caring for children and the elderly. **Unpaid care work is the ‘hidden engine’** that keeps the wheels of our economies, businesses and societies moving.

• The response by business and government must include a concerted effort to create new pathways to socioeconomic mobility, ensuring everyone has fair opportunities for success.

• Getting the richest one per cent to pay just 0.5 per cent extra tax on their wealth over the next 10 years would equal the **investment needed to create 117 million jobs in sectors** such as elderly and childcare, education and health.

• Governments **must prioritise care** as being as important as all other sectors in order to build more human economies that work for everyone, not just a fortunate few.

• Oxfam said its calculations are based on the latest data sources available, including from the **Credit Suisse Research Institute’s Global Wealth Databook 2019 and Forbes’ 2019 Billionaires List.**

### 4. Fashioning the framework of a New India

**Context: State of Indian Economy:**

• The Indian economy is going through a **severe crisis: a slowdown** as well as a **structural crisis**.

• In the words of the former Chief Economic Adviser, Arvind Subramanian, it is headed towards the ICU.

• Almost all sectors of the economy are **in decline**: the rate of growth of the **national GDP has declined to 5.0%**, and may go down further; the construction sector, one of the fastest growing sectors so far, is growing at 3.3% this year; agriculture is growing at 2.1% while the auto sector is declining continuously in absolute terms.

• The **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)** sector too has declined, in turn **raising the burden of non-performing assets** of the banking sector as well as non-banking financial institutions.

• Also, exports have been declining in recent years, raising the crisis of current account deficit.

• **Credit from banking and non-banking sectors** has been declining in the last few years; the **Financial Stability Report of the Reserve Bank of India (2019)** says that it is unlikely to increase in the next nine months.

**Slowdown in Economy: Impacting the poor:**

• These developments have had an **adverse impact on the bottom 30%-40% of the population**.

• The incidence of absolute poverty, which has been falling since 1972-73, has increased to 30% (4% jump).

• As the **Human Development Report (2019)** has shown, **more than 44%** of the Indian population is under the **multi-dimensional poverty line**.

• The poorest 50% population at present owns only **4.1% of the national wealth**, while the richest 10% people own 73% of the total wealth in India (Suisse Credit 2019).

• India has **2% population malnourished** (women 15%) as against 9.3% in China. And 50% of the malnourished children in the world are in India.

• **India’s global hunger rank** has gone up to 112 while Brazil is 18, China is 25 and South Africa, 59.

• In the field of education as per a **UN report (2015)**, overall literacy in India is 74.04% (more than the 25% are totally illiterate) against 94.3% in South Africa, 96.6% in China and 92.6% in Brazil. Almost 40-45% population is either illiterate or has studied up to standard 4.

• Given the quality of education in India, the overall population is very poorly educated, with the **share of ‘educated unemployment’ rising by leaps and bounds.**
• It needs to be realised that when exports are declining, the economy will have to depend on domestic demand for growth.
• It is no more feasible for the top 20-25% population to continue growing without depending on the demand from the bottom 40-45% population.
• There is thus a strong reason now for the economy to increase effective demand of this bottom 40-45% population at least to continue growing to reach a $5-trillion economy by 2024.

Public investments will revive growth:

• How does one raise resources to increase new public investments in the selected sectors mentioned above, especially when public revenue is declining and the claims on public resources are rising? One major strategy is to raise direct taxes, both capital tax and wealth tax.

However, Problems with Increase in Direct Tax rates:

• Experiences in the past has shown by following crony capitalism, i.e. providing tax cuts and extra incentives and concessions to the corporate sector, exports increased and also our national GDP no doubt. But this growth does not much percolate to the poor.
• This is because during the growth process due to **special treatment to corporate sector**, the political economy radically changed in favour of the rich who are never willing to be taxed to raise government revenue to a level that it is enough to promote the capabilities and the well-being of the marginalised and the excluded.

• On the other hand, the unholy alliance between the government and the corporate sector also does not allow them to worry about the poor.

• Consequently, taxing the rich has to be a major strategy to raise government revenue.

• Second, if the **public expenditure on raising capabilities** is treated as **social investment** rather than social welfare, policymakers will be willing to spend on this capital formation.

• And, finally, there was no sound economic reason to **control fiscal deficit ratio**. Sound macroeconomics never supports this.

**Solution that need to adopt: All-encompassing growth:**

✓ One important lesson for policymakers is this: a major solution to the present crisis is to go in **for inclusive growth**.

✓ Here, inclusive growth does not mean only including all sections of the population in the growth process as producers and beneficiaries; it also means **“shared prosperity”**.

✓ Since India has already committed to **sustainable and inclusive growth at the UN General Assembly**, India is definitely obliged to implement inclusive growth. This should be our “New India”.

**Under the “New India” the main requirements are as follows:**

• To start with, to improve the capabilities of the masses as well as their well-being by expanding **productive employment opportunities** for them.

• The main steps to **expand productive employment** for all in the economy should be made up of:

• A **process of inclusion** — expanding **quality of basic health for all and ensuring quality education to all**, which will by itself generate large-scale employment in the government;

• Having a well-educated and healthy labour force will ensure high employability; such people will be able to **participate actively in the development process**;

• Having a **well-educated labour force** will help start-ups and MSMEs, in turn triggering a cycle of more productive employment in the economy.

• This will also **improve the global competitiveness** of our production units. Employment guarantee schemes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) will also increase employment.

• Assets generated under MGNREGA will **expand capital formation in the economy**, thereby raising the **labour-absorbing capacity** of the mainstream economy.

**Conclusion: Outcomes for above strategy:**

❖ First, it will **raise incomes and the well-being** of those who need it most urgently.

❖ Second, it will **raise effective demand rapidly**, which is so badly needed in the economy today to raise economic growth.

❖ Third, growth will be equitable and sustainable.

**The discussion had important implications for the Union Budget:**

❖ **Need to raise expenditure on health** to at least 5% of GDP and expenditure on education to at least 6% of GDP;

❖ To push up **infrastructural development to enhance capabilities and opportunities of the masses** and not just to promote corporate units;

❖ To **promote agriculture by raising investment** in agriculture and not just cash transfer (cash transfer provides relief to them no doubt, and does not raise productivity of agriculture which needs large public investment); and

❖ To **facilitate credit flow** particularly continuous working capital, to labour intensive sectors.

**5. Why have LPG prices seen a sharp rise?**

**Context:**

• In recent, LPG **prices**, which are **revised on a monthly basis**, went up again. The rate for unsubsidised, 14.2 kg cylinders has risen by a steep Rs.144.50 in Delhi, at Rs.858.50. In January 2020, a non-subsidised LPG cylinder cost ₹714 in Delhi. In three other metros too, LPG prices jumped — Kolkata: ₹896 (increase
by ₹149); Mumbai: ₹829.50 (increase by ₹145); and Chennai: ₹881 (increase by ₹147). The recent price hike has been the sharpest since January 2014.

Importance of usage of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) in an Economy:

- LPG, the Liquefied Petroleum Gas is an integral part of every household and hence the budget at home. Any rise or fall in the cost of LPG cylinder affects the financial plan of a family. The most common use of LPG is for cooking both domestic as well as commercial. In addition to this LPG is also used for running automobiles and for refrigeration etc. LPG which is the mixture of hydrocarbon gases is the product obtained after refining crude oil (petroleum). Most of the crude oil is imported in India.

What influences LPG prices in India?

- Domestic prices of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) are based on a formula the import parity price (IPP), which is based on international LPG prices. Saudi Aramco’s LPG price acts as the benchmark for the IPP and includes the free-on-board price, ocean freight, customs duties, port dues and the like. This dollar-denominated figure is converted into rupees before local costs — such as local freight, bottling charges, marketing costs, margins for oil marketing firms and dealer commissions and the GST are added. This helps the government arrive at the retail selling price for LPG. The government resets the LPG price every month, the decision being influenced by international prices and how the rupee has behaved against the dollar in the immediately preceding weeks.

How have international prices behaved recently?

- The Brent crude price had been on an uptrend, and had breached the $68 level late that month. It peaked at $68.91 in early January, but with the coronavirus (COVID-19) disease hogging headlines in recent weeks, fears of a global slowdown have pushed oil prices down through January, save for a few spikes. Saudi Aramco had raised its propane prices to $565 per metric tonne in January, up sharply from $440 a metric tonne set for December. Aramco propane prices offer a benchmark for pricing the West Asia LPG sales to Asian markets.

- The dollar-rupee dance has since been within the range of ₹71-₹72 to the dollar, having briefly breached the Rs.72 mark in early January.

Who will the price rise affect?

- The price increase will affect retail consumers who have given up the subsidy. The government has said that for those who avail subsidy, the increase would be mostly absorbed by the rise in subsidy. The Centre said the price of an unsubsidised cylinder would increase from ₹714 to ₹858.50 in Delhi, for example, and that the subsidy offered would go up from ₹153.86 to ₹291.48. Of the 27.76 crore retail consumers, 26.12 crore consumers avail LPG subsidy.

- Likewise, for Ujjwala consumers, the subsidy would go up from ₹174.86 to ₹312.48 per cylinder.

Does this help the government move to an open pricing regime?

- Prior to the latest round of the price increase, the government had raised LPG cylinder prices by ₹62, starting from August 2019. Compare this with the increase of ₹82 that had taken place over five years to mid-2019, indicating a penchant for increasingly lesser subsidy. In the latest round, though, the Centre has sought to absorb much of the increase for those availing subsidies. It looks like the most recent

PaHal – Direct Benefit Transfer Scheme for LPG:

- PaHal (Pratyaksha Hastaantarit Laabh) is the abbreviated alternate Hindi name for the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) Scheme existing in India for the direct cash transfer of subsidy for Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) used in household cooking.

- Prior to the introduction of direct benefit transfer or direct cash transfer, LPG was sold at subsidised prices to all households through public sector oil marketing companies (private sector refiners were not allowed to distribute the subsidised LPG), leading to black marketing and diversion of subsidised/low priced cylinders for industrial or auto/transport uses.

- Cash transfer is an alternate form of giving subsidy wherein the amount contributed by the Government to suppress the price of the product is given directly to the consumer, leaving the price of the product to be determined by market forces.

- Thus, contrary to general perception, DBT is not elimination or substitution of subsidy, but an alternate way of giving subsidy.

- DBT is designed to ensure that the benefit meant for the genuine domestic customers reaches them directly and is not diverted. By this process public money is saved, just as fake and duplicate connections cease to exist.

- Under DBT, subsidy is available only to those who opt for it, thus ensuring self-selection and avoiding universal coverage.

- Capping the price of LPG for household consumption had also led to production distortions and stress on distribution infrastructure. DBT intends to correct such distortions in the industry.
increase has been beyond its control and it is hence raising the subsidy levels to protect consumers, given that the economy is reeling from lack of consumer spending.

**GiveItUp Campaign:**
1. Domestic LPG is **heavily subsidized** by the Government of India and every cylinder that we use in our kitchen carries a substantial subsidy.
2. This translates to a **huge annual subsidy burden** on the Government, draining precious resources which otherwise could have been used in developmental activities. Subsidy on domestic LPG instead of being universal needs to meet the needs of the truly needy citizens.
3. Fortunately, many able and aware citizens are not in favour of subsidies and would rather pay the full price for the products and, thereby they also make a personal contribution towards nation-building. There is a need to spread this message.
4. Accordingly, the Government has launched the ‘#GiveItUp’ campaign which is aimed at motivating LPG users who can afford to pay the market price for LPG to voluntarily surrender their LPG subsidy.

**Conclusion: Implications for the broader economy:**
- At a time when consumer demand, in general, for goods and services in the country has slumped, more cash in the hands of the retail consumer may have helped spur demand. It is ironic that the government has had to raise LPG prices now. This sucks away even more disposable income from those consumers who pay market rates for LPG.
- As a result, household budgets are bound to go up, especially for those not availing the subsidy. The increase in LPG price could spur headline inflation even further. As it is, the **consumer price index inflation** has seen a rise over the past few months.

**SCIENCE & TECH**

**Purifying water: On draft notification on RO systems**

**Context:**
- The Environment Ministry’s draft notification to regulate the use of membrane-based water purification systems primarily concerns the manufacturers of **reverse osmosis (RO) water filters** but effectively bars domestic users from installing RO systems.
- The Central government has drawn up plans to **ban the use of membrane-based water purification systems (MWPS)** – primarily reverse osmosis (RO) systems – in areas where the source of water meets the Bureau of Indian Standards’ drinking water norms.

**Draft notification that effectively prohibits home users to install MPWS:**
- The notification is the culmination of a legal dispute before the National Green Tribunal, which had banned RO water filter use in Delhi as the purification process wastes water.
- The notification mainly deals with **rules for commercial suppliers** and for integration of systems that inform consumers about TDS levels, a major determinant of water quality.
- This is envisaged both before water enters filtration systems and after it has been filtered.
• The association of water filter manufacturers challenged this order and the litigation led to this pan-India notification, where the intent is to conserve water and cut waste.

Problem with Reverse Osmosis (RO) systems:
• In RO, the total dissolved solids (TDS) in water, which covers trace chemicals, certain viruses, bacteria and salts can be reduced, to meet potable water standards. Home filters waste nearly 80% of the water during treatment.
• Second, some research has shown that the process can cut the levels of calcium and magnesium, which are vital nutrients.
• The resort to prohibition (to restrict home filters) may cause consumer apprehension but it is unlikely that they will be taken to task for using such water filters.
• For one, the notification implies, these filters are only prohibited if the home gets water supply that conforms to Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) for Drinking Water.
• Although several State and city water boards claim BIS standards, the water at homes falls short of the test parameters.

World Health Organization issues reverse osmosis water warning:
• Just about everyone knows that Reverse Osmosis (RO) systems excel at removing water impurities, but few are aware that they also remove the beneficial minerals.
• In fact, the reverse osmosis process removes 92-99% of beneficial calcium and magnesium.
• After analysing hundreds of scientific studies concerning demineralized or reverse osmosis water, the World Health Organization released a report stating that such water “has a definite adverse influence on the animal and human organism.”
• Consumers have been so concerned with removing as many things from water as possible that they have forgotten to ask if the resulting water actually improves health or causes health problems.
• It’s assumed that no toxins equal better health, but there is simply more to healthful water than a lack of toxins, as the World Health Organization clearly points out.

Official water supply quality by BIS:
• The BIS, last year, ranked several cities on official water supply quality. Delhi was last and only Mumbai met all the standards.
• In the 28 test parameters, Delhi failed 19, Chennai 9, and Kolkata 10. The BIS norms are voluntary for public agencies which supply piped water but are mandatory for bottled water producers.
• Moreover, most of the country does not have the luxury of piped water. The Composite Water Management Index (CWMI) of NITI Aayog says that 70% of water supply is contaminated.
• India is ranked 120th among 122 countries in an NGO, WaterAid’s quality index. The case for restricting people’s choices on the means they employ to ensure potable water is thus weak.

What is Reverse Osmosis?
• Reverse Osmosis is a technology that is used to remove a large majority of contaminants from water by pushing the water under pressure through a semi-permeable membrane.
• Reverse Osmosis works by using a high-pressure pump to increase the pressure on the salt side of the RO and force the water across the semi-permeable RO membrane, leaving almost all (around 95% to 99%) of dissolved salts behind in the reject stream.
• The amount of pressure required depends on the salt concentration of the feed water. The more concentrated the feed water, the more pressure is required to overcome the osmotic pressure.
• The desalinated water that is demineralized or deionized, is called permeate (or product) water. The water stream that carries the concentrated contaminants that did not pass through the RO membrane is called the reject (or concentrate) stream.
Conclusion:
- The aim is also to ensure that after 2022, no more than 25% of water being treated is wasted, and for residential complexes to reuse the residual waste water for other activities, including gardening.
- When implemented, the notification’s primary aim should be to persuade authorities to upgrade and supply BIS-standard water at the consumer’s end.
- This should be done without additional costs, particularly on millions who now lack access to protected supply.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. What Brexit means for the EU and its partners

Context:
- On January 31, 2020, the United Kingdom left the European Union.
- Britain has officially left the European Union (EU) and has become the first country to leave the 28-member bloc.
- Nevertheless, we have always respected the sovereign decision of 52% of the British electorate, and we now look forward to starting a new chapter in our relations.
A structured exit:
- This agreement sets out the exact terms of the UK and EU relationship immediately after exit but it is not clear, on what terms the UK and EU’s future relationship will be.
- Under this agreement, the EU and the U.K. agreed on a transition period, until the end of 2020 at least, during which the U.K. will continue to participate in the EU’s Customs Union and in the Single Market, and to apply EU law, even if it is no longer a Member State.
- During this period, the U.K. will also continue to abide by the international agreements of the EU, as we made clear in a note verbale to our international partners.
- A key part of the withdrawal agreement was, there would be a transition period, until the end of 2020.
- The transitional arrangement is designed to make the separation process smoother and it covers subjects like trade, law, and immigration.
- It will give them more time to iron out all the details of their future relationship including a possible free trade deal.
- During the transition, the UK will be officially out of the EU and not be represented on EU bodies but would still have the same obligations as an EU member.
- That includes remaining in the EU customs union and the single market, contributing to the EU’s budget and following EU law.

Element of continuity:
- So, with the transition period in place, there is a degree of continuity. This was not easy given the magnitude of the task.
- By leaving the Union, the U.K. automatically, mechanically, legally, leaves hundreds of international agreements concluded by or on behalf of the Union, to the benefit of its Member States, on topics as different as trade, aviation, fisheries or civil nuclear cooperation.
- They now have to build a new partnership between the EU and the U.K. That work will start in a few weeks as soon as the EU 27 Member States have approved the negotiating mandate proposed by the European Commission, setting out the terms and ambitions for achieving the closest possible partnership with a country which will remain as ally, partner and friend.

Shared and deep links:
- The EU and the U.K. are bound by history, by geography, culture, shared values and principles and a strong belief in rules-based multilateralism.
- Their future partnership will reflect these links and shared beliefs.
- They need to go well beyond trade and keep working together on security and defence, areas where the U.K. has experiences and assets that are best used as part of a common effort.

Collective Responses for transcendental challenges:
- In a world of big challenges and change, of turmoil and transition, the countries must consult each other and cooperate, bilaterally and in key regional and global fora, such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization or the G20.
- It is perhaps a cliche but the basic truth is that today’s global challenges — from climate change, to cybercrime, terrorism or inequality — require collective responses.
- The more the U.K. is able to work in lockstep with the EU and together with partners around the world, the greater our chances of addressing these challenges effectively.
- At the very core of the EU project is the idea that we are stronger together; that pooling our resources and initiatives is the best way of achieving common goals.
- Brexit does not change this, and will continue to take this project forward as 27.
- Together, the 27 Member States will continue to form a single market of 450 million citizens and more than 20 million businesses.
- Together, 27 Member States remain the largest trading bloc in the world. Together, at 27, we are still the world’s largest development aid donor.

Brexit w.r.t India:
- The U.K. is one of the largest investors in India, among the G20 countries. Hence, it is important to see how India and the U.K. can manoeuvre through Brexit and enter into new trade agreements that are mutually beneficial to both economies.
- Brexit will directly impact not only the Indian stock market but the global market in totality, including the emerging markets in the world. This is because of the high volatility in the pound.
• Both the U.K. and EU account for 23.7% of Rupee’s effective exchange rate. With Brexit, foreign portfolio investments will outflow and will lead to the weakening of the rupee.

• India’s businesses based in the U.K. will be hampered as till now they had border-free access to the rest of Europe.

Conclusion:
• EU partners can be sure that they will stay true to an ambitious, outward-looking agenda — be it on trade and investment, on climate action and digital, on connectivity, on security and counter-terrorism, on human rights and democracy, or on defence and foreign policy.

• After Brexit, European Union confidently told that “We will continue to live up to our commitments. We will continue to stand by the agreements that link us to our international partners and we will continue to develop multilateral cooperation frameworks around the world.”

• The European Union will continue to be a partner you can trust. A steadfast defender of rules-based multilateralism, working with our partners to make the world more secure and fair.

2. US-India trade deal, a threat to dairy sector

Context:
• The upcoming visit of US President Donald Trump to India may see the contours of the Indo-US deal being finalised in specific sectors, which is also likely to include allowing for market access for US dairy products in India.

• This move is likely to have significant adverse consequences on the prospects of the fledgling Indian dairy industry. India, the world’s largest milk-producing nation, has traditionally restricted dairy imports to protect the livelihoods of 80 million rural households involved in the industry.

Importance of the dairy sector in India’s overall economic schema:
• The dairy sector not only provides employment to the rural workforce, but is also a significant contributor to the national economy.

• While the share of agriculture and allied (A&A) sector in the gross value added (GVA) has consistently declined from 18.2 per cent in 2014 to 17.2 per cent in 2017, the share of livestock to GVA has increased from 4.4 per cent to 4.9 per cent during the same period. Importantly, within the A&A sector, among the key livestock products, milk and milk products have the highest share, at around 67.2 per cent in 2017.

• The dairy sector plays a pivotal role in aiding the reduction of rural poverty and inequity, in addition to ensuring the food security of millions of rural households.

India and US: Dairy Sector trade:
1. Coming to the dynamics of the dairy trade with focus on the US and India, the data shows that the US is a net exporter in dairy trading, with its share in global exports standing at 4.9 per cent as opposed to an import share of around 2.8 per cent in 2018.

2. In contrast, the share of India is minuscule at 0.3 per cent and 0.06 per cent in global dairy exports and imports, respectively, in 2018.

3. However, bilateral trade in dairy products between the US and India reveals a very variant picture.

4. While the dairy exports to US have increased by almost seven times from $2.1 million in 2015-16 to $14.9 million in 2018-19, the pace of imports from the US has shown a moderate uptick (see Chart).
5. This translates into a sharp jump in trade surplus for India from $1.94 million to $14.41 million during the comparable time period against the US.

**Disadvantage position of India:**

1. If India goes ahead with the signing of the deal on allowing market access of US dairy products in the Indian market, then the former stands to lose out in a big manner.
2. In 2017, **India contributed 21 per cent of the world’s milk production**, thus making it the largest milk producer in the world.
3. This has been made possible by the almost **73 million marginal and landless farmers** who directly work in the dairy sector and hold, on average, **two milch animals per farmer**.
4. Further, according to **The World Dairy Situation, 2019 report**, milk yield per cow in the US is the highest in the world, standing at 10,500 kg per cow as against 1,715 kg per cow in India, which is the second-lowest in the world after Pakistan.
5. Importantly, a dairy farmer in the US is able to sell milk at a price 16.6 per cent above the average world market price, as compared with the similar number standing at 15.6 per cent in India.
6. In addition, Indian farmers enjoy favourable terms of trade in the dairy arena, with their share in the consumer price standing at **around 60 per cent**, which happens to be the **highest in the world** (as per the **International Farm Comparison Network’s Dairy Report, 2018**).
7. However, in the US, there are around 0.04 million dairy farmers holding an average of 241 milch animals per farmer.
8. Though these farmers are **basically large dairy farmers** who benefit from economies of scale, they only get **around 43 per cent** of what the consumer pays, which is 1.4 times lower than that of India.

**In Reality: Deal affects the Indian Rural Economy:**

- The US dairy industry claims that the **proposed trade pact with India has the potential to increase dairy exports to India up to $100 million**.
- As per estimates, had the India-US trade deal in the dairy sector already been in force, India would have run up a dairy sector **trade deficit of $85 million today**, instead of the 2018-19 trade surplus of $14.71 million. This is not good news for the Indian dairy industry, as the trade deal will not only adversely affect the industry as a whole but also the **socio-economic conditions of millions of small, landless and marginal farmers** especially women, who are active in this industry.
- It will affect the business activity of small dairies and dairy cooperative players. It is likely to temper the sentiments in the rural economy, which is already dealing with a gamut of problems at present.

**Conclusion:**

- According to a report by the **Agriculture Skill Council of India**, while crop production generates employment for the rural workforce for an average of 90-120 days in a year; the **dairy sector plays a major role in providing alternative employment opportunities throughout the year**.
- In fact, in the recent years, milk and milk products have become the **largest agricultural commodity**, with their output standing at more than 20.6 per cent of the combined output of paddy, wheat and pulses.
- Thus, it is evident from the numbers that **despite lower milk yield and dominance of small and marginal farmers** in dairy activity,
- India is comfortably placed to produce milk at a cheaper rate. There is no gainsaying the importance of the dairy sector as one of the important sectors of the Indian economy.
- Thus, **opening market access** for the sector is likely to place these dairy farmers in a **disadvantaged position** in relation to the large-scale dairy farmers in US.

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**ENVIRONMENT**

**Declare Eastern Ghats UNESCO cultural heritage sites, say environmental groups**

**Context:**

- All the **historically and culturally significant mountains of the Eastern Ghats** should be declared UNESCO cultural heritage sites.
- The five States that the Ghats encompass – Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Odisha should prepare an **action plan to protect and conserve their ecology and natural resources**, the
Greens’ Alliance for Conservation of Eastern Ghats (GRACE) and the Council for Green Revolution (CGR) have said.

About Eastern Ghats:

1. The Eastern Ghats run parallel to the eastern coastal plains of India. Unlike the Western Ghats, they are discontinuous in nature and is dissected by the rivers that drain into the Bay of Bengal.

2. As discussed above, most of these rivers have their origin in the Western Ghats. It must be noted that the Eastern Ghats are lower in elevation than the western Ghats. The highest peak of western Ghats is the Mahendragiri.

3. The difference in the elevation levels of the highest peaks in both the ghats can also be compared.

4. Anaimudi which is the highest peak of the western Ghats has a height of 2695 mts whereas Mahendragiri of eastern Ghats is of 150 mts.

5. This gives us a fair idea of the differences in elevation levels of the hills in both the Ghats.

6. The main crop produced in the Eastern Ghats is the Rice, which is also the staple food of the people living in the region.

7. The Eastern Ghats reappear as more or less a continuous hill range in Cuddapah and Kurnool districts of Andhra Pradesh where they are called as Nallamalai Range [Naxalite hideout in AP] with general elevation of 600-850 m.

8. The southern part of this range is called the Palkonda range.

Report titled ‘Eastern Ghats – Environment Outlook’:

1. The Greens’ Alliance for Conservation of Eastern Ghats (GRACE) and the Council for Green Revolution (CGR) have demanded that the Central government form a Regional Coordination Committee of States on Eastern Ghats with a mandate for linking and coordinating activities relating to the Ghats.

2. It should have sought the appointment of a Nature Ombudsman for the Eastern Ghats and the publication of an Environmental Atlas of the Eastern Ghats, incorporating various ecological, social, cultural and heritage information, among others.

3. These were all laid out in a report titled ‘Eastern Ghats – Environment Outlook’.

4. The report said the degradation of the Eastern Ghats, which began a century ago, had accelerated since the 1970s, and the ecosystem of the hills had lost their natural species composition, forest structure, size, scale and character.

5. According to the report, the situation was grave due to the threats and challenges to floral and faunal elements, and the bio-geographic significance of the Eastern Ghats was declining fast.

6. The time has come for all the local governments to ensure that the conservation of the Eastern Ghats and the regeneration of all its biodiversity are top priority, the report said.

7. The region hosts wildlife sanctuaries, biosphere reserves and Ramsar convention sites. However, a large part of the Eastern Ghats wilderness is yet to be covered under the conservation umbrella.

Session for MPs to need to protect the Eastern Ghats:

• It is incumbent on the five States to make efforts to protect the fragile ecosystem that is home to nearly 5 million tribal people belonging to nearly 60 indigenous communities.

• A session for Members of Parliament from the five States is being planned to educate them about the gravity of the situation and the need to protect the Ghats, so that they can make efforts to bring in policy measures to ensure that the fragile ecosystem is protected.

• The tribes of the Eastern Ghats are stifled in conflicting interests between governments, corporate and neighbouring lowland societies and militants.

• Their lands have become sites for clandestine dumping of toxic waste, illegal mining, poaching and hunting, including human trafficking.
Climate change, land-use change may enhance plant species loss in the Eastern Ghats:

- Climate and land use change are likely to alter plant species richness in the Eastern Ghats in the future, scientists have said, pressing for urgent conservation attention on the region that has lost 16 percent of forest cover in a span of 100 years.
- While 40 percent of the Eastern Ghats is in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Odisha share 25 percent each, and Karnataka and Telangana share 5 percent each.

Conservation and Protection of Eastern Ghats Landscape:

1. **Water-energy dynamics** broadly regulates plant richness in the Eastern Ghats, with average annual rainfall and temperature having a considerable impact on plants.
2. “Plants need optimum supply of water and conducive temperature ranges to thrive and the disruption in this balance due to global warming can put species at risk,” said Centre for Oceans, Rivers, Atmosphere and Land Sciences at Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur.
3. The study finds herb species (771 herb species followed by 451 tree species) dominating in the Eastern Ghats landscape, suggesting how climate and human actions are changing the course of plant species richness.
4. The seasonal dryness and moderate to low rainfall favour their (herbs) growth.
5. Additionally, because of the dense population and anthropogenic disturbance, the number of tree species has reduced.

Difference between Eastern Ghats and Western Ghats:

1. **Direction:** Western Ghats runs parallel to the western coast in a north-south direction from the Tapi River to Kanayakumari. But Eastern Ghats runs in a north-east to south-west direction parallel to the eastern coast from Orissa to the Nilgiri hills.
2. **Width:** Western Ghat’s average width is 50 to 80 km. But Eastern Ghat’s width varying from 100 to 200 km.
3. **Source of rivers:** Western Ghats is source of many large rivers which flow in the Peninsular India. But no big river originates from the Eastern Ghats.
4. **Rainfall:** Western Ghats is almost perpendicular to the south-west monsoons coming from the Arabian Sea and causes heavy rainfall in the west coastal plain. But Eastern Ghats is almost parallel to the monsoons coming from the Bay of Bengal and does not cause much rainfall.
5. **Physical divisions:** Western Ghats continuous and can be crossed through passes only. But Eastern Ghats has been divided into several parts by large rivers.
6. **Elevation:** Western Ghats average elevation is 900 to 1,100 meters above sea-level. But the average elevation of Eastern Ghats is about 600 metres above sea level.

Conclusion:

- Conservation action and protection is mostly focused on hotspots such as the Himalayas and the Western Ghats.
- But we are losing species that are not included in the hotspots, said IIT Kharagpur scientists, referring to the 1600-km stretch of rich, biodiverse forests on discontinuous hills lying parallel to the Bay of Bengal.
- The biological integrity of the Eastern Ghats had to be protected on a war-footing, and a Marshall Plan was needed for the revival of its natural glory and green cover and for ensuring that wildlife was free from the fear of extinction.

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**SECURITY ISSUES**

1. **For a data firewall: On need for a data protection law**

**Context:**

- The report by a German cybersecurity firm that medical details of millions of Indian patients were leaked and are freely available on the Internet is worrying.
- The firm listed 1.02 million studies of Indian patients and 121 million medical images, including CT Scans, MRIs and even photos of the patients, as being available.
- What is even more worrying is that the number of data troves containing this sensitive data went up by a significant number in the Indian context a month after Greenbone’s initial report was published.
- The updated report also places Maharashtra at the top of the States affected by the leak.
• According to the Supreme Court in the **Puttaswamy judgement (2017)**, the **right to privacy is a fundamental right** and it is necessary to protect personal data as an essential facet of informational privacy, whereas the growth of the digital economy is also essential to **open new vistas of socio-economic growth**.

**Risks associated with leakage of data:**

1. Data is the **large collection of information** that is stored in a computer or on a network. **Data is collected and handled by entities called data fiduciaries.**
2. While the fiduciary controls how and why data is processed, the processing itself may be by a third party, the data processor.
3. This distinction is important to delineate responsibility as data moves from entity to entity.
4. For example, in the US, Facebook (the data controller) fell into controversy for the actions of the data processor — Cambridge Analytica.
5. Such information has the potential to be mined for **deeper data analysis** and for **creating profiles** that could be **used for social engineering, phishing and online identity theft**, among other practices that thrive on the **availability of such data on the Darknet** restricted computer networks which exchange information using means such as peer-to-peer file sharing.
6. The reason for the availability of this data is the **absence of any security** in the **Picture Archiving and Communications Systems (PACS)** servers used by medical professionals and which seem to have been connected to the public Internet without protection.
7. **Public data leaks** have been quite common in India from government websites enabling the download of Aadhaar numbers to electoral data rolls being downloaded in bulk, among others.
8. Unlike the data protection regulations in place in the European Union and in the U.S., India still lacks a comprehensive legal framework to protect data privacy.
9. The **Draft Personal Data Protection Bill 2019** is still to be tabled but could enable protection of privacy.
Brief about Data Protection Bill, 2019:

- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeITY) in July 2017 constituted a ten-member committee of experts headed by former Supreme Court Judge, Justice B.N. Srikrishna to study various issues related to data protection in India and also to draft a Data Protection Law.
- It submitted a report titled A Free and Fair Digital Economy Protecting Privacy, Empowering Indians.
- The report has cited Puttaswamy Judgment and highlighted that sphere of privacy includes a right to protect one’s identity.
- The Bill includes exemptions for processing data without an individual’s consent for “reasonable purposes”, including security of the state, detection of any unlawful activity or fraud, whistleblowing, medical emergencies, credit scoring, operation of search engines and processing of publicly available data.
- This right recognizes the fact that all information about a person is fundamentally their own, and they are free to communicate or retain it for themselves.
- This core of informational privacy, thus, is a right to autonomy and self-determination in respect of one’s personal data and must be the primary value that any data protection framework serves.

Data Principle, Data Fiduciary and Data Processor:

1. **Data Principal** means the natural person to whom the personal data relates.
2. **Data Fiduciary** means any person, including the State, a company, any juristic entity or any individual who alone or in conjunction with others determines the purpose and means of processing of personal data.
3. **Data Processor** means any person, including the State, a company, any juristic entity or any individual, who processes personal data on behalf of a data fiduciary.
4. **Data localisation**: It is the act of storing data on any device physically present within the borders of a country.

Storage of Data not on Rights Based Approach:

- Government sees storage of individual data for public good and does not take into account a rights-based approach.
- This gives government the right to use, monetise and exploit data in any manner it desires so long as it guards against security incidents such as breaches and unauthorised access.
- This mindset of the government has allowed selling or transferring sensitive personal data by the fiduciary to a third party in the Data Protection Bill of 2019.
- The committee sought to codify the relationship between individuals and firms/state institutions as one between “data principals” (whose information is collected) and “data fiduciaries” (those processing the data) so that privacy is safeguarded by design.

Conclusion:

- While the 2019 version of the Bill seeks to retain the intent and many of the recommendations of the Justice Srikrishna committee, it has also diluted a few provisions.
- For example, while the Bill tasks the fiduciary to seek the consent in a free, informed, specific, clear form (and which is capable of being withdrawn later) from the principal, it has removed the proviso from the 2018 version of the Bill that said selling or transferring sensitive personal data by the fiduciary to a third party is an offence.
- There are other substantive issues with the Bill pertaining to the situations when state institutions are granted exemption from seeking consent from principals to process or obtain their information.
- So, considering the report on medical data leak, there is a need for rights based data protection law which –
  - Includes comprehensive surveillance reform prohibiting mass surveillance. Provides for judicial oversight mechanism for targeted surveillance. Prohibit selling of transferring of personal data by the fiduciary to any third party.
  - Yet, considering the manner in which public data are being stored and used by both the state and private entities, a comprehensive Data Protection Act is the need of the hour.
2. Women-at-arms: on SC order on permanent commission to women officers

Context:
- Recently, In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court (SC) has upheld a Delhi High Court order of 2010 that seeks to grant permanent commission to women officers at par with their male counterparts.
- The Supreme Court of India has again showed what a constitutional culture of non-discrimination can achieve in demolishing obstinate structures of gender-based discrimination in state and civil society.
- Along with granting a role to women in combat arms, the judgment essentially highlights the denial of equal opportunity in their existing roles for promotion to higher commands.

Women in Army: Background of the case:
2. They were commissioned for a period of five years in certain chosen streams such as Army Education Corps, Corps of Signals, Intelligence Corps, and Corps of Engineers.
3. Recruits under the Women Special Entry Scheme (WSES) had a shorter pre-commission training period than their male counterparts who were commissioned under the Short Service Commission (SSC) scheme.
4. In 2006, the WSES scheme was replaced with the SSC scheme, which was extended to women officers.
5. They were commissioned for a period of 10 years, extendable up to 14 years. Serving WSES officers were given the option to move to the new SSC scheme, or to continue under the erstwhile WSES.
6. They were to be however, restricted to roles in streams specified earlier which excluded combat arms such as infantry and armoured corps.

Criticized to the Government’s Arguments:
1. The note had shown women officers in a poor light, saying isolation and hardships would eat into their resolve and that they would have to heed to the call of pregnancy, childbirth and family.
2. Difficult life in conflict zones: In conflict zones there are “minimal facilities for habitat and hygiene”.
3. The note had mentioned that women ran the risk of capture by enemy and taken prisoner of war.
4. The court held that the note reflected the age-old patriarchal notion that domestic obligations rested only with women.
5. The court also dismissed the point that women are physiologically weaker than men as a “sex stereotype”.
6. The court noted that challenging abilities of women on the ground of gender is an offence not only to their dignity as women but to the dignity of the members of the Indian Army men and women who serve as equal citizens in a common mission.
2 key arguments shot down by the Supreme Court:

1. The government put forth other arguments before the Supreme Court to justify the proposal on the grounds of permanent commission, grants of pensionary benefits, limitations of judicial review on policy issues, occupational hazards, reasons for discrimination against women, SSC as a support cadre, and rationalization on physiological limitations for employment in staff appointments.

2. The apex court has rejected these arguments, saying they are “based on sex stereotypes premised on assumptions about socially ascribed roles of gender which discriminate against women”.

3. It has also said that it only shows the need “to emphasise the need for change in mindsets to bring about true equality in the Army”.

4. The Supreme Court rejected arguments against greater role for women officers, saying these violated equality under law. They were being kept out of command posts on the reasoning that the largely rural rank and file will have problems with women as commanding officers. The biological argument was also rejected as disturbing.

Implications of the Judgement:

1. The spirit of the order is the principle of non-discrimination. According to Article 16, Gender only cannot serve as the basis for inequitable and unequal treatment in any sphere, including in defence forces.

2. It also held that right to equality under Article 14 needs to be prescribed by a right to rationality that forbids any “blanket” and “absolute” prohibition.

3. The implications of the judgment will have to be borne by the human resources management department of the Army, which will need to change policy in order to comply.

4. But the bigger shift will have to take place in the culture, norms, and values of the rank and file of the Army, which will be the responsibility of the senior military and political leadership.

5. After the Supreme Court’s progressive decision, they have no choice but to bite the proverbial bullet.

6. There are examples of women soldiers in combat roles like in Israel, Germany, US and Australia.

7. This gender equality can be achieved by establishing professional standards and adhering to them without any bias.

Conclusion:

- The current case is in line with a series of judgments that Supreme Court gave in recent years in order to address various forms of gender discrimination in Indian society and to assert Right to Equality.

- Making gender justice less contingent on the executive’s mood swings is the primary task of the judiciary.

- Making it immune from judicial re-visitations remains the paramount constitutional duty of all citizens, but more particularly of feminist citizens’ crusade for judicial consistency as a badge for constitutional rights and justice.

- Therefore, Indian armed forces must draw inspiration and move towards gender mainstreaming in the Indian armed forces.
RSTV/LSTV/AIR SYNOPSIS

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

1. Article 13 - Special powers of Supreme Court

Introduction:
- The Pinarayi Vijayan-led LDF government in Kerala, on Tuesday, moved the Supreme Court against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), a first by any state government. They sought that the act be declared as violative of the basic structure—principle of equality, freedom and secularism.
- The Kerala Assembly was also the first in the country to pass a resolution against the Act. The CAA grants Indian citizenship to non-Muslim minorities who migrated to India from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, following persecution over their faith.
- The Kerala government has said in its suit that there is no rationale in grouping together the three countries for the purpose of the CAA. In its suit, the state referred to Article 131 of the Constitution.

Article 131:
- Under Article 131 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court has original jurisdiction to deal with any dispute between the Centre and a state; the Centre and a state on the one side and another state on the other side; and two or more states.

Criteria:
- For a dispute to qualify as a dispute under Article 131, it has to necessarily be between states and the Centre, and must involve a question of law or fact on which the existence of a legal right of the state or the Centre depends.
- In a 1978 judgment, State of Karnataka v Union of India, Justice P N Bhagwati had said that for the Supreme Court to accept a suit under Article 131, the state need not show that its legal right is violated, but only that the dispute involves a legal question.
- Article 131 cannot be used to settle political differences between state and central governments headed by different parties.

Supreme court’s stance on article 131:
- There have been two conflicting judgments from the Supreme Court on whether a State can file an original suit under Article 131 to challenge the constitutionality of a central law.
- The first judgment reported in 2012 – State of Madhya Pradesh vs Union of India – held that States cannot challenge a central law under Article 131.
- The second judgment – State of Jharkhand Vs State of Bihar – took the opposite view in 2015 and referred the question of law to a larger Bench of the Supreme Court for final determination. Kerala’s plaint relies on the 2015 verdict.
- However, in the West Bengal government’s case in 2017, the SC proclaimed that the State government cannot ask for any remedy related to Fundamental rights. The case was filed under Article 32 of the Constitution challenging the validity of the ‘Aadhaar Act’. The Court also held that, “Fundamental rights are available to individuals: citizens or non-citizens against the State (under Article 32 or Article 226) and not to the State entities.”

How is Kerala Government’s petition different from other petitions?
- Kerala Government’s writ petition is not the same as the other challenges that are scheduled to be heard before the apex court on January 22. Kerala has filed its petition challenging the constitutional validity of the CAA act by invoking article 131 of the Indian constitution hence it is an original suit. The petition invokes the mechanism for the states to challenge the centre.
- Several petitions have been filed against the CAA act in the Supreme Court. The apex court may hear the petitions separately or club them together but Kerala Government’s petition cannot be clubbed with those petitions.

Can SC declare the act unconstitutional?
- A 2012 dispute between Bihar and Jharkhand that is currently pending for consideration by a larger Bench of the court will answer this question. The case deals with the issue of liability of Bihar to pay pension to employees of Jharkhand for the period of their employment in the former, undivided Bihar state.
- Although earlier judgments had held that the constitutionality of a law can be examined under Article 131, a 2011 judgment in the case of State of Madhya Pradesh v. Union of India ruled otherwise.
Since the 2011 case was also by a two-judge Bench and was later in time, the court could not overrule the case. However, the judges did not agree with the ruling.

“We regret our inability to agree with the conclusion recorded in the case of State of Madhya Pradesh v. Union of India and Anr. (supra), that in an original suit under Article 131, the constitutionality of an enactment cannot be examined. Since the above decision is rendered by a coordinate Bench of two judges, judicial discipline demands that we should not only refer the matter for examination of the said question by a larger Bench of this Court, but are also obliged to record broadly the reasons which compel us to disagree with the above-mentioned decision,” the court ruled in 2015, referring the case to a larger Bench.

Analysis:

The real question is whether the state can challenge a law enacted by the parliament under article 131.

Article 13 of the Constitution of India contains an inclusive definition of “law”. One of the major legal sources is ‘enacted law’.

Article 246 confers exclusive power to make laws with respect to any of the matters enumerated in list One in the seventh schedule. Entry seventeen (17) of list I pertains to citizenship, naturalisation and aliens.

Article 246 (2) confers power upon Parliament and also State legislatures to make laws with respect to any of the matters enumerated in list III.

Article 246(3) confers power on the legislature of the States to make laws in respect of any matters enumerated in list II of the seventh schedule only.

And, therefore, a State cannot make any legislation in respect of the matters enumerated in list I of the seventh schedule.

The Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, is a legislation made by the Parliament and therefore a “law in force”.

The CAA has been already challenged before the Supreme Court under Article 32 of the Constitution. Now, the Government of Kerala has filed a suit invoking Article 131 of the Constitution.

In this context now, it is necessary to examine the scope and ambit of Article 131 of the Constitution.

A reading of Article 131 shows that the apex court has got original jurisdiction in any dispute between the Government of India and one or more States, if and in so far as the dispute involves any question (whether of law or fact) on which the existence or extent of legal right depends.

A plain reading of the Article shows that the dispute should involve an infringement of legal right of the State government.

Legal right means a right derived from a statute or the Constitution. Therefore, primarily, the State government has to establish its legal right, which is likely to be infringed upon by the Citizenship Amendment Act, so as to invoke Article 131 of Constitution.

The Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, was duly enacted by Parliament by virtue of its power under Article 246(1) of the Constitution.

The State legislatures do not have any power to make any legislation in respect of “citizenship” and, therefore, the cannot claim infringement of such non-existent rights. In short, the States cannot refuse to implement the said Act.

Article 256 of the Constitution mandates that the executive power of every State shall be exercised so as to ensure compliance with the laws made by Parliament and any existing laws which apply in that State and the executive power of the Union shall extend to the giving of such directions to a State as may appear to the Government of India to be necessary for that purpose.

The State government does not have any power to make any legislation relating to Citizenship, and the same is within the exclusive domain of the Centre. Any law that is made by the Centre has to be implemented, since it is a constitutional mandate.

In order to invoke Article 131 of the Constitution, the State has to invariably establish either a legal right or a Constitutional right.

Article 256 mandates compliance of the Central legislation and, therefore, there is no constitutional right available to the State to invoke Article 131 of the constitution and filing of a suit under Article 131 may also amount to violation of Article 256 of the Constitution.

The Citizen Amendment Act does not violate any legal right vis-a-vis the State so as to enable the State to approach the Supreme Court under Article 131 of the Constitution.

It is only the individuals who may be affected by the legislation, and the recourse would be to challenge the same under Article 32 of the Constitution, which, in fact, has been done.
• There was a nexus between the Act of the Central government and the grievance of the State. The apex court also held that the words contained in the said Article clearly indicate that the dispute must be one affecting the existence or the extent of legal right and not a dispute on the political plane.
• In this case also, there was a nexus between the grievance of the State and the notification/orders.
• However, in all these cases, the respective States which had invoked Article 131 of the Constitution had certain grievances vis-a-vis the legislation/orders and their legal rights under a statute were alleged to have been infringed.
• But presently, the States do not have any legal right derived from any statute or the Constitution of India so as to challenge the constitutional validity of the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 under Article 131 of the Constitution.
• A State’s legal right is not infringed in any manner by implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019. The above referred cases stand on a different footing than the present case.

Link: https://youtu.be/BdLb_HMiEGU

2. Law Commission of India

Introduction:
• The Law Commission of India is a non-statutory, executive body constituted by the government for a fixed tenure of three years. The panel that has mainly legal and judicial experts acts as an advisory body to the Ministry of Law & Justice.
• The Law Commission has a pre-independence origin. However, the first panel in independent India came into being in 1955. Since then, we've had 21 Law Commissions, each of them making important contributions towards the progressive development and codification of laws in India.
• The 22nd Law Commission was approved on 19th February by the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Law Reform has been a continuing process particularly during the last 300 years or more in Indian history. In the ancient period, when religious and customary law occupied the field, reform process had been ad hoc and not institutionalised through duly constituted law reform agencies.
• However, since the third decade of the nineteenth century, Law Commissions were constituted by the Government from time to time and were empowered to recommend legislative reforms with a view to clarify, consolidate and codify particular branches of law where the Government felt the necessity for it. The first such Commission was established in 1834 under the Charter Act of 1833 under the Chairmanship of Lord Macaulay which recommended codification of the Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code and a few other matters.
• Thereafter, the second, third and fourth Law Commissions were constituted in 1853, 1861 and 1879 respectively which, during a span of fifty years contributed a great deal to enrich the Indian Statute Book with a large variety of legislations on the pattern of the then prevailing English Laws adapted to Indian conditions.
• The Indian Code of Civil Procedure, the Indian Contract Act, The Indian Evidence Act, the Transfer of Property Act etc are products of the labour of the first four Law Commissions.

Post-independence developments:
1. After independence, the Constitution of India with its Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy gave a new direction to law reform geared to the needs of a democratic legal order in a plural society.
2. Though the Constitution stipulated the continuation of pre-Constitution Laws (Article 372) till they are amended or repealed, there had been demands in Parliament and outside for establishing a Central Law Commission to recommend revision and updating of the inherited laws to serve the changing needs of the country.
3. The Government of India reacted favourably and established the First Law Commission of Independent India in 1955 with the then Attorney-General of India, Mr. M. C. Setalvad, as its Chairman. Since then twenty one more Law Commissions have been appointed, each with a three-year term and with different terms of reference.

The 21st law commission:
• The Twenty-first Law Commission was constituted through a Government Order with effect from 1st September, 2015.
• The Terms of Reference of the Twenty-first Law Commission are as follows:
Review/Repeal of obsolete laws:
- Identify laws which are no longer needed or relevant and can be immediately repealed.
- Identify laws which are not in harmony with the existing climate of economic liberalization and need change.
- Identify laws which otherwise require changes or amendments and to make suggestions for their amendment.
- Consider in a wider perspective the suggestions for revision/amendment given by Expert Groups in various Ministries/Departments with a view to coordinating and harmonizing them.
- Consider references made to it by Ministries/Departments through the Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice in respect of legislations having bearing on the working of more than one Ministry/Department
- Suggest suitable measures for quick redressal of citizens grievances, in the field of law.

Law and Poverty
- Examine the Laws which affect the poor and carry out post-audit for socio-economic legislations.
- Take all such measures as may be necessary to harness law and the legal process in the service of the poor.

Keep under review the system of judicial administration to ensure that it is responsive to the reasonable demands of the times and in particular to secure:
- Elimination of delays, speedy clearance of arrears and reduction in costs so as to secure quick and economical disposal of cases without affecting the cardinal principle that decision should be just and fair.
- Simplification of procedure to reduce and eliminate technicalities and devices for delay so that it operates not as an end in itself but as a means of achieving justice.
- Improvement of standards of all concerned with the administration of justice.
- Examine the existing laws in the light of Directive Principles of State Policy and to suggest ways of improvement and reform and also to suggest such legislations as might be necessary to implement the Directive Principles and to attain the objectives set out in the Preamble to the Constitution.
- Examine the existing laws with a view for promoting gender equality and suggesting amendments thereto.
- Revise the Central Acts of general importance so as to simplify them and to remove anomalies, ambiguities and inequities.
- Recommend to the Government measure for making the statute book up-to-date by repealing obsolete laws and enactments or parts thereof which have outlived their utility.
- Consider and to convey to the Government its views on any subject relating to law and judicial administration that may be specifically referred to it by the Government through Ministry of Law and Justice (Department of Legal Affairs).
- Consider the requests for providing research to any foreign countries as may be referred to it by the Government through Ministry of Law and Justice (Department of Legal Affairs).
- Examine the impact of globalization on food security, unemployment and recommend measures for the protection of the interests of the marginalized.

22nd Law Commission of India:
It will consist of:
1. a full-time Chairperson;
2. four full-time Members (including Member-Secretary)
3. Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs as ex-officio Member;
4. Secretary, Legislative Department as ex officio Member; and
5. not more than five part-time Members.

The Law Commission of India shall, inter-alia:
- identify laws which are no longer needed or relevant and can be immediately repealed;
- examine the existing laws in the light of Directive Principles of State Policy and suggest ways of improvement and reform and also suggest such legislations as might be necessary to implement the Directive Principles and to attain the objectives set out in the Preamble of the Constitution;
- consider and convey to the Government its views on any subject relating to law and judicial administration that may be specifically referred to it by the Government through Ministry of Law and Justice (Department of Legal Affairs);
Consider the requests for providing research to any foreign countries as may be referred to it by the Government through Ministry of Law and Justice (Department of Legal Affairs);

take all such measures as may be necessary to harness law and the legal process in the service of the poor;

revise the Central Acts of general importance so as to simplify them and remove anomalies, ambiguities and inequities;

Before finalizing its recommendations, the Commission will consult the nodal Ministry/Department(s) and such other stakeholders as the Commission may deem necessary for the purpose.

Link: https://youtu.be/RSxI98ssiM

3. Anticipatory Bail

Introduction:

The Supreme Court delivered a significant verdict, ruling that no time limit can be set while granting anticipatory bail. It also referred to the freedom movement when people were jailed for protesting against the British rule. While lamenting that arbitrary arrests continue to be a pervasive phenomenon.

The Top Court asserted that the discretionary power of courts to grant anticipatory bail can’t be curtailed and can continue till the end of a trial.

Over the years, anticipatory bail has come to mean a safeguard for a person who has false accusation or charges made against him or her, most commonly due to professional or personal enmity, as it ensures the release of the falsely accused person even before he or she is arrested.

Bail:

It is the provisional release of an accused in a criminal matter in which the court is yet to announce a judgment.

The expression ‘bail’ means a security deposited to appear before the court for release.

A bail is granted to an accused after presenting a bail bond to the court.

The primary objective of arrest is to ensure that the accused in a criminal case appears before the court for the conveyance of justice.

However, if the person’s presence can be guaranteed for the court trial without putting the person in a jail, it would unfair and unjust to violate a person’s liberty. Thus, bail can be granted as a conditional liberty to the accused.

Types Of Bail In India:

There are commonly 3 types of bail in India which a person can apply depending upon the stage of the criminal matter:

- **Regular Bail**: A regular bail can be granted to a person who has already been arrested and kept in police custody. A person can file a bail application for regular bail under Section 437 and 439 of the CrPC.

- **Interim Bail**: Interim bail is a bail granted for a short period of time. Interim bail is granted to an accused before the hearing for the grant of regular bail or anticipatory bail.

- **Anticipatory Bail**: A person who discerns that he may be arrested by the police for a non-bailable offence, can file an application for anticipatory bail. It is like an advance bail obtained under Section 438 of the CrPC. A bail under Section 438 is a bail before arrest and a person cannot be arrested by the police if the anticipatory bail has been granted by the court.

How To Apply For Bail In India?

The process to apply for a bail depends upon the stage at which the criminal matter is. In case, the person is not yet arrested by the court, but fears that an FIR may be filed against him with the police, the person can hire a criminal defence lawyer in India to file an anticipatory bail application.

For instance, if the person has an apprehension that his wife may file a false 498A case against him, he can obtain an anticipatory bail before the police register a complaint against him.

If the police have already arrested the person and taken him to the police station, the bail lawyer can file a bail as per the bail application format given in the CrPC. The bail application is to be filed and approved by the court and then presented to the police to get the arrested out of jail.

If the police have already arrested the person and taken him to the police station, the bail lawyer can file a bail as per the bail application format given in the CrPC. The bail application is to be filed and approved by the court and then presented to the police to get the arrested out of jail.

The bail amount or the bail bond to be deposited depends upon the discretion of court. However, a standardised bail amount is set and deposited for bail in less serious criminal cases.
Anticipatory Bail:
- Under Indian criminal law, there is a provision for **anticipatory bail** under Section 438 of the Criminal Procedure Code.
- Law Commission of India in its 41st report recommended to incorporate this provision in procedure code. This provision allows a person to seek bail in anticipation of an arrest on accusation of having committed a non-bailable offence.
- On filing anticipatory bail, the opposing party is notified about the bail application and the opposition can then contest the bail application in court (public prosecutor can also be used to do this).
- Anticipatory bail is a direction to release a person on bail, issued even before the person is arrested. It is only issued by the Sessions court and High Court.

Eligibility:
- When any person apprehends that there is a move to get him arrested on false or trumped up charges, or due to enmity with someone, or he fears that a false case is likely to be built up against him, he has the right to move the court of Session or the High Court under section 438 of the code of Criminal Procedure for grant of bail in the event of his arrest, and the court may, if it thinks fit, direct that in the event of such arrest, he shall be released on bail.
- Anticipatory bail can be granted by Sessions Court and High Court.

Conditions:
The High Court or the court of session may include such conditions in the light of the facts of the particular case, as it may think fit, including:
- a condition that the person shall make himself available for interrogation by the police officer as and when required;
- a condition that the person shall not, directly or indirectly, make any inducement, threat or promise to any person acquainted with the facts of the case so as to dissuade him from disclosing such facts to the court or to any police officer;
- a condition that the person shall not leave India without the previous permission of the court.

Qualification:
- The applicant must show by disclosing special facts and events that he or she has reason to believe, that he or she may be arrested for a non-bailable offence so that the court may take care to specify the offence or offences in respect of which alone the order will be effective and it is not a blanket order covering all other offences.

Observations made by the Court:
- If there are any special circumstances necessitating a limit on the tenure of anticipatory bail, it is open for the court to do so. **Nothing in Section 438 CrPC compels or obliges courts to impose conditions limiting relief in terms of time.**
- When Parliament has not thought it appropriate to curtail the rights of the citizens, it would be not appropriate for the SC to curtail powers granted to courts with regard to anticipatory bail.
- Anticipatory bail application could be moved by a person even before filing of FIR.
- The court, while granting anticipatory bail, should examine seriousness and gravity of the offence to impose any condition on the petitioner, if necessary.

Conditions for Bail in Bailable Offences:
- **Section 436 of the CrPC** lays down that a person accused of any bailable offence under the IPC can be released on bail.
- Bailable offences under the IPC include
  - unlawful assembly (Section 144 of CrPC),
  - payment of bribe during elections,
  - fabrication of false evidence,
  - sale of poisonous food or drink knowingly,
  - participation in riots,
  - being armed with deadly weapon,
  - furnishing false information,
  - threat of injury to public servant,
  - selling adulterated drug,
  - selling obscene book,
  - causing death by negligence (Section 304A),
In any of the above-mentioned offences, a person can hire a **bail/anticipatory bail lawyer in India** to apply for bail. However, there are certain conditions on which a bail can be granted in case the person is arrested or is likely to be arrested for a bailable offence:
- There are sufficient reasons to believe that the accused has not committed the offence.
- If, as per the court, there is sufficient reason to conduct further enquiry in the matter.
- The person is not accused of any crime for which is punishable with death, imprisonment for life or imprisonment up to 10 years.

**Conditions for Bail in Non-Bailable Offenses:**
- An accused does not have the right to apply for bail in case of a non-bailable offence.
- The power to release a person on bail in a non-bailable offence lies with the court.
- **Section 437 of the CrPC** lays down the power of court to grant a bail to a person even in a non-bailable offence.
- Non-bailable offences under the IPC include:
  - sedition,
  - waging or attempting to wage war against the government,
  - counterfeit of Indian currency,
  - adulteration of drug,
  - murder (Section 302),
  - culpable homicide not amounting to murder (Section 304),
  - dowry death (Section 304B),
  - abetment of suicide,
  - abduction of child under 10,
  - trafficking of person,
  - rape (Section 376),
  - cruelty by husband or his relatives (Section 498A), etc.
- A person can get legal advice from a **good criminal law lawyer in India** to apply for a bail in non-bailable offence. The conditions on which the court grants a bail in a non-bailable offence are as follows:
  - If the accused is a woman or child, bail can be granted in a non-bailable matter.
  - If there is a lack of adequate evidence, the court can grant a bail in non-bailable offence on discretion.
  - If there is a delay in registering the FIR by the complainant.
  - If the person accused is physically or gravely sick.
  - If there is some corroboration as to personal animosity between the accused and the person who filed the criminal matter.

**Cancellation:**
- An accused is free on bail as long as the same is not cancelled.
- The High Court or Court of Session may direct that any person who has been released on bail be arrested and commit him to custody on an application moved by the complainant or the prosecution.

Link: [https://youtu.be/aoCh38ePyf4](https://youtu.be/aoCh38ePyf4)

### 4. Police Commissioner System

**Introduction:**
- UP govt has approved the commissionerate system of policing state capital Lucknow and Noida. This system gives more responsibilities including **magisterial powers to IPS officers of the rank of Inspector general of Police** who are posted as Commissioner. Many states have adopted the commissionerate system at the metropolitan level to facilitate faster decision making in solving complex urban centric issues. According to a BPRD report 61 cities in 15 states had this system in place by January, 2018.
- **Sixth National police Commission report released in 1983** had recommended introduction of commissionerate system in cities with a population of 5 lakh and above. Later in **2005 a draft Model Police Act** framed by a committee set up by the Union Home Ministry also made similar recommendation.
saying metro cities and major urban areas with a population of 10 lakhs or more should have a Police Commissioner System

- In the last three decades, UP has experienced rapid urban growth that has given rise to many large cities. Policing needs of these mega cities are very different from rural areas. People, in these cities, expect immediate and coordinated response under a unified command system. The expectation of policing standards is higher and often exacting.

- The colonial administration had created commissioner system in the presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras recognising the unique needs of urban areas. Over a period of time, this system has been found to be most effective in meeting policing requirements of big cities across India. Such a governance reform will lead to perceptible improvement in law and order and citizen satisfaction with the police.

- The National Police Commission, in its sixth report submitted in March 1981, recommended that in major urban areas, crime and law and order situations develop rapidly, requiring a speedy and effective operational response from. This is best achieved when the police are organised around a unitary chain of command to perform the twin basic functions of decision-making and enforcement.

- As per the recommendation of the 1966 Khosla Commission, the police commissioner system was introduced in Delhi from July 1, 1978, when Charan Singh was the home minister. In the normal police system there is a diarchy. Most of the preventive and regulatory powers are with executive magistrates, but enforcement is carried out by the police. This requires that both magistracy and police must always think alike, consult, agree and take prompt as well as decisive action.

- The state government exercises control and superintendence over the state police forces. At the district level, the District Magistrate (DM) may also give directions to the SP and supervise police administration. This is called the dual system of control (as authority is vested in both the DM and SP) at the district level.

- In some metropolitan cities and urban areas, however, the dual system has been replaced by the Commissionerate system to allow for quicker decision-making in response to complex law and order situations.

**Dual System:**

- Dual command structure over the district police means that control and direction over the police vests with the SP (head of district police) and the District Magistrate (executive).
- Separation of powers of the DM (e.g., issues arrest warrants and licenses) and the police (e.g., investigate crimes and make arrests). Therefore, less concentration of power in the police, and accountability to DM at the district level.
- SP is assisted by Additional/Assistant/ Deputy SPs, Inspectors and constabulary.

**Commissionerate system:**

- Unified command structure with the Commissioner of Police (rank of the Deputy Inspector General or above) as the sole head of the force within the city. Allows for quicker responses to law and order situations.
- Powers of policing and magistracy concentrated in Commissioner. Directly accountable to state government and state police chief. Lesser accountability to the local administration.
- Commissioner is assisted by Special/ Joint/ Additional/ Deputy Commissioners, etc. Inspector downwards rank structure is the same.

**Can commissioner system solve the woes of large cities like Lucknow?**

- It gives an integrated command structure. It helps fix responsibility with the Commissioner and eliminates blame game between civil administration and police when something goes wrong.
- However, according to Singh, the Commissionerate system faces a lot of resistance from the IAS lobby.
- The commissionerate system only provides an enabling structure to delivering police services in a complex region.
- Ultimately, the officer in charge and the culture he ushers will matter. What will matter the most is how the government deals with him.
- The next plausible step would be to introduce further police reforms based on 2006 Supreme Court guidelines.
- From a state infamous for crime, Uttar Pradesh can emerge as a success-story of efficient and effective policing.
The advantages of the commissioner system:

- The responsibility of law and order maintenance is vested in a commissioner and there is complete clarity on chain of command as well as accountability.
- There is only one single point of responsibility when it comes to law and order, ie the commissioner of police.
- The commissioner of police is directly and totally accountable to the state government for his performance. Thus, the reporting system is clear.
- The commissioner system provides unified organisational command structure and powers to manage problems created by urban growth such as encroachment, anti-social activities, sudden law and order situations, illicit/illegal liquor sale, drug peddling, etc.
- It also creates necessary organisational independence and homogeneity so that the police are able to use their professional understanding to deal with contemporary urban problems like traffic regulation and evolve and innovate according to ground realities.
- It provides specialisation in training and personnel management and faster and more effective response.

Link: https://youtu.be/QdKM3sizKEM

5. Education & Aspiring India

Introduction:
- In the Union Budget 2020, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has suggested speedy implementation of the new education policy, besides several measures that will bring in a paradigm shift in the educational systems and creation of employment in India and abroad. The budget earmarked Rs 99,300 crore for the education sector in 2020-21 and about Rs 3,000 crore for skill development.
- In the previous Union Budget, the government’s allocation for the sector was Rs 94,800 crore. The FM said about 150 higher educational institutions will start apprenticeship embedded degree/diploma courses by March 2021 and will start a programme whereby urban local bodies across the country would provide internship opportunities to fresh engineers for a period up to one year.
- To create infrastructure in education sector, steps would be taken to enable sourcing External Commercial Borrowings and FDI so as to able to deliver higher quality education. Institutions that are ranked within top 100 in the National Institutional Ranking framework will start degree level full-fledged online education programme for students of deprived section of the society.

Present Status:
- The infrastructure provision is far from satisfactory (for both students and teachers).
- Only 12% of our schools are RTE complaint.
- The administrative support system is also not contributing to solving the crisis.
- Privatisation is not a remedy. If one compares children from similar backgrounds, private schools in many States are not better than government schools.

Challenges:
- The needs of our system of both schools and higher education have not been met.
- To encourage youngsters and graduates to come into the teaching profession is the biggest challenge of this government.
- Secondly, the issue is about increasing privatization, of not just school education but cutting across education sectors- primary, secondary as well as higher education.
- The Delhi government has set a very good example by investing very heavily in public education, and government schools are turning around.
- Major problem with the education sector lies with the higher education sector as we see the higher education structure in the country today, we are producing degree holders after degree holders.
- There appears to be an absolute emphasis on graduates who have degrees, that will not make them employable.
- The crisis in India is that a lot of graduates are getting produced, who are then either unable or are not skilled enough to enter the workforce.
- Thus, the primary challenge for India’s higher education sector is the skilling issue.
- Attempts have been made in the past of building vocational skills at the schooling level itself, but unfortunately, such plans have not worked out.
- The National Skills Development Council had setup for the first time various sector-skill councils.
• These sector-skill councils will offer short-term courses to graduates who are not interested in traditional education.

• Lack of good secondary and higher secondary schools: The number of secondary schools is less than 150,000 for a country of 1.3 billion, and even this comes down to just 100,000 at the higher secondary level. While there are around five million primary school teachers, at the secondary level the number is just 1.5 million. India has persisted with a schooling system that has long failed its young.

The inevitable shift to private school education along with the Right to Education Act represents a failure of the public-school system.

**Education agenda for a New and Changing India:**

• The Delhi government model of education needs to be looked into.

• Technology has to be a primary part of the process. Technology allows us to adapt to teaching and assessment of entirely new skills that are very significant for the present century and that you cannot progress in a kind of traditional setting.

• This necessitates refined public policy, a long-term commitment, and a systematic approach.

• Our education must be all round developer. It must be based on creative rather than memorizing. Practical or Visualize education must be promoted.

• It is time that India began viewing school education as a critical strategic investment and gave it the status of a vital infrastructure project. As all in-country efforts have failed, we should go in for a radical overhaul of our educational infrastructure with the help of countries that have an amazing record in providing quality school education — Finland, for instance. We can surely afford to pay for that.

• Providing universal quality education depends not on the performance of teachers alone but is the shared responsibility of several stakeholders: governments, schools, teachers, parents, the media and civil society, international organisations, and the private sector.

• A complete paradigm shift is needed as far as our education system is concerned. However, one has reason to believe that there are some positive signs too. For example, in schools itself, we are talking about Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA)- these are definitely encouraging signs.

• Skilling has to improve across higher education sectors and it has to be diverse. Let’s not forget that only about 5% of the Indian workforce is trained in any sort of skills today; we are staring in the face of a demographic disaster if skill development is not undertaken.

**Need for Innovation:**

• Promoting creativity and incentivizing innovations through our educational institutions is a first step towards broadening and deepening the impact of innovations in our society and economy.

• As in all sectors, innovation will be essential to bring about qualitative changes in education.

• These changes are needed to increase efficiency and improve the quality and equity of learning opportunities.

• Skills including critical thinking, creativity and imagination, can be fostered through appropriate teaching, and practices.

• Technology-based innovations in education reshape the environments in which schools operate.

• To provide alternative ways of learning for students with special needs.

**Behavioural shifts:**

• Getting students to shift to asking why, instead of saying yes

• From passive learning to exploring concepts

• From fear to confidence

• From being restricted to the textbook to being hands-on and practical.

**Build teacher capacity:**

• Regular assessments of teachers will determine individual gaps/needs in teachers.

• ICT should be used as a tool to provide high-quality training programmes for teachers.

• The resources available in the National Repository of Open Education Resources should be moderated by experts to ensure that high-quality resources are available to every teacher.

• Talented individuals and organisations can participate and contribute to create all this material

**Conclusion:**

• At the school level itself element of vocational education should be incorporated.

• Education needs innovation to keep it fresh and relevant.
Empowered by technology and tools, our education system can indeed scale up to edify, empower our citizens to help the country on its journey to becoming a digital and knowledge economy. The most crucial change is required in the governance of our institutions.

Universities must be open, questioning, trusting, experimenting, inspirational, direction setting, and enabling people to believe that nothing is impossible. Universities are always places of the future—the future is shaped in its crucibles, classrooms and conversations.

Governments and their bureaucracies will have to free up institutions to allow them to make their own decisions.

For any development in higher education to bear fruit, it will have to be supported by the strengthening of primary education. China succeeded in this.

The new technology of distance learning should be fully utilized in upgrading the teaching and knowledge standards.

Link: https://youtu.be/5u6AQp6OV9o

6. Census- Challenges & Importance

Introduction:

- Amid rising instances of field enumerators coming under attack across at least three states for some of the ongoing NSS surveys and gathering mistrust over CAA and NRC, the house-listing operation and the updation of the National Population Register, set to begin in April for Census 2021, could run into rough weather.

- The survey system is already in “deep trouble” and given the increasing instances of such attacks, conducting household surveys with the Census as the frame would be “very tough” going ahead, Pronab Sen, former Chief Statistician of India and Country Director for the India Programme of the International Growth Centre, said.

- Amid the backdrop of protests and rallies on the new citizenship law, the National Sample Survey Office field officials have been attacked in some areas of Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. Sen said that this could have an effect not just on the Census but on other surveys as well.

What is Census?

- Population Census is the total process of collecting, compiling, analyzing or otherwise disseminating demographic, economic and social data pertaining, at a specific time, of all persons in a country or a well-defined part of a country.

- As such, the census provides snapshot of the country’s population and housing at a given point of time.

Why Census?

- The census provides information on size, distribution and socio-economic, demographic and other characteristics of the country’s population.

- The data collected through the census are used for administration, planning and policy making as well as management and evaluation of various programmes by the government, NGOs, researchers, commercial and private enterprises, etc.

- Census data is also used for demarcation of constituencies and allocation of representation to parliament, State legislative Assemblies and the local bodies.

- Researchers and demographers use census data to analyze growth and trends of population and make projections.

- The census data is also important for business houses and industries for strengthening and planning their business for penetration into areas, which had hitherto remained, uncovered.

Importance of Census:

Utility in Administration and Policy:

- The population census provides the basic data for administrative purposes. One of the most basic of the administrative uses of census data is in the demarcation of constituencies and the allocation of representation on governing bodies.

- Detailed information on the geographic distribution of the population is indispensable for this purpose. The Census also gives information on the demographic and economic characteristics of the population at the district level.
Utility of Census data for Research Purposes:
• The population census provides indispensable data for scientific analysis and appraisal of the composition, distribution and past and prospective growth of the population.

Utility of Census data in Business and Industry:
• The census data has many important uses for individuals and institutions in business and industry. It is very difficult to make a full assessment of the multiplicity of ways in which trade and business make use of the census data.

Census as frame for Sample Surveys:
• The rapidity of current changes in the size and other characteristics of populations and the demand for additional detailed data on social and economic characteristics which are not appropriate for collection in a full-scale census, have brought about the need for continuing programmes of intercensal sample surveys to collect current and detailed information on many topics which are usually investigated at ten-year intervals in the population censuses.

Utility of Census data in Planning:
• The census data is indispensable for social and economic planning of the Country. The Planning Commission utilises the Census data on the distribution of population by age, sex classified by rural and urban regions, cities, town areas and social groups to analyse the growth of consumer demand and savings in the process of development.

Utility of Population Census to Electoral Rolls:
• Some countries have taken advantage of the enumeration for a population census to collect, at the same time, information needed for the establishment of electoral rolls. This procedure is not generally advisable because of the deleterious effect the secondary purpose might have on the quality of the census results.

Utility of Population Census to other types of Censuses:
• Certain information collected as part of a population census, or incidental to it, can be most useful in conducting and/or utilizing the results of housing, agricultural or establishment censuses taken at about the same time or near about as the population census.

Utility of Population Census to Civil Registration and Vital Statistics:
• Census data serve as denominators for the computation of vital rates, especially rates specific for characteristics normally investigated only at the time of the census.

Challenges and Experiences:
Cost of Conducting Census
• One of the biggest challenges associated with conducting census in poor countries is the enormous financial costs of conducting the exercise. It is no secret that it is extremely costly to conduct a census.

High Illiteracy Rate in a Nation has a Negative Impact on the Conducting of Census
• Countries with large proportions of their populations being illiterates face a great challenge during the conducting of censuses.

Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities in Certain Areas
• There are certain places in the world where it is very difficult undertaking efficient population census because of poor infrastructural facilities such as bad roads, inaccessible roads or insufficient roads that connect various towns and villages.

Traditional and Religious Beliefs can Interfere with the Census Exercise
• In many underdeveloped parts of the world where traditional beliefs are the order of the day, census officers face serious challenges when they reach these places and try counting the people.

Corruption Interferes with Census
• Corruption during census can make it difficult to have an efficient population census exercise that provides accurate population figures.

Insufficient Census Experts
• Another problem associated with conducting censuses in certain parts of the world is the insufficient number of professionals with the knowledge and experience of conducting census.

Insufficient and Ineffective Census Educational Campaign
• How effective an educational campaign on census is prior to the census taking place determines how successful the census exercise eventually becomes.
Poor Demographic Maps

- Because of demographic maps that aren’t reliable, it becomes very difficult for the authorities to know all the remote areas (especially the very remote areas) in the country and go there to conduct the census exercise.

Controversy over census:

1. Amid the anger and acrimony over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the National Population Register (NPR), and a possible National Register of Citizens (NRC), which the government has said has not been finalised yet, there has been little thought regarding its effects on another growing challenge — the quality of official data.
2. In the last few years, official data has suffered from credibility issues and undermined confidence in the economy. The Indian statistical system, once the envy of the developing world, has fallen on hard times.
3. In 2020 and 2021, the government will roll out the 16th Census (and the 8th after Independence). The Census will be conducted in two phases — a house listing and housing Census to be conducted between April and September this year, followed by the population enumeration in February 2021.
4. It is a massive exercise — and massively expensive. The cost of the 2021 Census is estimated at ₹8,754 crore (and NPR at ₹3,941 crore), involving about 30 lakh enumerators and field functionaries (generally government teachers and those appointed by state governments).
5. Concurrently, the NPR — first prepared in 2010 under the provisions of the Citizenship Act, 1955 and Citizenship Rules, 2003 and subsequently updated in 2015 — will also be updated along with house listing and housing Census (except in Assam).
6. News reports have been streaming in that data collection exercises like the National Sample Survey (NSS) are being hampered in states like Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. Reports from Karnataka indicate that people are declining to share personal information with officials visiting households in connection with government welfare schemes, with residents turning away ASHA workers on a pulse-polio visit, fearing that somehow some of their information might find its way into the NRC.
7. At its core, the fears of a tainted Census stem from the NPR breaking one of the cardinal rules in objective data collection, the preservation of anonymity.
8. Anonymity must be maintained if people are to report information truthfully, especially information that can be used against them. Otherwise, people will report the information that is most likely to yield a beneficial outcome, whether minimising risk or maximising benefits, not what is true.
9. If respondents ascertain that truthfully revealing certain kinds of information in the NPR is more likely to result in questioning their citizenship, they may choose to obfuscate or misreport.
10. Thus, if the CAA and NPR are perceived as targeting a particular community, measuring that community, however genuine the intentions, through the Census, will simply not work.

Link: [https://youtu.be/B5EBTYgULF0](https://youtu.be/B5EBTYgULF0)

**ECONOMY**

**1. The Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020**

Introduction:

- The government on Tuesday introduced a bill in the Lok Sabha to amend the Aircraft Act whereby the fine amount for violations will be hiked from Rs 10 lakh to up to Rs 1 crore.
- The Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020 also provides for keeping “aircraft belonging to any armed forces of the Union, other than naval, from military or air force outside the purview” of the Aircraft Act, 1934.
- Once the amendments are passed, the government would also have the power to issue directions to review, if necessary in public interest, any order passed by Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) and Aircraft Accidents Investigation Bureau, as per the bill’s Statement of Objects and Reasons.
- The bill was introduced by Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Arjun Ram Meghwal as Minister of State for Civil Aviation Hardeep Singh Puri was not present in the House. The proposed amendments to the Act were approved by the Union Cabinet in December. The Act pertains to control of the manufacture, possession, use, operation, sale, import and export of aircraft.
- To tighten aircraft safety norms, the government decided to amend an eight-decade-old law for a 10-fold increase in penalties in light of recent incidents of technical snags reported by airlines.
Need and Analysis:

- The government is planning to amend the new law after a **spike in the number of air safety violations or breaches** in the recent past.
- The most controversial ones, involving Airbus A320neo planes fitted with Pratt and Whitney engines, could have had catastrophic consequences as many such aircraft have faced mid-air glitches.
- DGCA had asked IndiGo and GoAir, who still use this version of the aircraft, to install modified engines or replace the entire fleet of such planes.
- There have also been many reports of **planes facing other technical snags** and could ultimately result in creating a sense of fear among passengers. This could be one of the reasons why the government wants to make aircraft operators more accountable.
- Generally, compoundable offences are those which can be settled by paying certain amount of money.
- Further, the bill seeks to empower the central government to constitute DGCA, BCAS and AAIB under the Act as well as specify their responsibilities.
- It would also bring regulations of all areas of air navigation services under the Act.
- The Act has provisions for securing the safety of aircraft operations in India and carrying out civil aviation operations as per standards, procedures and practices laid down by ICAO.
- As per the statement, ICAO audits, conducted in 2012 and 2015, have indicated a need to amend the Act to give proper recognition to the regulators under the Act.
- The amendments would fulfil the requirements of ICAO.
- This would enable the three regulatory bodies in the civil aviation sector in India, namely DGCA, BCAS and AAIB to become more effective, which would lead to enhancement in the level of safety and security of aircraft operations in the country, the release had said.
- Indian civil aviation sector has a high growth potential and at present, scheduled domestic carriers together have nearly 680 planes.
- The Economic Survey, tabled in Parliament on January 31, said that to continue with the high growth trajectory, the government has been providing a congenial environment so that the Indian carriers double their fleet from about 680 aircraft at the close of November 2019 to over 1,200 by FY 2023-24.
- ICAO, which is the United Nation’s global aviation watchdog, had carried out the Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme for India in November 2017 and in February 2018. The audit result showed that the country’s score declined to 57.44% from 65.82% earlier, placing India below Pakistan and Nepal.
- An ICAO team had visited India in November 2018 as well, and assessed the action taken on issues related to three areas that were audited by the ICAO in November 2015. Those pertaining to aerodromes and ground aids, air navigation services (ANS) and aircraft accident and incident investigation.
- Currently, India’s score is lower than the world average of 65% on the ICAO’s board.

**The Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020**

- The Bill is intended to carry out amendments to the Aircraft Act, 1934 (XXII of 1934).
- The Bill enhances the maximum limit of fine from the existing ₹10 lakhs to ₹one crore.
- It also enlarges the scope of the Act to include regulation of all areas of air navigation.
- The proposed amendments would fulfill the safety requirements of International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). This will also enable the three regulatory bodies in the civil aviation sector in India—Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) and Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) to become more effective.
- This (the Bill) will lead to enhancement in the level of safety and security of aircraft operations in the country.
- A few other provisions would also be made part of the law that will also help in complying with the International Civil Aviation Organization’s (ICAO) requirements.
- The Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2020 also provides for keeping “aircraft belonging to any armed forces of the Union, other than naval, from military or air force outside the purview” of the Aircraft Act, 1934.
- Other proposals include empowering BCAS or any authorised officer to issue directions, having designated officers for adjudging penalties and introducing a provision for compounding of offences.

Link: [https://youtu.be/reKECEbBriA](https://youtu.be/reKECEbBriA)
2. Multiple State Capitals & Governance

Introduction:
- The Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly passed the AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Bill, 2020 that intended to give shape to state government’s plan of having three capitals — executive capital in Visakhapatnam, legislative in Amaravati and judicial in Kurnool.
- The cabinet chaired by Reddy approved the proposal on three capital cities aimed at “decentralised and inclusive development of all regions of the state”.
- It also approved repealing the Capital Region Development Authority Act and establishes the Amaravati Metropolitan Development Authority. The ruling YSR Congress Party has also decided to scrap the state’s Upper House as it is miffed with the Legislative Council stalling bills

A government consists of 3 organs. Here, the government proposes to establish these institutions for these 3 organs.
1. **Judiciary**: a high court in **Kurnool**.
2. **Executive**: Secretariat in **Visakhapatnam**.
3. **Legislature**: legislative assembly and council in the present capital region **Amaravati**.

Rationale behind 3 capitals:
1. The government says it is against building one mega capital while neglecting other parts of the state. Three capitals ensure equal development of different regions of the state.
2. Decentralisation has been the central theme in recommendations of all major committees that were set up to suggest a suitable location for the capital of Andhra Pradesh.
3. The multiple capital idea is not new, it has been a prevailing practice in countries like South Africa, Brazil, Australia and Bolivia and even in some states in India like Kerala: where high court is in Kochi and the legislature and Secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram. And in Uttarakhand and Lucknow.
4. The other argument in favor is it sits in line with various reports like- Sribagh pact, which happened between Rayalaseema and coastal Andhra in 1937, where it was decided that if high court is in coastal Andhra, capital should be in Rayalaseema. but after the formation of Andhra Pradesh, it was left out and Hyderabad became the capital. And even the Srikrishna committee, which was set up to decide the capital region for AP recommended having high court and other institutions in different regions.
5. And a secretariat in Vizag can help in the development of regions like **Vizianagaram** and **Srikakulam**, which consists of most of the tribal and rural areas and are the most backward regions of the state. This may bring health and educational access to the region and may prevent uddanam like incidents, where several people are suffering from chronic kidney disease.
6. Kurnool having a high court is like doing Justice to the district or even entire Rayalaseema, as it is the most backward region when compared with coastal Andhra and Telangana with Hyderabad at the time of bifurcation.

Arguments against 3 states:
- In a parliamentary system of government, executive and legislature are 2 sides of a coin.
- One should realize that these 3 organs, most of the time have to work in resonance as most of their work is interlinked.
- For example, a policy or a bill is made by the cabinet in Secretariat in Vizag and the bill has to be passed in the legislature in Amaravati and if any conflict arises it has to be given judgment in the high court situated in Kurnool. It will result in the traveling cost not only for the public authorities but also for a common person, for example, a person in Kurnool has to travel about 700 km to get work done in Secretariat in Vizag. So a single capital not only reduces the cost but also time is taken to get the work done.
- Coordinating between seats of legislature and executive in separate cities will be easier said than done, and with the government offering no specifics of a plan, officers and common people alike fear a logistics nightmare.
- The proposal to have the legislature and executive at different places will lead to an unnecessary drain of resources for the state given that the ministers who perform both executive, as well as, legislative functions will need to constantly move between the two capitals at the expense of the state resources.
- Another counter-argument is strengthening the local bodies, both in urban and rural areas. If the government’s goal is to decentralize development, the best way possible is the financial strengthening
of the local bodies, granting more money to execute their functions in the 11 th and 12 th schedule of the Indian constitution. This not only results in the development of even remote areas but also improve governance, as it increases the participation of common people in the development process.

- People mostly farmers of 29 villages, who gave farmland in and around previously selected Amaravati region, to the previous government in land pooling, where they are expecting to get in return land and commercial building. Now they feel cheated after backing out of the previously proposed single capital.
- This may result in people from other regions being skeptical ( doubt ) of the government’s Promises in the future, Making it very difficult in the land acquisition or pooling for any development process.

Pro’s of having legislative councils:
- It widens the space for representative democracy.
- The Upper house act as a check on hasty actions by Legislative Assembly.
- They provide a forum for academicians and intellectuals to contribute to the legislative process.
- Academicians and intellectuals may not be suitable for the nature of electoral politics in Legislative Assembly.
- It provides a mechanism for a more serious appraisal of legislation.
- It would allow for more debate and sharing of work between the Houses.
- To act as a check on hasty actions by the popularly elected House.
- To ensure that individuals who might not be cut out for the rough-and-tumble of direct elections too are able to contribute to the legislative process.
- Having a second chamber would allow for more debate and sharing of work between the Houses.

Con’s for creation of legislative councils:
- Rather than fulfilling the lofty objective of getting intellectuals into the legislature, the forum is likely to be used to accommodate party functionaries who fail to get elected.
- It is also an unnecessary drain on the exchequer.
- Unlike Rajya Sabha which has substantial powers to shape non-financial legislation, Legislative Councils lack the constitutional mandate to do so. Legislative Assemblies have the power to override suggestions/amendments made to a legislation by the Council.
- While Rajya Sabha MPs can vote in the election of the President and Vice-President, members of Legislative Councils can’t. MLCs also can’t vote in the elections of Rajya Sabha members.
- As regards Money bills, only fourteen days’ delay can be caused by the Council, which is more or less a formality rather than a barrier in the way of Money Bill passed by the Assembly.
- Legislative Councils are subject to varied discussions around their creation, revival and abolishment.
- If there was any real benefit in having a Legislative Council, all States in the country would have a second chamber.
- Having only seven such Councils suggests the lack of any real advantage, apart from the absence of a broad political consensus on the issue.

Link: https://youtu.be/f7csZaZYdu0

SCIENCE & TECH

Regulating AI- Artificial Intelligence

Introduction:
- One of the most powerful men in IT, Sundar Pichai, has backed regulations for artificial intelligence. While Pichai isn’t the first big tech executive to say so publicly, his voice matters, given that Google is arguably the world’s largest AI Company. Tesla and SpaceX chief Elon Musk has been vocal about the need for regulating AI several times in the past. Musk even said that “by the time we are reactive in AI regulation, it’s too late”.
- Microsoft president Brad Smith is another prominent person in tech who has called for regulation of AI. Pichai, in an editorial, advocated for AI to be regulated keeping in mind both the harm and societal benefits that the technology can be used for. He also said that governments must be aligned on regulations around AI for “making global standards work”. While India has been vocal about the use of AI in various sectors, it is far from regulating it. A 2018 NITI Aayog paper proposed five areas where AI can be useful. In that paper, the think tank also noted the lack of regulation around AI as a major weakness for India.
Artificial Intelligence:
- Artificial intelligence is the branch of computer science concerned with making computers behave like humans.
- AI refers to the ability of machines to perform cognitive tasks like thinking, perceiving, learning, problem solving and decision making.
- Quality of Data is the crucial element to the success of AI.

National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence:
- NITI Aayog unveiled its discussion paper on national strategy on AI which aims to guide research and development in new and emerging technologies.
- NITI Aayog has identified five sectors — healthcare, agriculture, education, smart cities and infrastructure and transportation — to focus its efforts towards implementation of AI.
- The paper focuses on how India can leverage the transformative technologies to ensure social and inclusive growth.

Opportunities:
- Advancements in technology over the last couple of decades—computing evolution (cloud, big data, machine learning, etc), falling costs (cheaper data storage) and growing digitalisation.
- Access to technology easing for the masses.
- The demand for AI and machine learning specialists in India could rise by 60%.

Benefits from AI:
- Healthcare: increased access and affordability of quality healthcare.
- Agriculture: enhanced farmers’ income, increased farm productivity and reduction of wastage.
- Education: improved access and quality of education.
- Smart Cities and Infrastructure: efficient and connectivity for the burgeoning urban population.
- Smart Mobility and Transportation: smarter and safer modes of transportation and better traffic and congestion problems.
- Energy: In renewable energy systems, AI can enable storage of energy through intelligent grids enabled by smart meters.
- NITI Aayog estimates that adopting AI means a 15% boost for the gross value added (GVA) for the economy by 2035.
- Increase efficiency and enhance governance across the government.
- Helps in improving the ease of doing business, as well as making the lives of people simpler.

AI and Legal framework:
- AI systems have the capability to learn from experience and to perform autonomously for humans.
- This also makes AI the most disruptive and self-transformative technology of the 21st century.
- So, if AI is not regulated properly, it is bound to have unmanageable implications.
- The consequence if electricity supply suddenly stops while a robot is performing a surgery and access to a doctor is lost.
- These questions have already confronted courts in the U.S. and Germany.
- No comprehensive legislation to regulate this growing industry has been formulated in India till date.
- All countries, including India, need to be legally prepared to face such kind of disruptive technology.
- AI is growing multi-fold and we still do not know all the advantages or pitfalls associated with it which is why it is of utmost importance to have a two-layered protection model: one, technological regulators; and two, laws to control AI actions as well as for accountability of errors.

AI safety can only be achieved by regulating AI:
- Legally regulating AI can ensure that AI safety becomes an inherent part of any future AI development initiative.
- This means that every new AI, regardless of its simplicity or complexity, will go through a process of development that immanently focus on minimizing non-compliance and chances of failure.
- To ensure AI safety, the regulators must consider a few must-have tenets as a part of the legislation. These tenets should include:
  o the non-weaponization of AI technology, and
  o the liability of AI owners, developers, or manufacturers for the actions of their AI systems.
- Any international agency or government body that sets about regulating AI through legislation should consult with experts in the field of artificial intelligence, ethics and moral sciences, and law and justice.
Doing so helps in eliminating any political or personal agenda, biases, and misconceptions while framing the rules for regulating AI research and application. And once framed these regulations should be upheld and enforced strictly.

This will ensure that only the applications that comply with the highest of the safety standards are adopted for mainstream use.

While regulating AI is necessary, it should not be done in a way that stifles the existing momentum in AI research and development. Thus, the challenge will be to strike a balance between allowing enough freedom to developers to ensure the continued growth of AI research and bringing in more accountability for the makers of AI.

While too much regulation can prove to be the enemy of progress, no regulation at all can lead to the propagation of AI systems that can not only halt progress but can potentially lead to destruction and global decline.

Concerns:

• Predicting and analysing legal issues in regards with AI use and their solutions are not that simple
• There are less than 400 PhDs of AI in India out of total 20,000.
• AI is trained from data and this data has human biases.
• The armed forces of US and China have already invested billions of dollars to develop LAWS, intending to gain strategic and tactical advantage over each other. This runs the risks of an arms race.
• We donot have access to high grade infrastructure which other countries have and unique
• AI has to meet the first and foremost challenge of acceptability with the users from the government, public sector and the armed forces, or even the private sector.
  o As users of AI, their interest in the technology augmenting their own ability, and not posing a threat, is quite pertinent.
• India is only 13th in the quantity and quality of AI research that gets produced.
• Attacks possible on AI systems.
• Technical competence in this fast-paced sector, primarily in the case of government, could be a road block.
• AI can better adapt to the goals and expectations of the Indian decision makers, if the technology development is indigenous. Foreign dependence in this case would be detrimental and unproductive.
• AI has set off an economic and technological competition, which will further intensify.
• LAWS operate without human intervention, and there is formidable challenge in distinguishing between combatants and non-combatants, which is a subject of human judgment.

Need of the hour:

• Ethical norms regarding uses of AI and our ability to regulate them in an intelligent and beneficial manner should keep pace with the fast changing technological capabilities.
• That is why we need AI researchers to actively involve ethicists in their work.
• Some of the world’s largest companies like Baidu, Google, Alibaba, Facebook, Tencent, Amazon, Microsoft are cornering the market for AI researchers. They also need to employ ethicists.
• Additionally, regulators across the world need to be working closely with these academics and citizens’ groups to put brakes on both the harmful uses and effects of AI.
• For governments to regulate, we need to have clear theories of harms and trade-offs, and that is where researchers really need to make their mark felt: by engaging in public discourse and debate on what AI ethics and regulation should look like.

Link: https://youtu.be/sBjnvTTFbQA

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

1. Tamils of Sri Lanka

Introduction:

• India has once again expressed hope that the new government in Sri Lanka, led by the Rajapaksa brothers, will realise the aspirations of the Tamil community in the island nation. The issue figured prominently during talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Sri Lankan counterpart Mahinda Rajapaksa, during the latter’s five-day state visit to India. Following his interaction with the Lankan Prime Minister on the long-pending Tamil issue, Prime Minister Modi said he was confident that the Sri Lankan...
government will realise expectations of equality, justice, peace and respect of the Tamil people within a united Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan Conflict:

- Sri Lanka, from the early part of the 1980s, was facing an increasingly violent ethnic strife.
- The origins of this conflict can be traced to the independence of the island from Britain in 1948.
- At the time, a Sinhala majority government was instituted which passed legislation that were deemed discriminatory against the substantial Tamil minority population.
- In the 1970s, two major Tamil parties united to form the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) that started agitation for a separate state of Tamil Eelam within the system in a federal structure in the north and eastern Sri Lanka that would grant the Tamils greater autonomy.
- However, enactment of the sixth amendment of the Sri Lankan Constitution in August 1983 classified all separatist movements as unconstitutional, effectively rendering the TULF ineffective.
- Outside the TULF, however, factions advocating more radical and militant courses of action soon emerged, and the ethnic divisions started flaring into a violent civil war.

Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord:

- The Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord was an accord signed in Colombo on 29 July 1987, between Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President J. R. Jayewardene.
- The accord was expected to resolve the Sri Lankan Civil War by enabling the thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka and the Provincial Councils Act of 1987.
- Under the terms of the agreement, Colombo agreed to a devolution of power to the provinces, the Sri Lankan troops were to be withdrawn to their barracks in the north and the Tamil rebels were to surrender their arms.
- Importantly however, the Tamil groups, notably the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) (which at the time was one of the strongest Tamil forces), had not been made party to the talks and initially agreed to surrender their arms to the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) only reluctantly.
- Within a few months however, this flared into an active confrontation. The LTTE declared their intent to continue the armed struggle for an independent Tamil Eelam and refused to disarm. The IPKF found itself engaged in a bloody police action against the LTTE. Further complicating the return to peace was a burgeoning Sinhalese insurgency in the south.

Peace accord:

- Among the salient points of the agreement, the Sri Lankan Government made a number of concessions to Tamil demands, which included Colombo devolution of power to the provinces, merger (subject to later referendum) of the northern and eastern provinces, and official status for the Tamil language.
- More immediately, Operation Liberation — the successful, ongoing anti-insurgent operation by Sri Lankan forces in the Northern peninsula — was ended.
- Sri Lankan troops were to withdraw to their barracks in the north, the Tamil rebels were to disarm. India agreed to end support for the Tamil separatist movement and recognise the unity of Sri Lanka.
- The Indo-Sri Lanka Accord also underlined the commitment of Indian military assistance on which the IPKF came to be inducted into Sri Lanka.
- In 1990, India withdrew the last of its forces from Sri Lanka, and fighting between the LTTE and the government resumed.
- In January 1995, the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE agreed to a ceasefire as a preliminary step in a government-initiated plan for peace negotiations. After 3 months, however, the LTTE unilaterally resumed hostilities.
- The government of Sri Lanka then adopted a policy of military engagement with the Tigers, with government forces liberating Jaffna from LTTE control by mid-1996 and moving against LTTE positions in the northern part of the country called the Vanni.

Present Status:

- Since all provisions were not implemented, it is called 13- Minus.
- After LTTE defeat, 13th Amendment Plus was promised.
- Assured creation of upper house to parliament to ensure more minority participation.

Post Civil war:

- Tamil issue dominates ties between Sri Lanka and India.
• Sri Lanka- India ties go beyond people, into other domains.
• Sri Lanka a major recipients of development assistance from GoI.
• India’s commitment in Lanka close to $3 bn, $560 mn purely in grants.
• Indian Housing Project is Indian govt’s flagship project of developmental assistance to Sri Lanka war affected people.

Link: https://youtu.be/n1RseUFK_L8

2. India calls CPEC illegal

Introduction:
• The Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs, V. Muraleedharan in the Lok Sabha said the government’s position on China’s ‘One Belt One Road’ or ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ has been clear and consistent. Government’s concerns arise in part from the fact that the inclusion of the so-called illegal ‘China-Pakistan Economic Corridor’ as a flagship project of ‘OBOR/BRI’, directly impinges on the issue of sovereignty and territorial integrity of India. This so-called illegal ‘China-Pakistan Economic Corridor’ passes through parts of the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh which are under illegal occupation of Pakistan. Government has conveyed its concerns to the Chinese side about their activities in areas illegally occupied by Pakistan in the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh and has asked them to cease such activities. Further, the Government is of the firm belief that connectivity initiatives must be based on universally recognized international norms. They must follow principles of openness, transparency and financial responsibility and must be pursued in a manner that respects sovereignty, equality and territorial integrity of other nations.

CPEC:
• The CPEC is the flagship project of the multi-billion dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a pet project of Chinese President Xi Jinping, aimed at enhancing Beijing’s influence around the world through China-funded infrastructure projects.
  o The 3,000 km-long China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) consists of highways, railways, and pipelines.
  o CPEC eventually aims at linking the city of Gwadar in South Western Pakistan to China’s North Western region Xinjiang through a vast network of highways and railways.
  o The proposed project will be financed by heavily-subsidised loans, that will be disbursed to the Government of Pakistan by Chinese banking giants such as Exim Bank of China, China Development Bank, and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.

Present Stand by India on CPEC:
• New Delhi sent a clear message to Beijing that it doesn’t support CPEC. India registered its protest by boycotting the high-profile Belt and Road Forum organised by China.
• Its principal objection was that CPEC passed through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).
• The Ministry of External Affairs statement read: “Our position on OBOR/BRI is clear and there is no change. The so-called ‘China-Pakistan Economic Corridor’ violates India’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. No country can accept a project that ignores its core concerns on sovereignty and territorial integrity.” Nevertheless, for India, PoK remains an emotional and sensitive issue.

India’s Concern over CPEC and China:
• CPEC gives China a foothold in the western Indian Ocean with the Gwadar port, located near the strategic Strait of Hormuz, where Chinese warships and a submarine have surfaced.
• Access here allows China greater potential to control maritime trade in that part of the world—a vulnerable point for India, which sources more than 60% of its oil supplies from the Middle East.
• What’s more, if CPEC does resolve China’s “Malacca dilemma”—its over-reliance on the Malacca Straits for the transport of its energy resources—this would give Asia’s largest economy greater operational space to pursue unilateral interests in maritime matters to the detriment of freedom of navigation and the trade-energy security of several states in the Indian Ocean region, including India.

OBOR and CPEC seems to be primarily driven by broad geostrategic and geopolitical aim.
• CPEC will provide China strategic access to the Arabian Sea and enhance its presence in the region.
• It would enable China to wield much more powerful influence in the Indian Ocean.
Kashmir:
1. Once completed, CPEC project would mean that the Chinese presence in entire Pakistan including Pakistan Occupied Kashmir becomes all pervasive and powerful.
2. The route of CPEC passes through POK and makes China an indirect stakeholder in Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan.
3. OBOR is a unilateral ideational of China and there is a lack of transparency in its working. The process is not participatory and collaborative in nature.

String of pearls:
- Under Maritime Silk Route (MSR) China is developing ports in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan and is trying to enlarge its influence using its economic might in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.
- Thus MSR is nothing but an economic disguise to the “Strings of Pearls” Theory. China is investing a huge amount of money in India’s immediate neighbourhood and these countries tend to use the China card against India.

➢ Through OBOR, China is countering the strategies of India in North East region and is promoting its greater presence in North East India, part of which China claims as its own territory. This may have a security impact on India.
➢ Tense bilateral relations with China, deep mistrusts and India’s growing concerns over Chinese hegemonic intentions in South Asia and Indo-Pacific region make it practically unlikely that India will ever consider joining this project.
➢ The fact that the Chinese have begun to deploy 30,000 security personnel (Military deployment) to protect the projects along the CPEC route makes it an active player in the politics of the Indian subcontinent. Clearly, this is a case of double standards.

What the project means for India?
- India is the third party on which the CPEC impacts a lot of intangible and indirect effect
- The project goes through the disputed Pak occupied Kashmir (Gilgit- Baltistan) is a nuisance for India.
- the India-Iran alliance for a geographic connectivity with Central Asia partnering Afghanistan will continue.
- In future, some Indian regional development initiatives can use the physical development of CPEC like India’s connectivity to the Central and West Asia, Gulf region.
- If CPEC is completed not only China and Pakistan but also Afghanistan, India and Iran can benefit a lot.

CPEC and India-Pakistan Relations:
- The corridor runs through the region of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) in northern Pakistan.
- This region belongs to Jammu and Kashmir, to which both India and Pakistan have asserted claims.

The Negative Scenario
1. A Pakistan economically strengthened by Chinese support would have little interest in expanding economic cooperation with India.
2. Pakistan could then more forcefully place the Kashmir dispute on the foreign policy agenda, as it did intermittently in 2014/15.
3. The economic and political effects of CPEC would essentially prolong the negative cycle of India-Pakistan relations.

The Positive Scenario:
0. This would have an effect on the constitutional status of the Gilgit Baltistan region in Pakistan, on the one hand, and on relations between China, Pakistan and India on the other.
1. CPEC to improve Pakistan’s economic development, this could foment discontent in Gilgit-Baltistan over the growing gap between the region and other provinces.
2. Contributing to improving Pakistan’s infrastructure and easing its chronic energy shortage.
3. CPEC and its economic effects will also contribute to the transformation of Pakistani society and the strengthening of moderate forces
4. Peaceful development in Pakistan could in turn also have a positive influence on the region, for example with regard to the situation in Afghanistan.
5. Granting Gilgit-Baltistan the constitutional status of a province would codify the status quo, thus indirectly bringing the Kashmir dispute to an end.

Link: https://youtu.be/dkfOQ_aGyk4
3. India – Sri Lanka Relations

Introduction:
- Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa is on a four-day state visit to India. He will hold talks on a number of key areas including trade, defence and maritime security cooperation, his office announced on Thursday. The visit, will be the Rajapaksa senior’s first overseas visit since his brother Gotabaya was elected President in November. Rajapaksa held bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The leaders are expected to **prioritise defence and maritime security ties between both countries** as the neighbours play a crucial role in the US-led Indo-Pacific initiative, seen largely as an attempt to counter China. The visiting dignitary hopes to **finalise the implementation of the $ 450 million line of credit** pledged by Prime Minister Modi to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa during his visit to New Delhi in November.

Key areas:
- **Diplomatic Cooperation:** Diplomatic relations between India and Sri Lanka are marked by visits of high level Government functionaries.
  - A notable diplomatic event in the recent past was our Indian Prime Minister’s address to the Sri Lankan parliament in 2015
  - India-Sri Lanka Joint Commission was established in 1992. The commission facilitates discussions relating to bilateral affairs of both the countries
  - India and Sri Lanka signed a civilian nuclear energy deal in 2015. The agreement aims at cooperation to explore nuclear energy for peaceful purposes
- **Fishermen Issue:**
  - The constant and frequent issue of fisherman and recently Indian fishermen were picked up by the Sri Lankan Navy. The fishermen dispute is inevitable between neighbours. Indian Fishermen entering Sri Lankan water is not with any particular intention. What is important is that the two governments and the fishermen associations of both the sides must take care of these incidents and can be contained.
  - Both countries have **signed an MOU** to equip the fishermen and give them nets and necessary things to help them carry out their trade better and more peacefully.
  - Sri Lanka has taken the position that big fishing trawlers should not be used which is scientific and without which we may lose the fish yield.
- **Economic Cooperation:**
  - India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement was signed in 2010. India is Sri Lanka’s largest trading partner
  - India is the source of one of the largest foreign direct investments in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is also a potential source of foreign investment in India
- **Defence and Security Cooperation:**
  - Colombo and New Delhi have long history of security cooperation. In recent years, the two sides have steadily increased their military-to-military relationship.
  - India and Sri Lanka conducts **joint Military (‘Mitra Shakti’) and Naval exercise (SLINEX)**.
  - India also provides defence training to Sri Lankan forces.
  - A trilateral maritime security cooperation agreement was signed by India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives to improve surveillance, anti-piracy operations and reducing maritime pollution in Indian Ocean Region.
  - In April 2019, India and Sri Lanka also concluded agreement on countering Drug and Human trafficking.
  - In the aftermath of the horrific Easter bombings, Sri Lankan Prime Minister thanked the Indian government for all the “help” given.
  - The alerts issued by Indian agencies before the attacks had warned specifically about the use of radicalised suicide bombers attacking churches and the Indian High Commission in Colombo.
- **Development Assistance:**
  - The war between Sri Lankan Government and LTTE came to an end in 2009. The armed conflict led to many casualties and internal displacement
As an immediate response India provided all war relief measures including food, medicine etc.

As a long term measure, India announced reconstruction of 50000 houses to provide shelter to Internally Displaced People (IDP).

India is one of the largest provider of development credit to Sri Lanka. As of 2016, a total of USD 1284 million has been provided by India. The credit is mostly provided for the Sri Lanka’s infrastructure development.

India has provided medical equipment and ambulances to hospitals in Sri Lanka.

- Cultural and Educational Cooperation:
  - India and Sri Lanka signed a cultural cooperation agreement back in 1977.
  - India Sri Lanka foundation was setup in 1998. It aims at technical, scientific, cultural and educational cooperation by engaging civil society organizations of both the countries.
  - India cultural centre in Colombo promotes Indian culture by providing courses in Indian music, dance, yoga etc.,
  - India provides scholarships to qualified Sri Lankan students in Undergraduate and research studies.
  - Tourism is one of the important areas of cooperation. Sri Lankan tourists are one of the top ten visitors to India.
  - Sri Lanka is also a partner in Nalanda university project of India.
  - India and Sri Lanka commemorated the 2600th year of the attainment of enlightenment by Lord Buddha (Sambuddhathva Jayanthi) through joint activities.
  - The two Governments also celebrated the 150th Anniversary of Anagarika Dharmapala in 2014.
  - The People of Indian Origin (PIOs) comprise Sindhis, Gujaratis, Memons, Parsis, Malayalis and Telugu speaking persons who have settled down in Sri Lanka and are engaged in various business ventures.
  - Government of India formally launched the e-Tourist Visa (eTV) scheme for Sri Lankan tourists on 14 April 2015 to increase the people to people contact.

Developments in Sri Lanka

- Sri Lanka has progressed in the Health sector. When they became independent, they were supposed to be one of the worst affected regions affected by malaria. Now they are declared malaria free. This is a lesson to be learnt for India.
- Social development indicators are quite high in literacy, health indicators, etc. They have made considerable progress.

Significance of the relations:

- India shares a common cultural and security space with the countries in the South Asian region especially Sri Lanka.
- Sri Lanka’s location in the Indian Ocean region as an island State has been of strategic geopolitical relevance to several major powers.
- As a prominent Asian nation with critical national interests in South Asia, India has a special responsibility to ensure peace and stability in its closest neighbourhood.
- India should shed its big brother image and actively take part to rebuild the war-torn country.
- India needs the support of Sri Lanka to emerge as a Blue water navy in the Indian Ocean and also in pursuing the permanent membership in United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
- China’s string of pearl’s strategy is aimed at encircling India to establish dominance in the Indian Ocean.
- Post 2015, Sri Lanka still relies heavily on China for Port city project and for continuation of Chinese funded infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka.
- Sri Lanka’s location can thus serve both commercial and industrial purposes and be used as a military base.

Conclusion:

- Despite some of the pending issues, the relations between the two neighbors in IOR look to be going forward.
• **Trade** between the two has **grown rapidly after the entry into force of FTA in 2000**. India is planning to develop regions beyond the defence assistance provided to Sri Lanka which are welcome steps. It may be hoped that the **ethnic and fishermen issues may also get resolved** in near future with better relations being on track.

Link: [https://youtu.be/f11HoPQ7nP](https://youtu.be/f11HoPQ7nP)

## ENVIRONMENT

### 1. Locust Attack

**Introduction:**

• In recent weeks, locust swarms have attacked crops in more than a dozen countries in Asia and Africa. The United Nations says the situation is **extremely alarming in three regions** – the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea area, and southwest Asia.

• The Horn of Africa is the worst-affected area. Locust swarms from Ethiopia and Somalia have reached south to Kenya and 14 other countries in the continent. In the Red Sea area, locusts have struck Saudi Arabia, Oman and Yemen. In southwest Asia, locust swarms have damaged in Iran, Pakistan and India.

• Huge swarms of locusts have struck border villages in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Punjab — causing heavy damage to standing crop prompting state governments to sound high alert against locust attacks.

**Locusts:**

• They are a collection of certain species of short-horned grasshoppers in the family Acrididae that have a swarming phase.

• These insects are usually solitary, but under certain circumstances they become more abundant and change their behaviour and habits, becoming gregarious.

• No taxonomic distinction is made between locust and grasshopper species; the basis for the definition is whether a species forms swarms under intermittently suitable conditions.

• These grasshoppers are innocuous, their numbers are low, and they do not pose a major economic threat to agriculture.

• However, under suitable conditions of drought followed by rapid vegetation growth, serotonin in their brains triggers a dramatic set of changes: they start to breed abundantly, becoming gregarious and nomadic (loosely described as migratory) when their populations become dense enough.

• They form bands of wingless nymphs which later become swarms of winged adults. Both the bands and the swarms move around and rapidly strip fields and cause damage to crops.

• The adults are powerful fliers; they can travel great distances, consuming most of the green vegetation wherever the swarm settles.

**Is this the first time that locust has stayed in India after October-November?**

• This has happened for the first time since the 1950s. The decades before this witnessed terrible and long periods of locust plague (when there is a swarm attack for more than two continuous years, it is called plague). This time, they stayed for long because of good monsoon.

• In 2019, monsoon started six weeks before time (first week of July) in western India, especially in locust infested areas. It also lasted a month longer — till November, instead of the usual September/October. Extended rains created excellent breeding conditions for the locust, while also producing natural vegetation on which they could feed longer.

• Locust came to Jaisalmer in May end. Rajasthan has witnessed three generations of breeding instead of the regular one generation. The first two generations caused a lot of damage to crops. The third generation is weak now.

**How big is the number after the third generation?**

• Locust breeds fast. The first breeding causes a 20-time increase in number; the second a 400-time rise; and the third 16,000 times.

• The peak infestation this time was in October, at the end of second generation, when large swarms were reported in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

• Since natural vegetation dried out in December, the swarms got into cultivated areas and caused damage.

**Relationship between locusts and and climate change:**

• During quiet periods—known as recessions—desert locusts are usually restricted to the semi-arid and arid deserts of Africa, the Near East and South-West Asia that receive less than 200 mm of rain annually.
In normal conditions, locust numbers decrease either by natural mortality or through migration.

However, the last five years have been hotter than any other since the industrial revolution and since 2009.

Studies have linked a hotter climate to more damaging locust swarms, leaving Africa disproportionately affected—20 of the fastest warming countries globally are in Africa.

Wet weather also favours multiplication of locusts. Widespread, above average rain that pounded the Horn of Africa from October to December 2019 were up to 400 per cent above normal rainfall amount.

These abnormal rains were caused by the Indian Ocean dipole, a phenomenon accentuated by climate change.

**How can countries and individuals be better prepared:**

- While climate change is a global phenomenon, Africa stands out for its vulnerability which is driven primarily by the prevailing low levels of socioeconomic development. Persons living in poverty face compounding vulnerabilities to climate change impacts because they lack the resources to quickly recover from its effects.
- In this case, desert locusts are ravaging crops in the field before harvesting, wiping out livestock and wildlife feed, and with them savings, assets and livelihoods.
- Deployment of climate action solutions such as decentralizing solar dryers to agro-value chain actors can ensure that they can earn up to 30 times more by being able to preserve their harvest and sell during the offseason or gives them flexibility to compensate for unpredictable events such as these locust swarms.
- It can also create enterprise opportunities for auxiliary value chains of fabricating these solar dryers. Interventions like this are critical to increase climate resilience for some of the most vulnerable communities across the continent.

**How can locusts be controlled?**

- Controlling desert locust swarms primarily uses organophosphate chemicals by vehicle-mounted and aerial sprayers, and to a lesser extent by knapsack and hand-held sprayers.
- Extensive research is ongoing regarding biological control and other means of non-chemical control with the current focus on pathogens and insect growth regulators. Control by natural predators and parasites so far is limited since locusts can quickly move away from most natural enemies.
- While people and birds often eat locusts, this is not enough to significantly reduce population levels over large areas.

### 2. Endangered Species

**Introduction:**

- Three endangered species from India – the Great Indian Bustard, the Asiatic elephant and the Bengal Florican – will be included in a special global list for protection under the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species.
- It will be done at the 13th conference of parties that will be held from February 15th-22nd at Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The theme of COP13 is ‘Migratory species connect the planet and we welcome them home’ and its mascot is the Great Indian Bustard.
- These birds are dying at the rate of 15 per cent annually due to collision with high-voltage power lines. In the last 30 years, their population has reduced drastically by nearly 75 percent. Their inclusion in the list of species for protection under the CMS will enable range countries to protect and conserve these migratory birds.
- Besides, seven other species have also been proposed by different countries to be included in the global protection list. Which are these species of birds and animals that will be included in the global list of protection and what is the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.

**CMS:**

- As an environmental treaty of the United Nations, CMS provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats. CMS brings together the States through which migratory animals pass, the Range States, and lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures throughout a migratory range.

As the only global convention specializing in the conservation of migratory species, their habitats and migration routes, CMS...Read more »
• As an environmental treaty of the United Nations, CMS provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats.
• CMS brings together the States through which migratory animals pass, the Range States, and lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures throughout a migratory range.
• As the only global convention specializing in the conservation of migratory species, their habitats and migration routes, CMS complements and co-operates with a number of other international organizations, NGOs and partners in the media as well as in the corporate sector.
• Migratory species threatened with extinction are listed on Appendix I of the Convention. CMS Parties strive towards strictly protecting these animals, conserving or restoring the places where they live, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them. Besides establishing obligations for each State joining the Convention, CMS promotes concerted action among the Range States of many of these species.
• Migratory species that need or would significantly benefit from international co-operation are listed in Appendix II of the Convention. For this reason, the Convention encourages the Range States to conclude global or regional agreements.
• In this respect, CMS acts as a framework Convention. The agreements may range from legally binding treaties (called Agreements) to less formal instruments, such as Memoranda of Understanding, and can be adapted to the requirements of particular regions. The development of models tailored according to the conservation needs throughout the migratory range is a unique capacity to CMS.

What are migratory species? Why protect them?
• Migratory species are those animals that move from one habitat to another during different times of the year, due to various factors such as food, sunlight, temperature, climate, etc.
• The movement between habitats, can sometimes exceed thousands of miles/kilometres for some migratory birds and mammals. A migratory route can involve nesting and also requires the availability of habitats before and after each migration.

COP:
• The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the principal decision making body of the Convention as set out in Article VII of the CMS text.
• It meets once every three years and sets the budget and priorities of the following three years (the triennium).
• It also decides on the amendment of the Appendices and considers reports submitted by the Parties, the Scientific Council and the Agreements established under the Convention. It also has the task of recommending to Parties whether they should conclude further regional Agreements for the conservation of particular species or groups of species.

COP 13:
• The Thirteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP13) together with the associated meetings of the Standing Committee will be held in Gandhinagar from 15 to 22 February 2020.
• Theme: “Migratory species connect the planet and together we welcome them home”

Man Biggest Enemy of Wildlife:
Living planet report:
• It is published every 2 years by WWF.
• It is based on the ‘Living Planet Index’ and ‘Ecological footprint calculations’.
• The ‘Living Planet Index’ is an indicator of the state of global biological diversity managed by Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and WWF.
• Ecological footprint is the biologically productive area needed to provide for everything used by people: fruits and vegetables, fish, wood, fibres, absorption of CO₂ from fossil fuels use, and space for buildings and roads. It is currently developed by Global Footprint Network (an independent think-tank). The GHG footprint and carbon footprint are a component of Ecological Footprint.
• Humanity’s Ecological Footprint for 2014 was 1.7 planet Earth’s. This meant that humanity’s demands were 1.7 times faster than what the Earth’s ecosystems renewed.
• It is a science-based analysis on the health of Earth and the impact of human activity.
• The 2018 report has found a decline of 60% in population sizes of vertebrate species from 1970 to 2014. The tropics of South and Central America had an 89% loss compared to 1970.
• Issues like Ocean acidification, loss of corals, increasing Carbon in the atmosphere, species disappearance due to habitat loss and degradation, etc are highlighted in the 2018 report.
• Increasing use of plastics that ultimately reaches the oceans and seas via rivers is also a cause for deaths of marine organisms.
• The latest report calls for new goals post-2020 alongside Convention on Biological Diversity, the Paris Climate Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:
• The act provides for the protection of wild animals, birds and plants and matters connected with them, with a view to ensure the ecological and environmental security of India.
• It provides for prohibition on use of animal traps except under certain circumstances
• It provides for protection of hunting rights of the Scheduled Tribes in Andaman and Nicobar Islands
• Has provisions for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
• It has six schedules which give varying degrees of protection
  o Species listed in Schedule I and part II of Schedule II get absolute protection — offences under these are prescribed the highest penalties
  o Species listed in Schedule III and Schedule IV are also protected, but the penalties are much lower
  o Schedule V includes the animals which may be hunted
  o The plants in Schedule VI are prohibited from cultivation and planting
• The act constitutes a National Board for Wildlife that
  o provides guidelines for framing policies and advising Central and State Government on promotion of wildlife conservation and controlling poaching and illegal trade of wildlife and its products;
  o Making recommendations for setting up and managing national parks, sanctuaries and other protected areas; and
  o Suggesting measures for improvement of wildlife conservation.
• It also sets up National Tiger Conservation Authority.
• The acts sets up various provisions related to trade and penalties for hunting the animals in wild.
• Five kinds of protected areas can be notified in the Act. These are:
  o Sanctuaries: The State or Central Government may by notification declare its intention to constitute any area as a sanctuary for protecting wildlife and the environment. The government determines the nature and extent of rights of persons in or over the land within the sanctuary.
  o National Parks:
    ▪ The State or Central Government may declare an area, whether inside a sanctuary or not, as a national park for the purpose of protecting and developing wildlife and its environment.
    ▪ The State Government cannot alter the boundaries of a national park except on the recommendation of the National Board for Wildlife.
  o No grazing is allowed inside a national park.
  o All provisions applicable to a sanctuary are also applicable to a national park.
  o Conservation Reserves: The State Government after consultations with local communities can declare any area owned by the Government, particularly areas adjacent to national parks or sanctuaries, as conservation reserves. The government constitutes a Conservation Reserve Management Committee to manage and conserve the conservation reserve.
  o Community Reserves: The State Government can, in consultation with the community or an individual who have volunteered to conserve wildlife, declare any private or community land as community reserve. A Community Reserve Management Committee shall be constituted by State Government for conserving and managing the reserve.
  o Tiger Reserve: These areas were reserved for protection tiger in the country. The State Government on the recommendation of the Tiger Conservation Authority may notify an area as a tiger reserve, for which it has to prepare a Tiger Conservation Plan.

National Wildlife Action Plan:
• The NWAP 2017-31, under which there are 250 projects, is India’s road map to conserve wildlife for the next 15 years. The plan is woven around the agenda of the United Nations’ 15th Sustainable Developmental Goal — “Life on Land”. 
• The key strategic changes in the new plan is adopting a “landscape approach” in conservation of all the wildlife — uncultivated flora (plants) and undomesticated fauna (animals) — rather than the areas where they occur.

• This means that while till now programmes and plans related to wildlife were focused on and around national parks and sanctuaries, now the strategies would be based on the landscape of the region that may not be limited to a reserve forest system alone.

• The plan has been divided into five components, which are further divided into 17 themes carrying 103 conservation actions. Each theme has a set of conservation actions and projects — 250, in all.

• Man-animal conflict mitigation, adapting to the climate change, managing eco-tourism, ensuring public participation in the conservation, developing human resources, strengthening research and monitoring through modern technology like radio collars and drones and ensuring funds for the wildlife sector have been given special thrust in the planning.

• The plan adopts a “landscape approach” in conservation of all wildlife — uncultivated flora and fauna — that have an ecological value to the ecosystem and to mankind irrespective of where they occur. It gives special emphasis to recovery of threatened species of wildlife while conserving their habitats.

• The government has also underlined an increased role of private sector in wildlife conservation. The plan lays down that the Centre would ensure that adequate and sustained funding including Corporate Social Responsibility funds are made available for the National Wildlife Action Plan implementation.

The factors responsible for the extinction of flora and fauna across the world are as follows

• Overexploitation of species: either for human consumption, use, elaboration of by-products, or for sport. Poaching has been a major threat which is going on unabated.

• Habitat Loss:
  - Habitat destruction: People directly destroy habitat include filling in wetlands, dredging rivers, mowing fields, and cutting down trees. Commercial activities like mining, quarrying has destroyed many eco-sensitive zones. Example: Iron ore mining in the Western Ghats of India.
  - Habitat fragmentation: Much of the remaining terrestrial wildlife habitat has been cut up into fragments by roads and development. Aquatic species’ habitats have been fragmented by dams and water diversions. These fragments of habitat may not be large or connected enough to support species that need a large territory where they can find mates and food. Also, the loss and fragmentation of habitats makes it difficult for migratory species to find places to rest and feed along their migration routes.
  - Habitat degradation: Pollution, invasive species, and disruption of ecosystem processes (such as changing the intensity of fires in an ecosystem) are some of the ways habitats can become so degraded they can no longer support native wildlife.

• Climate Change:
  - As climate change alters temperature and weather patterns, it also impacts plant and animal life. Scientists expect that the number and range of species, which define biodiversity, will decline greatly as temperatures continue to rise.
  - The burning of fossil fuels for energy and animal agriculture are two of the biggest contributors to global warming, along with deforestation.
  - As people increase their level of income, they consume more meat and dairy products. The populations of industrial countries consume twice as much meat as those in developing countries. Worldwide meat production has tripled over the last four decades and increased 20 percent in just the last ten years.

• The spread of non-native species around the world: a single species (us) taking over a significant percentage of the world’s physical space and production; and, human actions increasingly directing evolution.
  - Reduced Diversity: Biological homogenization qualifies as a global environmental catastrophe. The Earth has never witnessed such a broad and complete reorganization of species distribution, in which animals and plants (and other organisms for that matter) have been translocated on a global scale around the planet.
  - Humans are directing evolution in numerous other ways as well, manipulating genomes by artificial selection and molecular techniques, and indirectly by managing ecosystems and populations to conserve them.
Other:
- In countries around the world, policies have been enacted that have led to extinction or near extinction of specific species, such as large predators in the US and Europe.
- Chemical products associated with agriculture or other productive processes have affected many species such as honeybees and other pollinators.

Link: https://youtu.be/H8cE8I7iMok

SECURITY ISSUES

1. Defence Expo 2020

Introduction:
- India’s biennial Defence Expo was held in Lucknow. Aimed at showcasing India’s potential as a global defence manufacturing hub, the 11th edition of the Defence Expo will bring new technologies and solutions on a single platform for defence manufacturing firms from India and abroad.
- The theme of the Expo is ‘India: The Emerging Defence Manufacturing Hub’ and the focus is ‘Digital Transformation of Defence’.
- The five-day mega exhibition saw as many as 856 Indian defence firms unveil their products. The Defence Expo is an opportunity for the Indian defence industry to promote its export potential.

DefExpo-2020:
- It is a flagship biennial event of the Ministry of Defence, Government of India, one of the largest events of its kind held for the first time in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh from 5th to 9th Feb 2020.
- The 11th edition of Def Expo promises to bring new technologies, technological solutions, where Defence manufacturing companies from India and abroad showcase their products and services in Defence arena, on a single platform.
- The main theme of the Def Expo India-2020 is ‘India: The Emerging Defence Manufacturing Hub’ and the focus will be on ‘Digital Transformation of Defence’.
- Reflecting the Government’s focus on ‘Make in India’, Def Expo 2020, would offer an excellent opportunity for the Indian Defence industry to showcase its capabilities and promote its export potential.
- Defence Expo 2020 would prove to be an effective platform to showcase the unique products that help achieving the Digital Transformation of Defence, where India’s Defence public sector units, and also India’s growing private industry and MSME will be bringing their cutting-edge technological products to be showcased to the World.
- The number of companies registered for participating in the Def Expo 2020 reached 1,028. In the Def Expo 2018, held in Chennai, 702 companies had participated. Thus, it has become by far the biggest ever Def Expo to be held in India.
- The number of participating foreign companies has also increased to 172 from the previous figure of 160.
- The booked exhibition space by exhibitors for Def Expo 2020 has gone up by 96 per cent to over 43,021 square metres, compared to around 27,000 during the last edition.

Funds Allocated to the Armed Forces:

The BE allocations of Army, Navy & Air Force for the last three years is tabulated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
<th>2019-20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>145167.22</td>
<td>153875.22</td>
<td>169909.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy (Incl. Joint Staff)</td>
<td>37841.98</td>
<td>40419.53</td>
<td>45368.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>58372.50</td>
<td>64591.44</td>
<td>68948.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It may be seen from the above table that allocations for all the three Services are consistently increasing over the years in absolute terms.
Impact of FDI in Defence:
• In May, 2001, the Defence Industry sector, which was hitherto reserved for the public sector, was opened upto 100% for Indian private sector participation, with Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) upto 26% both subject to licensing.
• Further, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce & Industry has allowed FDI under automatic route upto 49% and above 49% through government route wherever it is likely to result in access to modern technology or for other reasons to be recorded.
• Further, FDI in defence industry sector is subject to industrial license under Industries (Development & Regulation) Act, 1951 and manufacturing of small arms and ammunition under the Arms Act, 1959.
• As per the data furnished by 37 companies operating in Defence and Aerospace sector, so far, FDI inflows of over Rs. 1561 Crores have been reported in defence and aerospace sector after 2014 in automatic route.

Boosting Domestic Production of Defence Equipment:
Government has taken following policy initiatives to boost production and promote indigenous design, development & manufacture of defence equipment in collaboration with Indian private sector:
• Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) has been revised in 2016 wherein specific provisions have been introduced for stimulating growth of the domestic defence industry including private sector.
• A new category of procurement “Buy (Indian-IDDM (Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured))” has been introduced in Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP)-2016 to promote indigenous design and development of defence equipment. It has been accorded top most priority for procurement of capital equipment. Besides this, preference has been accorded to ‘Buy (Indian)’, ‘Buy and Make (Indian)’ & ‘Make’ categories of capital acquisition over ‘Buy (Global)’ & ‘Buy & Make (Global)’ categories.
• FDI Policy has been revised and under the revised policy, FDI is allowed under automatic route upto 49% and beyond 49% through Government route wherever it is likely to result in access to modern technology or for other reasons to be recorded.
• An innovation ecosystem for Defence titled Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) has been launched in April, 2018. iDEX is aimed at creation of an ecosystem to foster innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace by engaging Industries including MSMEs, Start-ups, Individual Innovators, R&D institutes and Academia and provide them grants/funding and other support to carry out R&D which has potential for future adoption for Indian defence and aerospace needs.
• The “Make” Procedure has been simplified with provisions for funding of 90% of development cost by the Government to Indian industry and reserving Government funded Make-I projects not exceeding development cost of Rs.10 Crore & procurement cost Rs. 50 Crore per year for MSMEs. The industry funded Make-II Projects not exceeding development cost of Rs.3 Crore & procurement cost Rs. 50 Crore per year have also been reserved for MSMEs.
• Separate procedure for “Make-II” category has been notified under DPP to encourage indigenous development and manufacture of defence equipment. Number of industry friendly provisions such as relaxation of eligibility criterion, minimal documentation, provision for considering proposals suggested by industry/individual etc. have been introduced in this procedure.
• Government has notified the “Strategic Partnership (SP)” Model which envisages establishment of long-term strategic partnerships with Indian entities through a transparent and competitive process, wherein they would tie up with global Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) to seek technology transfers to set up domestic manufacturing infrastructure and supply chains.
• Government has notified a Policy for indigenisation of components and spares used in Defence Platforms in March, 2019 with the objective to create an industry ecosystem which is able to indigenize the imported components (including alloys & special materials) and sub-assemblies for defence equipment and platform manufactured in India.
• Offset guidelines have been made flexible by allowing change of Indian Offset Partners (IOPs) and offset components, even in signed contracts. Foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) are now allowed to provide the details of IOPs and products after signing of contracts. In order to bring more transparency and efficiency into the Offset discharge process, “Offset portal” has been created in May, 2019.
Defence Products list requiring Industrial Licences has been rationalised and manufacture of most of parts or components does not require Industrial License. The initial validity of the Industrial Licence granted under the IDR Act has been increased from 03 years to 15 years with a provision to further extend it by 03 years on a case-to-case basis.

Link: https://youtu.be/vBgj2GDAjis

2. Permanent Commission to Women Army Officers

Introduction:
- The Supreme Court granted women the right to permanent commission and the right to command. The petition was filed by a group of 332 women officers, who joined the army from 1993 onwards. Their petition was partially accepted by the Delhi High Court in March 2010.
- At the time of filing the petition, woman officers were permitted PC in only two services – the JAG and the Army Education Corps. In February 2019, the Centre had issued a notification where it allowed the permanent commission to SSC women officers of Indian Army.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi had endorsed the idea of the permanent commission for women officers and announced the policy change in his Independence Day speech.

What is Short Service Commission?
- Short Service Commission was there because we had cadre problem.
- Short Service Commission (SSC) scheme allows women officers into the Army for a period of 10 years, extendable up to 14 years.
- However, women were restricted to specific responsibilities such as Corps of Engineers, Army Education Corps, Corps of Signals and Intelligence Corps. SSC scheme doesn’t allow women officers in combat roles like armoured corps and infantry.
- On the other hand, SSC provides an option to male army officers to opt for permanent commission at the end of ten years of service. Women officers were not allowed for permanent commission. Also, women officers could not qualify for a government pension.

What is Permanent Commission in Army?
- Permanent Commission refers to a career till the age of retirement.
- It means an officer gets selected through the Permanent Commission and serve the nation up to the age of 60. An Army officer has to join the National Defence Academy (NDA), (Indian Military Academy) IMA or Officers Training Academy (OTA) for permanent commission.

Supreme Court’s observations:
- The Supreme Court rejected arguments against greater role for women officers, saying these violated equality under law.
- The biological argument was also rejected as disturbing.
- The court has rejected government’s arguments, saying they are based on sex stereotypes premised on assumptions about socially ascribed roles of gender which discriminate against women.
- It has also said that it only shows the need “to emphasise the need for change in mindsets to bring about true equality in the Army”.

What will be the implications of the judgement?
- The permanent commission for women will bring a historic change in the Indian Army.
- It means that when a woman is appointed to the army, then that female military officer will be able to work in the army till the age of retirement.
- However, if a woman officer would like to resign for some reason, she can resign. All women officers working in the army under the Short Service Commission will be given an option to choose a permanent commission.
- Now, women officers will also be entitled to pension after getting a permanent commission.

Women in Army: Background of the case:
- They were commissioned for a period of five years in certain chosen streams such as Army Education Corps, Corps of Signals, Intelligence Corps, and Corps of Engineers.
- Recruits under the Women Special Entry Scheme (WSES) had a shorter pre-commission training period than their male counterparts who were commissioned under the Short Service Commission (SSC) scheme.
• In 2006, the WSES scheme was replaced with the SSC scheme, which was extended to women officers.
• They were commissioned for a period of 10 years, extendable up to 14 years. Serving WSES officers were given the option to move to the new SSC scheme, or to continue under the erstwhile WSES.
• They were to be however, restricted to roles in streams specified earlier which excluded combat arms such as infantry and armoured corps.

Why the government was against this?
• Motherhood, childcare, psychological limitations have a bearing on the employment of women officers in the Army.
• Family separation, career prospects of spouses, education of children, prolonged absence due to pregnancy, motherhood were a greater challenge for women to meet the exigencies of service.
• Physical limitations: Soldiers will be asked to work in difficult terrains, isolated posts and adverse climate conditions. Officers have to lead from the front. They should be in prime physical condition to undertake combat tasks. The Govt. said women were not fit to serve in ground combat roles.
• Behavioural and Psychological Challenges: Army units were a “unique all-male environment”. The presence of women officers would require “moderated behaviour”. The male troop predominantly comes from a rural background and may not be in a position to accept commands from a female leader.

Link: https://youtu.be/c5rNQbfAfEw

MISCELLANEOUS

1. World Economic Forum 2020

Introduction:
• The World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos-Klosters happens to be the foremost creative force for engaging the world’s top leaders in collaborative activities to shape the global, regional and industry agendas at the beginning of each year.
• It brought together 3,000 participants from around the world, and aim to give concrete meaning to “stakeholder capitalism”, assist governments and international institutions in tracking progress towards the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals, and facilitate discussions on technology and trade governance.

The World Economic Forum:
• The World Economic Forum is the International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation.
• The Forum engages the foremost political, business, cultural and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.
• It was established in 1971 as a not-for-profit foundation and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
• It is independent, impartial and not tied to any special interests.
• The Forum strives in all its efforts to demonstrate entrepreneurship in the global public interest while upholding the highest standards of governance. Moral and intellectual integrity is at the heart of everything it does.
• The activities are shaped by a unique institutional culture founded on the stakeholder theory, which asserts that an organization is accountable to all parts of society. The institution carefully blends and balances the best of many kinds of organizations, from both the public and private sectors, international organizations and academic institutions.
• It believes that progress happens by bringing together people from all walks of life who have the drive and the influence to make positive change.
• The Forum strategy is simple and effective: bring together the most relevant leaders from all sectors of global society, and identify the best ways to address the world’s most significant challenges.
• It works. For almost 50 years, the Forum has been the catalyst for global initiatives, historic shifts, industry breakthroughs, economic ideas and tens of thousands of projects and collaborations.
• 2020 theme: Stakeholders for a Cohesive and Sustainable World
Governance:

- **Chairperson**: Founder and Executive Chairman Professor Klaus Schwab
- **Board of Trustees**: exceptional individuals who act as guardians of its mission and values, and oversee the Forum’s work in promoting true global citizenship. Its membership is divided equally between representatives of the business community and leaders from international organizations and civil society.
- **Managing Board**: acts as the executive body of the WEF & acts as its representative to outside parties.
- The organization also convenes some six to eight regional meetings each year in locations across Africa, East Asia, and Latin America, and holds two further annual meetings in China, India and the United Arab Emirates.
- Until 2012, it had **observer status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council**; it is under the supervision of the Swiss Federal Council.

Impact:

1. **Building awareness and co-operation**
   - The Forum creates impact by gathering leaders from business, government, international organizations, academia, civil society and youth to work together to drive positive change.

2. **Shaping mindsets and agendas**
   - Our flagship reports, policy frameworks and strategies influence government priorities, business strategies and public opinion.

3. **Driving collective action**
   - Projects and collaborations started or supported by the Forum impact millions of people, from saving lives through childhood vaccination to improving the productivity of small-scale farms.

Publications

- Global risk report, 2018
- Readiness for the future of production
- Global gender gap report
- Inclusive development index
- Global competitiveness report (index)
- Global human capital report (index)
- Travel and tourism competitiveness report (index)
- Global energy architecture performance index report

India at WEF 2020:

- India is the largest consumer of LED bulbs and this has helped the nation in reducing power consumption and carbon emissions.
- This was stated by Union Minister for Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal who is leading the Indian delegation at the 50th World Economic Forum at Davos.
- The Minister stated that India will rely on coal as a baseload for the grid, to enable it to start introducing renewables.

Prioritized key areas at the platform:

- **Ecology**: How to mobilize business to respond to the risks of climate change and ensure that measures to protect biodiversity reach forest floors and ocean beds.
- **Economy**: How to remove the long-term debt burden and keep the economy working at a pace that allows higher inclusion.
- **Technology**: How to create a global consensus on deployment of Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies and avoid a ‘technology war’.
- **Society**: How to reskill and upskill a billion people in the next decade.
- **Geopolitics**: How the ‘spirit of Davos’ can create bridges to resolve conflicts in global hotspots. Informal meetings to set kickstart conciliation.
- **Industry**: How to help business create the models necessary to drive enterprise in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. How to navigate an enterprise in a world exposed to political tensions and driven by exponential technological change as well as increasing expectations from all stakeholders.
2. Pornography- Impact on Children & Society

Introduction:
- The Adhoc Committee of the Rajya instituted by Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu has made 40 far reaching recommendations to prevent sexual abuse of children and to contain access to and transmission of child pornography content on social media.
- The report of the Committee was presented by the Chairman of the Committee Jai Ram Ramesh to Naidu. Expressing concern over the seriousness of the prevalence of the horrific social evil of child pornography, the Committee has recommended important amendments to the Protection of Children From Sexual Offences Act, 2012 and the Information Technology Act, 2000 besides technological, institutional, social and educational measures and state level initiatives to address the alarming issue of pornography on social media and its effects on children and the society as a whole. Forty recommendations have been made by the Adhoc Committee to deal with the issue.

Exposure to pornography is harmful to children of all ages!
- Seeing unfamiliar looking bodies engaging in acts that a child cannot comprehend is a confusing and frightening experience for a child or adolescent.
- Children or adolescents may experience autonomic sexual arousal at the sight of pornography, which can confuse them into thinking they “like” what they see, when in fact their bodies are reacting instinctively without the “approval” of their brain.
- Children and adolescents can become “de-sensitized” to pornography exposure and this can result in acting out sexualized behaviors with other children and engaging in high-risk sexual experiences by adolescents.
- Adults who choose to view adult pornography have an obligation to ensure that children cannot possibly access it. Lockup written material, clear browsers, and use every technological resources possible. Use of adult pornography or other sexually explicit materials in a home should never be accessible to children.

The family and pornography:
- Married men who are involved in pornography feel less satisfied with their conjugal relations and less emotionally attached to their wives. Wives notice and are upset by the difference.
- Pornography use is a pathway to infidelity and divorce, and is frequently a major factor in these family disasters.
- Among couples affected by one spouse’s addiction, two-thirds experience a loss of interest in sexual intercourse.
- Both spouses perceive pornography viewing as tantamount to infidelity.
- Pornography viewing leads to a loss of interest in good family relations.

The individual and pornography:
- Pornography is addictive, and neuroscientists are beginning to map the biological substrate of this addiction.
- Users tend to become desensitized to the type of pornography they use, become bored with it, and then seek more perverse forms of pornography.
- Men who view pornography regularly have a higher tolerance for abnormal sexuality, including rape, sexual aggression, and sexual promiscuity.
- Prolonged consumption of pornography by men produces stronger notions of women as commodities or as “sex objects.”
- Pornography engenders greater sexual permissiveness, which in turn leads to a greater risk of out-of-wedlock births and STDs. These, in turn, lead to still more weaknesses and debilities.
- Child-sex offenders are more likely to view pornography regularly or to be involved in its distribution.

Effects of exposure:
- In the absence of other information, pornography can be the main source of a young person’s sex education.
- The use of pornography by adolescents is associated with stronger permissive sexual attitudes (e.g., premarital sex, casual sex). There is some evidence that exposure to pornography can increase the likelihood of earlier first-time sexual experience, particularly for those adolescents who consume pornography more frequently.
- Pornography can influence a young person’s expectations about sex, for example what young men expect their partners to do and vice versa.
• Pornography is also associated with unsafe sexual health practices such as not using condoms and unsafe anal and vaginal sex.
• Gaps between expectations and reality can produce “sexual uncertainty” about sexual beliefs and values and may also be related to sexual dissatisfaction, anxiety and fear. The content of pornography may reinforce double standards of an active male sexuality and passive female receptacle.
• Both male and female consumers of pornography had increased levels of self-objectification and body surveillance.
• Adolescent pornography use is associated with stronger beliefs in gender stereotypes, particularly for males. Male adolescents who view pornography frequently are more likely to view women as sex objects and to hold sexist attitudes such as women “leading men on”.
• Pornography may strengthen attitudes supportive of sexual violence and violence against women. There is evidence of an association between consuming pornography and perpetrating sexual harassment for boys.
• Sexual preoccupation, compulsive consumption and “addiction” can be associated with the frequency of viewing pornography and also the purposes of using pornography

Way Forward:
• Parents can make a vast and positive difference by talking with their children. Like sexuality education in general, the topic of pornography is not one big talk but rather a series of discussions that easily can arise from the content of songs, music videos, video games, movies and unintended or intended exposure to sexually explicit images.
• Parents can help their children develop a critical eye when viewing media, so they see the lies, and differentiate that fiction from the joy in loving equitable and respectful relationships.
• National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal shall be designated as the national portal under-reporting requirements in the POCSO Act in case of electronic material
• Union Government shall be empowered through its designated authority to block and/or prohibit all websites/intermediaries that carry child sexual abuse material
• Law enforcement agencies should be permitted to brake end to end encryption to trace distributors of child pornography. Apps that help in monitoring children’s access to pornographic content shall be made mandatory on all devices sold in India. Such Apps or similar solutions to be developed and made freely available to ISP, companies, schools and parents.
• Ministry of Electronics and IT and Ministry of Home Affairs shall coordinate with Blockchain analysis companies to trace identities of users engaging in cryptocurrency transactions to purchase child pornography online. Online payment portals and credit cards are prohibited from processing payments for any pornographic website.
• All social media platforms should be mandated with minimum essential technologies to detect Child Sexual Abuse Material besides regular reporting to law enforcement agencies in the country.
• On-streaming platforms like Netflix and social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook etc. should have a separate adult section where under-aged children could be disallowed.
• The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) shall mandatorily record and report annually cases of child pornography of all kinds. A national Tipline Number should be created where child sexual abuse, as well as the distribution of child pornographic material, can be reported by concerned citizens.
• Ministries of Women and Child Development and Information and Broadcasting shall launch campaigns for greater awareness among parents to recognize early signs of child abuse, online risks and improving online safety for their child.
• Schools shall undertake training programmes for parents at least twice a year, making them aware of hazards for children of free access to smartphones, internet at an early age. Based on the experiences of other countries, a proper practicable policy for restricting the use of smartphones by under-aged kids needs to be considered.

Link: https://youtu.be/oyTERBLOvbc

3. Road Safety- Global Goals 2030

Introduction:
• According to WHO’s most recent Global status report on road safety approximately 1.35 million lives are lost every year due to road traffic accidents and the injuries caused by such accidents are now the leading

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cause of death for the age group of 5 to 29 years. More than half of these road traffic deaths occur among pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists.

- Ministers and senior officials from more than 100 nations will meet in Stockholm for the 3rd Global ministerial conference on road safety on 19th and 20th February.
- Their objective is to share the expertise and discuss new steps to halve the road accident deaths and injuries by 2030 which is in line with the global targets agreed in the UN Sustainable development goals.

Global Status Report on Road Safety 2018:

1. The number of deaths on the world’s roads remains unacceptably high, with an estimated 35 million people dying each year.
2. Road traffic injuries are now the leading cause of death for children and young adults aged 5–29 years.
3. There has been no reduction in the number of road traffic deaths in any low-income country since 2013.
4. The rates of road traffic death are highest in Africa (26.6/100,000 people) and South-East Asia (20.7/100,000 people).
5. More than half of all road traffic deaths are among vulnerable road users: pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists.
6. 22 countries representing 1 billion people amended their laws on one or more risk factors to bring them into alignment with best practice.
7. 46 countries representing 3 billion people currently have laws setting speed limits that align with best practice.
8. 45 countries representing 2.3 billion people currently have drink–driving laws that align with best practice.
9. 49 countries representing 2.7 billion people currently have laws on motorcycle helmet use that align with best practice.
10. 40 countries representing 1 billion people have implemented at least 7 or all of the 8 priority UN vehicle safety standards.

- Road safety is also an important sustainable development issue as illustrated by its express inclusion in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in targets 3.6 – aiming for the reduction of global road traffic deaths and injuries by 50 per cent by 2020; and 11.2 – aiming to provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all by 2030.
- The need for improving road safety has been acknowledged by the United Nations and its Member States for over 60 years, with extensive work being carried out particularly by the United Nations regional commissions, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Bank.
- More recently, road safety has been receiving increased international attention, including through the launch of relevant initiatives and activities.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

1. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, road safety was expressly included as an important sustainable development issue, in targets 3.6 and 11.2, related to health and cities.
2. Target 3.6 pledges to halve by 2020 “the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents,” serving as an incentive for action by the international community towards accelerating progress in achieving a much-needed reduction in global road traffic deaths.
3. Target 11.2 calls on providing, by 2030, “access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety”. In addition, target 9.1 calls for developing “quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure”, including through investments in transport infrastructure.
4. The goals and related targets being universal in nature and applicable to all United Nations Member States, represent strong international road safety commitments, and a renewed momentum for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.
5. Road safety is also an important development issue because road accidents, in addition to being a major public health issue, causing human deaths and injuries, also bring costs and economic losses, including those arising from medical treatment, lost productivity for those disabled, and time off work or school taken by family members to care for the injured.
6. Progressing towards achieving the road safety target, will have important benefits that relate to other sustainable development goals, including those related to transport and climate change.
Third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety:
1. The Third Global Ministerial Conference (Ministerial Conference) aims to reach high-level consensus for continued global road safety targets and collaboration up to 2030.
2. It is primarily targeted at national government ministers and their delegations. It will also be attended by policymakers, corporations, academics, and NGOs working in road safety.
3. The conference was organised in active collaboration with World Bank, World Health Organisation (WHO) and other agencies.

Parameters needed to be involved in measuring road safety:
1. Pedestrian Rights / Road Safety:
   • Hence, it’s imperative to have zebra crossings on busy roads, cycling tracks and no-vehicle days so that pedestrians feel safe on the road.
2. Road Lighting and Maintenance / Road Safety For Children: Well-lit roads, city squares and public spaces are the hallmarks of any urban establishment. They not only make citizens feel safe, but also result in less number of accidents. Keeping in mind energy conservation, it is also essential that cities use solar-powered lights.
3. Motor Laws and Traffic Control: For any city’s roads to be safe, there need to be strict laws against drunken driving and efficient traffic management, specially during peak hours and in congested areas. Chennai races past other cities in this aspect, followed by Ahmedabad and Kolkata.
4. One of the most productive measures to bring down accidents is zero tolerance enforcement. Strong policing reduces the risk for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and two-wheeler riders, who must be compelled to wear helmets.
5. Emergency Services / Road Transport Infrastructure / Heavy Vehicle Traffic Management:
   o Ahmedabad is the best city when it comes to providing emergency services such as police, ambulance and fire. Other cities can emulate this.
   o Road cleanliness: To increase citizen participation, there should also be incentives for undertaking cleanliness drives.
6. International:
   o Sustainable Safe Road System in Netherland:- It aims to prevent crashes and even if it occurs it intends to minimize the consequences, which include increase in size of zones to 30km/hr in, built up areas and 60km/hr outside built up areas.
   o Implementation of the Sundar Committee on Road Safety and Traffic Management which recommended the creation of a safety board through legislation.
   o Without empowered oversight, it is impossible to eliminate systemic corruption in transport departments in vehicle certification and licensing of drivers, and poor monitoring of roadworthiness of commercial vehicles.
7. Develop awareness: lack of awareness of basic traffic rules, absence of traffic signage and change the situation where neither passenger nor commercial vehicles come equipped with basic safety features.
8. Police harassment need to reduce:
   1. The general public are reluctant to help accident victims for fear of getting caught up in court battles, whilst medical help is often too little too late.
   2. Traffic police need better road infrastructure and technology to police speeding and drunk driving two primary causes of road accidents and enforce penalties.

Conclusion:
• The number of road traffic deaths continues to climb, reaching 1.35 million in 2016, while the rates of death relative to the size of the world population has stabilised in recent years.
• The progress that has been achieved in a number of countries to stabilise the global risk of dying from a road traffic crash has not occurred at a pace fast enough to compensate for the rising population and rapid motorization of transport taking place in many parts of the world.
• At this rate, the SDG target to halve road traffic deaths by 2020 will not be met. This review of key risk factors does show, however, that progress is being made in improving key road safety laws, making infrastructure safer, adopting vehicle standards and improving access to post-crash care. Further progress will depend upon future success in addressing the range of significant challenges which remain.

Link: https://youtu.be/w8GdOEv4bWA