PERFECT

Weekly Current Affairs

A New Initiative of Dhyeya IAS

1 Agricultural Harvests
Under

COVID-19 Threat

Private Health Sector : Time to Pay Back

70 Years of India-China Relations

Coronavirus Exposes Global Leadership Faultlines

Biological Weapons
Convention: Need for
Strengthening Cooperation

6 COVID-19 and Illegal Wildlife Trade

Coronavirus Questions Nature and Human Relations









(COVID-19)



Protect yourself and others! Follow these Do's and Don'ts





Practice frequent hand wasting. Wash hands with sopp and water or use alcohol based hand ruit. Wash hands even if they are visibly clean



Cover your nose and mouth with handbershief/tissue while sneeding and coughing



Throw used tissues into closed bins immediately after use



See a doctor if you feel unwell (fever, difficult breathing and cough). While visiting doctor wear a mask/cluth to cover. your mouth and nose



If you have these signalsymptoms please call State helpline number or Ministry of Health & Family Welfare's 24X7 halpline at 011-23978046



Avoid participating in large gatherings



Have a close contact with anyone, if you're experiencing cough and lever



Fouch your eyes dual and mouth



Spit in public

Together we can fight Coronavirus

For further information: Call at Ministry of Health, Govt. of India's 24X7 control room number +91-11-2397 8046

Email at ncov2019@gmail.com









DHYEYA IAS

AN INTRODUCTION



he guiding philosophy of the institute, throughout, has been creation of knowledge base. Dhyeya IAS inculcates human values and professional ethics in the students, which help them make decisions and create path that are good not only for them, but also for the society, for the nation, and for the world as whole. To fulfill its mission in new and powerful ways, each student is motivated to strive towards achieving excellence in every endeavor. It is done by making continuous improvements in curricula and pedagogical tools.

The rigorous syllabi not only instills in them, a passion for knowledge but also attempts to teach them how to apply that knowledge in reallife situations. The programmes lay emphasis on well-rounded personality development of the students and also in inculcating the values of honesty and integrity in them.



hyeya IAS is an institution that aims at the complete development of the student. Our faculty are hand-picked and highly qualified to ensure that the students are given every possible support in all their academic endeavors. It is a multidisciplinary institution which ensures that the students have ready access to a wide range of academic material.

Our brand of education has broad horizons as we believe in exposure. Our students are encouraged to widen their knowledge base and study beyond the confinements of the syllabus. We aim to lend a gentle guiding hand to make our students recognize their inner potential and grow on their own accord into stalwarts of tomorrow's society.

Perfect 7

AN INTRODUCTION



DHYEYA IAS (Ex Editor- Rajya Sabha TV)

ith immense pleasure I would like to inform you that the new version of 'Perfect 7', from the Dhyeya IAS, is coming with more information in a very attractive manner. Heartily congratulations to the editorial team. The 'Perfect 7' invites a wider readership in the Institute. The name and fame of an institute depends on the caliber and achievements of the students and teachers. The role of the teacher is to nurture the skills and talents of the students as a facilitator. This magazine is going to showcase the strength of our Institute. Let this be a forum to exhibit the potential of faculties, eminent writers, authors and students with their literary skills and innovative ideas.

Please do visit our website www.dhyeyaias.com and our youtube channel for regular and updated information on current affairs.



Managing Editor **DHYEYA IAS**

e have not only given the name 'Perfect 7' to our magazine, but also left no stone unturned to keep it 'near to perfect'. We all know that beginning of a task is most challenging as well as most important thing. So we met the same fate.

Publishing 'Perfect 7' provided us various challenges because from the beginning itself we kept our bar too high to ensure the quality. Right from the very first issue we had a daunting task to save aspirants from the 'overdose of information'. Focusing on civil services exams 'Perfect 7' embodies in itself rightful friend and guide in your preparation. This weapon is built to be precise yet comprehensive. It is not about bombardment of mindless facts rather an analysis of various facets of the issues, selected in a systematic manner. We adopted the 'Multi Filter' and 'Six Sigma' approach, in which a subject or an issue is selected after diligent discussion on various levels so that the questions in the examination could be covered with high probability.

Being a weekly magazine there is a constant challenge to provide qualitative study material in a time bound approach. It is our humble achievement that we feel proud to make delivered our promise of quality consistently without missing any issue since its inception.

Your suggestions and popular demands have inspired us to come up with a coloured edition of 'Perfect 7' on this pious festival of colours. May this version of 'Perfect 7' instill a new energy and a new spirit in you. We wish that the bond of affection between you and Dhyeya IAS is reaches a new height.

PREFACE





n the joyous occasion of Holi, Dhyeya family has decided to bring a new colourful and vibrant version of 'Perfect 7' — a panacea for current affairs. Just like vividness of colours, newer version of 'Perfect 7' will add positive and dynamic energy in your preparation.

'Perfect7' is an outstanding compilation of current affairs topics as per the new pattern of Civil Service examination (CSE). It presents weekly analysis of information and issues (national and international) in the form of articles, news analysis, brain boosters, PIB highlights and graphical information, which helps to understand and retain the information comprehensively. Hence, 'Perfect 7' will build in-depth understanding of various issues in different facets. 'Perfect7' is our genuine effort to provide correct, concise and concrete information, which helps students to crack the civil service examination. This magazine is the result of the efforts of the eminent scholars and the experts from different fields. 'Perfect 7' is surely a force multiplier in your effort and plugs the loopholes in the preparation.

We believe in environment of continuous improvement and learning. Your constructive suggestions and comments are always welcome, which could guide us in further revision of this magazine.

Omveer Singh Chaudhary

Editor Dhyeya IAS s a proud jewel of Dhyeya IAS, 'Perfect 7' now comes in a new coloured avatar. 'Perfect 7' is a quintessential part of your preparation strategy for Civil Services Examination. A regular and manageable dose of current affairs will now reach you in new format, making it more reader friendly. Our humble attempt to serve you is surely rewarded by your appreciations. It encourages us to innovate and provide the best as per our ability.

A dedicated team of experts at Dhyeya IAS toils night and day to make your dream of Civil Services come true. I heartily thank and express my gratitude to the esteemed readers and all the people involved in making this magazine a shining star in the galaxy of Dhyeya IAS.

Rajat Jhingan

Editor Dhyeya IAS



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PERFECT Weekly A New Initiative of Dhyeya IAS **Current Affairs** APRIL ⊕ 2020 ISSUE ⊕ 2

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SEVEN IMPORTANT ISSUES

1. AGRICULTURAL HARVESTS UNDER COVID-19 THREAT

Why in News?

- Summer fruits and vegetables have ripened, a bumper crop of wheat is ready for harvest in India, but hobbled by severe labor shortages, transport bottlenecks and plummeting demand due to a nationwide coronavirus lockdown, millions of farmers are staring at huge losses.
- The setback caused by the COVID-19 pandemic can plunge the country's struggling rural economy that supports nearly half its population into further distress, according to farm economists.

Background

- The coronavirus pandemic that prompted the government to announce a strict three-week shutdown starting March 25 coincided with the country's peak summer farm season, when crops are harvested and sold.
- Although farming has been declared an essential service and agriculture markets are exempted from the lockdown, a shuttered economy has left farmers facing huge challenges.
- India is the world's second largest producer of fruits and vegetables which have taken the greatest hit as prices have plunged.

India's peak farm activity happens between April and June. This is when the winter crop - wheat, rice and pulses - is harvested and sold. It is also peak season for fruits. And it is also when farmers begin sowing the summer rain-fed crop, comprising paddy, pulses, cotton and sugarcane.

Increasing Problems

- The retail prices of perishable vegetables have gone up, the wholesale prices have fallen by 15-20% because of reduction in demand. The panic-buying and hoarding which resulted from the announcement of lockdown have pushed the prices of vegetables up by 20-30%. This increase in price is attributed to logistics management.
- Price rise is not immediately alarming but the prices perishable agri-products increase after a fortnight or a month due to limited availability. Transactions at large mandis have been severely impacted due to the lockdown. On the one hand, this creates a scarcity of fruit and vegetables in cities that depend on mandis for their supplies. On the other hand, the post-harvest losses increase significantly because of delayed handling and transaction.
- The pandemic and the subsequent lockdown imposed are breaking the functional sequence of agricultural produce movement,

- that is, production distribution consumption. The impact of trucks stranded with agricultural products is now being felt. However, this experience would be felt more widely during the next cycle when these trucks will not reach the stipulated farms where they are expected to transport the succeeding cycle of harvest.
- Reports from Madhya Pradesh are harrowing; farmers are ready to harvest wheat but there are no buyers. The situation is similar in Punjab where farmers have harvested and packed their produce, but arhatiyas (commission agents) are not ready to accept the produce and they are advising farmers to store their produce with themselves. Farmers in Bihar are ready with matured banana, but no transporter is ready to take their produce. The situation is likely to worsen in the coming days.
- There is uncertainty of the market closure and continuation of public procurement. Supply chain management, procurement, and distribution of agri-produce, to which farmers are generally not related, are affecting farmers the most. As the restriction on movement of goods continues amid the lockdown, the farmers are likely to feel the pinch in their income.



- The agriculture labour market has already been massively impacted. Not allowed to work in groups, 30 million agricultural labourers, who survive on their daily income, are without work. The situation has been aggravated in many parts of the country where there are specialized farm practices which are usually done by the manual labourers, who are migrant workers.
- The lockdown and the resultant return of these migrant labourers to their native villages are certainly going to affect agriculture adversely in the coming months. India lacks farm mechanization and about 60% of farm activities are still manually executed.
- Farmers also fear the sowing of summer season crop as none of the shops selling seeds, fertilizers and other vital inputs.
- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research has advised wheat farmers to postpone their harvest to April 20 in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak. But, late harvests mean lower yields, reduced returns, and a smaller window to plant next season's crops, as well as leaving crops vulnerable to rain and hailstorms.

India's Safety Cushion

- While the rural economy will reel from the losses, India's food security is unlikely to be affected – the country maintains huge buffer stocks of wheat and rice and its granaries are overflowing with nearly 60 million tons of food grain.
- Those stocks will come in handy at a time when millions of daily

- wagers are without jobs and will need government support in the months ahead.
- The government has announced a \$22.6 billion package to provide rations such as rice, wheat and lentils and cash transfers to 800 million people; but economists say much more will be needed to alleviate the widespread distress.
- India has some 7,500 big wholesale farm markets and another 25,000 small weekly markets. Some of them have begun reopening and they are trying to figure out how to operate and transport produce and maintain social distancing. Despite the formidable odds, Indian farmers appear to be largely resilient.

Enabling Agri-Exports

- India is a big exporter of rice, tea, meat, milk products, honey and horticultural products but shipments have come to a standstill because of the lockdown. The Centre has asked states to ensure that farmers don't face any problems in shipping exportable items, which will boost farmers' income during the lockdown.
- The Centre has identified 21 agricultural products, including honey, potatoes, grapes, soya beans and groundnuts, which Indian can export, taking advantage of the trade restrictions against Chinese goods.
- The government has allowed traders and bulk purchasers to buy agricultural products directly from farmgates through farmer producer organisations and governmentowned warehouses, bypassing

mandis, to ease procurement and transportation of agricultural goods.

Way Forward

- India is still dependent on agriculture sector as a major share for employment.
- The lockdown at a time of harversting season will be surely detrimental to farmer's welfare. The scheme like PM-Kisan where the government has disbursed Rs 50,850 crore to farmers, enabling them to meet farm input cost and household expenses is one of the steps in right direction.
- A payment of Rs. 2,000 to the farmers by April is a welcome step. However, considering the losses to the farmers, it's a paltry amount. The Central Government and state governments need to make arrangements to ensure the continuance of agricultural operations, to prevent the danger of food and nutrition insecurity.
- Further, the governments need to take immediate measures to support the farmers for the continuity of uninterrupted agricultural movement. We cannot afford to wait for the lockdown to lift before initiating relief efforts.

General Studies Paper-III

Topic: Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System-objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.

CCC

Q. Lockdown in response to a pandemic has hurt Indian agriculture sector badly and has been a big blow to farmers. Discuss the measures taken by the government to ease the farmers from this distress.



2. PRIVATE HEALTH SECTOR: TIME TO PAY BACK

Why in News?

- According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), a total of 1, 44,910 samples on 09 April 2020. It shows that the India has among the lowest rates of testing in the world.
- Given the resource constraints of both the Central and State governments, it is clear that government hospitals alone will not be able to manage the fallout. Therefore, India needs a national policy providing for free testing and treatment of COVID-19 patients in private hospitals.

Overview

- As India enters the third week of a national lockdown imposed in response to COVID-19, it is still unclear how well prepared the healthcare system is in dealing with the pandemic.
- Indian government has come up with a national health policy for including Covid-19 treatment.
- India as a nation presents a diverse set of demographics, which makes it difficult for any national government to look after the health of its people in its entirety. There have to be certain basic premises as to how the available funds are put to best use for healthcare.
- In countries with well-established regulation of the private sector and good regulatory capacity, governments use a range of regulatory and financial policy tools to steer mixed delivery of health services in the public interest for fighting COVID-19.
- A preparedness plan has to be addressed at all levels in India of care in terms of infrastructure,

- equipment, testing facilities and human resources in both the public and private sectors.
- The private hospitals, including laboratories, have an important role to play in containing the scale of the pandemic by extending philanthropic services in the hour of national crisis.

Today, the private sector acts as a vibrant force in the Indian healthcare industry with over 70% contribution in healthcare delivery.

India currently spends cumulatively 4.2% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on healthcare, with just 1.4% contribution by the government, which is among the lowest, globally. Even the projected government's contribution by 2025 (at 2.5%) does not cut close with ground-level realities.

Countries such as the UK, China and Indonesia lead the global statistics when it comes to public sector contribution. With an ever increasing scale, India is the fastest growing trillion-dollar economy and the sixth largest with a nominal GDP of \$2.61 trillion.

Now, we aspire to become the third largest economy worth \$10 trillion by 2030. And, to achieve this goal, a healthy India also becomes a necessity as our noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) burden is rising alarmingly and is estimated to cost around 2% of our GDP. With NCDs contributing to around 5.87 million (60%) of all deaths in India annually, the country's burden of NCDs is escalating.

Another challenge is that the onset of such diseases starts a decade earlier, at 45 years, in India, while most developed countries start having it at 55 years of age.

Challenges

 Country faces major challenges in relation to the private sector and universal health coverage. Given the diversity of private sector entities, these challenges might differ depending on whether the focus is on for-profit or not-

- for-profit entities while other challenges might be common to all private providers.
- A household survey of 70 low- and middle-income countries showed that private services provide about 65% of care for childhood illness, but the proportions varied widely by country.
- The complexity and diversity of the private sector in health systems is another important challenge.
- The private sector is highly heterogeneous and specific policy approaches are needed to engage and manage it.
- The choice and implementation of these approaches requires an understanding of the many different private sector actors that operate in primary care and their attributes.
- These attributes include whether they are for profit or not for profit, their social intentions, whether they have domestic or foreign affiliations, their social and ethical behavior, and their capacity.

The Government's Silence

- The governments at the Centre and in States have to take responsibility for providing universal health services free of charge and accessible to all. This will require governments to not just expand the capacity within the public sector, but also to tap into the available capacity in the private sector.
- Faced with a serious health emergency, the silence of the government on the expected role of the private sector is intriguing.



Judiciary Breaking Silence

- The Supreme Court directed the government to issue appropriate orders immediately for free of cost testing for coronavirus even in private hospitals and laboratories, saying the current charges - though capped at Rs 4,500— will be beyond the reach of the poor.
- The court also said it would examine later whether the private entities, carrying out the tests free of cost, would be entitled to reimbursement.

Steps taken by Government

Andhra Pradesh has done it partially. It has taken over 58 private hospitals across 13 districts to deal with the coronavirus crisis in the state. This increased the bed-availability under the Andhra Pradesh government by 19,114 beds including 1,286 in ICU and 717 isolation beds.

- Union Finance Ministry announced a special insurance scheme for healthcare workers battling the novel coronavirus epidemic, "any health professional, who while treating COVID-19 patients, meets with some accident, then he/she would be compensated with an amount of Rs 50 lakh."
- Even the much publicised 'Ayushman Bharat' scheme offers coverage of just Rs 5 lakh for each family. In the case of coronavirus infection, if one member of the family gets the disease, others are more likely to get it before the index patient starts showing symptoms.

Way Forward

 In India, private corporate hospitals have, in the past, received government subsidies in various forms and it is now time to seek repayment from them. They are also well poised to provide specialised care and have the expertise and infrastructure to do so. Therefore, to strengthen the capacity of testing and treating the patients of COVID-19, the participation of private health sector is the need of the hour.

General Studies Paper-II

Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation. **Topic:** Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

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Q. Critically evalulate why India needs participation of private hospitals for testing and treatment of COVID-19 patients.

3. 70 YEARS OF INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS

Why in News?

- Burying their differences in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, India and China on 1st April 2020, celebrated the 70 years of their diplomatic relations and exchanged warm words of greetings and spoke of the partnership between the world's two most populous nations.
- India and China are two ancient civilizations, with a long history of mutually beneficial exchanges over centuries. Today, both are two large developing countries and emerging economies who are increasingly playing an important role on the

global landscape. As such, good relations between India and China are conducive not only for our respective countries, but are also important from the perspective of peace, stability and prosperity of our region and the world.

Brief Background

- On April 1, 1950, China and India established diplomatic relations.
 India was the first non-socialist country to establish relations with the People's Republic of China.
- In 1954, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai visited India. China and India signed the Joint Statement and jointly advocated the Five

- Principles of Peaceful Coexistence The Pancsheel.
- In 1962, the border conflict led to a serious setback in bilateral relations.
- In 1976, China and India restored ambassadorial relations and bilateral ties improved gradually.
- In 1988, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited China, initiating the process of normalization of bilateral relations. The two sides agreed to "look forward" and develop bilateral relations actively in other fields while seeking a mutually acceptable solution to boundary question.

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- In 2003, Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee visited China. The two sides signed 'The Declaration on the Principles and Comprehensive Cooperation in China-India Relations', and agreed to establish the special representatives meeting mechanism on India-China boundary question.
- In 2005, Premier Wen Jiabao visited India. China and India signed the Joint Statement and declared the establishment of the strategic and cooperative partnership for peace and prosperity. The two sides welcomed signing of the Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question.
- In 2006, President Hu Jintao visited India. The two sides signed a Joint Declaration to formulate the tenpronged strategy for deepening the strategic and cooperative partnership.
- In 2008, Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh visited China. "A Shared Vision for the 21st Century" was agreed upon by the two governments.
- After 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi initiated "hometown diplomacy", held two informal summits in Wuhan and Chennai respectively, carried out strategic communication on overarching, long-term and strategic issues of global and regional importance, and agreed to strengthen the closer partnership for development between the two countries.

India-China: Bilateral Relations

Economic Engagement

 Since the beginning of the 21st century, trade between China and

- India has grown from less than \$3 billion to nearly \$100 billion, an increase of about 32 times.
- More than 1,000 Chinese companies have increased their investment in industrial parks, e-commerce and other areas in India, with a total investment of \$8 billion and 2,00,000 local jobs created.
- Chinese mobile phone brands such as Xiaomi, VIVO and OPPO have been well-established in the Indian market. Indian companies are also actively expanding the Chinese market, with a cumulative investment of nearly \$1 billion in China.
- More than two-thirds of Indian companies investing in China are making steady profits. With a combined market of over 2.7 billion people and a GDP of 20% of the world's total, China and India enjoy huge potential and broad prospects for economic and trade cooperation.

International Partnerships

- In May 2018, the two countries agreed to coordinate their development programmes in Afghanistan in the areas of health, education and food security.
- China has backed India's suggestion for 'reformed multilateralism' in international institutions including International Monetary Fund (IMF) & World Trade Organization (WTO) for the first time and supported the proposal at the BRICS Foreign Minister's meet in Rio De Janeiro

Cultural Highway

 Both nations have established High-level People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges Mechanism, identified the 10 pillars and 8 priorities of people-to-people and cultural cooperation, and opened

- a new chapter in personnel and cultural exchanges.
- Practicing yoga, drinking Indian black tea and watching Bollywood movies have become the fashion among Chinese youth. Chinese movie stars such as Jackie Chan are household names in India. People in India enjoy acupuncture, martial arts and Chinese cuisine.
- The two countries have established 14 pairs of sister cities and provinces, and will establish sister provinces and cities between Fujian Province and Tamil Nadu State, Quanzhou City and Chennai City.
- There are 134 flights linking major cities of the two countries every week. More than 20,000 Indian youth are studying in China, and over 2,000 young Chinese are studying in India.
- The number of Indian pilgrims to Xizang Autonomous Region of China has surged from several hundreds in the 1980s to more than 20,000 in 2019.

Major Issues in the Relationship

Border Issues

- India claims 43,180 squares kms of Jammu and Kashmir occupied by China including 5180 square kms cede to China by Pakistan under a 1963 China-Pakistan boundary Agreement. On the other hand China claims 90,000 square kms of territory held by India in Arunachal Pradesh.
- India's grant of statehood to Arunachal Pradesh in the late eighties (February 1987) which China claims as a part of South Tibet caused the hostility on the bilateral relations.
- China claimed the major territorial concessions in populated areas



of Arunachal Pradesh particularly Twang because Chinese claim it to be central to Tibetan Buddhism given that the sixth Dalai Lama was born there. In the same way, as China seeks return of Arunachal Pradesh on religious grounds, India demands the return of the sacred Mount Kailash Manasrovar in Tibet, since it is a sacred place associated with the Hindu religion

Water Issue

- China's plan of constructing big dams and diverting the water of rivers to its own advantage has discontented in India. As there are four rivers that flow from China to India, the two countries must have a better understanding relating to water sharing and other attending benefits out of these rivers. However, China's strategic advantage over these rivers makes it possible for her to counterbalance India on many other issues.
- There are four rivers descending from four directions of Mount Kailash in the Nagari region of Tibet to the Indian subcontinent:
 - 1. The TackokKhabab originates in the East of Mount Kailash and flows through the eastern region of India becoming the Brahmaputra. It then descends into Bangladesh and finally into Bay of Bengal.
 - 2. The Ma Cha Khabab originates in the North of Mount Kailash and flows from Nepal and then through the state of Uttar Pradesh into India. It merges with Ganga and ends up in Bay of Bengal.
 - The languchen Khabab originates in the North of Mount Kailash and flows through

- DhapaThoding of Nagari region and becomes Sutlej River.
- 4. The Senge Khabab originates in the west of Kailash and flows through Ngari Gar and then becomes the Indus.
- India being the lower riparian, will be vulnerable to any major storage projects planned on the YarlungTsangpo. Due to the political situation between the two countries, it is hard to imagine China playing the role of a responsible upper riparian by releasing re-regulated flows from power houses immediately book into river.

Dalai Lama

China views that India is treating Dalai Lama in India as government in exile in Dharmsala which is just 200 miles away from China's border. Further, the presence of more than 1,00,000 Tibetans refugees in India and India's continued willingness to provide shelter to the Dalai Lama is a continued source of irritation in China-India relations.

Diplomacy

- The One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative is a Chinese infrastructure project, which includes the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). CPEC is not acceptable to India as it passes through Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, thereby violating India's territorial integrity.
- China's elusive strategic equation with Pakistan poses a hindrance to any substantive improvement in India's relations with China. The core of Sino-Pakistan ties comprises the transfer of military hardware and technology besides nuclear co-operation. Islamabad has been

getting weapons at subsidised prices from China.

Way Forward

- At present, China-India relations stand at a new starting point and usher in new opportunities. Both countries should draw wisdom from their thousands of years of civilizations and explore a way for neighboring and emerging major countries to get along with each other in accordance with "enhancing mutual trust, focusing on cooperation, managing differences and seeking common development".
- Both countries also need to master the four keys of "leading, transmitting, shaping integrating". "Leading" means to reach consensus and guide the direction of the development of bilateral relations under the guidance of our two leaders. "Transmitting" means to transmit the leaders' consensus to all levels and translate it into tangible cooperation and outcomes. "Shaping" means to go beyond the mode of managing differences, shape bilateral relations actively accumulate positive momentum. "Integrating" means to strengthen exchanges and cooperation, promote convergence of interests and achieve common development.

General Studies Paper-II

Topic: India and its neighborhood-relations.

Topic: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

OOO

Q. Recently, India and China have celebrated their 70 years of diplomatic relations. In the light of such events, discuss the areas of conflict and cooperation for both the nations.



4. CORONAVIRUS EXPOSES GLOBAL LEADERSHIP FAULTLINES

Context

The coronavirus's flight across the world at lightning speed has exposed the total void in collective leadership at the global level. Three months into the catastrophic war declared by an invisible, almost invincible virus, COVID-19, there is as yet no comprehensive, concerted plan of action, orchestrated by global leaders, to combat this terror.

Global Flop-Show

- World leaders are obviously overwhelmed with their own national challenges and do not appear inclined to view the pandemic as a common enemy against mankind, which it is. China delayed reporting the virus to the World Health Organisation (WHO), and perhaps, in the process, contributed to the exacerbation of the spread of the virus across the globe.
- In Frankfurt, the President of the European Central Bank warned that the coronavirus could trigger an economic crash as dire as that of 2008. In Berlin, the German chancellor warned the virus could infect two-thirds of her country's population. In London, the British Prime Minister rolled out a nearly \$40 billion rescue package to cushion his economy from the shock.
- In the United States (US), the delay in developing coronavirus test kits and the scarcity of tests have made it impossible for officials, even weeks after the first cases appeared in the country, to get a true picture of the scale of the outbreak.
- In hard-hit Italy, quarrels broke out between politicians and

- medical experts over whether the authorities were testing too many people in Lombardy, inflating the infection figures and fueling panic in the public. Italy's response could be weakened further by the antivaccination movement that was once embraced by the populist Five Star Movement, which took power in the last government.
- Germany rebuffed a request for medical equipment from Italy, only to see China offer the Italians an aid package that includes two million face masks and 100,000 respirators.
- Far from trying to stamp out the virus, strongmen like President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia have seized on the upheaval it is causing as cover for steps to consolidate their power.
- Even comparing one country's case count with another's is almost impossible, given the different testing procedures and diagnostic criteria around the world.
- China's case count skyrocketed when it began recording positives based on people's symptoms, rather than a on lab test, the method most countries are still using. But even lab tests might yield different results in different places, depending on the targets labs are using and the ways health workers collect and process specimens.
- Yet all these noises were alone and no one united any global effort to address the crisis. Thus, a global mis-management has been more damaging to the fight which could have been better off if fought united.

Setback to Global Collective

Two developments in the global polity

in the last few years have contributed to the indifference towards collective global action.

- On the swing towards right-wing nationalism, as a guiding political ideology, in large swathes of the world, particularly in the US This ideology posits 'global good' being in conflict with and inimical to national interests.
- WHO, which has as its objective 'to be the directing and coordinating authority among member countries in health emergencies', has proven to be too lethargic in reacting to pandemics in the past. Its responses to COVID-19, has come under the scanner, not merely for incompetence, but also for lack of intellectual integrity.

Scale of the Problem

- There is no evidence that, at the global level, the pandemic has abated yet and would be brought under control soon.
- To imagine that nations would be able to tame the virus soon with massive shutdowns might be just wishful thinking. National shutdowns and physical distancing have been a challenge not only in the US and some European countries, it would be more so in populous countries such as India.
- At any rate, such lockouts come at enormous economic and social costs. As long as the virus is alive in some corner of the world, it would resume its travel across the world the moment international travel restrictions are relaxed.
- Is it realistic to imagine that international travel will remain suspended until the last virus alive on this planet is extinguished? Epidemiologists point out that unless herd immunity develops which will take long and come at the



- cost of at least half the population being infected — the virus will remain alive and strike whenever there is a lowering of guard.
- This millennium has already suffered three pandemics and COVID-19 will certainly not be the last.

Silver Linings

- Indian PM Narendra Modi's move to convene a video conference of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) states to collectively rein in the threat of COVID-19 can be seen as a thoughtful drive to respond to China's growing influence in the region by reasserting India's leadership. Two the atrophy of multilatural institutions for example.
 - Modi's proposal now is a positive move toward smooth South Asian integration. Such a grouping is a helpful way for regional nations to show solidarity with countries that face disaster or crisis. Such integration is more effective when institutions set powerful demonstrations by helping countries in need. Modi's move can be seen as a masterstroke to assert India's leadership in the South Asian region.
 - During the G20 virtual meeting, G20 leaders have agreed to inject \$5-trillion into the world economy to partially counter the devastating economic impact of the pandemic. This is indeed good news. But taking collective ownership to fight a global war against the virus will require a lot more than writing cheques.

Setting the Right Priorities

 An organisation which is not burdened with bureaucracy, is required to manage a global crisis of the nature that we are confronted with, today.

- What is important is for the global leaders to acknowledge what every foot soldier knows: winning a war would require the right strategy, rapid mobilisation of relevant resources and, most importantly, timely action.
- In facing the present challenge, the following actions should come out of such a collective:
 - The collective should ensure that shortages of drugs, medical equipment and protective gear do not come in the way of any nation's capacity to contain or fight the pandemic.
 - 2. Protocols might need to be put in place among participating countries to ensure seamless logistics for the supply chain for essential goods and services to function efficiently. This might be particularly necessary in the context of controls on international traffic and national shutdowns. There would need to be concomitant accord to eliminate all kinds of tariff and non tariff barriers.
 - 3. There needs to be instantaneous exchange of authenticated information on what clinical solutions have succeeded and what has not.
 - 4. This is a time to have cross-country collaboration on laboratory trials and clinical validation for vaccines and anti-viral drugs. It must be acknowledged that WHO has already moved on this issue, although, perhaps, belatedly. The world can ill-afford delays, as the pandemic is predicted to stage a comeback once the shutdowns are gradually relaxed. The best way to ensure speedy research is to pool global resources.
 - Anticipate food shortages occurring sooner or later, in some part of the world, consequent

- to the national shutdowns. Ironically, while we might have saved lives from the assault of the novel coronavirus, we might run the risk of losing lives to starvation and malnutrition, somewhere in the world if we do not take adequate precautions. This requires not only coordinated global action; it would also turn out to be the test of global concern for mankind in general.
- Need to facilitate easy movement of trained health professionals across the world to train others and augment resources wherever there are shortages.

Way Forward

- Economies of the world are inexorably intertwined. An orderly reconstruction of the global economy, which is equitable and inclusive, will eventually involve renegotiating terms of trade among key trading blocs, concerted action among central bankers to stabilise currencies, and a responsible way to regulate and manage global commodity markets.
- This is a war against a common enemy that respects no borders. If this global challenge is not a battle to be fought by a collective global leadership, nothing else is. Therefore, there is a much bigger and emergent need for leaders of nations to come together for collective global action.

General Studies Paper-II

Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora. **Topic:** Important International institutions, agencies and foratheir structure, mandate.

COC

Q. There has been rampant mismanagement of the crisis at the international level despite so many multilateral institutions. The absence of global leadership has been under the scanner. Discuss what could be done to saoove the situation and offer a united response to a global crisis.



5. BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION: NEED FOR STRENGTHENING COOPERATION

Context

 It's been 45 Years since Biological and Toxin Weapon Convention (BWC) came into force.

About BWC

- Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), formally Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their destruction, international treaty that bans the use of biological weapons in war and prohibits all development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, or transfer of such weapons.
- The convention was signed in London, Moscow, and Washington D.C., on April 10, 1972, and thereafter was opened for signing by other states.
- The convention went into force on March 26, 1975, following the submission of 22 national instruments of ratification (such as passage by a national assembly).
- By 2013, 170 states and Taiwan had signed and ratified the BWC, and 10 states had signed but not ratified it. Sixteen member states of the United Nations had neither signed nor ratified the treaty by that time.

Compliance

- The BWC prohibits countries that have signed the treaty from developing, producing, stockpiling, acquiring, or retaining biological agents or toxins of types and in quantities that have no justification for protective, defensive, or other peaceful purposes.
- The treaty also bans any equipment or means of delivery that is designed to use biological agents

- or toxins for hostile purposes or

 armed conflict.
- It requires signatories to destroy biological weapons, agents, and production facilities within nine months of the treaty's entry into force.
- The Sixth Review Conference. taking into account the importance providing administrative support to meetings agreed by the Review Conference as well as comprehensive implementation universalization of Convention and the exchange of confidence-building measures, decided to establish an Implementation Support Unit (ISU) for the Convention within the Geneva Branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs.
- The Seventh Review Conference renewed the mandate of the ISU up until the Eighth Review Conference in 2016. The Eighth Review Conference renewed the ISU's mandate until the Ninth Review Conference in 2021. Furthermore, the Seventh Review Conference also added new tasks for the Unit to undertake.

ISU: Function

- Administrative support and assistance;
- National implementation support and assistance;
- Support and assistance for Confidence-Building Measures;
- Support and assistance for obtaining universality;
- Administers the database for assistance requests and offers and facilitated associated exchanges of information; and

- Supports States Parties' efforts to implement the decisions and recommendations of the review conference.
- The Seventh Review Conference called upon States Parties "to adopt. in accordance with their constitutional processes, legislative, administrative, judicial and other measures, including penal legislation" to enhance domestic implementation ensure the safety and security of microbial or other biological agents or toxins.
- To strengthen the implementation of Article IV, States Parties agreed upon the value of:
 - Implementing voluntary management standards on biosafety and biosecurity;
 - Encouraging the promotion of awareness of obligations to the Convention as well as relevant national legislation amongst those working in the biological sciences and related professionals in the private and public sectors;
 - Encouraging the development of education programmes and voluntary codes of conduct to promote a culture of responsibility for those with access to biological agents and toxins relevant to the Convention; and
 - Strengthening methods and capacities for surveillance and detection of outbreaks of disease at the national, regional and international levels.

Challenges

 Unfortunately, the BWC does not yet contain provisions for verification of members' compliance, and there has been



evidence of significant cheating by some parties since the treaty went into effect.

- For example, the Soviet Union engaged in a massive clandestine biological weapons program in direct violation of the BWC from the day it signed the treaty in 1972. The illegal program was revealed by scientists formerly involved in the program and finally confirmed by Russia's first post-Soviet President, Boris Yeltsin, who ordered the termination of all Russian offensive biological weapons programs in 1992.
- The lack of a necessarily intrusive inspection and reporting system has left the states who are parties to the treaty with no strong assurance that they can monitor and verify other members' compliance with the terms of the BWC.
- Biological weapons programs can be easily concealed and need not require large numbers of personnel or large-scale physical plants.
- For instance, a clandestine weapons program can be hidden inside a perfectly legal vaccine-production facility or pharmaceutical plant. Weapons laboratories disguised in this way would give off few unique "signatures," or telltale signs that illicit activity is taking place.
- Indeed, if "national technical means" (that is, spy satellites and other such systems) are the only methods used to verify BWC compliance and if moretraditional "human intelligence" (i.e., spies and defectors) is insufficient, a massive biological weapons program might take place in a country that has signed the BWC without any physical evidence coming to light.
- This lack of a verification procedure has led some critics of the BWC to argue that the best deterrent to being attacked with biological weapons is not a treaty at all but

rather the recognized ability to retaliate in equal or greater measure.

Proponents of the BWC

- Proponents of the BWC argue that the treaty provides an international norm for the world community, making it understood by all that biological weapons are illegitimate tools of statecraft or warfare.
- Therefore, if violations are detected, the international community can be more easily mobilized to pressure the offending regime into giving up the weapons lest it face military, economic, and diplomatic sanctions.
- The BWC, it is also argued, makes proliferation harder, slower and more expensive for cheaters.
- Finally, it is argued that the presence of an international treaty on biological weapons may put pressure on even non signatory states to comply with the treaty or at least to restrict their biological weapons programs by creating an international norm against them.

India and BWC

- India reiterates the high importance that it has always attached to the BWC as the first global and non- discriminatory disarmament convention, prohibiting an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.
- India strongly believes that the BWC must respond effectively to the challenges posed by the new and emerging scientific and technological developments of relevance to the Convention. India has been submitting an annual Resolution at the UN General Assembly on the "Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament", which has been adopted by consensus.
- India has been working with fellow States Parties to establish an Article

- VII database which can play an important role in dealing with biothreats and bio-emergencies.
- India has also been highlighting the dangers from the possible use, in future, of microorganisms as biological weapons by terrorists through its annual Resolution at the UN General Assembly, titled "Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring the weapons of mass destruction", which has been adopted, annually since 2002, by consensus.
- India took this opportunity to call upon all States Parties to the BWC to recommit themselves to full and effective implementation of the Convention and full compliance with it, in letter and spirit.
- India reaffirms its unwavering commitment to continue to work together with fellow States Parties towards strengthening the Convention in all its aspects.

Way Forward

The global economic and social implications of the pandemic, caused by COVID-19, have highlighted the need for strengthening cooperation amongst the States Parties to the BWC aimed at full and effective implementation of the Convention in all its aspects along with international cooperation, including institutional strengthening of the institutions like World Health Organisation (WHO).

General Studies Paper-II

Topic: Important International institutions, agencies and fora-their structure, mandate.

OOO

Q. "The global economic and social implications of the pandemic, caused by COVID-19, have highlighted the importance of Biological and Toxin Weapon Convention (BWC)." Do you agree? Discuss.



6. COVID-19 AND ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

Why in News?

• While coronaviruses have been recorded before, the strain that causes COVID-19—SARS-CoV-2—is new. Of all the possibilities for the virus's origin, its transmission from a wild animal to a human being cannot be ruled out. The cause for this can be traced to illicit wildlife trade, for which all nations, directly or indirectly, are responsible.

Background

- At present, the epicentre of the outbreak is alleged to be a wet market in Wuhan, China. Here, pangolins normally seen in South East Asia were traded and sold for human consumption.
- It is well known that the virus originated in China and during a press briefing in January 2020, the Director of China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention had stated that the "origin of the new coronavirus is the wildlife sold illegally in a Wuhan seafood market".
- Recent research suggested that the pangolin served as the link between bats, which are known to carry coronaviruses, and human beings.
- It is an open secret that many Wuhan-type wet and dry markets are running in China, Thailand and Vietnam, where there is strong demand for exotic wildlife articles.
- In China, domestic wildlife farming itself is assessed as a billion-dollar industry.
- Although Shenzhen in South-Eastern China has taken lead and announced prohibition on

consumption of cats and dogs as food, a recent media report has noted that a wet market in Guilin in South-West China was reportedly selling cats and dogs, and a seller in Dongguan, Southern China was seen advertising bats, snakes, lizards and toads to assist with common ailments.

Status of Illicit Trade

- Illegal wildlife trade has been identified as the fourth largest illicit transnational activity in the world and the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime has estimated the global wildlife trafficking industry to be worth between US\$7 billion and US\$23 billion annually.
- As per the World Customs Organization's Illicit Trade Report, in 2018, customs administrations from 47 countries reported cases of wildlife smuggling amounting to 2,727 seizures of flora and fauna.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

- CITES is a multilateral agreement between governments that regulates the international trade of wildlife and wildlife products.
- It came into force in 1975 with the goal of ensuring that international trade does not threaten the survival of wild plants and animals.
- There are about 5,800 species of animals and 30,000 species of plants protected by CITES currently. They're categorized into one of three appendices, depending on how at risk from trade they are.

- Appendix I includes species that are in danger of extinction because of international trade. Permits are required for import and export, and trade for commercial purposes is prohibited.
- Appendix II includes species that aren't facing imminent extinction but need monitoring to ensure that trade doesn't become a threat. Export is allowed if the plant, animal, or related product was obtained legally and if harvesting it won't hurt the species' chance of survival.
- Appendix III includes species
 that are protected in at least
 one country, when that country
 asks others for help in regulating
 the trade. Regulations for these
 species vary, but typically the
 country that requested the
 listing can issue export permits,
 and export from other countries
 requires a certificate of origin.
- As of June 2019, CITES had 183 party governments, which must abide by CITES regulations by implementing legislation within their own borders to enforce those regulations.
- CITES was first conceived of at a 1963 meeting of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the global authority on the conservation status of wild animals and plants.

International Measures

 States are also committed to United Nations mandated Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) wherein SDG-15 requires States to "Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of



- flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products."
- The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Member States acknowledged the issue in 2005 and set up the South Asia Wildlife Trade Initiative (SAWTI) during the Tenth Meeting of Governing Council for the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP).
- In 2014, the 9th East Asia Summit (EAS) declaration called for "increased harmonization, capacity building, support, coordination and resources to optimize crime prevention and criminal justice to combat illicit trafficking and illegal wildlife trade throughout the region".
- Asian Nations (ASEAN) States are committed to CITES as also to the successful implementation of the Plan of Action for ASEAN Cooperation on CITES and Wildlife Enforcement, 2016–2020. As chair of the ASEAN for 2019, Thailand had chosen "wildlife trafficking (along with marine debris) as one its two priority environmental issues for raising profile,"
- The 'Chiang Mai Statement of ASEAN Ministers Responsible For Cites And Wildlife Enforcement On Illegal Wildlife Trade' issued during the Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting On Illegal Wildlife Trade held 21–22 March 2019 at Chiang Mai, Thailand is noteworthy and notes that the "domestic wildlife markets need to be regulated and enforced thoroughly to prevent

- over exploitation and ensure the sustainable population of endangered species".
- As far as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) • is concerned, the issue of trade in wildlife is not included in any of the Priority Sectors. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has noted that illegal markets for live and dead wild animals are thriving in many Southeast Asian countries particularly in areas closer China i.e. Lao, Thailand and Myanmar. Under the circumstances, it is not only prudent but critical for BIMSTEC Member States to take initiatives and include issues concerning illegal trade in live and dead wild animals in one of its Priority Sectors.
- In the instant case of COVID-19, Vietnam which holds the ASEAN Chairmanship Year 2020, has announced that the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) will compile a report on the COVID-19 to be submitted to ASEAN leaders at the 36th ASEAN Summit scheduled in Vietnam in April.

COVID-19: Suspect

- Bats, pangolins and human beings are not natural co-habitants, as all but the latter are wild. A species barrier prevents the transmission of microorganism between wild and non-wild. But, human beings are known to disrupt ecosystems, cut forests and eat wildlife.
- The presence of Malayan Pangolins (also known as Sunda or Javan Pangolins) in a market

- in Wuhan, China, strongly points towards the real culprit behind the genesis of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic—illegal wildlife trade and trafficking.
- However, scientists and experts are still uncertain about the source of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (COVID-19). Some of the possible suspected species connected with the virus are horseshoe bats that are known to host disease causing pathogens.

Way Forward

- The emergence of COVID-19 and the role of Wuhan market is still under investigation. However, the 2003 outbreak of SARS CoV -1 was ultimately traced back to masked palm civets (Paguma larvata) and raccoon dogs (Nyctereutes procyonoides) traded in a Shenzhen wet market in China. Therefore, close contact with these animals offers opportunity for viruses like the coronavirus to jump and cross species barriers. Unless strictly prohibited, the wild pet culture will be the next epidemic bomb.
- Hence, mass awareness, huge public funding and strict policies along with globally co-ordinated enforcement are the keys to containing this menace and preventing another pandemic like COVID-19.

General Studies Paper- III

Topic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

OOO

Q. "The illegal trade of wildlife species has been behind numerous global diseases including current Covid-19." Comment on the given statement and discuss various measures adopted to address the given problem.



7. CORONAVIRUS QUESTIONS NATURE AND HUMAN RELATIONS

Context

Despite rapid scientific and medical advancements, the pandemic has shown how vulnerable and helpless homo sapiens are, even as scientists across the globe are racing against time to save lives by finding an appropriate cure for the severely afflicted and develop a preventive vaccine.

Introduction

- The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has created a massive impact on the whole world. One aspect which makes it all the more threatening and infamous is the fact that, almost, the entire world is grappling with this situation.
- Coronavirus has been attributed by some to be a viral flu. In the past, the world has come across more lethal outbreaks. SARS, MERS, Ebola and H5N1 are a few examples of the massive outbreaks which has brought the whole world to a standstill. But what is unique and differentiates the coronavirus from all the other viruses is its nature to spread at a very rapid rate.
- The number of people infected by coronavirus is increasing rapidly.
- In all the havoc created by coronavirus, one positive thing which the world is witnessing is the impact of the virus on the environment and nature of the world.

COVID-19 : Relation between Human and Nature

 A significant number of countries have declared lockdown. Because

- of this lockdown and the awareness that is being spread by the health organisations, the carbon footprint, the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of the activities of a particular individual, organisation, or community, has reduced drastically and this has led to the improvement and betterment of the environment and nature.
- Human beings have started understanding and seeing the effect on the environment. One can easily witness the changing colour of the sky and the impact on the nature wholly.

Indian Vision to Restore Balance between Human and Nature

- The COVID-19 pandemic is bringing into sharp focus the distortions in the ecological equilibrium. It may be time to recall the ancient Indian vision to respect and restore this balance. More than 2,000 years ago, the ancient Vedic sages had espoused a worldview that gave equal importance to all living creatures.
- Worshipping nature is part of our culture as the manifestation of divinity is seen in every element, including plants and animals.
 As such, preservation of the environment and maintaining ecological balance has been an age-old tradition.
- In the Indian worldview, our prayers have been for maintaining this harmony not only on the earth but also in sky and space, as the following Vedic verse succinctly illustrates: Dyauh Shaantir-Antariksham Shaantir-Prithivi Shaantir-Aapah Shaantir-

- Ossadhayah Shaantih Vanaspatayah Shaantir-Vishvedevaah Shaantir Brahma Shaantih, Sarvam Shaantih Shaantir-Eva Shaantih, Saa Maa Shaantir-Edhi (Peace is in the Sky and Space; Peace is on the Earth; Peace is in Water; Peace is in Plants; Peace is in Trees; Peace is in Gods presiding over various elements of Nature; Peace is in our consciousness; Peace is pervading everywhere; Peace outside and Peace within. May you have that Peace which makes your life fulfilled.)
- India has achieved significant progress on various health indices since Independence and has eliminated important infectious diseases like yaws, smallpox, and polio. The average life expectancy has increased to 69 years and India's disease burden due to communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases has dropped from 61 per cent to 33 per cent between 1990 and 2016.
- However, lifestyle changes over the years have led to a huge increase in non-communicable diseases. A few years ago, WHO data has attributed 61 per cent of all deaths in India to NCDs like heart disorders, cancer and diabetes. There is a need to arrest this worrisome trend by mounting a massive national campaign on the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle by shunning sedentary living and avoiding junk food, among other steps.
- Awareness has to be created from a young age by promoting yoga and meditation as also healthy dietary habits. These aspects should become part of the school curriculum and bodies like the Indian Medical Association and



- medical institutions should take the lead in educating people.
- It is time for all Indians and every global citizen to become proactive warriors in the cause of protecting nature so that the planet, people and all other living creatures remain healthy and enjoy a harmonious existence. The air we breathe and the water we drink should be clean. We should conserve soil and plant wealth and other natural resources.

Way Forward

 This pandemic has made the world re-examine the

- interconnection between man and nature. We need to recognise that we share this planet with plants, birds and animals and other living organisms. We need to understand the dynamics of this interaction and adopt what WHO has termed a "One Health" concept, which adopts a multidisciplinary approach to attain optimal health for people, animals, plants and the environment.
- To achieve optimal health outcomes, it seeks to bring together multiple sectors and combine the expertise of health professionals, biologists,

- veterinarians, virologists and ecologists, among others, in designing policies and programmes.
- Ours is one world. We must protect its balance so that we can lead healthier lives. We must combine knowledge with wisdom.
 We must act in unison to create a safer planet with improved health outcomes for people, plants and animals while protecting the environment.

General Studies Paper-III

Topic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.



Q. "COVID-19 has made the world re-examine the interconnection between man and nature." Elaborate.

SEVEN BRAIN BOOSTERS

1. OPERATION SANJEEVANI

1. Why in News?

➢ IAF aircraft C-130J airlifted 6.2 tonnes of essential medicines and hospital consumables supplies to Maldivian Capital, Male as part of "Operation Sanjeevani", as a support during Coronavirus crisis.

2. Operation Sanjeevani

- At the request of the government of Maldives, the IAF aircraft activated Operation Sanjeevani and lifted these medicines from airports in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Madurai.
- Among other things, these medicines include influenza vaccines, anti-viral drugs such as lopinavir and ritonavir — which have been used to treat patients with COVID-19 in other countries.
- Medicines for cardiac conditions, kidney ailments, hypertension, high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, allergies and cancer treatment, anticonvulsants, as well as consumables such as catheters, nebulisers, urine bags and infant feeding tubes were also delivered.
- Indian Army facilitated the transport of these medicines and consumables from warehouses across India to the respective airports.



3. India's Other Initiatives

- Last month, India had dispatched a 14-member Army medical team to Maldives to set up a viral testing lab there. India had gifted 5.5 tonne of essential medicines to Male on March 14.
- Air India has received China's clearance to operate cargo flights to Shanghai and Hong Kong to help Indian pharmaceutical companies import personal protective equipment for frontline health workers.

6. India Maldives Relations

- India was among the first to recognise Maldives after its independence in 1965 and to establish diplomatic relations with the country.
- India helps Malddives in meeting it's 70% of defence training needs.
- India-Maldives joint military ecercise- "Ekuverin".
- India is the fourth largest trade partner of Maldives.
- India and Maldives share cultural, religious, ethenic, linguistic and commercial links.

4. Maldives and Diplomacy

- Maldives has been one of the foremost countries which has received Indian assistance during COVID-19 crisis.
- It is a growing example of India's 'Neighbourhood First Policy' and reciprocation of Maldives' 'India First Policy'.
- New Delhi gifted 5.5 tonnes of essential medicines to the Maldives on March 14, 2020, and also sent a 14-member COVID-19 Rapid Response Team of doctors to enhance preparedness.
- India had evacuated nine Maldives nationals from Wuhan which was once the epicentre of the crisis.

5. Previous Humanitarian Help

- The Indian Armed Forces have helped the government of Maldives in the neutralization of the 1988 coup attempt. (Operation Cactus)
- India has also helped the country after the 2004 tsunami, and has also supplied drinking water when 'Operation Neer' was launched in 2014.
- The two Advanced Light Helicopters given by India to the armed forces of Maldives have been used in saving Maldivian lives.





2. BCG VACCINE

1. Why in News?

Countries that have a widespread vaccination programme involving the Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) jab have a coronavirus death rate almost six times lower than nations that do not use it, a study reveals.

2. Observation

- Gonzalo Otazu, assistant professor at the New York Institute of Technology, noticed the low number of COVID-19 cases in Japan, which have universal BCG vaccine policies.
- It is well known that BCG vaccine provided protection against not just tuberculosis bacteria but also other types of contagions.
- There exists a strong correlation between compulsory BCG vaccinations and a lower number of COVID-19 cases and deaths.
- After these initial findings on lower COVID-19 deaths in countries with universal BCG programmes, researchers at the University of Texas did a more comprehensive statistical study trying to reduce the possibility of error analysing data from 178 countries.
 - They found that in countries with BCG vaccination programmes, the death rate was 4.28 per million while countries without such programmes faced 40 deaths per million.



3. BCG Vaccine

- The vaccine, named after French microbiologists Albert Calmette and Camille Guérin, was developed over 100 years ago, in 1919, to fight against the highly contagious respiratory illness tuberculosis.
- Originally developed from Mycobacterium bovis, which is commonly found in cows. While it has been weakened, it is still live.
- The BCG vaccine was first used medically in 1921. It is on the World Health Organization's List of Essential Medicines.
- Other than its effectiveness in preventing tuberculosis, scientists say it also helps with other respiratory illnesses, certain bladder cancers, and could protect against asthma and autoimmune diseases such as type 1 diabetes.
- While many people get the BCG vaccination in childhood, studies have shown that the TB vaccine's effects offer protection for about 15 years.

6. India's Efforts

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the apex body in the field, has begun work to understand if the vaccine for tuberculosis — bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) — could be used to strengthen immunity against Covid-19.
- Pune-based Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine manufacturer and developer of a new form of the BCG vaccine, is also ready to test the vaccine.

4. Indirect Help

- The BCG vaccine does not directly protect against the coronavirus, but provides a boost to the immune system which may lead to improved protection and a milder infection.
- This is a relatively new concept based on the discovery that our innate immune response
 the body's generalised defences also has a memory, alongside the acquired immunity, which develops antibodies after coming into contact with a specific pathogen.
- The idea is that the innate immune system can be prepared, or "trained" to better combat attacks, with the help of live attenuated vaccines, such as BCG or measles, which contained a weakened sliver of the original pathogen.
- The vaccine acts as a "military exercise in peacetime" so that the body can "fight the enemy effectively in wartime.
- In the case of COVID-19, in addition to infection by the virus itself, some patients have also suffered excessive immune responses, with the uncontrolled production of proinflammatory proteins, cytokines.
 - Vaccination, in particular against BCG, might help to better orchestrate this inflammatory immune response.

5. Global Efforts

- Netherlands, recently announced a clinical trial, with the University of Utrecht involving hundreds of healthcare workers.
- A separate trial of the BCG vaccine has also been launched in Australia, with some 4,000 health workers, by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute.
- Researchers in Spain, instead of using the BCG, would like to try a new tuberculosis vaccine developed by the biotech firm Biofabri.
- In Germany, the Max Planck Institute for Infectious Biology is also preparing a trial with a genetically-modified vaccine candidate, developed by the Serum Institute of India.



3. BHILWARA MODEL TO COMBAT COVID-19

1. Why in News?

The Centre may adopt the 'Bhilwara Model' as a containment strategy to curb the spread of new coronavirus in areas that have been identified as hotspots.

2. Background

- Rajasthan's Bhilwara, which reported over 25 coronavirus cases, has witnessed a significant drop in cases after the government adopted a strategy, now called 'Bhilwara Model'
- Bhilwara was the epicentre of the new coronavirus in Rajashthan until aggressive containment measures taken by the district administration limited the spread of the virus.



3. Bhilwara Model

- Bhilwara was completely isolated and around 2,000 teams screened 28 lakh people via door-to-door campaign. 'Maha curfew' has been imposed from April 3-13, wherein people can't step out and essentials are sent to homes.
- The strategy to combat cluster spread was three-pronged.
 - First step was effective implementation of the curfew, sealing the borders of containment zones and ensuring zero vehicular movement.
 - Second, was to identify potential clusters and carry out intensive mapping of contacts, besides isolating high-risk people and collecting samples for tests quickly.
 - Third step was a massive screening exercise covering the entire population to detect influenza-like symptoms.
- The model can be summarised as a 'ruthless containment' strategy which involves:
 - timely action;
 - total screening in rural and urban parts; and
 - strict enforcement of curfew and lockdown restrictions.

6. India's COVID Hotspots

- India moves to sealing the COVID hotspots all over the country.
- Hotspots criteria may vary for different states, for e.g. in UP the hotspot criteria currently includes an area having six or more cases.
- Uttar Pradesh government announced to 'completely seal' affected areas across 15 districts.
- In Delhi, at least 20 hotspots have been identified.
- Other hotspots have been identified in Maharashtra, Kerala and Gujarat.

4. Rajasthan Vs Covid-2019

- Rajasthan has led by example to show the effective way of dealing with COVID-19: 'Bhilwara Model'.
- Nearly half of the 55 hospitals enlisted by state government to fight the epidemic are from the private sector which have helped enhance the capacity of the state to more than 10,000 isolation beds, 824 intensive care unit (ICU) beds and nearly 400 ventilators.
- Cities such as Ajmer, Jaisalmer, Sikar and Pali, which otherwise had limited medical facilities available through single government hospitals, will now see enhanced capability with private hospitals on board.
- The poor can avail free treatment and testing for COVID-19 at private hospitals under Ayushman Bharat scheme.
- Rajasthan has so far seen 325 positive cases, with six deaths. The highest number of 105 cases has been reported from Jaipur.
- The situation in Bhilwara has stabilised now, with most of the 27 people who tested positive have been cured.
- Now Bhilwara Model to be implemented in Ramganj (Jaipur) which will have drone surveillance, barricades, flag-marches in addition to other protocols.

5. Lessons Learnt from Bhilwara Model

- Response was graded, in consonance with the magnitude of the problem. Screening and then testing them.
- Every city has its own character, its different model. Example for Ramganj the model needed to be adapted as it is a walled city, so flag marches and drone surveillance is more helpful.
- Need to equip and empower the local administration instead of bossing over.
- People on the ground, they know the situation very well, so it makes sense to let them handle most of the responsibility while ensuring that they have enough resources to do their jobs.





4. PRICE MONITORING AND RESOURCE UNIT

1. Why in News?

- Jammu & Kashmir Union Territory has become 12th State where the Price Monitoring & Resource Unit (PMRU) has been set up by National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA).
- PMRUs have already been set up by NPPA in 11 States, including, Kerala, Odisha, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Nagaland, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Mizoram.
- Kerala became the first State to set up a price monitoring and research unit to track violation of prices of essential drugs and medical devices under the Drugs Price Control Order (DPCO).

2. Legal Mandate

- The Department of Pharmaceuticals under Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers constituted a notification under "National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority" to establish guidelines for setting up Price Monitoring and Resource Units (PMRUs) at state/ Union Territories under Central Sector Scheme of Consumer Awareness, Publicity and Price Monitoring.
- National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has been entrusted with the task of:
 - Price/fixation revision of prices of scheduled formulations (as listed in Schedule 1 of Drug (Prices Control) Order DPCO) as revised from time to time:
 - Monitoring and enforcement of the notified prices; and
 - Providing inputs to the govt. for policy formulation and on other specific issues pertaining to availability, accessibility and affordability of medicine for all.
- The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Policy 2012, is the implementing autority for the policy inter-alia, provides that NPPA would be provide required organisational and financial support so as to enable it to implement the various provisions of the policy as well as the DPCO, 2013.
- Price Monitoring & Research Unit (PMRU), set up by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) in collaboration with the Department of Health and State Drug Controller.



3. PMRUs

- Objectives of Setting PMRUs are:
 - Monitoring the notifies prices of medicines, detection of violation of the provisions of DPCO, pricing compliance and ensuring availability of medicines.
 - Monnitoring the price movement of scheduled and non-scheduled formulations and revision of price of scheduled formulations on the basis of annual increase in WPI and to ensure that the price of non-scheduled formulations are not increased beyond 10% annually.
 - Collect test samples of medicines at retailed market.
 - Collection and compilation of market base data of scheduled and nonscheduled formulations.
 - PMRU is also expected to organise seminars, training programs and other information, education and communication activities in the areas of availability and affordability of medicines for all.
- PMRU is a registered society and has to function under the direction and supervision of State Drug Controller of the state in which it is established.
- For the purpose of staffing and providing the required infrastructure to the PMRU, it has been proposed to categorise States/ UTs into three categories:
 - States/ UTs having population of more than 3% of total population;
 - States/ UTs having population of less than 3% but more than 1% of the total population; and
 - Those having a population of less than 1% of the total population.

4. Need for PMRU

- To protect consumer, form the overcharging of the prices of scheduled category drugs
- > PMRU is a field level link between NPPA and State Drug Controllers and assist the State Drug Inspectors to monitor drug prices.
- To ensure the availability and act against any profiteering and black marketing of essential medicines.



5. GEO FENCING

1. Recently

The Centre is using powers under the Indian Telegraph Act to "fetch information" from telecom companies every 15 minutes to track COVID-19 cases across the country.



2. About

- The government has tested an application that triggers e-mails and SMS alerts to an authorized government agency if a person has jumped quarantine or escaped from isolation, based on the person's mobile phone's cell tower location.
- On March 29, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) shared a standard operating procedure (SOP) with all telecom service providers regarding the application called COVID-19 Quarantine Alert System (CQAS).
- The system will collate phone data, including the device's location, on a common secured platform and alert the local agencies in case of a violation by COVID patients under watch or in isolation.
- The States have been asked to seek the approval of their Home Secretaries under the provisions of Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, for the specified mobile phone numbers to request the DoT to provide information by email or SMS in case of violation of "geo-fencing"
- The "geo-fencing" is accurate by up to 300 m.
- Kerala was one of the first States to use geo-fencing to track COVID-19 cases.

3. Understanding Geofencing

- Geofencing is a location-based service in which an app or other software uses GPS, RFID, Wi-Fi or cellular data to trigger a pre-programmed action when a mobile device or RFID tag enters or exits a virtual boundary set up around a geographical location, known as a geofence.
- Depending on how a geofence is configured it can prompt mobile push notifications, trigger text messages or alerts, send targeted advertisements on social media, allow tracking on vehicle fleets, disable certain technology or deliver location-based marketing
- Some geofences are set up to monitor activity in secure areas, allowing management to see alerts when anyone enters or leaves a specific area. Businesses can also use geofencing to monitor employees in the field, automate time cards and keep track of company property.

6. Conclusion

The existing approaches puts the onus of responsibility of contact tracing and alerting or isolating the potential suspects on the government only, and are subjected to delays because of which, in most cases, the suspect has further spread the virus to many before being caught. This app, if implemented successfully, can timely alert and more efficiently control the spread and can result into game changer.

4. Geo-Fencing Apps

- From "GoCoronaGo" to "Sampark-o-Meter", the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore and four Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) have developed several mobile applications to aid the fight against coronavirus in the country.
- The app "GoCoronaGo" has been developed by a team at IISc which can help identify people who may have crossed paths with COVID-19 suspects.
- The app will help identify people who may have crossed paths with COVID-19 positive individuals or suspects by tracking their interactions in the past using Bluetooth and
- The app generates a 'risk score' after considering various factors and can alert people to take precautionary measures including self-isolate or consulting a doctor

- There are some cautions with geofencing, especially when it comes to privacy with marketing.
- The phone number should be deleted from the system after the period for which location monitoring is required is over and the data would be deleted four weeks from thereon.
- The data collected shall be used only for the purpose of Health Management in the context of COVID-19 and is strictly not for any other purposes. Any violation in this regard would attract penal provisions under the relevant laws.

Current Affairs: Perfect 7



6. KERALA'S RAPID TEST MODEL

1. Recently

Kerala has made war-like preparations to contain the spread of COVID-19 as it fears spurt in infections in the coming weeks on account of community spread.

2. COVID-19 in Kerala

- The records of COVID-19 patients who tested positive between March 9 and 20 show Kerala as having a high rate of recovery at 84 per cent.
- In comparison, Maharashtra has a recovery rate of 5.5 per cent, while the rate for Delhi is 4.04 per cent.
- Healthcare experts have cited Kerala's early identification system and its specialized Covid-care wards as the main reasons behind the state's good recovery rate.
- Kerala has quarantined 1,71,355 persons and among them, 1,70,621 are under home quarantine and 734 in hospitals.
- So far, 9,744 samples have been sent for tests and 8,586 reports were found to be negative.
- The state government is now going ahead with a targeted approach to prevent community spread and has ordered rapid screening in hotspot regions of the state.
- Kerala has sent more than 10,000 samples for COVID-19 diagnostic tests (10,716 as on April 6), the highest in the country, of which 9,607 have proved negative.



3. Step Taken

- "Break the Chain" was the slogan given by the government in Kerala.
- The state government has converted educational institutions across the state into corona care homes with inpatient and outpatient wings.
- Every corona care home has two separate sections inpatient wing for serious infections and primary care area, where the mild infections are treated.
- ➤ Each center will have the services of four doctors and 12 nursing and paramedical staff in addition to 10 support staff or health volunteers, four data engineers, six counselors, eight security personnel to manage entry and exit gates and five other persons as reserve staff.
- The state government adopted two-way strategy to minimize the community spread of infection.
- It is launched Corona Literacy Mission reaching out to all families in an aggressive campaign with Malayalam content and the government has asked the local self-government bodies and police to intensify surveillance and tracking of quarantined persons in the state.
- ➤ The Kerala government started early testing of suspected cases, isolating the infected, carefully tracing contacts, shutting down mass gatherings/closing schools, shutting down the borders and restricting traffic both internationally as well as with the neighboring states.

4. Way Forward

- Kerala model can be a bench mark for other states. Kerala has some admirable best practices that must be a template for other states to follow.
- Kerala went full throttle and left no stone unturned in its efforts, when other states were beginning to notice the new infections. One of the reasons is because of its previous experience with the 2018 outbreak of the Nipah virus. This was an infection that spread from fruit bats into humans.
- The advantage that Kerala had was that it already has a strong health system, with very good public health networks, and dedicated health professionals. This augmented by a tested and tried emergency preparedness plan and decentralized governance, helped the administration to swiftly swing into action by coordinating multiple and interdepartmental efforts.



7. LOAN TO FIGHT CORONA

1. Why in News?

- The World Bank has funded 1 billion USD to India to fight against COVID-19.
- Further India is seeking as much as \$6 billion of loans from multilateral institutions such as the Asian Development Bank to bolster its efforts to fight the coronavirus outbreak.



2. About

- > The World Bank has already committed \$1 billion, while Indian government is in talks with Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and ADB.
- India needs to rapidly scale up testing for the virus to head off the disease from infecting more people in the world's most populated nation after China.
- ➤ Hence the need to rapidly boost testing. The number of tests in India stood at just 66,000 on April 3, about one-thirtieth the pace of the U.S and even further behind that of top testing countries like South Korea.
- Proceeds including from the World Bank will be used to acquire testing kits and ventilators, turning hospital beds into intensive care unit beds as well as for buying personal protective equipment for health care workers.
- This funding will cover all states and union territories. It will help in managing the requirements of infected people, at-risk populations, medical and emergency staff, medical service providers, medical and testing facilities, and national and animal health agencies.
- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) will release new guidelines on conducting rapid tests.
- Furthermore, it also needs to increase production and import of personal protection equipment (PPE)s and maximize the stock of equipment such as ventilators.
- Indian economy will also take a major hit owing to the 21-day nationwide lockdown to curb the pandemic.

3. Covid -19: Economic Impact

- According to ADB's outlook for the financial year 2020-21, India's economic growth is likely to slow down to 4 % this fiscal on the back of the current global health emergency.
- Meanwhile, CARE estimates that the real impact of the lockdown will be felt in the first quarter of financial year 2021, reported by Quartz India.
- CARE ratings suggested that growth between January-March 2020 quarter could fall to 1.5-2.5 percent as the usual ramping up of production due in the year end could not be implemented due to the shutdown.
- Aside from both small and large businesses coming to a complete standstill, lakhs of migrant labourers have been rendered unemployed.
- With train services completely suspended, these daily wage workers have been forced to walk hundreds of kilometres to reach their homes.

4. Financial Institutions

- AIIB: The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development bank with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia. Headquartered in Beijing, It began operations in January 2016 and have now grown to 102 approved members worldwide. By investing in sustainable infrastructure and other productive sectors in Asia and beyond.
- ADB: ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. From 31 members at its establishment in 1966, ADB has grown to encompass 68 members—of which 49 are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 outside.
- **WORLD BANK:** Formed in July 1944, with 189 member countries, staff from more than 170 countries, and offices in over 130 locations, the World Bank Group is a unique global partnership: five institutions working for sustainable solutions that reduce poverty and build shared prosperity in developing countries.

SEVEN MCQ's WITH EXPLANATORY ANSWERS (Based on Brain Boosters)

1. Operation Sanjeevani

- Q. With reference to "Operation Sanjeevani", consider the following statements:
 - "Operation Sanjeevani" was executed by Indian Air Force to deliver essential medicines and hospital supplies to SAARC nations that have contributed to SAARC Covid Fund.
 - 2. In "Operation Sanjeevani", the Army facilitated the transport of supplies from warehouses across India to respective airports and the Indian Air Force delivered 6.2 tonnes of supplies to Maldives.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 Only

b) 2 Only

c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b)

Statement 1 is incorrect: "Operation Sanjeevani" was meant to deliver the medicines and supplies to Maldives. The operation was conducted by Indian Air Force on the request of Maldivian government.

Statement 2 is correct: Indian Air Force airlifted 6.2 tonnes of medical supplies and hospital consumables to Male. All the supplies were transported from the warehouses to the respective airports by Indian Army. These supplies were airlifted from the airports in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Madurai.

2. BCG Vaccine

- Q. Consider the following statements with reference to 'BCG Vaccine' in the context of COVID-19:
 - 1. BCG vaccine could be a key to end the COVID-19 crisis. It can act as a vaccine to coronavirus.
 - 2. The Indian Council of Medical research (ICMR) has begun the research-work on the BCG vaccine and to understand its effect on the immunity strengthening against COVID-19.
 - 3. The death rate for coronavirus cases is very low in

the countries that have universal BCG vaccination programme.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

a) 1 and 2 only

b) 2 and 3 only

c) 1, 2 and 3

d) Nove of the Above

Answer: (b)

Statement 1 is incorrect: BCG is not in itself a vaccine against coronavirus, but it strengthens our innate immune response which may lead to improved protection and a milder infection.

Statement 2 and 3 are correct: A study by doctors in New York Institute of Technology, has revealed that there exists a link between BCG vaccination programme and low COVID-19 cases and deaths. The said results has been supported by the findings from the University of Texas and John Hopkins Institute. The Indian Council of Medical Research, the apex body in the field, has begun work to understand if the vaccine for TB i.e. BCG could be used to strengthen against COVID-19. Pune based Serum Institute of India, which is a largest global vaccine manufacturer is ready to test the BCG vaccine.

3. Bhilwara Model to Combat COVID-19

- Q. Consider the following statements with reference to 'Bhilwara Model' for the containment of Coronavirus spread:
 - 'Bhilwara Model' can be summarized as a "ruthless containment strategy", under which there is intensive curfew, sealing of borders, zero vehicular movement, identification potential clusters, mapping of contacts, isolation of highrisk people and massive screening of entire population.
 - 2. Rajashtan's 'Bhilwara Model' showed the way to handle such a dire crisis and it helped to limit the spread of Coronavirus in Bhilwara, which was



feared to become the epicenter of the crisis in Rajasthan.

3. 'Bhilwara Model' has been replicated in other areas in Rajasthan like Ramgunj, where according to the need and topography of the town, surveillance drones were also used.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) None of the Above

Answer: (c)

Explanation: All the statements are correct. The "ruthless containment strategy" of Bhilwara helped the district to contain the spread of virus. It helped Bhilwara not to become the epicenter of the disease. The timely action coupled with total screening in urban and rural areas played a vital role. It was backed by strict enforcement and lockdown restrictions.

Central government is also hinting to adopt the Bhilwara model as a containment strategy to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus in areas that have been identified as hotspots.

4. Price Monitoring and **Resource Unit**

With reference to 'Price Monitoring and Resource Q. Unit', consider the following statements:

- 1. The 'Price Monitoring and Resource Unit' (PMRU) has a legal mandate of the Department of Pharmaceuticals and is managed by the guidelines under Ministry of Commerce.
- 2. Jammu and Kashmir UT has become the 12th state where PMRU has been set up by National Pharmaceutical Authority (NPPA).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (b)

Statement 1 is incorrect: Price Monitoring and Research unit is set up by National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) in collaboration with the Department of Health and State Drug Controller. The guidelines to setup PMRU is given by The Department of Pharmaceuticals under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.

Statement 2 is correct: PMRU is a registered society. J&K UT has become the 12th state to establish PMRU. Kerala was the first state to have PMRU.

5. Geo Fencing

With reference to "Geo Fencing", consider the following statements:

- 1. It is a location based service in which an app or other software uses GPS, RIFD, Wi-Fi or cellular data to trigger a pre programmed action when a mobile or RIFD tag enters or exists a virtual boundary known as geo fence.
- 2. Geo fencing is currently in use to track COVID-19 patients.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (c)

Explanation: Both the statements are correct. Geo fencing is a location based service which is currently in use by the Indian government to track COVID-19 patients. The center is using powers under the Indian Telegraph Act to 'fetch information' from telecom operators every 15 minutes to track the cases and alert to government agencies. If a Covid patient jumps a quarantine area. Geo fencing is accurate upto 300 mts. Kerala is the first state to use geo-fencing to track COVID-19 cases.

6. Kerala's Rapid Test Model

Q. With reference to the Coronavirus situation in Kerala, consider the following statements:

- 1. Kerala has shown a high rate of recovery at 84 per cent.
- 2. In comparison, Maharashtra has a recovery rate of 5.5 per cent, while the rate for Delhi is 4.04 per cent.
- 3. Kerala government launched Corona Literacy Mission reaching out to all families in an aggressive campaign with Malayalam content.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 Only
- b) 3 Only
- c) 1, 2 and 3
- d) None of the Above

Answer: (c)

Explanation: All the statements are correct. Healthcare experts have cited Kerala's early identification system and its specialized COVID-care wards as the main reasons behind the state's good recovery rate. The records of COVID-19 patients who tested positive between March 9 and 20 show Kerala as having a high rate of recovery at 84 per cent.



In comparison, Maharashtra has a recovery rate of 5.5 per cent, while the rate for Delhi is 4.04 per cent. Kerala has launched Corona Literacy Mission reaching out to all families in an aggressive campaign with Malayalam content. "Break the Chain" was the slogan given by the government in Kerala.

The state government has converted educational institutions across the state into corona care homes with inpatient and outpatient wings.

7. Loan to Fight Corona

- Q. With reference to international loans to India in the fight against coronavirus, consider the following statements:
 - 1. India is seeking as much as \$6 billion of loans from multilateral institutions such as the Asian Development Bank to bolster its efforts to fight the coronavirus outbreak.
 - 2. The aim is to acquire testing kits and ventilators,

turning hospital beds into intensive care unit beds as well as for buying personal protective equipment for health care workers.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d)

Explanation: Both statements are correct. The World Bank has already committed \$1 billion, while Indian government is in talks with Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and ADB. India needs to rapidly scale up testing for the virus to head off the disease from infecting more people in the world's most populated nation after China. Hence the need to rapidly boost testing. The aim of the funding is to acquire testing kits and ventilators, turning hospital beds into intensive care unit beds as well as for buying personal protective equipment for health care workers.

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SEVIEN IMPORTANT NEWS

1. Tiger 'Nadia' Tests Positive for COVID-19

A tiger at New York's Bronx Zoo has tested positive for Covid-19. Nadia, along with six other big cats, is thought to have been infected by an asymptomatic zoo keeper. The cats started showing symptoms, including a dry cough, late last month after exposure to the employee, who has not been identified. This is the first time that any of us know of anywhere in the world that a person infected the animal and the animal got sick.

Animals and the Virus

The COVID-19 is thought to have originated in wildlife and been passed

to humans via a live animal market in Wuhan. The pandemic has been driven by human-to-human transmission, but the infection of Nadia raises new questions about human-to-animal transmission.

There have been less than a handful of isolated reports of companion animals testing positive for coronavirus, including two dogs in Hong Kong.

That is also the view of the World Organisation for Animal Health and the World Health Organization (WHO), which says there is no evidence that pet dogs or cats can pass on the coronavirus. The World Organisation for Animal Health says studies are under way to understand the issue more and urges anyone who has become sick to limit contact with pets.

However, conservation experts have warned that the virus could pose a threat to some wildlife like the great apes - and have said measures are needed to reduce the risk of wild gorillas, chimps and orangutans.

2. Arogya Setu App

The government of India has launched the mobile app, Arogya Setu, to help people assess themselves the risk of getting infected with coronavirus and alert authorities if they have come in close contact with a person infected with the deadly virus. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has urged people to download the 'Aarogya Setu' mobile application, saying it is a fantastic use of technology to combat coronavirus.

Key Highlights

Aarogya Setu, a mobile app developed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to help citizens identify their risk of contracting the novel coronavirus. Aarogya Setu is designed to keep an user informed in case s/he has crossed paths with someone who has tested positive. The tracking is done through a Bluetooth & location-generated social graph, which can show your interaction with anyone who has tested positive.

It has a tool for self-testing. The user is asked to answer a number of questions. In case some of the answers suggest Covid symptoms, the information will be sent to a government server. The data will then help the government take timely steps and initiate the isolation procedure, if necessary.

You will be alerted if someone you came in close proximity with,

unknowingly, tests positive. The app alerts are accompanied by instructions on how to self-isolate and what to do in case you develop symptoms.

After you have installed Aarogya Setu in your phone, it will detect other nearby smartphones that also have the app installed. It can then figure out the risk of infection based on sophisticated parameters if any of these contacts is tested positive.

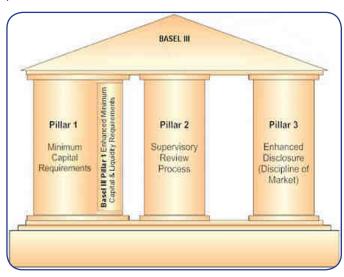
The basis of this calculation — which is done using Bluetooth, algorithms and artificial intelligence — is the smartphone user's interaction with others.

Current Affairs: Perfect 7



3. Counter-Cyclical Capital Buffer

In order to cope with the economic fallout of the COVID-19, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has deferred implementation of countercyclical capital buffers (CCCB) and extended the realisation period for export proceeds.



About CCCB

Following Basel-III norms, central banks specify certain capital adequacy norms for banks in a country. The CCCB is a part of such norms and is calculated as a fixed percentage of a bank's risk-

weighted loan book. However, one respect in which the CCCB differs from other forms of capital adequacy is that it works to help a bank counteract the effect of a downturn or distressed economic conditions. With the CCCB, banks are required to set aside a higher portion of their capital during good

times when loans are growing rapidly, so that the capital can be released and used during bad times, when there's distress in the economy.

The CCCB is supposed to be in the form of equity capital, and if the minimum buffer requirements are breached, capital distribution constraints such as limits on dividends and share buybacks can be imposed on the bank.

Significance

Apart from acting as a buffer that can be drawn upon during distress, the CCCB also helps head off systemic risks by curbing unruly bank credit growth. Systemic risks refer to events that can, besides impacting individual banks, shake up the financial system.

4. New Domicile Rule for Jammu and Kashmir

The Ministry of Home Affairs has amended the new domicile rule for Jammu and Kashmir. The move comes almost eight months after the revocation of Article 370, which was followed by the division of the then state into two Union territories.

Key Highlights

Domiciles have been now been redefined as "those who have resided for a period of 15 years in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir or have studied for a period of seven years and appeared in Class 10/12 examination in an educational institutions located in the union territory".

According to the new law on domiciles, "children of those central government officials, All India Services officers, officials of public sector undertaking and autonomous body of central public government, sector banks, officials of statutory officials of central bodies, universities and recognized research institutes of central

government who have served in Jammu and Kashmir for a total period of ten years" are eligible to hold and apply for jobs in the Union Territory.

Anyone who has lived in the region for 15 years or has studied in the region



for seven years and has appeared in either the Class 10 or the Class 12 examinations, will be eligible for domicile certificates, paving the way for the people to apply for gazetted and non-gazetted government jobs.

5. CubeSat Imaging Radar for Earth Sciences (CIRES)

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has introduced a system to monitor the physical

changes caused by seismic and volcanic activity on Earth from space. The instrument that will detect these

activities is known as CubeSat Imaging Radar for Earth Sciences (CIRES). According to NASA, CIRES is "designed



to detect each time the volcano took a breath, as its caldera swelled and deflated."

Key Highlights

CIRES is equipped with an S-band Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar (InSAR). The S-band radar is able to penetrate through vegetation and reach the ground. CIRES takes two radar images of a specific area from

approximately the same position in space at two different times and then processes the two images to determine the difference between them.

A constellation of small InSAR satellites could work in tandem with the NASA-ISRO SAR Mission (NISAR), which is NASA's first dedicated InSAR satellite currently in development. Multiple small satellites could collect frequent data over rapidly evolving

processes, like volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and landslides, adding to NISAR's systematic global data.

Significance

The radar's findings can be used to help decision makers and energy managers in obtaining observations soon after a catastrophic event so they are better equipped to deal with disaster relief.

6. Stranded in India Portal

The Ministry of Tourism in India has launched a portal called 'Stranded in India' to help thousands of foreigners – including tourists from the Gulf – who arrived in India before the coronavirus pandemic and are now stuck in the country following cancellation of domestic and international flights, trains and inter-state buses.

Key Highlights

As many as 1,194 foreign tourists (till April 9) have been assisted through 'Stranded in India' portal.

The aim of the portal is to extend support to foreign tourists who are stranded in India and to disseminate information regarding the services that can be availed of by foreigners who are stuck far away from their homeland.

The portal's services may also help Indian citizens who live abroad and want to return to countries where they work or do business as expatriates.

Background

The sudden spike in coronavirus cases in India forced the government

to place the country in a lockdown seemingly overnight, which left several tourists stranded. As India has earlier had to rescue its own citizens, who were in distress, from various countries like China, Italy and Iran, it understands the plight of all the foreign travellers stuck here and has hence, taken this step to ensure that their stay is as comfortable as possible and that they can reach home safely.

7. Samadhan Challenge

The Innovation Cell of the Ministry of Human Resource Development and All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has launched an online challenge 'Samadhan' to invite ideas and innovations that can help fight against the novel coronavirus. The challenge is open for student innovators, researchers, educators and startups to participate. The last date for applications is April 14.

Key Highlights

Under the "Samadhan" challenge, the students and faculty will be motivated for doing new experiments and new discoveries and provide them with a strong base leading to spirit of experimentation and discovery.

The success of this program depends on how effective are the ideas of participating contestants with ability to find solutions, technically and commercially, which in turn will help fight the epidemic like coronavirus.

It is categorised into two parts:

Ideate-Simulate-Win: It invites student innovators, researchers, educators, and startups to share their ideas (design/simulation mandatory) in a form of YouTube video link, which should ideally be a solution against the COVID-19 pandemic that India is facing.

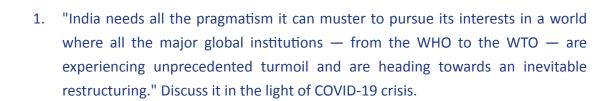
Validate-Pitch-Deploy: It invites student innovators, researchers, educators, and startups with a working

prototype of technologically advanced solutions, which can be validated and deployed immediately to support the fight against the pandemic.

The students participating in this challenge will search and develop such measures that can be made available to the government agencies, health services, hospitals and other services for quick solutions to the Coronavirus epidemic and other such calamities.

Apart from this, through this "Samadhan" challenge, work will be done to make citizens aware, to motivate them, to face any challenge, to prevent any crisis and to help people get livelihood.

SEVEN PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAINS



- 2. What are the basic principles of public life? Illustrate any three of these with suitable examples.
- 3. Can the strategy of regional resource-based manufacturing help in promoting employment in India?
- 4. "The reservation of seats for women in the institutions of local self- government has had a limited impact on the patriarchal character of the Indian political process." Comment.
- 5. What do you understand by traditional knowledge of medicine? How is the Government of India protecting traditional knowledge of medicine from patenting by pharmaceutical companies? Discuss.
- 6. "COVID-19 is yet another call to humankind to mend its ways or perish." Elaborate.
- 7. "Emotional Intelligence is the ability to make your emotions work for you instead of against you". Do you agree with this view? Discuss.



SEVIEN IMPORTINAT FACTS FOR PRIBLIMS



- Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik

2. What is the name of an online global hackathon initiative to find orking solutions for overcoming COVID 19 pandemic?

- Hack the Crisis - India

3. Which state government has launched 'PRAGYAAM App' to issue e-passes to everyone associated with delivery of essential services amid lockdown?

- Jharkhand

4. Which Indian armed force has launched 'Operation Namaste' to combat the spread of COVID-19 and help the government in its fight against the pandemic?

- Indian Army

5. What is the theme of World TB Day 2020?

- "It's TIME"

6. Which country will host 'Asian Youth Games in 2021'?

- China

7. Which government body has launched a unique entrepreneurship train, called the 'Swavalamban Express' to carry business aspirants and entrepreneurs on a 15-day journey across India?

- Small Industries Development Bank of India

OOO

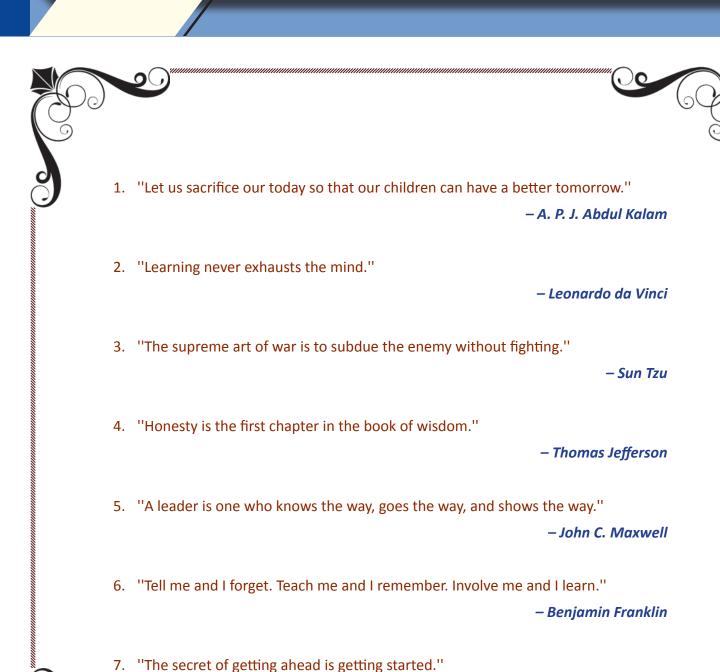






SEVEN PERFECT QUOTES

(IMPORTANT FOR ESSAY AND ANSWER WRITING)



– Mark Twain





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जो विद्यार्थी ध्येय IAS के व्हाट्सएप ग्रुप (Whatsapp Group) से जुड़े हुये हैं और उनको दैनिक अध्ययन सामग्री प्राप्त होने में समस्या हो रही है | तो आप हमारे<u>ईमेल लिंक Subscribe</u> कर ले इससे आपको प्रतिदिन अध्ययन सामग्री का लिंक मेल में प्राप्त होता रहेगा | **ईमेल से Subscribe करने के बाद मेल में प्राप्त लिंक को क्लिक करके पृष्टि (Verify) जरूर करें अन्यथा आपको प्रतिदिन मेल में अध्ययन सामग्री प्राप्त नहीं होगी |**

नोट (Note): अगर आपको हिंदी और अंग्रेजी दोनों माध्यम में अध्ययन सामग्री प्राप्त करनी है, तो आपको दोनों में अपनी ईमेल से Subscribe करना पड़ेगा | आप दोनों माध्यम के लिए एक ही ईमेल से जुड़ सकते हैं |



