

PERFECT 7

WEEKLY

CURRENT AFFAIRS

January : 2020 / Issue- 4

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND EXPRESSION ON THE INTERNET

A Fundamental Right

- National Policy for Rare Diseases, 2020 : An Analysis
- The Conundrum of Religious Liberty and Individual Right
- Annual Status of Education Report, 2019 : An Overview
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DHYEYA IAS : AN INTRODUCTION



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Vinay Kumar Singh
CEO and Founder
Dhyeya IAS



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Q H Khan
Managing Director
Dhyeya IAS

PERFECT 7 : AN INTRODUCTION



With immense pleasure and gratitude I want 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.

Qurban Ali

Chief Editor

Dhyeya IAS

(Ex Editor- Rajya Sabha TV)



We 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.

The new 'avatar' of 'Perfect 7' is a result of your love and affection. We feel inspired to continue our efforts to deliver effective and valuable content in interesting manner. Our promise of quality has reached you in previous issues and more are yet to come.

Ashutosh Singh

Managing Editor

Dhyeya IAS

Send us your suggestions, comments, views and feedback for guiding us towards continuous improvement & enhancement of 'Perfect 7' on

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PREFACE

Dhyeya family feels honoured to present you 'Perfect 7' - a panacea for Current Affairs. '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

Perfect 7

The Weekly Issue

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Contents

Seven Important Issues & Subjective Questions Based on Them.....1-23

- Freedom of Speech and Expression on the Internet : A Fundamental Right
- National Policy for Rare Diseases, 2020 : An Analysis
- The Conundrum of Religious Liberty and Individual Right
- Annual Status of Education Report, 2019 : An Overview
- Khelo India : Revitalizing Sports Culture in India
- India's Rising Inflation and Its Impact
- Global Electricity Grid : An Ambitious Proposal of India

Seven Brain Boosters & MCQ's Based on Them 24-32

Seven Important Facts for Prelims 33

Seven Practice Questions for Mains Exam 34

Seven Important News35-37

Seven Important Highlights from PIB38-40

Seven Important Concepts through Graphics.....41-44

Our other initiative



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(Broadcasted on YouTube & Dhyeya-TV)

SEVEN IMPORTANT ISSUES

1. FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND EXPRESSION ON THE INTERNET : A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

Why in News?

Recently, the Supreme Court of India declared that access to the internet is protected under Article 19 of the Constitution, hence, making it a fundamental right. Responding to a plea against the suspension of internet services in Jammu and Kashmir since last August, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court has observed that the right to freedom of speech and expression, as guaranteed to all citizens under the first section of that article, covers the right to go online. In effect, even if left unsaid, this would make net access a fundamental right.

Earlier, in September last year, the Kerala High Court had held that the right to have access to the Internet is part of the fundamental right to education as well as the right to privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Introduction

Internet is so embedded in the lives of so many people, acting as the main way for information exchange, that to deny access to everyone in the world is on many levels being termed as breach of human rights. In formal terms, the Internet is a global system of interconnected computer networks that use the Internet protocol suite (TCP/IP.) This enables billions of devices to be connected worldwide.

Through this network, the Internet delivers a range of services, including

inter-linked hypertext documents; the World Wide Web; electronic mail; telephony; and file sharing networks. Over the past three decades the global use of the Internet has risen exponentially, with billions connected and sharing images, posts, mails and stories (with Digital Journal being a prime example of the rapid dissemination of key news stories.)

Despite the billions of people accessing the Internet there remain pockets of the world that do not have access, including many people in the developing world; and there are several countries that attempt to restrict or control the content that users have access to — such as in China and more recently in our own country.

Due to the lack of access and suppressive tactics by certain governments, the United Nations (U.N.) has declared that “online freedom” is a “human right,” and one that must be protected.

The constitution of India has ensured the freedom of speech and expression under article 19 (1)(a) which is naturally linked with the information one has access to. In today's world, the internet has become the most basic means to access information that empowers one with choice and freedom to express.

It is in this regard that the internet shutdown is being seen as a violation of basic human entitlement.

Internet Shutdown and Government's Stand

In recent months, there has been a spree of bans on access to Internet services in Indian states and Union Territories, for different reasons. The State governments have relied on Section 144, Code of Criminal Procedure 1973 to institute such bans. It is also argued that it is Section 69A of the Information Technology Act 2000, and the Website Blocking Rules, which set out the legal provision and procedure empowering the State to block access to the Internet (if at all it is necessary), and not Section 144, CrPC.

In most cases, the purpose of shutting down the internet that is given by the authorities has been maintaining the law and order situation. Though in case of shutdown in Jammu and Kashmir the internet shutdown the Union Government has cited more serious basis than law and order i.e. security of the country due to the particular type of polity, history and constitutional changes that has been brought upon Jammu and Kashmir.

As the internet shutdown in the region has been in place for more than five months, the court in its recent ruling has emphasised upon finding a balance between the security concerns of State and liberty of people and observed that indefinite suspension of the internet is not permissible and that repeated orders under Section 144 CrPC will amount to an abuse of power.

Apex Court's Observation

The three judges' bench, headed by Justice N.V. Ramana and also comprising Justices B.R. Gavai and R. Subhash Reddy observed that "Non recognition of technology within the sphere of law is only a disservice to the inevitable. In this light, the importance of the internet cannot be underestimated, as from morning to night we are encapsulated within the cyberspace and our most basic activities are enabled by the use of internet."

The Case Outside India

Several countries have adopted laws that require the state to work to ensure that Internet access is broadly available and/or preventing the state from unreasonably restricting an individual's access to information and the Internet."

Costa Rica's Supreme Court has ruled that access to information technology and communication is a basic tool to facilitate participation in society and access to public services. Citizens have "the fundamental right of access to these technologies, in particular, the right of access to the Internet or World Wide Web."

Estonia began a program in 2000 to expand internet access to the countryside by declaring access a basic human right. According to Estonian government, internet is essential for life in the 21st century.

Finland had decided that every person will have access to a one-megabit per second broadband connection by 2010. By 2015 everyone would have access to a 100 Mbit/s connection.

France's, highest court, declared access to the Internet to be a basic human right.

Greece's Constitution (Article 5A) states that everyone has a right to participate in the Information Society. The state must "facilitate the production, exchange, diffusion, and access to electronically transmitted information."

Spain decided that state has to guarantee to offer "reasonably" priced broadband of at least one megabit per second throughout the country.

However, the judgement did not mention any timeframe to restore internet services to other sectors

and for the people in the region. The apex court also observed that it is essential to distinguish between the internet as a tool and the freedom of expression through the internet. There is no dispute that freedom of speech and expression includes the right to disseminate information to as wide a section of the population as possible. The wider range of circulation of information or its greater impact cannot restrict the content of the right nor can it justify its denial.

The apex court said that the expression through the internet has gained contemporary relevance and is one of the major means of information diffusion. Therefore, the freedom of speech and expression through the medium of internet is an integral part of Article 19(1)(a) and accordingly, any restriction on the same must be in accordance with Article 19(2) of the Constitution.

The court identified the internet is also a very important tool for trade and commerce, and there is no doubt that there are certain trades which are completely dependent on the internet. Such a right of trade through internet also fosters consumerism and availability of choice. Therefore, the freedom of trade and commerce through the medium of the internet is also constitutionally protected under Article 19(1)(g), subject to the restrictions provided under Article 19(6).

The apex court observed that none of the counsels involved in the matter have argued for declaring the right to access the internet as a fundamental right and therefore "we are not expressing any view on the same".

The court, however, has confined itself to declaring that the right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a), and the right to carry on any trade or business under 19(1)(g), using the medium of internet

The Case of Kerala High Court

The Kerala High Court, in September last year, held that the right to have access to the Internet is part of the fundamental right to education as well as the right to privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Justice P.V. Asha made the observation while ordering the Principal of Sree Narayanaguru College, Kozhikode, to re-admit a student who had been expelled from the college hostel for using her mobile phone beyond the restricted hours.

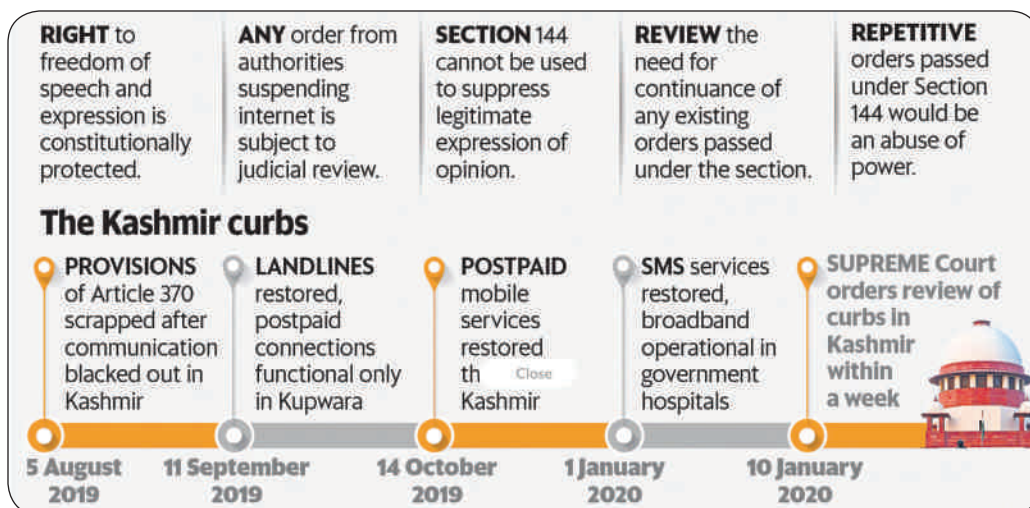
The Kerala High Court itself has observed, "When the Human Rights Council of the United Nations has found that the right of access to Internet is a fundamental freedom and a tool to ensure right to education, a rule or instruction which impairs the said right of the students cannot be permitted to stand in the eye of law."

is constitutionally protected. Therefore, the court has given Constitutional protection to the right to access the internet, which can be termed as a fundamental right.

The apex court concluded that the suspension of broad telecom services, be it the internet or otherwise, being a drastic measure, "which must be considered by the state only if 'necessary' and 'unavoidable'." The Court also directed the Jammu & Kashmir administration to immediately restore internet services connected with access to government websites, localised/limited e-banking facilities, hospital services and other essential services.

The Economic Aspect

The report 'The Global Cost of Internet Shutdowns in 2019' by internet research firm Top10VPN says that India with 8.4 million internet users imposes internet restrictions more often than any other country. According to the report, with internet blackouts lasting for 4,196 hours in 2019, India has lost over \$1.3 billion in economic terms. This places the country on the third spot among world's most affected countries economically after Iraq and Sudan.



Issues with Government's Power to Shutdown Internet

- ◆ The petitioners in the case did not challenge the underlying power of the Central government to turn off telecommunications and Internet connectivity. The focus of their challenge was not the Telegraph Act and the Internet Suspension Rules that enabled the government to shut down the Internet, but squarely on the orders passed under these laws.
- ◆ Another issue was that the government had not made the shutdown orders publicly available. Due to the issue being related to national security concerns, government could only file some sample orders that too after pressure from Supreme Court. Orders furnished in the court could not be judicially reviewed and claims of privilege to prevent their disclosure were permitted.
- ◆ The Supreme Court reasoned that "complete blocking/prohibition perpetually cannot be accepted" even in the case of national security concern as government machinery has to devise a way to ensure basic human rights of its citizens.
- ◆ No novelty has been introduced with the judgement as this was already a well-established position

flowing from various previous verdicts such as the Section 66A decision in the Shreya Singhal case and administrative policies and orders such as National Telecom Policy and Net Neutrality Rules.

- ◆ The committee that is directed to be set-up and tasked with periodic review of the telecommunication and internet situation in the region is limited by the real powers given to it and independence of its members.

Expanding Scope of Rights

The Supreme Court interprets the meaning of the text of the Constitution wherever it is not clear. The right to life and personal liberty has been expanded in meaning on several occasions to include as wider a meaning as possible.

Similarly, the apex court while not making the 'access to internet' a separate fundamental right, has expanded the meaning of the article 19 (1)(a) of the Constitution to include right to access the internet.

Way Forward

The Supreme Court has also observed in its recent judgement on internet access that the government has to find way to administer without violating citizen's freedom of speech and expression and trade. Also, at a time when the government under the

leadership of prime minister is making huge efforts and expenses for promoting digital government or e-government, the shutting down of the internet, on which the entire edifice of 'digital India' is based, defeats the purpose.

Availability and access of internet becomes a must when the government in an attempt to expedite the service delivery has linked even the basic and essential services like rail, road and hospitals to some digital network.

Hence, the best course forward would be to review the vulnerability situation and then resume the internet services of the frameworks that deliver essential services to the people. Also, attempts should be made to pre-ensure the security of internet connections on which the governments service delivering websites are run so that, in the event of unavoidable situation of internet shutdown, delivery of these services is not hampered. A lot more is also needed to be done regarding making the very internet more secure and robust.

General Studies Paper- II

Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Topic: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance-applications, models, successes, limitations and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.



2. NATIONAL POLICY FOR RARE DISEASES-2020 : AN ANALYSIS

Why in News?

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), on January 13, 2020, released its National Draft Policy on rare diseases for the treatment of 450 such diseases. The Centre first prepared such a policy in 2017 and appointed a committee in 2018 to review it.

Introduction

A rare disease is a health condition of a particularly low prevalence that affects a small number of people compared with other prevalent diseases in the general population. It is estimated that globally around 6000 to 8000 rare diseases exist with new rare diseases being reported in the medical literature regularly. However, 80% of all rare disease patients are affected by approximately 350 rare diseases.

Paradoxically, though rare diseases are of low prevalence and individually rare, collectively they affect a considerable proportion of the population in any country, which according to generally accepted international research is – between 6% and 8%. Rare diseases include genetic diseases, rare cancers, infectious tropical diseases and degenerative diseases. 80% of rare diseases are genetic in origin and hence disproportionately impact children.

There is no universally accepted definition of a rare disease. Different countries define rare diseases differently. However, the common considerations in the definitions are primarily, disease prevalence and to varying extent - severity and existence of alternative therapeutic options. World Health Organisation (WHO) defines rare disease as often debilitating lifelong disease or disorder condition with a prevalence of 1 or

less, per 1000 population. In the US, rare diseases are defined as a disease or condition that affects fewer than 200,000 patients in the country (6.4 in 10,000 people) whereas in the case of Japan it is identified as diseases with fewer than 50,000 prevalent cases (0.4%).

Prevalence of Rare Diseases in India

India, like many other developing countries, currently has no standard definition of rare diseases and data on prevalence. Since there is no epidemiological data, there are no figures on burden of rare diseases and morbidity and mortality associated with them. If we apply the international estimate of 6% to 8% of population being affected by rare diseases, to India, we have between 72 to 96 million people affected by rare diseases in the country, which is a significant number. However, this is at best a general estimate and India will need to arrive at its own estimate and definition of rare diseases, derived chiefly from prevalence data, which is currently lacking.

So far only about 450 rare diseases have been recorded in India from tertiary care hospitals. The most common rare diseases include Haemophilia, Thalassemia, Sickle-cell Anaemia and Primary Immuno Deficiency in children, auto-immune diseases, Lysosomal storage disorders such as Pompe disease, Hirschsprung disease, Gaucher's disease, Cystic Fibrosis, Hemangiomas and certain forms of muscular dystrophies.

Rare Diseases as a Public Health Issue

The field of rare diseases is complex and heterogeneous and suffers from

a deficit of medical and scientific knowledge. The landscape of rare diseases is constantly evolving as there are new rare diseases and conditions being identified and reported regularly in medical literature. Apart from a few rare diseases, where significant progress has been made, the field is still at a nascent stage.

Diagnosis of Rare Diseases

Diagnosis of a rare condition may take upto several years, owing to difficulty in diagnostic modalities and lack of awareness among doctors. For many rare diseases, no diagnostic method exists, or diagnostic facilities are unavailable. Traditional genetic testing can only address a few genes at a time. As a result, physicians must often provide their best guess on which genes to investigate. If the test is negative, further testing will be required, which is an expensive and time-consuming process.

There is a lack of awareness about rare diseases in general public as well as in the medical profession. Many doctors lack appropriate training and awareness to be able to correctly and timely diagnose and treat these conditions. There is an immediate need to create awareness among general public, patients and their families and doctors, training of doctors for better diagnosis, standardisation of diagnostic modalities, developing of new diagnostic tools and investment in gene therapy.

Problems of Varying Definitions and Prevalence Thresholds

The use of inconsistent definitions and diverse terminology can result in confusion and inconsistencies and have implications for access

to treatment and for research and development. According to a study, which reviewed and analysed definitions across jurisdictions, most definitions, as discussed above, appear to consider disease prevalence, but other criteria also apply sometimes, such as - disease severity, whether the disease is life-threatening, whether there are alternative treatment options available, and whether it is heritable. The study found that relatively few definitions (30%) included qualifiers relating to disease severity and/or a lack of existing treatments.

Disease prevalence alone may also not be an accurate basis for defining rare diseases, as it does not take into account changes in population over time. Hence, some have suggested that a more reliable approach to arriving at a definition could be based on the factors of – a) location - a disease which is uncommon in one country may be quite common in other parts of the world; b) levels of rarity - some diseases may be much more rare than other diseases which are also uncommon; and c) study-ability - whether the prevalence of a disease lends itself to clinical trials and studies.

Challenges in Research and Development

A fundamental challenge in research and development for the majority of rare diseases is that there is relatively little known about the pathophysiology or the natural history of these diseases. Rare diseases are difficult to research upon as the patient pool is very small and it often results in inadequate clinical experience. Therefore, the clinical explanation of rare diseases may be skewed or partial. The challenge becomes even greater as rare diseases are chronic in nature, where long term follow up is particularly important. As a result,

rare diseases lack published data on long-term treatment outcomes and are often incompletely characterized.

Challenges in Treatment

Availability and access to medicines are important to reduce morbidity and mortality associated with rare diseases. Despite progress in recent years, effective or safe treatment is not available for most of the rare diseases. Hence, even when a correct diagnosis is made, there may not be an available therapy to treat the rare disease.

As the number of persons suffering from individual rare diseases is small, they do not constitute a significant market for drug manufacturers to develop and bring to market drugs for them. For this reason, rare diseases are also called 'orphan diseases' and drugs to treat them are called "orphan drugs". Where, they do make drugs to treat rare diseases, they sell them at extremely high costs, statedly, to recoup the cost of research and development.

Balancing Competing Priorities of Public Health

Rare diseases constitute a major economic burden independent of a country's size and demographics; these costs arise from increased healthcare spending and lost productivity. The exorbitant prices of medicines are important considerations in public health policy development with reference to treatment for rare diseases.

In resource constrained settings, it is pertinent to balance competing interests of public health for achieving optimal outcome for the resources allocated. As resources are limited, there is a macroeconomic allocation dilemma: on one hand, health problems of a much larger number of persons can be addressed by allocating

a relatively smaller amount, on the other, for funding treatment of rare diseases, much greater resources will be required for addressing health problems of a relatively smaller number of persons. This raises questions of fairness and reasonability. However, it also raises issues of ethics and equity of opportunity for patients to benefit, in the interest of patients suffering from rare diseases. Hence any policy on treatment of rare diseases will have to strike a balance between access to treatments with health system sustainability.

National Policy for Rare Diseases-2020

Key Features of the Policy

- ◆ A patient registry of rare diseases is to be constituted under ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research).
- ◆ According to the policy, rare diseases include genetic diseases, rare cancers, infectious tropical diseases, and degenerative diseases.
- ◆ Under the policy, there are three categories of rare diseases — requiring one-time curative treatment, diseases that require long-term treatment but where the cost is low, and those needing long-term treatments with high cost. Some of the diseases in the first category include osteopetrosis and immune deficiency disorders, among others.
- ◆ As per the policy, the assistance of Rs 15 lakh will be provided to patients suffering from rare diseases that require a one-time curative treatment under the 'Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi Scheme'. The treatment will be limited to the beneficiaries of 'Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana'.

- ◆ Under the policy, certain medical institutes will be certified as Centre of Excellence for rare diseases. It includes AIIMS, New Delhi; Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Science, Lucknow; King Edward Medical Hospital, Mumbai and four others.
- ◆ There are certain diseases such as Hurler Syndrome, Gaucher's disease, Wolman disease for which the annual treatment expenses may vary from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 1 crore. For such diseases, a digital platform is to be set up to raise donations and corporate funding.
- ◆ It proposes an inter-ministerial consultative committee is to be set up at national level. The committee will be led by MoHFW.
- ◆ It also aims to create Administrative Committee that will develop guidelines to determine which rare diseases to fund.

Need of Nationwide Policy

- ◆ State has responsibility for providing affordable, accessible and reliable health-care services to every citizen. In fact constitution also mentions importance of health-care services under articles like 21, 38 and 47 and thus state cannot evade this responsibility under the pretext of non-justifiability of articles.
- ◆ Given the low volumes at which the drugs needed to treat such diseases would be consumed, pharmaceutical companies have little commercial incentive to produce them. Thus, a nationwide policy on orphan drugs could incentivize these players.
- ◆ Even if pharmaceutical companies are incentivized to develop drugs to treat rare diseases, pharmaceutical companies remain beholden to the laws of economics and, given

the low demand for orphan drugs, price these drugs as high as they choose to. Hence there has to be regulation of the government in restricting the exorbitant prices of the drugs.

- ◆ Although proportion of rare diseases is much less than the other diseases, it does not reduce the importance of the life of person affected by rare diseases. Thus national policy would remove this adverse distinction and would make government committed equally to all people.

Criticism of the Policy

Rare disease advocacy and support groups have called out the policy for several discrepancies including a lack of funding to support families and individuals with a rare disease. They have pointed out that the proposed allocation of financial support has been brought down to a maximum of Rs 15 lakh per case under an umbrella scheme - 'Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi' – for those who have a rare disease that falls in Group 1, and require one-time treatment. This is much lower than the initially proposed corpus fund of Rs 100 crore.

Further, the policy also passes the buck, and says that crowdfunding can be used to provide financial support. It identifies eight hospitals across India as 'centres of excellence' and leaves it up to them to set up crowdfunding initiatives for patients that require it, or for families to themselves look at crowdfunding options for treatment.

The problem is that the policy caps resources for different diseases. While treatment for one particular disease might amount to Rs 10 lakh, another disease may require Rs 1 crore to cover the cost of medications, which are only bound to increase over time.

The policy has been criticised for acting more like a set of guidelines to understand the disease, rather than specifying actions which must be taken by the government to offer support to those affected. For instance, while the policy focus is on prevention, it does not lay down any concrete steps for implementing steps towards it.

Public health and hospitals being a State subject, the Central Government shall encourage and support the States in their endeavour towards screening and prevention of rare diseases. However, while screening has been emphasised as a preventive measure, there is no mention of how and when screening will take place, nor has it been stated how screening will be implemented.

Conclusion

Recent developments have not given the rare disease community much to celebrate. Since these diseases are not found commonly, doctors are typically unaware about them and therefore either misdiagnose or do not diagnose them. Unfortunately, the new rare disease policy has reinforced the premise that public health is a game of numbers, not lives. The government must not abandon the rare disease community to the market mechanism. Policymakers must address fiscal constraints without devaluing lives of entire patient populations.

General Studies Paper- II

Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/ Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.



3. THE CONUNDRUM OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHT

Why in News?

A nine-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sharad A. Bobde said its objective was not to review the Sabarimala women entry case but examine “larger issues” of law arising from religious practices.

Introduction

A religion is certainly a matter of faith and is not necessarily theistic. Religion has its basis in “a system of beliefs or doctrines which are regarded by those who profess that religion as conducive to their spiritual well being”, but it would not be correct to say that religion is nothing else but a doctrine or belief. A religion may not only lay down a code of ethical rules for its followers to accept, it might prescribe rituals and observances, ceremonies and modes of worship which are regarded as integral part of religion and these forms and observances might extend even to matters of food and dress. Subject to certain limitations, Article 25 confers a fundamental right on every person not merely to entertain such religious beliefs as may be approved by his judgment or conscience but also exhibit his beliefs and ideas by such overt acts and practices which are sanctioned by his religion. Now what practices are protected under the Article is to be decided by the courts with reference to the doctrine of a particular religion and include practices regarded by the community as part of its religion. The courts have gone into religious scriptures to ascertain the status of a practice in question.

Supreme Court: Religion, Faith and Superstition

On November 14, the five-judge Bench led by then Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, instead of deciding the Sabarimala

review entrusted to it, sought an “authoritative pronouncement” on the Court’s power to decide the essentiality of religious practices. Framing seven questions, the Bench referred them to a seven-judge Bench. These referral questions included whether “essential religious practices” be afforded constitutional protection under Article 26 (freedom to manage religious affairs). Seven issues were framed by the five-judge Review Bench for the larger Bench. They form the crux but may be re-framed for future hearing before the nine-judge Bench. The ‘broad’ issues are:

1. What should be the interplay between freedom of religion under Articles 25 and 26 and the right to equality under Article 14?
2. Right to practice religion is subject to ‘public order, morality and health’ under Article 25(1). What do these terms actually mean?
3. Is constitutional morality the overarching morality in reference to the Preamble or limited to religious beliefs or faith?
4. Should and, if so, how after can a court enquire into whether a religious practice is essential to a particular faith?
5. What is the meaning of the expression ‘sections of Hindus’ appearing in Article 25(2)(b) of the Constitution?
6. Whether ‘essential religious practices’ deserve constitutional protection under Article 26?
7. What is the extent to which courts should entertain PILs questioning religious practices filed by a third person who is not a member of that faith?

Chief Justice explained that the basis of the Bench’s judicial enquiry would be seven questions referred

to a larger Bench by a five-judge Bench on November 14, 2019. He said the nine-judge Bench was only examining propositions of law raised about religious practices believed to be essential to various religions such as questions of law on women’s entry to mosques/temples, genital mutilation by Dawoodi Bohras, entry of Parsi women who marry outside their community into fire temple. In many religious communities, norms and practices are shaped and imposed from above, by community leaders, and then enforced with the force of social sanction. Dissenters are then faced with an impossible choice: either comply with discriminatory practices, or make a painful (and often unsustainable) exit from the community. It is here that the Constitution can help by ensuring that the oppressed and excluded among communities can call upon the Court for aid, and by ensuring that powerful communities are not exempt from guaranteeing the basic norms of fairness, equality, and freedom to all their members. The Bench, however, clarified that it would not go into the legality of issues such as the practice of polygamy and ‘nikah-halala’ in Islam.

Madesnana

In December 2014, the Supreme Court of India placed a temporary ban on madesnana, a 500-year-old ritual performed at the Kukke Subramanya Temple in Karnataka. The practice involves persons, in particular those from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, rolling over plantain leaves left behind with food half eaten by Brahmins, in the belief that doing so would cleanse their skin of impurities.

Right to Equality and Religious freedom: The Constitutional Aspects

Articles 14, 15 and 16 of the Constitution of India deal with the right to equality. Article 17 is the special provision that

abolishes 'untouchability' and forbids its practice in any form. Right to equality before the law and equal protection of the law to all citizens irrespective of religion, race, sex and place of birth is one of the basic values of a secular democratic State. Article 14 of the Constitution provides both aspects of equality to all persons, including aliens who reside within the territory of India. There are at the same time some provisions of the Constitution that recognise exception to the general rule of equality on various reasonable grounds.

Article 25 mandates that subject to public order, morality and health, all persons enjoy the freedom of conscience and have the right to entertain any religious belief and propagate it.

Article 26: gives every religious group a right to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes, manage its affairs, properties as per the law. This guarantee is available to only Citizens of India and not to aliens.

Article 27: This Article mandates that no citizen would be compelled by the state to pay any taxes for promotion or maintenance of particular religion or religious institutions.

Article 28: This Article mandates that No religious instruction would be imparted in the state funded educational institutions.

Overall implied principle is that a society is egalitarian when all are treated with respect in their dignity as human persons. This egalitarian principle of the Indian Constitution, when seen in the context of the welfare State, demands the protection of human dignity by promoting the development of all sections of the people. Religion must cooperate in the functioning of the Constitution to achieve its humane objectives.

Religious Community Right vs Individual Right

How then do we strike a balance between respecting the autonomy of cultural and religious communities and also ensuring that individual rights are not entirely sacrificed at the altar of the community? Over the years, the Supreme Court has attempted to do so by carving out a jurisprudence that virtually allows it to sit in theological judgment over different practices. It has done this by recognising that it is only those practices that are "essential" to religion that enjoy constitutional protection. Any other ritual is seen as secular and amenable to the state's interference. In the Constitution of India, there are two impulses that may, at times, come into conflict with one another.

- ◆ The first impulse recognises that India is a pluralist and diverse nation, where groups and communities — whether religious or cultural — have always played an important role in society. Following up on this impulse, the Constitution recognises both the freedom of religion as an individual right (Article 25), as well as the right of religious denominations to manage their own affairs in matters of religion (Article 26).
- ◆ The second impulse, on the other hand, recognises that while community can be a source of solidarity at the best of times, it can also be a terrain of oppression and exclusion. The Constitution, therefore, expressly provides for the possibility that there may be times when members of religious and cultural communities may need to be protected from authoritarian and oppressive social practices.

Thus, both Articles 25 and 26 are subject to public order, morality, and health; and further, Article 25 is

also subject to other fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution, and to the state's power to bring in social reform laws. These two impulses, and their expression in various provisions of the Constitution, speak to an observation made by Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer, one of the foremost drafters of the Constitution: that in our country, religion and social life are inextricably linked. As the madrasana example shows us, religious proscriptions often spill over into broader society, and religious and social status often reinforce each other.

Conclusion

In the context of a religiously plural society like India, where conflicting value systems often compete with each other, the principled approach of the Supreme Court on religious matters is to promote religious freedom that secures human dignity. Therefore, the Court may apply a liberal or a conservative approach towards religion depending on which of the two better promotes religious liberty consistent with a set of values that protect the sanctity of human life and provide a life-affirming space for all to live in dignity. Hence, the Indian judiciary tells in unambiguous language that the Constitution recognizes the importance of religion in people's life, and that it holds religious liberty as a fundamental value of the Indian political community but not at the cost of certain substantive principles which are necessary in the society for all to lead a life worthy of human dignity. Religion thrives in India and it remains an integral aspect of Indian ethos.

The Preamble of the Constitution of India and the various provisions of Part III and IV of the Constitution explicitly enunciate that the positive content of the political freedom consists in establishing an egalitarian social order based on the principles

of the welfare State and Democracy. Religious beliefs and practices that contravene these legislations, which are intended to promote all round welfare of the people consistent with the progressive enhancement of human dignity, must be redefined and updated in order to create space for these State measures. For centuries in the past, the Indian society had been a divided society before the law as it was structured on a caste based hierarchical social order according to which human

persons in their essential nature are not equal by birth. In this particular social and religious milieu, which seems to be unique to Indian society, article 17 together with article 15 (2) (4) and article 25 (2) (b) have the revolutionary potential to carry forward social reform and to transform the caste ridden Indian society into an egalitarian social order, wherein the inalienable worth and dignity of each individual person as a moral subject is affirmed and protected by the secular law of the Constitution.

General Studies Paper- II

Topic: Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Topic: Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary; Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

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4. ANNUAL STATUS OF EDUCATION REPORT 2019 : AN OVERVIEW

Why in News?

Recently, the fourteenth Annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2019 'Early Years') was released in New Delhi. Every year since 2005, ASER has reported on the schooling status and the ability to do basic reading and arithmetic tasks for children in the 5-16 age group in rural India.

Introduction

ASER is a nation-wide household survey that provides data on children's schooling and learning for a representative sample of children across rural India. Children in the age group 3 to 16 are surveyed to find out their enrollment status in pre-school or school. Children in the age group 5 to 16 are assessed one-on-one to understand their basic reading and arithmetic abilities. Since 2005, ASER continues to be the only annual source of information about children's foundational skills across the country. ASER reaches almost all rural districts of India and generates district, state, and national estimates of foundational reading and arithmetic abilities of children in the age group 5 to 16.

Starting its second decade of existence in 2016, ASER switched to an

alternate-year cycle, where the 'basic' ASER described above is conducted every other year (2016, 2018, and next in 2020). In alternate years, ASER focuses on a different aspect of children's schooling and learning. In 2017, ASER 'Beyond Basics' focused on the abilities, activities, awareness, and aspirations of youth in the 14 to 18 age group across 28 districts in the country. In 2019, ASER aims to shine the spotlight on the early years, reporting on the schooling status as well as on a range of important developmental indicators for young children in the age group 4 to 8 across 26 districts in the country.

What is ASER 2019 'Early Years'?

ASER 'Early Years' reports on the pre-schooling or schooling status of children in the age group 4 to 8 and, in addition, explores their performance on some competencies that international research has identified as important predictors of future success. These competencies have been categorized into four domains: cognitive development, early language, early numeracy, and social and emotional development.

- ◆ **Cognitive development:** Cognitive ability helps build problem-solving, memory, logical reasoning, and creative thinking skills in young children. These skills help children think, explore and make meaning of the world around them.
- ◆ **Early language:** ASER 2019 tasks to provide a snapshot of early language acquisition in young children are picture description, listening comprehension, reading (letters, words, a Std I level text), and reading comprehension.
- ◆ **Early numeracy:** ASER 2019 tasks to provide a snapshot of young children's early numeracy skills are counting of objects and relative comparison of objects; 1-digit oral word addition and subtraction problems; and 1-digit and 2-digit number recognition, relative comparison, and numeric addition and subtraction tasks.
- ◆ **Social and emotional development:** The ability to identify their own as well as others' emotions and perspectives, establish and maintain relationships, and take responsible decisions are important skills for all human beings. ASER 2019 tasks in this domain comprise

emotion identification, situation to emotion mapping, and situation reaction test.

ASER 2019 'Early Years' - National Findings

ASER 2019 'Early Years' was conducted in 26 districts across 24 states in India. Sampled children's enrollment status in pre-school or school was collected. All tasks were done one-on-one with children in their homes.

Overview: Pre-school and school enrollment patterns among young children (age 4-8)

- ◆ Overall, more than 90% of young children in the age group 4-8 are enrolled in some type of educational institution.
- ◆ Gender gaps are visible even among these young children, with more girls than boys enrolled in government institution and more boys than girls enrolled in private institutions.
- ◆ Within each cohort of the same age, there is enormous variation in what children are doing.

Children in the pre-school age group (age 4-5 years)

- ◆ From age 4 to age 5, children's ability to do all tasks improves substantially, in line with what child development experts expect and other studies have found.
- ◆ Regardless of whether or where they are enrolled, young children's ability to do cognitive, early language, early numeracy, and social and emotional learning tasks is higher among 5-year-olds than among 4-year-olds. For example, while 31% of 4-year-olds enrolled in anganwadis or government pre-primary classes were able to do a 4-piece puzzle, 45% of 5-year-olds attending these institutions could do so.

- ◆ Although almost half of all 4-year-olds (44.2%) and more than a quarter of all 5-year-olds (26.3%) are enrolled in anganwadis, these children have far lower levels of cognitive skill and foundational ability than their counterparts in private LKG/UKG classes.
- ◆ At both age 4 and age 5, ASER 'Early Years' data shows that children's performance on tasks requiring cognitive skills (such as sorting, seriation, and pattern recognition) is strongly related to their ability to do early language tasks (such as describing what they see in a picture) and early numeracy tasks (such as relative comparison of objects).
- ◆ This suggests that focusing on play-based activities that build memory, reasoning, and problem-solving abilities is more productive than an early focus on content knowledge.

Children in Std I

- ◆ The Right to Education Act, 2009 (RTE) mandates that children should enter Std I at age 6. Many states allow entry to Std I at age 5+. However, 4 out of every 10 children in Std I are younger than 5 or older than 6. Overall, 41.7% of children in Std I are of the RTE-mandated age of 6 years, 36.4% are 7 or 8 years old, and 21.9% are 4 or 5 years old.
- ◆ Irrespective of age, children in Std I do better in numeric arithmetic tasks (addition and subtraction problems presented in written numeric form) than oral word problems involving similar operations. For example, while 50.6% of Std I children could solve a 1-digit numeric addition sum correctly, 39.5% could do an oral word problem involving 1-digit addition.

Children in early primary grades (Std I-III)

- ◆ The variation in age distribution is widest in Std I and decreases in each subsequent grade. But older children continue to do better than younger ones on every task. By Std III, most children in both government and private schools are either 7 or 8 years old. But whereas 53.4% of 8-year-olds in Std III could read Std I level text, 46.1% of 7-year-olds could do so.
- ◆ Children's skills and abilities improve in each subsequent grade. But the huge jump between curriculum expectations at each grade means that by Std III, their early language and numeracy outcomes are already well behind curriculum expectations.

Private Schools are Better

Of 6 years olds in class 1, 41.5% of students in private schools could read word in comparison to only 19% from government schools. Similarly, 28% of those in government schools could do simple addition as against 47% in private schools. This gap is further exacerbated by a gender divide: only 39% of girls aged 6-8 are enrolled in private schools in comparison to almost 48% of boys.

Implications for Policy

Three key implications emerge from ASER 2019 'Early Years':

- ◆ Expand and strengthen the existing network of anganwadi centres. These institutions cater to large proportions of children well before they can enter pre-primary grades. The already significant scale of this network can be leveraged to reach those children who remain unreached. At the same time, the ability of these centres to implement appropriate

school readiness activities for 3- and 4-year-olds needs to be strengthened.

- ◆ Revisit state and national norms for age of entry to school. Data from ASER 2019 'Early Years' shows clearly that performance on cognitive, early language, early numeracy, and social and emotional learning tasks is closely related to children's age, with older children doing better than younger ones. Permitting underage children into primary grades puts them at a learning disadvantage which is difficult to overcome.
- ◆ Breadth of skills is important, and focusing too early on formal subject learning is counter-productive. ASER 2019 data shows a clear relationship between children's performance on cognitive tasks and measures of early language and early numeracy, suggesting that a focus on activities that strengthen cognitive skills rather than subject learning in the early years may generate substantial benefits in terms of children's future learning. The entire age band from 4 to 8 needs to be seen as a continuum and curriculum progression across grades and schooling stages should be designed accordingly. For an effective and implementable curriculum, the process of designing, planning, piloting, and finalizing needs to keep ground realities in mind.

Government Initiatives

India is home to the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme, which is among the largest and oldest public sector initiatives for early childhood development in the world. More recently, India has developed additional important schemes, policies and frameworks, such as the National Early Childhood Care and Education (NECCE) Policy

(2013); the National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum Framework (2014); and the draft Framework for Implementation of Samagra Shiksha (Integrated Scheme for School Education), which for the first time brings the pre-primary stage under the same umbrella as all other levels of schooling. Most recently, the draft National Education Policy 2019 underlines the importance of early childhood education and prescribes guidelines for providing pre-primary education.

The draft National Education Policy 2019 acknowledges, "A major part of this (learning) crisis appears to be occurring well before children even enter Grade 1. Far too many children are enrolling in Grade 1 before the age of 6, due to a lack of any suitable pre-primary options (and limited ECCE); these are often the children that remain the most behind in primary school and beyond." Worldwide research tells us that lack of access to an appropriate environment and activities means that many children do not have the skills and abilities expected when they enter school, and therefore have difficulty coping with the school curriculum. Once they fall behind, it is difficult to catch up.

In India, NITI Aayog's vision and strategy document, Three-year Action Agenda (2017-18 to 2019-20), seeks to orient the system towards outcomes and implement a time-bound program with focus on ensuring that all children attain basic skills. Focusing on quality education, the central RTE (Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009) rules have been amended in 2017 to include class-wise, subject-wise learning outcomes for all elementary classes and also prepare guidelines for putting into practice Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation, to achieve the defined learning outcomes.



Conclusion

Most policy documents related to education suggest that it is indispensable to ensure 'quality' and 'developmentally appropriate' education in the early years. The answer is not only to ensure that children attend preschool followed by primary school, but also to ensure that these provide environments that help children to grow and thrive. As a country, we have acknowledged that we have a crisis of learning on hand. Now it is time to understand the contours of the problem and take decisions accordingly, so that year on year there is progress. The first step to lift up the learning trajectory of children is to ensure foundational skills. To enable millions of children to learn how to read, to comprehend and to calculate we need a massive 'catch up' effort. This 'catch up' needs a 'push forward' and not a 'hold back'. We need to believe that the real right to education is not only in terms of years of schooling but 'value added' in terms of learning; first foundational skills, then higher level capabilities and knowledge, and finally to being able to cope with a dynamic and changing wide world beyond.

General Studies Paper- II

Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/ Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.



5. KHELO INDIA : REVITALIZING SPORTS CULTURE IN INDIA

Why in News?

2020 Khelo India Games are being conducted in Guwahati from 10th January to 22nd January are the national level multidisciplinary grassroot games in India held for two categories, namely under-17 years school students and under-21 college students. They became India's first digital games, going completely paperless, finishing all their processes on their high-tech digital platform.

Introduction

Sports shape the character of a person significantly. Concentration, alertness, team-work, focus and leadership are some of the skills that sport teaches anyone. Sports develop and encourage the spirit of healthy rivalry and competition. They teach us coolness, courage and self-control. It inculcates team-spirit, a sense of comradeship and discipline. A sportsman has to obey his captain and accept the judgment of umpires and referees. He learns to place the interests of the team above considerations of self. Thus, sports play a vital role in imparting complete education. Also it breeds the sportsman spirit which enables everyone to accept failure and defeats in a positive way and learn from such events.

UN in one of its reports has highlighted the importance of sports to the society and wellbeing of humans. According to it, "Sport's unique and universal power to attract, motivate and inspire makes it a highly effective tool for engaging and empowering individuals, communities and even countries to take action to improve their health. Sport can also be a powerful means of mobilizing more resources in the global fight against disease, but this potential is only just beginning to be realized."

According to the WHO, "experience and scientific evidence show that regular participation in appropriate physical activity and sport provides people of both sexes and all ages and conditions, including persons with disabilities, with a wide range of physical, social and mental health benefits. It improves diet and discourages the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs. It helps to reduce violence, enhance functional capacity, and promote social interaction and integration."

Governance of Sports in India
Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (MYAS): The Department of Sports at MYAS is the apex government body for sports in India; it is primarily responsible for funding the management and development of sports infrastructure, and formulating sports development programmes. It also provides funding and recognition status to NSFs that abide by its guidelines.
Sports Authority of India (SAI): SAI maintains government stadia, releases funds sanctioned by MYAS to NSFs, manages sports academic institutions and training centers, and runs training and talent scouting schemes. It is responsible for carrying out the objectives laid out by the MYAS.
Indian Olympic Association (IOA): IOA is the Indian representative for the International Olympic Committee (IOC); it is an autonomous body that enforces the Olympic charter over NSFs of Olympic sports. It also organises the National Games and liaises with the government for financial assistance.
National Sports Federation (NSFs): NSFs are autonomous bodies responsible for promoting their respective sports and organising tournaments; they are assisted by state and district sports associations. NSFs play a pivotal role in developing a sport, as they work at the base level, promoting a sport right from school and village levels up to the national level.

India's Status in Sport

India is a youthful country where 65% of population is less than the age of 35

years. If we look at the age group of 15-29 years, 27.5 of our population fall in this bracket. These numbers make India one of the youngest countries in the world. However when we look at the performance of Indian sports in major games like the Olympics and Asian Games, the medals won doesn't commensurate with the population. Also there is a rise in lifestyle related diseases in the country, one of the big reasons for this being lack of exercise/games/sports. Thus Khelo India was launched in January 2018 with an aim to promote mass participation in sports.

It is aimed to improve India's performance in sporting events. The positive approach of holistic development and creating a culture of sports is better than any isolated approach targeted on any particular game or an event.

Khelo India Youth Games has been introduced to establish India as a sporting super power by building a strong framework for all sports played in our country and reviving the sports culture in India.

Challenges to Sporting Culture

Today India has no sporting culture. Barring cricket, the condition of all other games is pathetic. We have Cricketers who are billionaires, at the same time; we have national sportsmen who sell tea. This mismatch has aggravated the situation leading to slow death of several local games of rural India. This can be well acknowledged by the fact the country is the worst-performing Olympic country, given its size.

- ◆ The Parliament Standing Committee on Human Resource Development (1998) studied a wide range of issues concerning

Sports and emphasized the need for bringing about reforms in sports management and governance in order to make it more dynamic, responsive, responsible and result-oriented. Some of the major problems identified by the Committee include:

- ♦ The lack of sports culture in the country;
- ♦ The non-integration of sports with the formal education system;
- ♦ The lack of coordination between all stakeholders;
- ♦ The inadequacy of sports infrastructure;
- ♦ The inadequate participation of women in sports; and
- ♦ The lack of effective sports systems for talent identification and training and fair selection of teams..
- ♦ **Social Approach:** Modern India became apathetic to sports as career because the entire new middle class looked education as a means to get jobs and earn sustainable living. Additionally, people in developing country finds it expensive buying sporting goods and support diets and regimen along with gym and federation fees.
- ♦ **Harassment:** 45 cases of sexual harassment were reported from 24 SAI institutes over the last 10 years, the nodal body to administer Olympic sports in the country asserted that a "robust" system and substantive "deterrents" are in place to deal with such cases. As per SAI records, since 2011 till 2019, the SAI received 35 complaints of sexual harassment out of which penalty was imposed in 13 cases, while inquiry is in progress in 15 cases. Three were found to be false allegations, while two accused were acquitted by the court.

One accused committed suicide while another complaint was withdrawn. Out of these 35 cases, 27 were against coaches while eight were against SAI officials. The punishments, which currently range from transfers to cuts in pay and pension to suspensions and bans, ought to be more stringent.

- ♦ **Dominance of Cricket:** Cricket domination over other sports is sharply visible. If on one hand BCCI is the one of the richest sports body on the globe, there are other sports bodies in India who do not have funds to finance basic infrastructure and logistics for sportspersons.
- ♦ **Unrecognition:** Sports and sports events are not recognised. There is no reward policy for the achievers, so there is no incentive for people to take up sports as a career. There is no encouragement to the players in respect of financial resources, infrastructure. Proper coaching associated with standard techniques is not being imparted to the potential sports personnel.
- ♦ **Administrative Failure:** Poor implementation of Schemes. Government initiatives like in every other sector has failed. Thus, we are at square one since independence. Many sports federations have been established but due to lack of sound financial backing these federations have become nominal. Organising bodies of sports are lacking in discipline, coordination and control. Selection process is skeptical and everytime fingers are raised.
- ♦ **Certified Instructors:** One important factor contributing to poor sports culture is that physical education teachers appointed in schools generally do not come from sports background although these teachers have diplomas and degrees to their credit.

Khelo India Addressing Medal Draught

The revamped Khelo India Scheme was launched during the financial year 2017-18 with a view to achieving the twin objectives of mass participation and promotion of excellence in sports. The vision of the revamped Khelo India is to infuse sports culture and achieve sporting excellence in the country. The mission as stated in the revamped scheme is to encourage sports for all thus allowing the population across gender and all age groups to harness the power of sports through its cross-cutting influence, namely, holistic development of children & youth, community development, social integration, gender equality, healthy lifestyle, national pride and economic opportunities related to sports development.

Under the Khelo India the identified sports talents will be given the option to join SAI National Sports Academies, State Sports Academies or Sports Academies established by private sector. Grants-in-aid will be provided for establishment, operation and maintenance of sports academies in respect of identified disciplines to Sports Authority of India, State Governments or to private sector or sports person under Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode for facilitating and supplementing Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) programme (for 8 years). The best academies might be at National, Regional or State level, both in public and private sector. Academies will be identified for need-based support, both recurring and non-recurring, by inviting proposals from suitable entities. A system would be developed for rating of academics to facilitate selection of appropriate academics for support. At least one academy for Para Athletes will be supported. The Khelo India programme also aims to identify talented players in priority sports disciplines at various

levels by a High-Powered Committee. These players will be provided annual financial assistance of INR 5 lakh per annum for eight years.

Khelo India is not only about winning medals. It is an effort to give strength to a mass movement for playing more. The focus is on every aspect that would make sports more popular across the nation. It is clear that these games will highlight India's young sporting talent and showcase India's sports potential. The hope is to mentor talent and to convert it into Olympic medals by 2024. The systematic long term approach of Khelo India most certainly marks a new dawn for the world of sports in India.

Standing Committee on Khelo India

The Standing Committee on Human Resource Development (Chair: Dr. Satyanarayan Jatiya) submitted its report on the Khelo India scheme on December 10, 2019. Key observations and recommendations are :

- ◆ **Administration:** An eminent sportsperson or sports administrator should be appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of the General Council to oversee the implementation of the scheme. As such a person would be sensitive to problems faced by athletes and could act as an interface between athletes and the administration.
- ◆ **Utilisation of funds:** The Committee observed that there has been uner-utilisation of funds. But, Department of Sports specified several constraints in the implementation of the scheme such as inadequate funds, human resources and sports infrastructure. The Committee recommended that the Department should first utilise funds allocated to it, and then mobilise other resources. Other resources could include funds from private and corporate sectors,

public private partnerships to create sports infrastructure, and converging the scheme with the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme.

- ◆ **Talent identification:** The Committee observed that the process of talent identification was complex and lengthy. The Committee noted that repeated tests for sportspersons can lead to favouritism and regionalism in the selection process. It recommended that a single window selection procedure should be followed.
- ◆ **Shortage of coaches:** The Committee recommended that the vacant posts for coaches should be filled expediently. Further, the Department should collaborate with coaches running private sports academies to help train athletes.
- ◆ **Sports infrastructure:** The Committee recommended that the Ministry should develop sports infrastructure in these states and tribal areas where unassessed sporting talent may exist to ensure uniformity in sports infrastructure across states. To increase sports infrastructure, the Committee recommended that private residential schools with sports facilities of international standards in at least four disciplines should be identified. Such schools should be developed as centres for sports excellence in every district of the country.
- ◆ **Education:** The Khelo India scheme identifies and trains players for international sports events such as the Olympics. The Committee recommended that the academies should have educational and hostel facilities so that trainees can complete their basic education. Further, training spaces in existing private schools, colleges and academies with hostels, should



be identified. These may be affiliated under the Khelo India scheme and provided with certified coaches for the purpose of training sportspersons.

Way Forward

The question of sports in India is not merely a matter of 'CHILD'S PLAY'. It's a question of the healthy growth of the Indian youth, indeed, a question of the very future of India. 'Sportsmanship' is a central value for nation-building. India has a long way to go before it emerges as a serious player in the world of sports. Khelo India is a remarkable initiative and holds a promise of healthy, motivated and sport loving nation. Though the administrative, implementational and policy lacunas have become a part of India's bureaucratic management, but a the winds of change signals a healthy shit and hopes to a medal winning and sports champion nation.

General Studies Paper- II

Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Topic: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance-applications, models, successes, limitations and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.



6. INDIA'S RISING INFLATION AND ITS IMPACT

Why in News?

The inflation devil is back and at the wrong time. India's retail inflation accelerated to 7.35% in December on the back of rising food prices. Growth in oil prices have added to the uptick which presents a new risk to inflation in India. CPI has breached the upper end of the Reserve Bank of India's 2-6 percent target band for the first time since July 2016. It has set off fears over whether India is entering a period of slow growth accompanied by high inflation, in other words, stagflation. Global economic turbulence combined with domestic policy turmoil and cyclical economic slowdown can lead to diminishing incomes and pushdown the standards of living. In December RBI kept its key interest rate unchanged as it cited, 'much higher than expected' inflation for its decision.

Introduction

Inflation is a sustained increase in the general price level of goods and services in an economy over a period of time. When the general price level rises, each unit of rupee buys fewer goods and services; consequently, inflation reflects a reduction in the purchasing power per unit of money – a loss of real value in the medium of exchange and unit of account i.e. a rupees, within the economy.

Inflation is a necessary evil which should be tamed at higher levels but should be supported at lower levels. A healthy inflation drives economic growth, where as higher inflation erodes the real value of the money, while low inflation leads to stagnation in the economy. A moderate level of inflation keeps the economic engine growing with stability.

There are two main set of inflation indices for measuring price level

changes in India – the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) and the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The, WPI, where prices are quoted from wholesalers, is constructed by Office of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Commerce. Two ministries – Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) and Ministry of Labour and Employment are engaged in the construction of CPI where the prices are quoted from retailers. In 2014, RBI has selected the 'All India CPI' (Base Year - 2012) as the inflation index to target inflation under its new inflation targeting monetary policy framework. This decision has made CPI as the prime inflation index.

In 2016, India adopted an inflation target of 4% for the next five years under the monetary policy framework in line with the government's focus on macroeconomic stability to boost growth while keeping prices in check. The Ministry of Finance has notified that consumer inflation target for RBI until March 31, 2021, with an upper tolerance level of 6% and lower limit of 2%.

Current Scenario

The consumer price index (CPI) rose 7.35% in December, hitting the highest since 2014 and crossing the threshold limit set by the Reserve Bank of India. Price pressures were high in both rural and urban areas, driven by food prices. Food price inflation surged to 14%, led by vegetables (60%), pulses (15%), meat and fish (9.6%), and eggs (8.8%). A similar picture emerged from the wholesale price index (WPI) data. While overall inflation, at 2.6%, is not very high, inflation in food articles at 13.2% is close to the CPI rate. The culprit again is food inflation, driven by vegetables (70%), cereals (7.7%), pulses (13.1%), and egg, meat and fish (6.2%).

At the same time, core inflation has stayed low, ruling out any possibility of a demand recovery. The core inflation measure, which excludes food and fuel and light groups, grew at only 3.5% in December, rising marginally from its 3.26% value in November 2019. It would be worrisome indeed if core inflation were to shoot up or if food inflation does not cool down in the next couple of months. Also, the effects of the increase in telecom tariffs, rail tickets and in fuel prices need to be closely watched.

On 7th January, the ministry of statistics released India's advance estimates of national income for 2019-20, pegging the economy's growth rate this financial year at 5%. This is bound to dampen economic sentiment. While the economy has been showing some green shoots — GST collection has been more than Rs1 lakh crore for two consecutive months, Index of Industrial Production (IIP) turned positive in December after contracting for three months and Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) has been rising — big-ticket consumer spending continues to be fragile. Car sales contracted for the eighteenth consecutive month in December, according to data realised by the Society for Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM).

The rise in retail price inflation to a nearly six-year high of 7.35% in December has led to increasing worries that the Indian economy may be headed towards stagflation. The current rise in retail inflation has been attributed mainly to the rise in the prices of vegetables such as onions. Still, the steady rise in wider inflation figures over the last few months amidst falling economic growth has led to fears of stagflation.

Fears of Stagflation

Stagflation is a condition of slow economic growth and relatively high unemployment, accompanied by rising prices. It can also be defined as inflation and declining gross domestic product (GDP). The Indian economy has now faced six consecutive quarters of slowing growth since 2018. Economic growth in the second quarter ending September, the most recent quarter for which data is available, was just 4.5%. For the whole year, growth is expected to be around 5%. Most economists have blamed the slowdown on the lack of sufficient consumer demand for goods and services. In fact, insufficient demand was cited as the primary reason behind the low price inflation that was prevalent in the economy until recently.

But stagflation essentially ties the hands of the government and the central bank from taking countercyclical policy steps. With retail inflation now well above the RBI's targeted range of 2-6%, the central bank is unlikely to assist the economy any time soon by cutting its benchmark interest rate. If the central bank decides to inject fresh money into the economy either by cutting its benchmark interest rate or other unconventional means, it could lead to a further rise in prices and make things worse. A similar rise in inflation could result if the government engages in deficit spending that is funded by the RBI. On the one hand, the slowdown in growth could affect peoples' incomes. On the other, higher inflation could cause a reduction in people's standard of living as they can afford fewer things.

Causes of Inflation

- ◆ **Onion Tears:** Rise in onion prices, which did contribute to vegetable inflation. The government has been importing onions to deal with the situation and analysts expect the prices to start coming down. Inflation should come down in

January with the new onion crop in and prices moving down.

- ◆ **Not Just Onions:** Data shows a sharp rise in inflation in almost all vegetables along with cereals (mainly wheat and coarse cereals), pulses and personal care items. Clearly, the inflation story is not just an onion story, and is far more widespread and serious. However, attributing this to seasonal factors would be missing the forest for the trees. Onions, for example, have a weight of only 0.64% in the CPI and 0.16% in the WPI. Additionally, higher onion prices could have been perceived with more optimism had they led to an increase in farmers' incomes. Onion prices have seasonally witnessed a greater degree of volatility due to supply-side factors and role of certain policy measures (like MSP ratesetting).
- ◆ **Supply Side Issues:** Untimely rains, drought in some regions and crop losses due to local factors did contribute to supply shocks.
- ◆ **Wheat Conundrum:** Why are wheat prices rising if wheat production has been at record levels? Government policy has created an artificial scarcity in the market. In the run-up to the general elections, the government procured 34 million tonnes of wheat in 2019, on top of the 36 million tonnes procured in 2018. These are the highest procurement levels since 2012-13. But it failed to distribute the wheat through the public distribution system, so there just wasn't enough to go around. As of January, total stocks with Food Corporation of India (FCI) stand at 75 million tonnes, 33 million tonnes of it wheat, and the rest, rice. This implies that almost all the wheat that the FCI procured before the polls is still with it. This is almost a third of the country's

total wheat production. For the record, the buffer norms for FCI prescribe 21.4 million tonnes of stock at the start of each year. The resultant artificial scarcity has not only pushed up wheat prices, but also led to higher demand for coarse grains and fodder, almost all of which have seen double-digit inflation.

- ◆ **Policy Failures:** In pulses, untimely imports flooded the markets and contributed to lower price realization last year, further leading to lower production this year. Within cereals, wholesale wheat prices have risen 8% this year while retail prices gained 6.3%, the highest in five years.
- ◆ **Slipping Oil:** Volatile crude oil prices amid tensions between the United States and Iran are likely to add to price pressures in India, the world's third-biggest oil importer.
- ◆ **Global Turbulence:** The U.S.-China trade war is rippling across the globe, putting a brake on world growth. That and various internal factors have been weighing on China's growth, which some economists expect to slow to just under 6% this year. The trade fallout is hurting India's exports as well, but the bigger problem is the slide in domestic consumption. International Monetary Fund Chief Economist Gita Gopinath said in December that poor business sentiment and declining rural consumption were among the reasons for weakness in India's economy, adding that its growth forecast was likely to be cut.

The Government's View

During a heated debate in Parliament on a slowdown in the economy and related job losses, members of the opposition parties said the country faced an "economic emergency".

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman acknowledged that there was a slowdown but said there was no recession.

"Growth may have come down, but it's not recession yet or it won't be recession ever," she said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has taken several steps, including cutting corporate tax, a bailout package for the cash-strapped housing sector, promises to speed infrastructure spending and a rollback of newly introduced taxes on foreign investors, to boost investments and bolster economic growth.

However, all policies proposed by the government to address the slowdown seem to focus on businesses and not individual earners.

The slowdown comes on the back of controversial flagship reforms implemented by the Modi government in the past few years: There was a sudden clampdown in November 2016 on more than 80 percent of the currency in circulation in a bid to crack down on the black market, followed by a massive sales tax overhaul the next summer that created a lot of confusion and compliance burdens, especially for small traders who account for about a third of the economy.

Government Efforts Against Slowdown in 2019

- Eased foreign investment rules in retail, manufacturing and coal mining-**Aug. 29**
- Merged 10 state owned banks to create four big lenders-**Aug. 30**
- Announced \$1.4 Bn fund to salvage stalled residential projects-**Sept 14**
- Cut corporate tax to 22% in a \$20 Bn stimulus-**Sept 20**
- Privatised oil refiner, ship owner in biggest sales push in a decade-**Nov. 20**

Fire Fighting

According to the mandate, the RBI will try to keep CPI inflation at around 4 per cent, with a band of 2 percentage

points on either side. If the inflation moves outside 2-6 per cent for three successive quarters, the RBI will have to give a written explanation to the Centre why it failed to contain the inflation within the range. Inflation is a period of rising prices. The primary policy for reducing inflation is monetary policy – in particular, raising interest rates reduces demand and helps to bring inflation under control.

Other policies to reduce inflation can include tight fiscal policy (higher tax), supply-side policies, wage control, appreciation in the exchange rate and control of the money supply. (a form of monetary policy). However, in theory, there are a variety of tools to control inflation including:

1. **Monetary policy:** Higher interest rates reduce demand in the economy, leading to lower economic growth and lower inflation.
2. **Control of money supply:** Monetarists argue there is a close link between the money supply and inflation, therefore controlling money supply can control inflation. (Other tools includes: Variable reserve ratios, Open Market Operations)
3. **Supply-side policies:** policies to increase the competitiveness and efficiency of the economy, putting downward pressure on long-term costs.
4. **Fiscal policy:** a higher rate of income tax could reduce spending, demand and inflationary pressures.
5. **Wage controls:** trying to control wages could, in theory, help to reduce inflationary pressures. However, apart from the 1970s, it has been rarely used.
6. **Indexation:** it is a method by which the prices, wages and contracts are partially or wholly compensated for any changes in the general price level. It is

not a good method to counter inflation but rather than adjusts the monetary differences.

Experts View

- ◆ Economists are divided along ideological lines on what needs to be done for an economy to recover from stagflation. Some economists suggest that policymakers should stop worrying about inflation and instead focus exclusively on boosting aggregate demand in the economy.
- ◆ India's nominal GDP growth, a measure of the overall level of spending in the economy, is expected to hit a 42-year low of 7.5% this year. They consider the RBI's target of keeping inflation from rising above 6% as an arbitrary one and believe that the central bank should further ease its policy stance and the government should spend more on infrastructure and other sectors to boost the economy.
- ◆ Some economists even see the severe drop in consumer demand simply as a symptom rather than as the primary cause behind the current slowdown. According to this view, it is natural for spending to drop after the end of a credit-fuelled boom. India's growth rate, it is worth noting, was boosted by the availability of easy credit over the last decade, or even longer. Further credit expansion by the central bank and debt-fuelled government spending, these economists argue, will not lead to genuine and sustainable economic growth but only to another unsustainable boom followed by a bust. So they instead advocate supply-side reforms to bring about genuine economic growth.
- ◆ Another point raised by these economists is that inflation on the broader level, as measured by

the core inflation figures, remains within the RBI's target range. Core inflation in December was at 3.7%. So greater spending by the government and the RBI will not cause inflation levels to run out of control, they argue.

Way Forward

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the annual budget for 2020-21 on February 1, and is widely expected to increase spending on

infrastructure and cut taxes, which some economists fear could further stoke inflation. The global economic scenario is not much to be blamed here, rather structural reforms leading to RBI's autonomy and tuning of the monetary and fiscal policies. The aggregate demand can only be increased by rising government spending and better ease of doing business. The government need to put money in common man's pocket and to ensure that his/her real income does not erode. RBI cannot be

blamed for everything, the policy and administrative deftness is the need of the hour.

General Studies Paper- III

Topic: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

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7. GLOBAL ELECTRICITY GRID : AN AMBITIOUS PROPOSAL OF INDIA

Why in News?

India has started consultations with the World Bank as its technical partner to implement an ambitious global electricity grid plan pitched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. With the world grappling with climate change concerns, the multilateral funding organization (World Bank) may prepare a feasibility report for the project announced in October 2018, that can further bolster India's image as a clean energy champion.

Introduction

The concept of cross-border power system connectivity has gained increasing support from Governments and international organizations, given the benefits it can offer in lowering costs, diversifying supply, and tapping into renewable and low carbon energy resources.

Since the concept of the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) Energy Ring – an interconnected electricity system covering South Asia – was first announced in 2004, progress has been made in developing bilateral electricity interconnection and trade in several South Asian countries. Progress in concluding international agreements

on sustainable development and climate change provide a new lens through which to examine South Asia's power grid interconnection. However, this progress has not proceeded at the same pace across the sub-region, and the vision of a SAARC Energy Ring still seems elusive. Other sub-regional blocs in the Asia-Pacific region are at varying stages of grid integration, most notably the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) which aims to establish an ASEAN Power Grid.

The Case of Global Grid

The proposed global grid plans to leverage solar power generated in one geography to feed the electricity demands of other nations. This comes against the backdrop of China's attempts to co-opt countries into its ambitious One Belt One Road initiative, a programme to invest billions of dollars in infrastructure projects, including railways, ports and power grids, across Asia, Africa and Europe.

One common grid is very advantageous to the participating nations. India has been supplying power to Bangladesh and Nepal and has been championing a South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) electricity grid minus Pakistan

to meet electricity demand in the region. Also, power-starved Bangladesh wants to buy electricity from large solar parks being set up in Gujarat and Rajasthan, with fostering cross-border energy trade being an important part of Prime Minister's South Asia-focused neighbourhood-first policy.

Interconnectors in South Asia

South Asia's interconnection will form a key building block to underpin the broader vision of an interconnected Asia-Pacific power system. The intersecting geography of South Asia through the land borders of Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh offers extensive possibilities for developing cross-border interconnections of national power grids. To date, interconnections have been developed between India-Nepal, India-Bhutan and India-Bangladesh. With India as a transit country, there are plans for Bangladesh to import electricity from Bhutan and Nepal.

ISA and other Energy Groupings

Initially, ISA envisaged 121 sunshine countries situated between the tropics

of Cancer and Capricorn as its members. Prime Minister Narendra Modi later announced the “universalization” of membership with India moving the proposal to make all United Nations members eligible for ISA membership. India has plans to help set up a global electricity grid that may initially aim to link countries such as Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam with the sub-continent as part of an evolving energy security architecture. The initial plans also involve setting up an under-sea link to connect with Oman in the West. However, the plan hasn’t gained traction in the backdrop of India-headquartered International Solar Alliance’s (ISA’s) drive to co-opt countries from South-East Asia facing problems with some countries holding back because of New Delhi’s decision to not join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership trade deal.

Prominent inter-governmental organizations in the energy sector include the Vienna-based Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and Paris-based International Energy Agency. Interestingly, India has pitched ISA as a counterweight to OPEC, with the fossil fuel consumers calling for a global consensus on “responsible pricing” against the backdrop of uncertain global oil prices.

SAARC power grid: SAARC Framework Agreement for Energy Cooperation (Electricity)

The SAARC Framework Agreement for Energy Cooperation (Electricity), signed at the 18th SAARC Summit held in November 2014, was a major step towards developing a SAARC market for electricity, and laid the legal and regulatory foundations for the SAARC Power Grid.

The Framework Agreement contains guiding provisions for infrastructure building and management of cross border power interconnections, a transmission

services agreement, electricity grid protection system, transmission access, trading arrangements including pricing and duty structure, and overall intergovernmental regulatory requirements. As the first step, the working details of the mandate for these provisions will have to be framed through further mutual consultations.

The SAARC member States need to initiate the process for making necessary amendments to their national policies as well as existing laws and regulations.

Opportunities for India

The geography of South Asia’s power grids offers many power connection opportunities at border interfaces, with India located at the centre of many of the power exchange opportunities as an energy supplier, exporter or transit country. To date, the greatest progress in the subregion has been made in bilateral interconnection and power trade between Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal. These countries have developed a series of interconnections to trade hydropower from Nepal and Bhutan, and to provide support to Bangladesh from India’s grid. At the same time progress on interconnection between SAARC’s two largest economies, India and Pakistan, is stagnant. The proposed interconnection between India and Sri Lanka is still at the feasibility stage.

National Grid is crucial to alleviating the pressure on countries to meet future electricity demand as populations grow and development multiplies per capita electricity consumption. For India, cross-border power trade is crucial. India’s peak national planning body, the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog in a 2015 report projected that demand for electricity would grow nearly three-fold from 762 TWh in 2012 to 2,239 TWh by 2030, with the fastest increases in residential and industrial sectors.

Cross-border power trade is also crucial to accelerating the potential for an increased renewables share in the energy mix. Without policy intervention, fossil fuel will continue to dominate (85 to 88 per cent) the energy mix with significant adverse impacts on the environment and other SDGs. The NITI Aayog report projects that under current trends, coal with a 52 per cent share (2030) will continue to be the dominant source in the primary energy mix followed by oil at 29 per cent and gas at 8 per cent. Cross-border power trade can also substitute for some of the fossil fuel imports that India will need in the future. India’s import dependence on fossil fuels is projected to rise from 32 per cent of the primary energy supply in 2012 to 45 per cent in 2030. For oil, import dependence would be more than 80 per cent, while for coal and gas, dependence would be 59 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively.

Way to Develop National Grid

South Asia, offer opportunities for a subregional approach to power generation and its efficient use. This requires joint investments for power generation and joint management of power distribution through cross-border grid interconnections and allied infrastructure. As well as the “hard” infrastructure of physical power grid interconnection, there is a need to: (a) develop the “soft” infrastructure for interconnection – the power trade agreements, harmonization of laws, regulations and standards – necessary for connecting adjoining power systems; and (b) strengthen the capacity of the institutions involved. A regional approach with optimal use of a diverse generation mix and trade can bring enhanced operational efficiency, economic gains and environmental benefits. There are, however, tradeoffs between gains in power system performance with issues such as national sovereignty and energy policy

independence. High levels of trust and cooperation, the formation of new institutions, and harmonization of the rules and standards of different national power systems are necessary prerequisites for integrating the power systems of South Asia.

Benefits of Power Grid

Regional electricity trade enabled through enhanced power grid connectivity is a key strategy for overcoming South Asia's energy sector challenges and delivering economic benefits for all participating countries. Interconnected systems deliver multiple benefits to linked countries across several dimensions. These include:

- ◆ Lower costs of electricity through more efficient utilization of subregional energy endowments and price arbitrage between countries;
- ◆ Lower operating costs of cross-border integrated systems;
- ◆ Input efficiency gains from greater scale of production; and
- ◆ Lower levels of required generating capacity due to centralized management of reserves and the smoothing of variations, both in generation and in load profiles.

Beyond these direct benefits, interconnected grids may also offer investors an improved investment

climate and attractive investment opportunities for private capital from efficiency gains in production and distribution chains, through enhanced reliability and stability of the shared power generation installations and by way of equitable distribution.

Cross-border power trade also has the potential to make importing countries less vulnerable to volatile electricity prices. Lower costs of power will play an important role in increasing access, affordability and per capita energy usage. In addition to direct economic benefits, regional cooperation and joint ownership can be expected to deliver important spillovers.

Conclusion

South Asia, like many other subregions, is working to deepen its integration in trade, infrastructure connectivity and financial cooperation. As part of this effort, the integration of the power grids of the countries in South Asia is a major component of overall subregional integration that can realize benefits across the social, environmental and economic pillars of development. South Asia offers a unique example for the application of a regional approach to electricity. It faces current electricity deficits, with a strong demand growth outlook, but at the same time has enormous unexploited generation potential. Since the

concept of the SAARC Energy Ring was advanced in 2004, several factors have emerged that can help to positively shape this endeavour; concerns over GHG emissions, the emergence of low-cost solar and wind power generation, and advances in HVDC technology are just some of these factors.

More bilateral and multilateral power trading can pave the way to developing a single interconnected power market in the SASEC region that will benefit all countries, some initiatives in this regard can already be seen, like the agreement to export power from a specific generator in Nepal to Bangladesh through transmission grid in India, and preliminary discussions for Bangladesh to invest in a hydropower plant in Bhutan. Based on this foundation the vision of 'Global Grid' can be envisaged. Although the plan is ambitious but not impossible.

General Studies Paper- II

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

General Studies Paper- III

Topic: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

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SEVEN SUBJECTIVE QUESTIONS WITH MODEL ANSWERS

1. Freedom of Speech and Expression on the Internet : A Fundamental Right

Q. Recently, Supreme Court has declared freedom of speech and expression on the internet a fundamental right. Discuss its implications.

Hints:

- ◆ Responding to a plea against the suspension of internet services in Jammu and Kashmir since last August, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court has observed that the right to freedom of speech and expression, as guaranteed to all citizens under the first section of that article, covers the right to go online. In effect, even if left unsaid, this would make net access a fundamental right.
- ◆ In recent months, there has been a spree of bans on access to Internet services in Indian states and Union Territories, for different reasons. The State governments have relied on Section 144, Code of Criminal Procedure 1973 to institute such bans. It is also argued that it is Section 69A of the Information Technology Act 2000, and the Website Blocking Rules, which set out the legal provision and procedure empowering the State to block access to the Internet (if at all it is necessary), and not Section 144, CrPC.
- ◆ The Supreme Court has also observed in its recent judgement on internet access that the government has to find way to administer without violating citizen's freedom of speech and expression and trade. Also, at a time when the government under the leadership of prime minister is making huge efforts and expenses for promoting digital government or e-government, the shutting down of the internet, on which the entire edifice of 'digital India' is based, defeats the purpose.
- ◆ Availability and access of internet becomes a must when the government in an attempt to expedite the service delivery has linked even the basic and essential services like rail, road and hospitals to some digital network.

2. National Policy for Rare Diseases-2020 : An Analysis

Q. Despite progress in recent years, effective or safe treatment is not available for most of the rare diseases in India. Elaborate.

Hints:

- ◆ A rare disease is a health condition of a particularly low prevalence that affects a small number of people compared with other prevalent diseases in the general population. So far only about 450 rare diseases have been recorded in India from tertiary care hospitals. The most common rare diseases include Haemophilia, Thalassemia, Sickle-cell Anaemia.
- ◆ The field of rare diseases is complex and heterogeneous and suffers from a deficit of medical and scientific knowledge. The landscape of rare diseases is constantly evolving as there are new rare diseases and conditions being identified and reported regularly in medical literature. Apart from a few rare diseases, where significant progress has been made, the field is still at a nascent stage.
- ◆ The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), on January 13, 2020, released its National Draft Policy on rare diseases for the treatment of 450 such diseases. The Centre first prepared such a policy in 2017 and appointed a committee in 2018 to review it.
- ◆ Recent developments have not given the rare disease community much to celebrate. Since these diseases are not found commonly, doctors are typically unaware about them and therefore either misdiagnose or do not diagnose them. Unfortunately, the new rare disease policy has reinforced the premise that public health is a game of numbers, not lives. The government must not abandon the rare disease community to the market mechanism. Policymakers must address fiscal constraints without devaluing lives of entire patient populations.

3. The Conundrum of Religious Liberty and Individual Right

Q. Right to practice religion is subject to 'public order, morality and health' under Article 25(1). What do these terms actually mean?

Hints:

- ◆ A religion is certainly a matter of faith and is not necessarily theistic. Religion has its basis in “a system of beliefs or doctrines which are regarded by those who profess that religion as conducive to their spiritual well being”, but it would not be correct to say that religion is nothing else but a doctrine or belief.
- ◆ Over the years, the Supreme Court has attempted to do so by carving out a jurisprudence that virtually allows it to sit in theological judgment over different practices. It has done this by recognising that it is only those practices that are “essential” to religion that enjoy constitutional protection.
- ◆ Thus, both Articles 25 and 26 are subject to public order, morality, and health; and further, Article 25 is also subject to other fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution, and to the state’s power to bring in social reform laws. These two impulses, and their expression in various provisions of the Constitution, speak to an observation made by Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer, one of the foremost drafters of the Constitution: that in our country, religion and social life are inextricably linked.
- ◆ In this particular social and religious milieu, which seems to be unique to Indian society, article 17 together with article 15 (2) (4) and article 25 (2) (b) have the revolutionary potential to carry forward social reform and to transform the caste ridden Indian society into an egalitarian social order, wherein the inalienable worth and dignity of each individual person as a moral subject is affirmed and protected by the secular law of the Constitution.

4. Annual Status of Education Report 2019 : An Overview

Q. The first step to lift up the learning trajectory of children is to ensure foundational skills. In this context highlight the policy implications of ASER 2019.

Hints:

- ◆ Expand and strengthen the existing network of anganwadi centres. These institutions cater to large proportions of children well before they can enter

pre-primary grades. The already significant scale of this network can be leveraged to reach those children who remain unreached. At the same time, the ability of these centres to implement appropriate school readiness activities for 3- and 4-year-olds needs to be strengthened.

- ◆ Revisit state and national norms for age of entry to school. Data from ASER 2019 'Early Years' shows clearly that performance on cognitive, early language, early numeracy, and social and emotional learning tasks is closely related to children's age, with older children doing better than younger ones. Permitting underage children into primary grades puts them at a learning disadvantage which is difficult to overcome.
- ◆ Breadth of skills is important, and focusing too early on formal subject learning is counter-productive. ASER 2019 data shows a clear relationship between children's performance on cognitive tasks and measures of early language and early numeracy, suggesting that a focus on activities that strengthen cognitive skills rather than subject learning in the early years may generate substantial benefits in terms of children's future learning.
- ◆ Most policy documents related to educations suggest that it is indispensable to ensure 'quality' and 'developmentally appropriate' education in the early years.

5. Khelo India : Revitalizing Sports Culture in India

Q. India has a long way to go before it emerges as a serious player in the world of sports. Do you agree? Give reasons.

Hints:

- ◆ India is a youthful country where 65% of population is less than the age of 35 years. If we look at the age group of 15-29 years, 27.5% of our population fall in this bracket. These numbers make India one of the youngest countries in the world. However when we look at the performance of Indian sports in major games like the Olympics and Asian Games, the medals won doesn't commensurate with the population.
- ◆ Today India has no sporting culture. Barring cricket, the condition of all other games is pathetic. We have Cricketers who are billionaires, at the same time; we have national sportsmen who sell tea. This mismatch has aggravated the situation leading to slow death of several local games of rural India. This can be well

acknowledged by the fact the country is the worst-performing Olympic country, given its size.

- ◆ The question of sports in India is not merely a matter of 'CHILD'S PLAY'. It's a question of the healthy growth of the Indian youth, indeed, a question of the very future of India. 'Sportsmanship' is a central value for nation-building. India has a long way to go before it emerges as a serious player in the world of sports.
- ◆ Khelo India is a remarkable initiative and holds a promise of healthy, motivated and sport loving nation. Though the administrative, implementational and policy lacunas have become a part of India's bureaucratic management, but at the winds of change signals a healthy shift and hopes to a medal winning and sports champion nation.

6. India's Rising Inflation and Its Impact

Q. With retail inflation surpassing RBI's safety slab and looming threat of stagflation, what is the threat of stagflation?

Hints:

- ◆ In 2016, India adopted an inflation target of 4% for the next five years under the monetary policy framework. The Ministry of Finance has notified that consumer inflation target for RBI until March 31, 2021, with an upper tolerance level of 6% and lower limit of 2%. The consumer price index (CPI) rose 7.35% in December, hitting the highest since 2014.
- ◆ Stagflation is a condition of slow economic growth and relatively high unemployment, accompanied by rising prices. On the one hand, the slowdown in growth could affect peoples' incomes. On the other, higher inflation could cause a reduction in people's standard of living as they can afford fewer things.
- ◆ With retail inflation now well above the RBI's targeted range of 2-6%, the central bank is unlikely to assist the economy any time soon by cutting its benchmark interest rate. If the central bank decides to inject fresh

money into the economy either by cutting its benchmark interest rate or other unconventional means, it could lead to a further rise in prices and make things worse. A similar rise in inflation could result if the government engages in deficit spending that is funded by the RBI. On the one hand, the slowdown in growth could affect peoples' incomes. On the other, higher inflation could cause a reduction in people's standard of living as they can afford fewer things.

7. Global Electricity Grid : An Ambitious Proposal of India

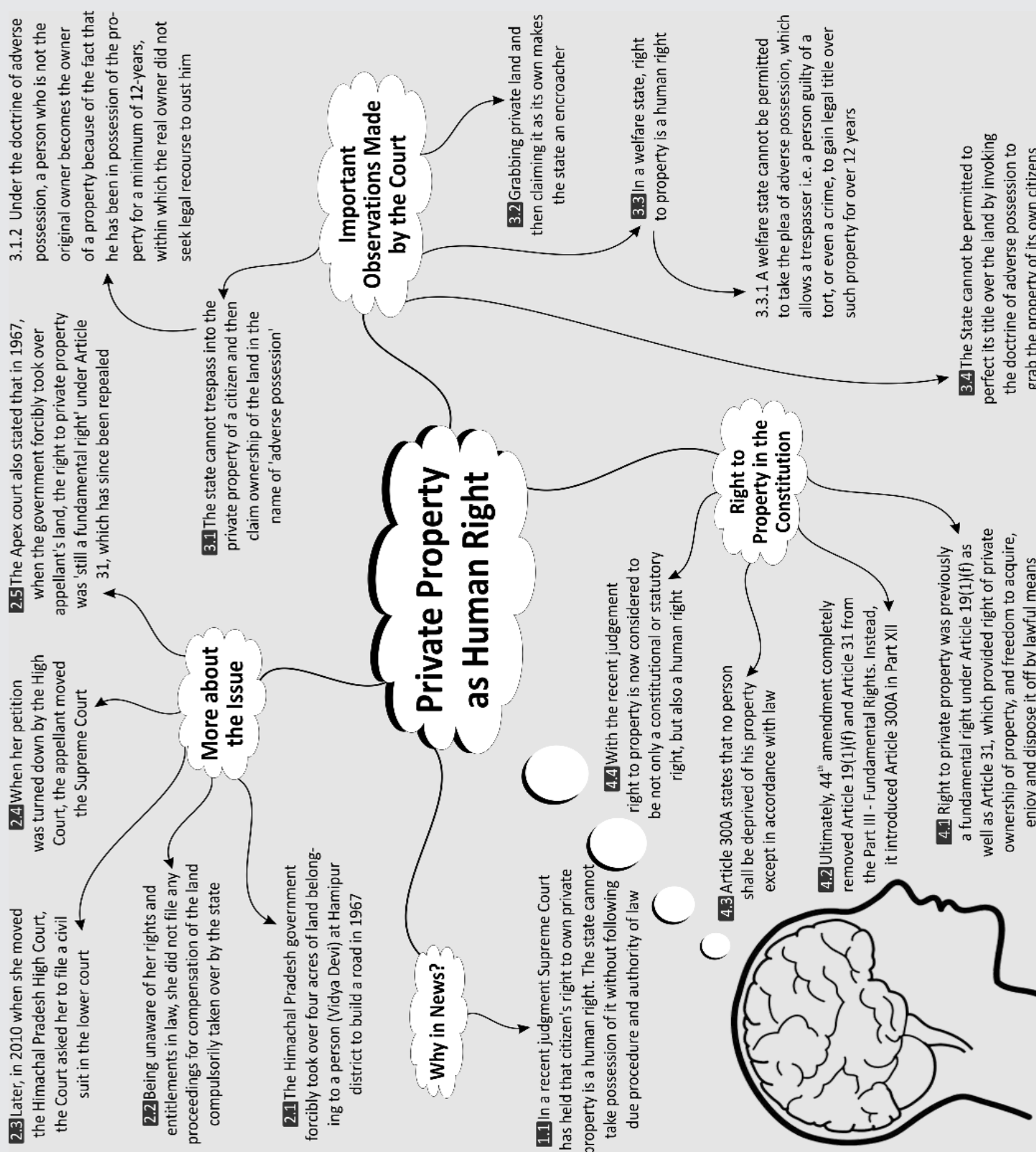
Q. Progress in concluding international agreements on sustainable development and climate change provide a new lens through which to examine South Asia's power grid interconnection. Discuss.

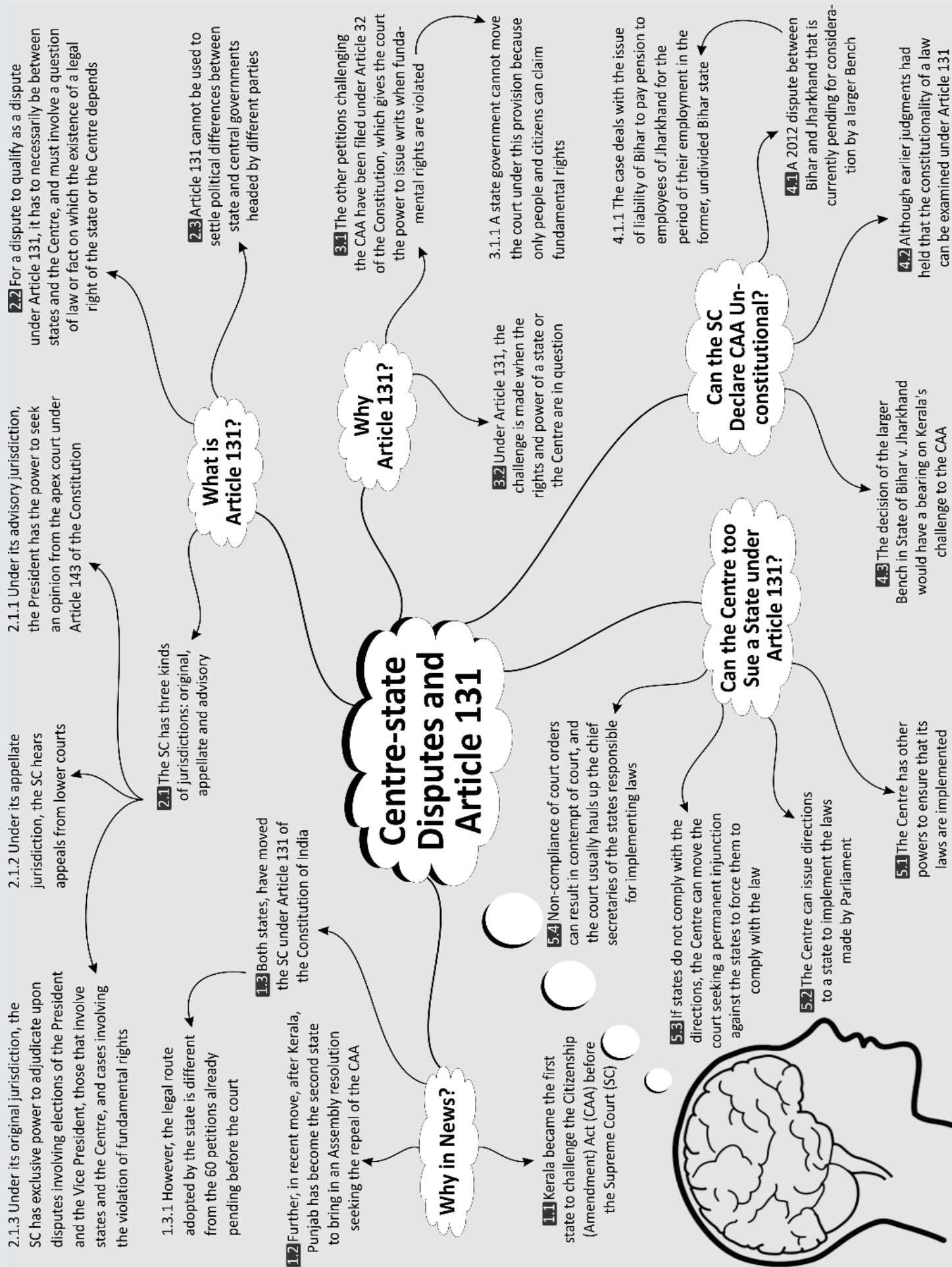
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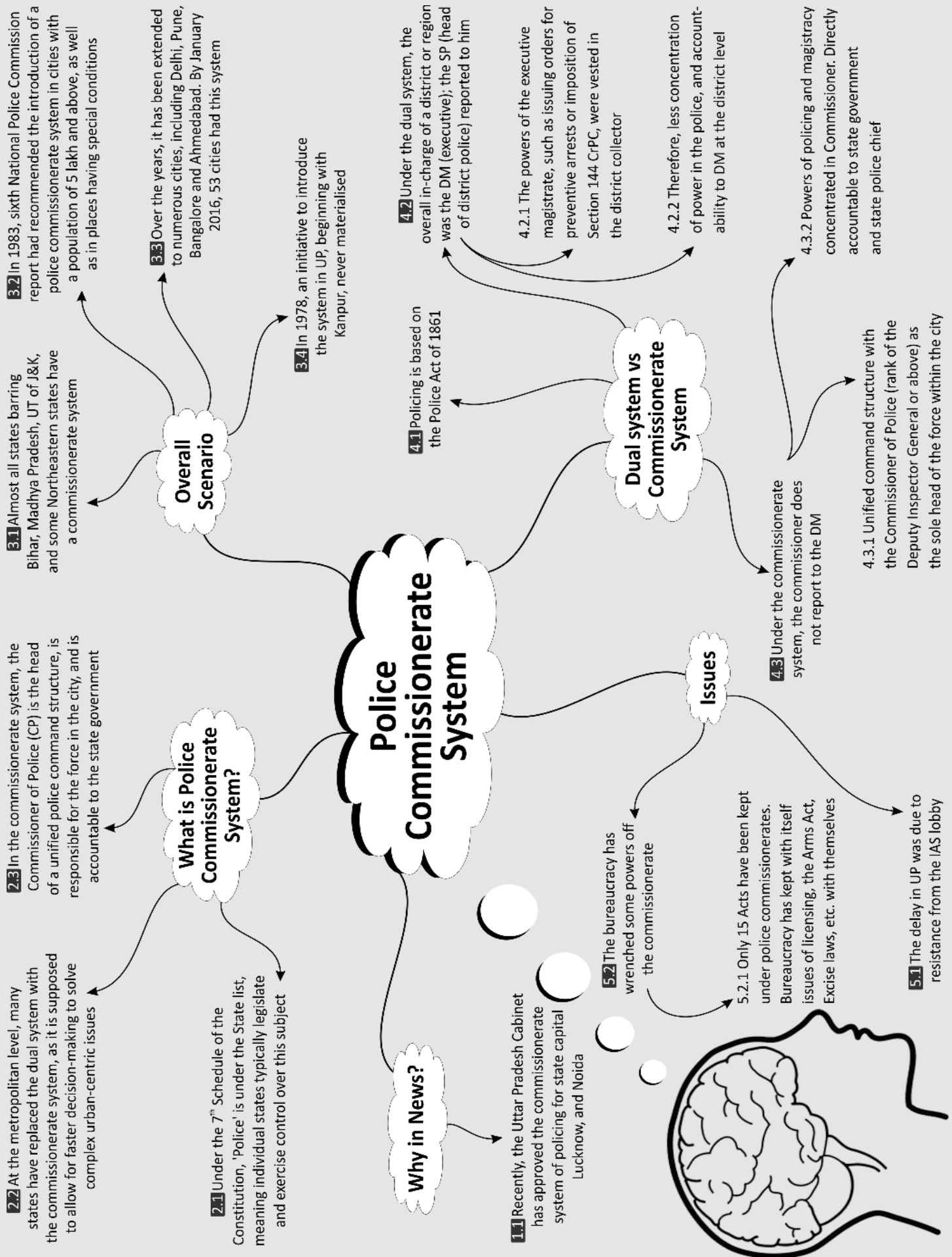
- ◆ The concept of cross-border power system connectivity has gained increasing support from Governments and international organizations, given the benefits it can offer in lowering costs, diversifying supply, and tapping into renewable and low carbon energy resources.
- ◆ South Asia's interconnection will form a key building block to underpin the broader vision of an interconnected Asia-Pacific power system.
- ◆ The intersecting geography of South Asia through the land borders of Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh offers extensive possibilities for developing cross-border interconnections of national power grids.
- ◆ South Asia, like many other subregions, is working to deepen its integration in trade, infrastructure connectivity and financial cooperation.
- ◆ South Asia offers a unique example for the application of a regional approach to electricity. It faces current electricity deficits, with a strong demand growth outlook, but at the same time has enormous unexploited generation potential.

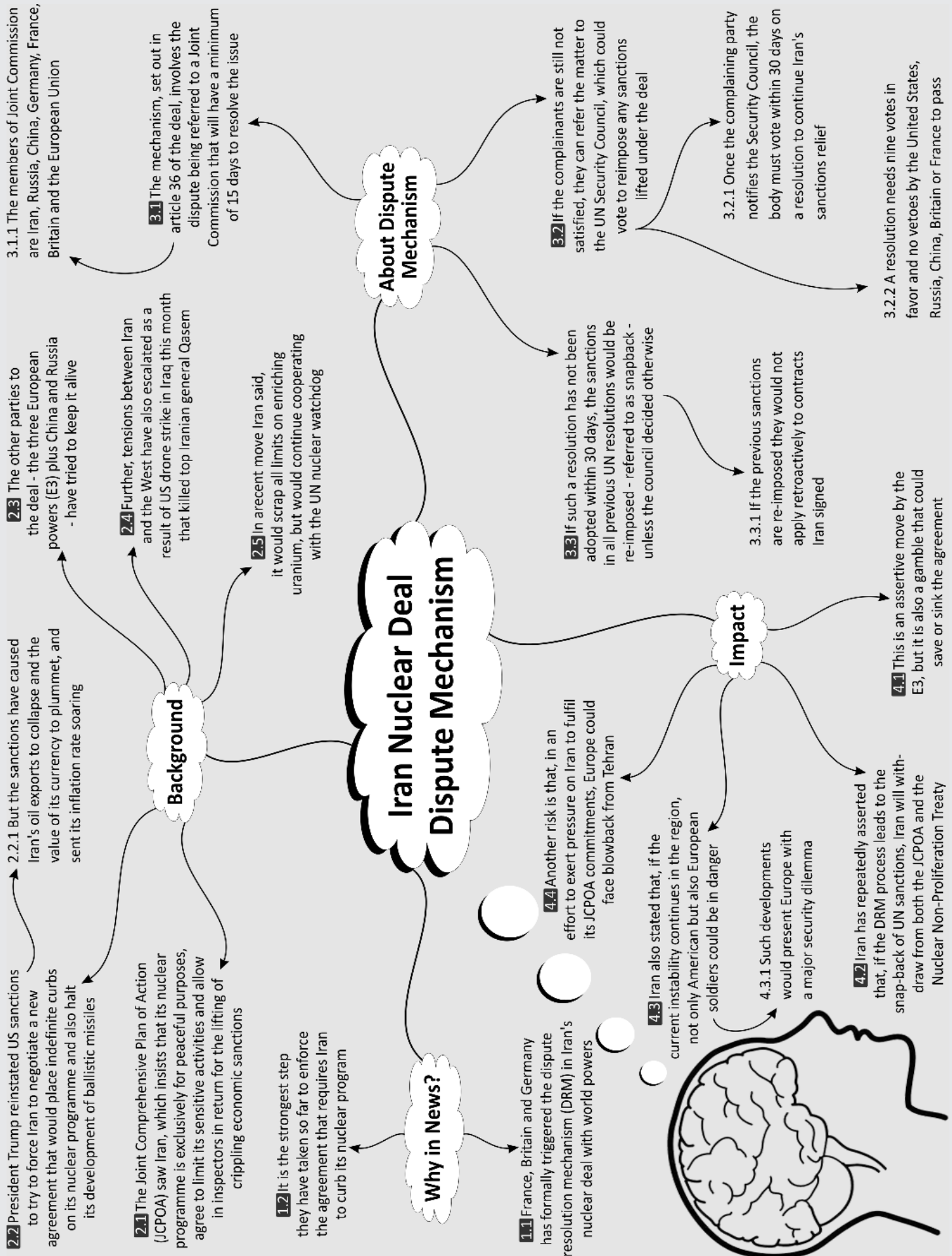


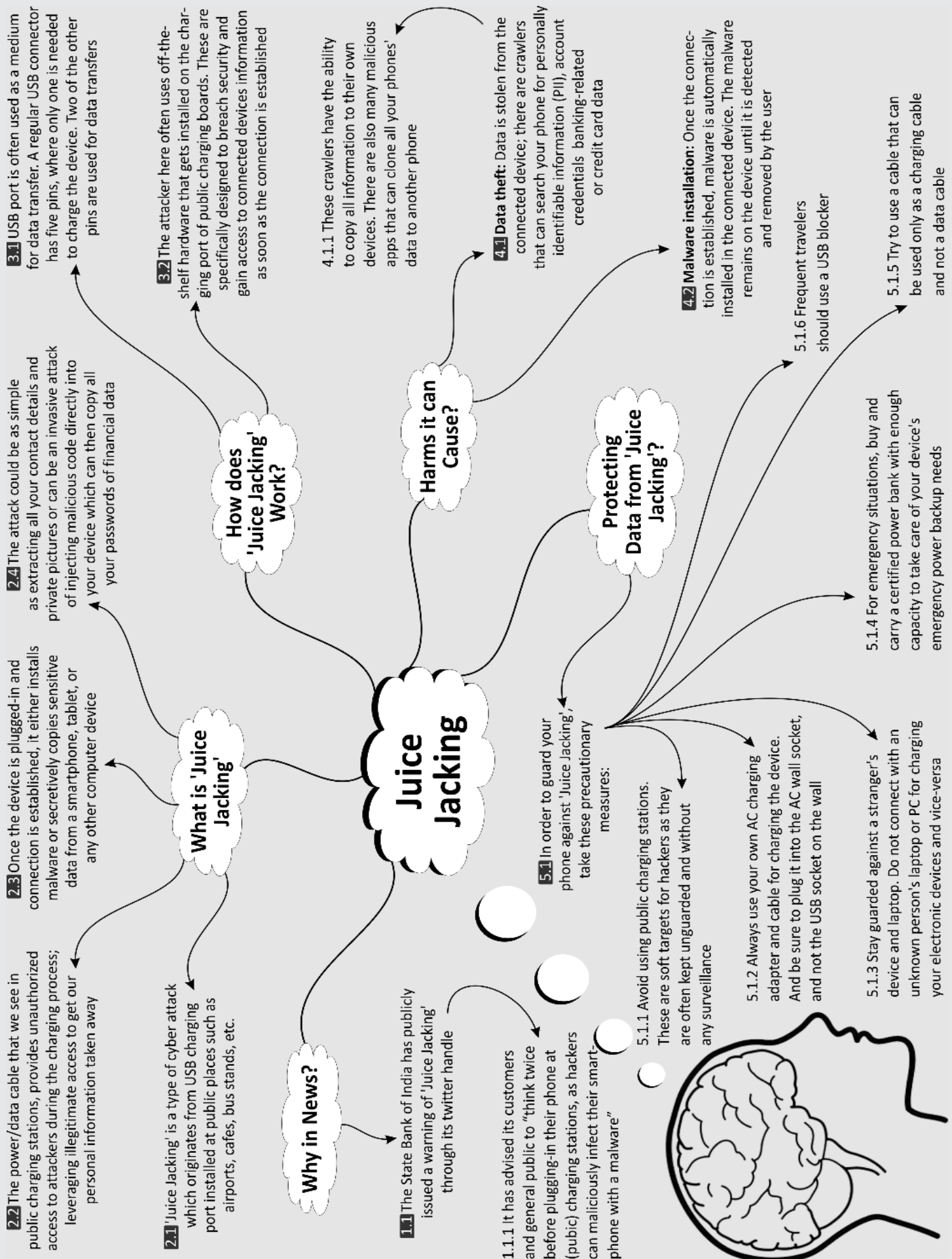
SEVEN BRAIN BOOSTERS

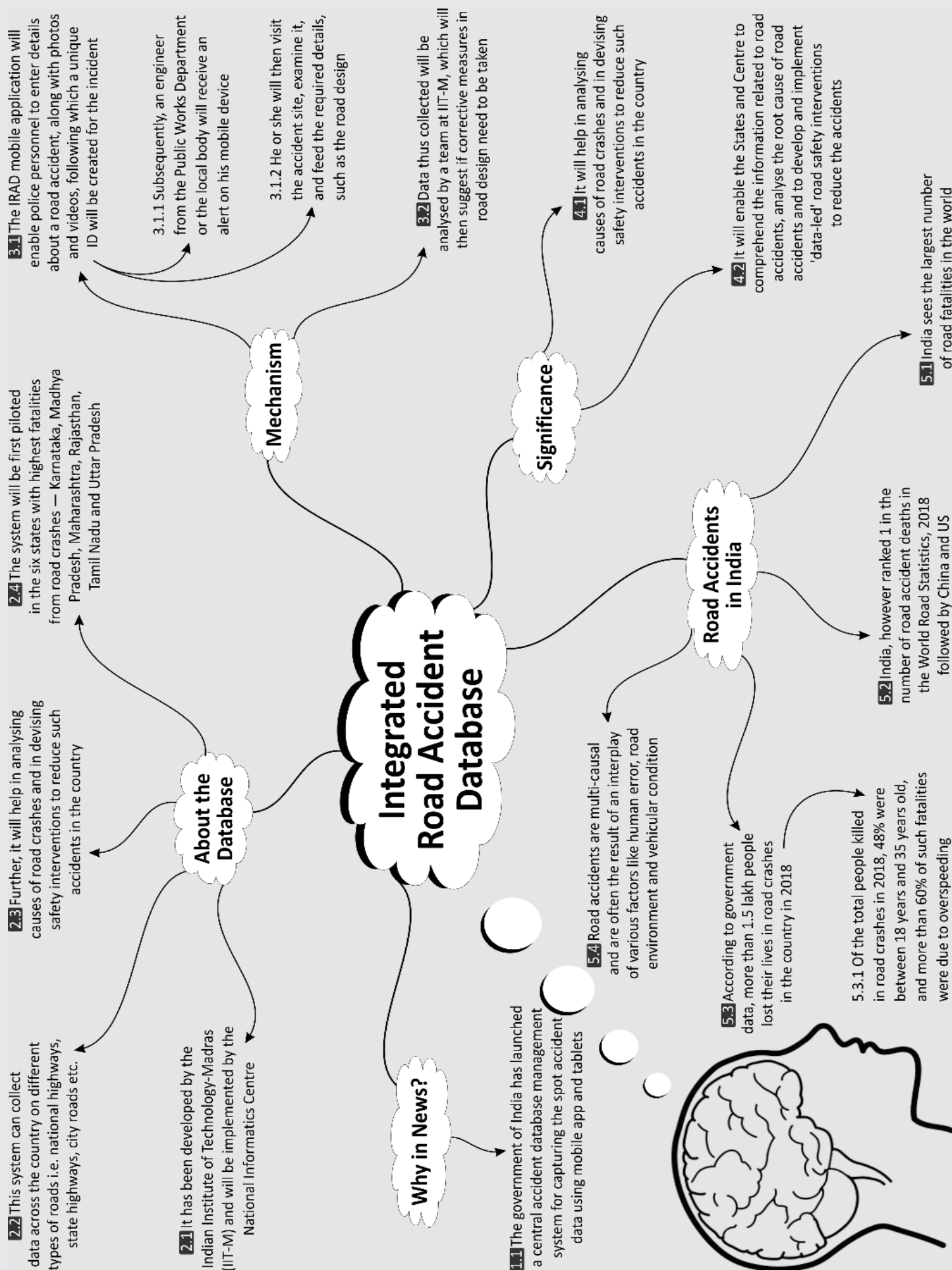


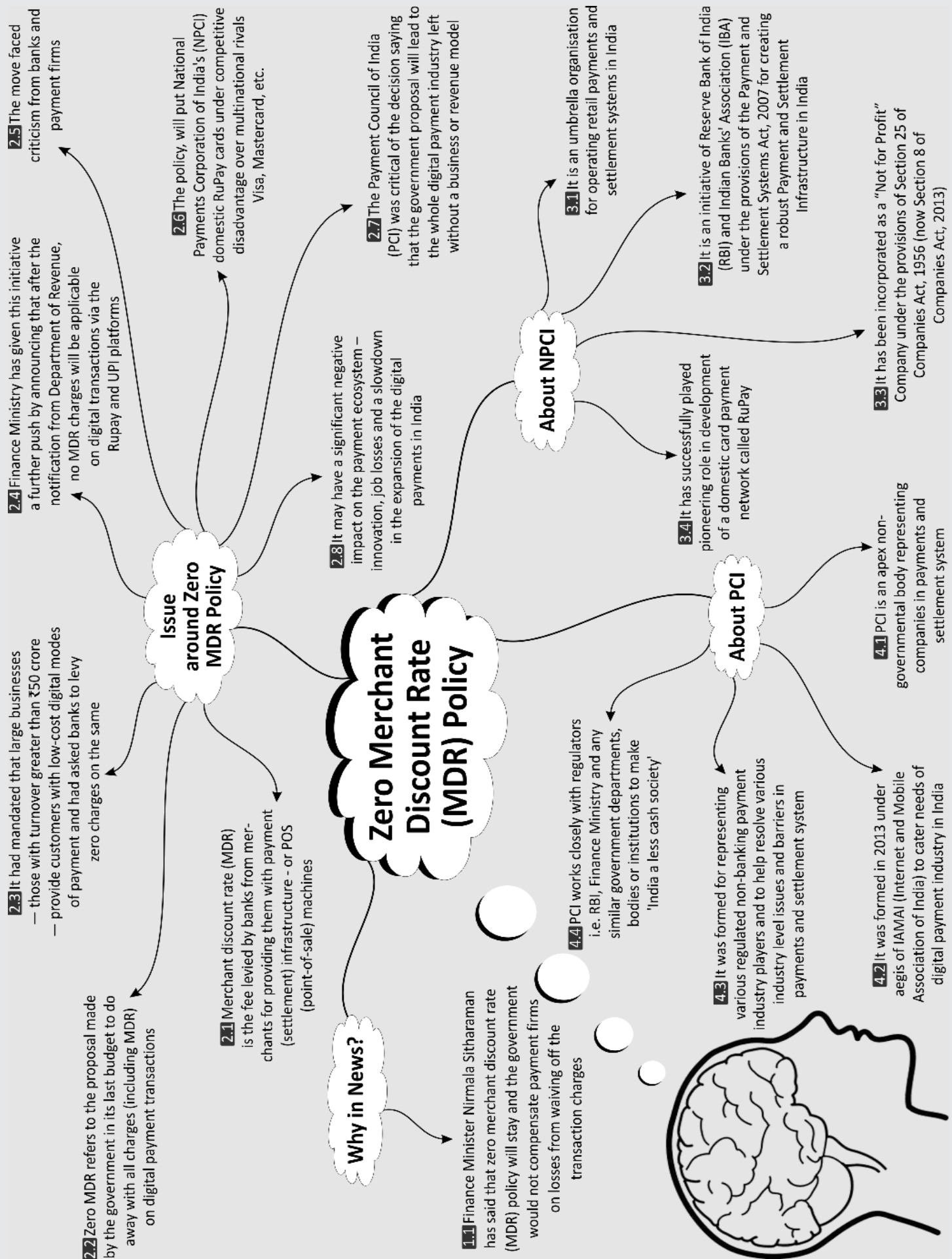












SEVEN MCQ'S WITH EXPLANATORY ANSWERS

(Based on Brain Boosters)

1. Private Property as Human Right

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. Right to property is considered to be not only a constitutional or statutory right, but also a human right.
2. It means the state cannot take possession of private property at all.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a)

Explanation: Statement 1 is correct. In a recent judgment Supreme Court has held that citizen's right to own private property is a human right. The state cannot take possession of it without following due procedure and authority of law.

With the recent judgement right to property is now considered to be not only a constitutional or statutory right, but also a human right. 'Right to private property was previously a fundamental right' under Article 19(1)(f) as well as Article 31, which provided right of private ownership of property, and freedom to acquire, enjoy and dispose it off by lawful means.

2. Centre-state Disputes and Article 131

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. During the violation of fundamental rights, a state government cannot move the court under the Article 32 of Indian Constitution.
2. Under Article 131 of Indian Constitution, the challenge is made when the rights and power of a state or the Centre are in question.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c)

Explanation: Both statements are correct. Generally, the petitions challenging the CAA have been filed under

Article 32 of the Constitution, which gives the court the power to issue writs when fundamental rights are violated.

A state government cannot move the court under this provision because only people and citizens can claim fundamental rights. Under Article 131, the challenge is made when the rights and power of a state or the Centre are in question.

3. Police Commissionerate System

Q. Consider the following statements with respect of police commissionerate system:

1. Under the dual system, the overall in-charge of a district or region is the DM (executive); the SP (head of district police) reported to him.
2. Under the commissionerate system, the overall in-charge of district is the commissioner and reports to the DM.

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: (a)

Explanation: Statement 1 is correct. Under the dual system, the overall in-charge of a district or region was the DM (executive); the SP (head of district police) reported to him. The powers of the executive magistrate, such as issuing orders for preventive arrests or imposition of Section 144 CrPC, were vested in the district collector.

Statement 2 is not correct. In the commissionerate system, the Commissioner of Police (CP) is the head of a unified police command structure, is responsible for the force in the city, and is accountable to the state government.

4. Iran Nuclear Deal Dispute Mechanism

Q. The word 'dispute mechanism' is sometimes mentioned in news in reference to

- a) France, Britain and Germany has formally triggered the dispute mechanism in Iran's nuclear deal with world powers.

- b) France, Britain and Germany has initiated a mechanism with Iran for trade related dispute
- c) France, Britain and Germany along with China and Russia triggered the mechanism in Iran's nuclear deal with US
- d) Iran has initiated a deal with western powers except US on the future of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Answer: (a)

Explanation: Option (a) is correct. The mechanism, set out in article 36 of the deal, involves the dispute being referred to a Joint Commission. France, Britain and Germany have formally triggered the dispute resolution mechanism in Iran's nuclear deal with world powers. It is the strongest step they have taken so far to enforce the agreement that requires Iran to curb its nuclear program.

5. Juice Jacking

Q. The word 'Juice Jacking', recently mentioned in news is related to

- a) a virus to hack the ATMs
- b) a malware was detected in a personal computer at the Kudankulam nuclear power plant
- c) a type of cyber-attack which originates from USB charging port installed at public places
- d) a type of ransomware that encrypts a victim's files for the demand online payment

Answer: (c)

Explanation: Option (c) is correct. The State Bank of India has publicly issued a warning of 'Juice Jacking' through its twitter handle.

'Juice Jacking' is a type of cyber-attack which originates from USB charging port installed at public places such as airports, cafes, bus stands, etc.

6. Integrated Road Accident Database

Q. With reference to the 'Integrated Road Accident Database', consider the following statements:

- 1. Ministry of Road Transport and Highways will be implementing body of this database.
- 2. It will help in analysing causes of road crashes and

in devising safety interventions to reduce such accidents in the country.

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)

Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect. It has been developed by the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M) and will be implemented by the National Informatics Centre.

Statement 2 is correct. This system can collect data across the country on different types of roads i.e. national highways, state highways, city roads etc. Further, it will help in analysing causes of road crashes and in devising safety interventions to reduce such accidents in the country.

7. Zero Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) Policy

Q. The word Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) is sometimes mentioned in news. Consider the following statements in this regard:

- 1. Merchant discount rate (MDR) is the fee levied by central bank from commercial banks for providing them with payment infrastructure.
- 2. Now, government has proposed to do away with all charges (including MDR) on digital payment transactions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d)

Explanation: Both statements are incorrect. Merchant discount rate (MDR) is the fee levied by banks from merchants for providing them with payment (settlement) infrastructure — or POS (point-of-sale) machines. Zero MDR refers to the proposal made by the government in its last budget to do away with all charges (including MDR) on digital payment transactions.

Recently, Union Finance Minister has said that zero merchant discount rate (MDR) policy will stay and the government would not compensate payment firms on losses from waiving off the transaction charges.



SEVEN IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIMS

1. Who has been conferred with 29th Saraswati Samman?

*- Eminent Sindhi writer Vasdev Mohi (for his short stories collection-
Chequebook)*

2. Which city hosted 7th Conference of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association India Region?

- Lucknow

3. Which IT company has launched new browser called 'Edge Chromium' for Windows and macOS?

- Microsoft

4. Which company has launched privacy-focused search engine called 'OneSearch'?

- Verizon

5. Which Indian architecture design has been included in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's (SCO) '8 Wonders of SCO' list?

- Statue of Unity, Gujarat

6. Which Indian port has been renamed as Shyama Prasad Mukherjee?

- Kolkata Port Trust

7. Which city hosted '13th edition of World Future Energy Summit 2020'?

- Abu Dhabi

○○○

SEVEN PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAINS EXAM

1. While opposing internationalizing of the Kashmir dispute, India must engage Pakistan. Examine the issues in context of recent developments.
2. The public expenditure management is a challenge to the Government of India in context of budget making during the post liberalization period. Clarify.
3. How is the Government of India protecting traditional knowledge of medicine from patenting by pharmaceutical companies?
4. Despite Consistent experience of High growth, India still goes with the lowest indicators of human development. Examine the issues that make balanced and inclusive development elusive.
5. What is meant by 'crisis of conscience'? How does it manifest itself in the public domain?
6. The central bank's shift of focus from financial stability to inflation targeting could have led to regulatory infirmity. Discuss.
7. The Centre should specify penal action against officials and doctors accused of dereliction of duty. Discuss it in the context of Mob lynching.

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SEVEN IMPORTANT NEWS

1. Plant Life Expanding over the Himalayas

Areas around Mount Everest and across the Himalayan region are getting increasingly greener, with plant life growing in areas that used to be permanently under snow cover.

Key Findings

A team from UK's University of Exeter used data from 1993 to 2018 from NASA's Landsat satellites to measure the extent of subnival vegetation — plants growing between the treeline and snowline — in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region. These ecosystems, which predominantly consist of grass and shrubs, now cover between five

to 15 times the area of what were permanent glaciers and snow. The height of 6,000 metres is generally considered the maximum height at which plants can grow.

The research found small but significant increases in the subnival vegetation cover. While they did not study the reasons for the spike in plant life, the findings are consistent with previous estimates, which predict a decline in glacier cover in the Himalayan region due to global warming.

About Hindu Kush Region

The Hindu Kush Himalayan region extends across eight countries, from



Afghanistan in the west to Myanmar in the east. According to the researchers, more than 1.4 billion people depend on water from catchments emanating here.

2. GSAT-30

In the first mission of the year for the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), India's forty-first communication satellite – GSAT 30 –

has been launched by the European commercial launcher Arianespace.

Key Findings

GSAT-30 is configured on ISRO's enhanced I-3K Bus structure to provide communication services from Geostationary orbit in C and Ku bands. The satellite derives its heritage from ISRO's earlier INSAT/GSAT satellite series.

Weighing 3357 kg, GSAT-30 is to serve as replacement to INSAT-4A spacecraft services with enhanced coverage.

With a mission life of 15 years, GSAT-30 is an operational communication satellite.

GSAT-30 has a unique configuration of providing flexible frequency segments and flexible coverage. The satellite will provide communication services to Indian mainland and islands through Ku-band and wide coverage covering Gulf countries, a large number of Asian countries and Australia through C-band.

GSAT-30 will provide DTH Television Services, connectivity to VSATs for ATM, stock-exchange, television uplinking and teleport services, Digital Satellite News Gathering (DSNG) and e-governance applications. The satellite will also be used for bulk data transfer for a host of emerging telecommunication applications.



3. Seke Language

Recently, The New York Times reported that the “near-extinct” Nepalese language Seke has just 700 speakers around the world.

Background

The last year, 2019, was the International Year of Indigenous Languages, mandated by the United Nations (UN). As per UN, despite efforts throughout the year, one indigenous language disappears every fortnight.

About Seke Language

According to the Endangered Language Alliance (ELA), Seke is one of the over 100 indigenous languages of Nepal and is mainly spoken in the five villages of Chuksang, Chaile, Gyakar, Tangbe and

Tetang in the Upper Mustang district. The dialects from these villages differ substantially and are believed to have varying degrees of mutual intelligibility.

In recent years, Seke has been retreating in the face of Nepali, which is Nepal’s official language and is considered to be crucial for getting educational and employment opportunities outside villages.

The vulnerability of the language is linked to the migration of people to places where Seke is not spoken, which has reduced the intergenerational transmission of the language. Furthermore, the younger generation does not find much use in learning the language, giving preference to Nepali and English.

As per the Endangered Languages Project (ELP), there are roughly 201 endangered languages in India and about 70 in Nepal.

Languages in Danger

UNESCO has six degrees of endangerment. These are: safe, which are the languages spoken by all generations and their intergenerational transmission is uninterrupted; vulnerable languages, which are spoken by most children but may be restricted to certain domains; definitely endangered languages, which are no longer being learnt by children as their mother tongue.

4. Epiphany Festival

The Epiphany festival was celebrated in parts of India, such as Goa and Kerala. In Goa, the celebration is known by its Portuguese name ‘Festa dos Reis’, and in parts of Kerala by its Syriac name ‘Denha’.

About Epiphany

Epiphany is among the three oldest and major festival days in Christianity, the two others being Christmas and Easter. It is celebrated on January 6 by a number of Christian sects, including

Roman Catholics, and on January 19 by some Eastern Orthodox churches. In the West, the duration between December 25 and January 6 is known as the Twelve Days of Christmas.

Epiphany is a feast day, or a day of commemoration, which in Christianity marks the visit of the Magi (meaning the Three Wise Men or Three Kings) to the Infant Jesus (Christ from his nativity until age 12).

According to Christian belief, the Magi — Balthasar, Melchior, and

Gaspar (or Casper), the kings of Arabia, Persia, and India, respectively — followed a miraculous guiding star to Bethlehem, where they paid homage to the Infant Jesus. The three are said to have brought gifts for Jesus: gold by Melchior, myrrh by Balthasar, and incense by Gaspar. The visit is believed to signify Jesus’ physical manifestation to the Gentiles (non-Jewish people).

The day also commemorates the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River.

5. Government Owned Contractor Operated (GOCO) Model

The Government of India has decided to transfer Army Base Workshops (ABWs) presently being operated by the Central Government, on the lines of Government Owned Contractor Operated (GOCO) Model. These Army Base Workshops located across the country, are assigned the role of undertaking overhaul (OH) of specified weapons and support platforms in use

by the Indian Army. These Workshops are also involved in undertaking repair and OH of major assemblies, repairs of PCBs and modules of various equipment held with the Indian Army.

The Army has initiated the process of identifying potential industry partners to implement the GOCO model for its base workshops and

ordnance depots intended to improve operational efficiency.

Background

The GOCO model was one of the recommendations of the Lt. Gen. DB Shekatkar (Retd.) committee to “enhance combat capability and re-balancing defence expenditure.” Based on the recommendations, the

government has “decided to disband two advance base workshops, one static workshop and four ordnance depots” and eight ABWs are recommended to be corporatised on GOCO model.

Significance

The assets owned by government will be operated by the private industries.

Under the model, the private companies need not make investments on land, machinery and other support systems.

The missions are set by government and the private sectors are given full independence in implementing the missions using their best practices.

The main advantage of the model is that the targets are achieved in lesser time frame. Also, it will boost competitiveness among the private entities paving way to newer technologies.

6. Great Indian Bustard

Since June last year, nine Great Indian Bustard (GIB) eggs collected from the Desert National Park in Jaisalmer where a conservation centre has been set up, have hatched, and the chicks are reported to be doing well. This is the largest number of hatchings reported within a six-month frame by any GIB conservation programme in the world.

About GIB

The GIB, is one of the heaviest flying birds. It is found mainly in the Indian subcontinent. Barely 150 of these birds are estimated to be surviving now globally. It is considered the flagship grassland species, representing the health of the grassland ecology. The IUCN (International Union for

Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) had categorised the species as critically endangered. Grave concerns were voiced by experts all over the world over delay in conservation for decades.

Conservation

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun, are working to save the GIB. The Ministry has allotted special funds to the tune of Rs 33 crore, a part of which was used to set up the incubation and chick-rearing centre in Jaisalmer.

Challenges

Male birds reach sexual maturity between the ages of 4 and 5; females

at age 3-4. Generally, the GIB lives up to age 15 or 16. A female lays an egg once in 1-2 years, and the chicks' survival rate is 60%-70%. “Being such long-lived and slow reproducing species, adult mortality remains high.

Globally and in India, high voltage power lines are a major threat to the GIB.

The GIB is known to eat insects, harvested foodgrains, and fruit. The uncontrolled use of pesticides and insecticides in farms has badly hit their food habitat. Further, vanishing grasslands, and attacks by dogs and foxes have contributed to the threat to the GIB's survival.

7. Tulu Language

According to the 2001 Census, India has 30 languages that are spoken by more than a million people each. Additionally, it has 122 languages that are spoken by at least 10,000 people each. It also has 1,599 languages, most of which are dialects. These are restricted to specific regions and many of them are on the verge of extinction. India must accommodate this plethora of languages in its cultural discourse and administrative apparatus. India must accommodate this plethora of languages in its cultural discourse and administrative apparatus.

Article 29 of the Constitution provides that a section of citizens

having a distinct language, script or culture have the right to conserve the same. Actually, both the state and the citizens have an equal responsibility to conserve the distinct language, script and culture of a people.

About Tulu

Tulu is a Dravidian language whose speakers are concentrated in two coastal districts of Karnataka and in Kasaragod district of Kerala. Kasaragod district is called ‘Sapta bhasha Samgama Bhumi (the confluence of seven languages)’, and Tulu is among the seven. The Tulu-speaking people are larger in number than speakers of

Manipuri and Sanskrit, which have the Eighth Schedule status.

At present, Tulu is not an official language in India or any other country. Efforts are being made to include Tulu in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. If included in the Eighth Schedule, Tulu would get recognition from the Sahitya Akademi. Tulu books would be translated into other recognised Indian languages. Members of Parliament and MLAs could speak in Tulu in Parliament and State Assemblies, respectively. Candidates could write all-India competitive examinations like the Civil Services exam in Tulu.

SEVEN IMPORTANT HIGHLIGHTS FROM PIB

1. MoU between SCR of Indian Railways and SBI

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between South Central Zone of Indian Railways and State Bank of India for Doorstep Banking for direct pickup of earnings covering all 585 railway stations over SCR Zone.

Major Benefits from the MoU:

- ◆ All the railway stations will have uniform cash remittance mechanism.
- ◆ Real time information about the cash being deposited by different stations which will help in better supervision and accountability.

- ◆ Avoidance of unwanted accumulation of cash at railway stations.

- ◆ Smart way of remittance of station earnings.

The direct pick up of cash from all the railway stations on SCR as per the MoU dispenses with the tedious and complex activity of movement of cash earnings through “Cash Safes” by trains. This will enable hassle free collection of traffic earnings by SBI and remittance into Government account avoiding delay in transmission of traffic cash earnings. It will go a long way in streamlining financial transactions accounting.

Prior to the MoU, the earnings generated at smaller railway stations each day were being manually sent with the Guard of nominated trains while in case of major stations, earnings were being remitted by the concerned commercial supervisor.

The existing procedure held scope for delay in remittances of cash owing to various factors such as holidays, availability of man power etc. The newly introduced facility of door step banking as per the MoU will do away with the difficulties faced earlier, besides increasing the pace of financial transactions and digitization of remittance of cash earnings of the Railways.

2. Bru-Reang Refugee Crisis

Union Minister for Home Affairs has presided over the signing of an agreement between Government of India, Governments of Tripura and Mizoram and Bru-Reang representatives, to end the 23-year old Bru-Reang refugee crisis.

Background

In 1997, following ethnic tension, around 5,000 families comprising around 30,000 Bru-Reang tribals were forced to flee Mizoram and seek shelter in Tripura. These people were housed in temporary camps at Kanchanpur, in North Tripura.

On 3rd July, 2018, an agreement was signed between the Union government,

the two State governments and representatives of Bru-Reang refugees, as a result of which the aid given to these families was increased substantially. There had been a sustained demand of most Bru-Reang families that they may be allowed to settle down in Tripura, considering their apprehensions about their security.

Recent Agreement

Under the new agreement, around 34,000 Bru refugees will be settled in Tripura and would be given aid from the Centre to help with their rehabilitation and all round development, through a package of around Rs 600 crores. These people would get all the rights that normal residents of the States get

and they would now be able to enjoy the benefits of social welfare schemes of Centre and State governments. The settlement has been reached after detailed discussions held by Union government with the State governments of Mizoram and Tripura and the representatives of Bru tribes.

Under the new arrangement, each of the displaced families would be given 40x30 sq.ft. residential plots, in addition to the aid under earlier agreement of a fixed deposit of Rs. 4 lakhs, Rs. 5,000 cash aid per month for 2 years, free ration for 2 years and Rs. 1.5 lakhs aid to build their house. The government of Tripura would provide the land under this agreement.

3. Assam Inland Water Transport Project

The Government of India, the Government of Assam and the World Bank signed a loan agreement of \$88 million to help modernize Assam's passenger ferry sector that runs on its rivers including the mighty Brahmaputra.

More about the Project

A majority of Assam's more than 361 ferry routes cross the Brahmaputra or serve its islands, providing a crucial means of transport to thousands of commuters in both the urban and rural areas of the Brahmaputra Valley. The Assam Inland Water Transport Project

(AIWTP) will help Assam improve the passenger ferry infrastructure and its services and strengthen the capacity of the institutions running the inland water transport. Technically better designed terminals and energy-efficient vessels (both new and retrofitted) will make the ferry services more sustainable with least disruption to nature.

In Assam, the rivers are a vital transport asset for its people. The Assam Inland Water Transport Project will help develop a modern, efficient and safe river transport system for the

large volume of passengers and cargo carried by the vessels.

Assam has the largest network of navigable waterways in India. The project will also help build modern ferry terminals. In doing so, the project will draw guidance from 'working with nature' principles that aim to design new infrastructure or rehabilitate existing infrastructure in a way that works with natural river processes. The project will improve facilities for people using the ferry services and give special attention to the safety and security of women and girls.

4. International Conclave on Globalizing Indian Thought

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi participated recently in the international conclave on "Global Indian Thought" that is being organised by IIM Kozhikode.

More in News

Prime Minister held that Indian thought is vibrant and diverse. It is constant and evolving. It is too vast to be put in a lecture or a seminar or even books. But, broadly, there are certain ideals that have remained central to Indian values. They are- compassion, harmony, justice, service and openness.

Highlights

India is stepping towards the goal of becoming a 5 trillion Dollar economy by 2025. This will make India one of the top three economies in the world after US and China. It is essential for India to reveal its path while it is achieving such goals. The Conclave is an initiative to achieve

The Conclave focuses on India's thought on development. The thoughts are as follows Satyam-Truth Nithyam-Sustainability Purnam-Wholeness.

Significance

The Conclave is important as it reveals India and its path towards development to the global market. Ethically, it is important to choose the right path of development. With the world marching towards development, it is important to get hold of traditional routes to sustain mankind. The conclave is important to convey this message to the world. The Conclave also offers opportunities to thinkers across different professions to converge their ideas into creative platforms.

5. ELECRAMA 2020

Union Minister of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises, Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Information & Broadcasting, Prakash Javadekar has inaugurated ELECRAMA 2020, at India Expo Mart in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh recently.

What is ELECRAMA?

ELECRAMA is the flagship showcase of the Indian electrical industry and

a platform to connect the world with Indian industry in respect of technology, new trends and innovation for future energy transition.

Key Points

- ◆ The annual growth of energy should be 10% for many years to come even if the country's economy grows at the rate of 6% annually.

- ◆ Electricity for a poor household is not only a facility but also an empowerment and main source of inspiration.
- ◆ Electrification of 18 thousand unelectrified villages was done and 3.5 crore households were given power connections under SAUBHAGYA (Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana) scheme.

- ◆ The Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises Ministry has asked the electrical industry to focus on quality of electrical equipment stating that main cause of fire incidents in many cases is poor quality of equipment and faulty wiring.
- ◆ The Ministry urged the power industry to become part of product chain and not just supplier of spare parts.
Government is revamping energy tariff policy and any subsidy, that has to be given to any category of electricity consumers by the State Governments, should be done through direct benefit transfer scheme. There is a need of reform in the power distribution system.

6. Saksham 2020

'Saksham', an annual one-month long fuel conservation mega campaign of Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, was launched recently.

About Saksham

'Saksham' a flagship program of PCRA and Oil PSUs under the guidance of Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas is an initiative for adding values to the various efforts being made in the country for saving fuel.

During Saksham-2020, various interactive programs and activities are being planned by PCRA. Public Sector upstream/downstream Oil & Gas companies under the able guidance

of Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas are conducting various activities like 'Saksham' Cycle Day, Cyclothons, Workshops for drivers of commercial vehicles, Seminars for housewives/cooks on adopting simple fuel saving measure, Nationwide campaign through Radio, TV, Digital Cinemas, Outdoor etc. with a focus on reaching out to various segments of fuel users. PCRA is effectively utilizing the social media platforms for various customized campaigns through Facebook, Twitter, MyGov platform an endeavour to spread its reach amongst the masses.

On this occasion, the publicity vans of PCRA were also flagged-off which shall visit different states covering the rural side as well, spreading messages

about fuel conservation awareness through interactive audio, video creatives and print displays.

Significance

By mid 2020s India will be the world's largest growth market accounting for 25% of global energy demand growth. Today 83% of India's crude oil requirement is met through import. The earnest efforts for petroleum conservation can help us to reduce the huge import burden. Every drop of oil saved will contribute to saving of foreign exchange. It can also help in addressing the issues of climate change. Through SAKSHAM a strong message can be delivered that sustainable future demands conservation of natural resources.

7. Indian Heritage in Digital Space

The Union Minister of State for Culture and Tourism (IC), Shri Prahlad Singh Patel has launched a month long special exhibition titled Indian Heritage in Digital Space and a two day long first international heritage symposium in New Delhi recently. The exhibition was organized in collaboration with Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi.

More about News

This special exhibition showcase adaptation and infusion of technologies being developed under the Indian Digital Heritage (IDH) initiative of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), in the cultural heritage domain of the country. The exhibition demonstrate the outcome

of two flagship projects viz., A digital mini-spectacle to showcase the glory of Hampi and Augmented reality based interactions with physical models of monuments; that are completed under the DST mentored initiative Indian Heritage in Digital Space (IHDS).

Significance

The goals of these projects are to create digital installations using 3D laser scan data, AR, holographic projections and 3D fabrication, to provide interactive and immersive experiences showcasing the glory of Hampi and five Indian monuments namely Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Varanasi; Taj Mahal, Agra; Sun Temple, Konark; Ramachandra Temple, Hampi; and Rani Ki Vav, Patan.

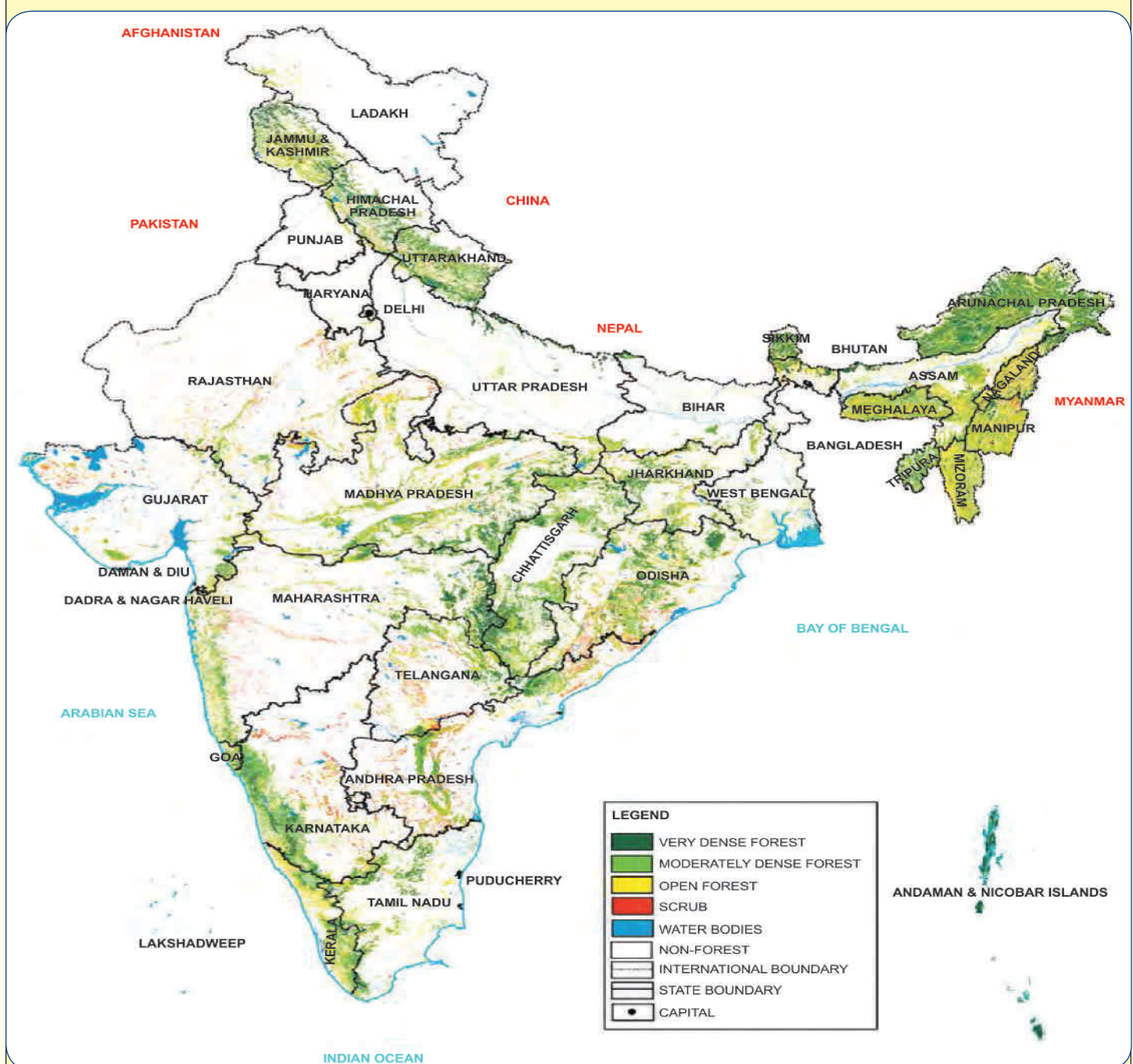
This special exhibition, first of its kind in India, has a major focus to display the latest interventions in the cultural heritage domain, that are being driven by cutting-edge technologies. A special installation named 'ViRaasat', consisting of a scaled down 3D printed replica shall provide a mixed reality experience to visitors for selected monuments, using laser-scanning, 3D modelling and rendering, 3D printing, computer vision and spatial AR.

Use of technology in heritage is very important but it should not be limited to research only, it should reach to people in such a way that they get a chance to know and understand the unseen aspects of heritage sites easily.

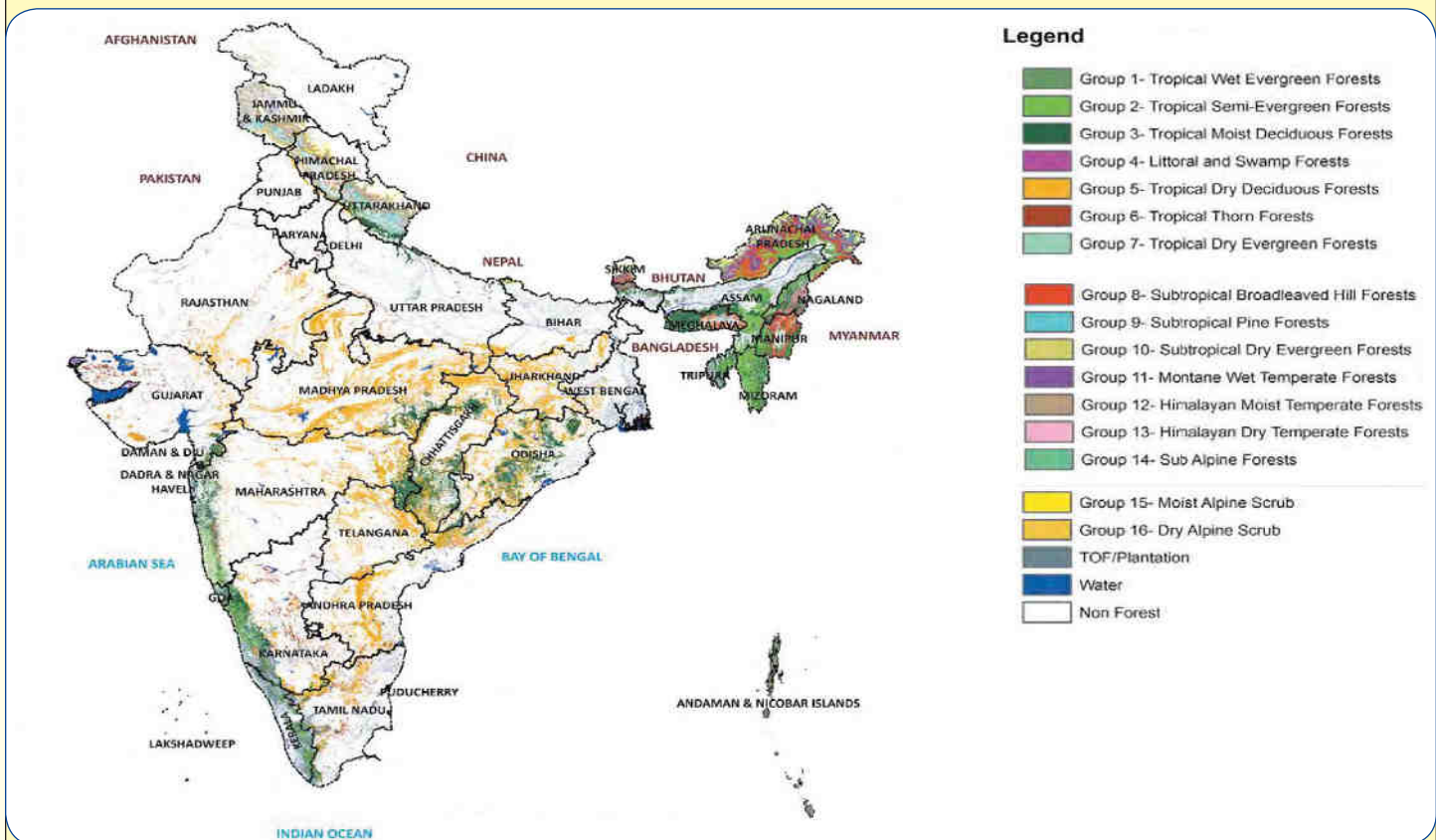
SEVEN IMPORTANT CONCEPTS THROUGH GRAPHICS

India State of Forest Report 2019

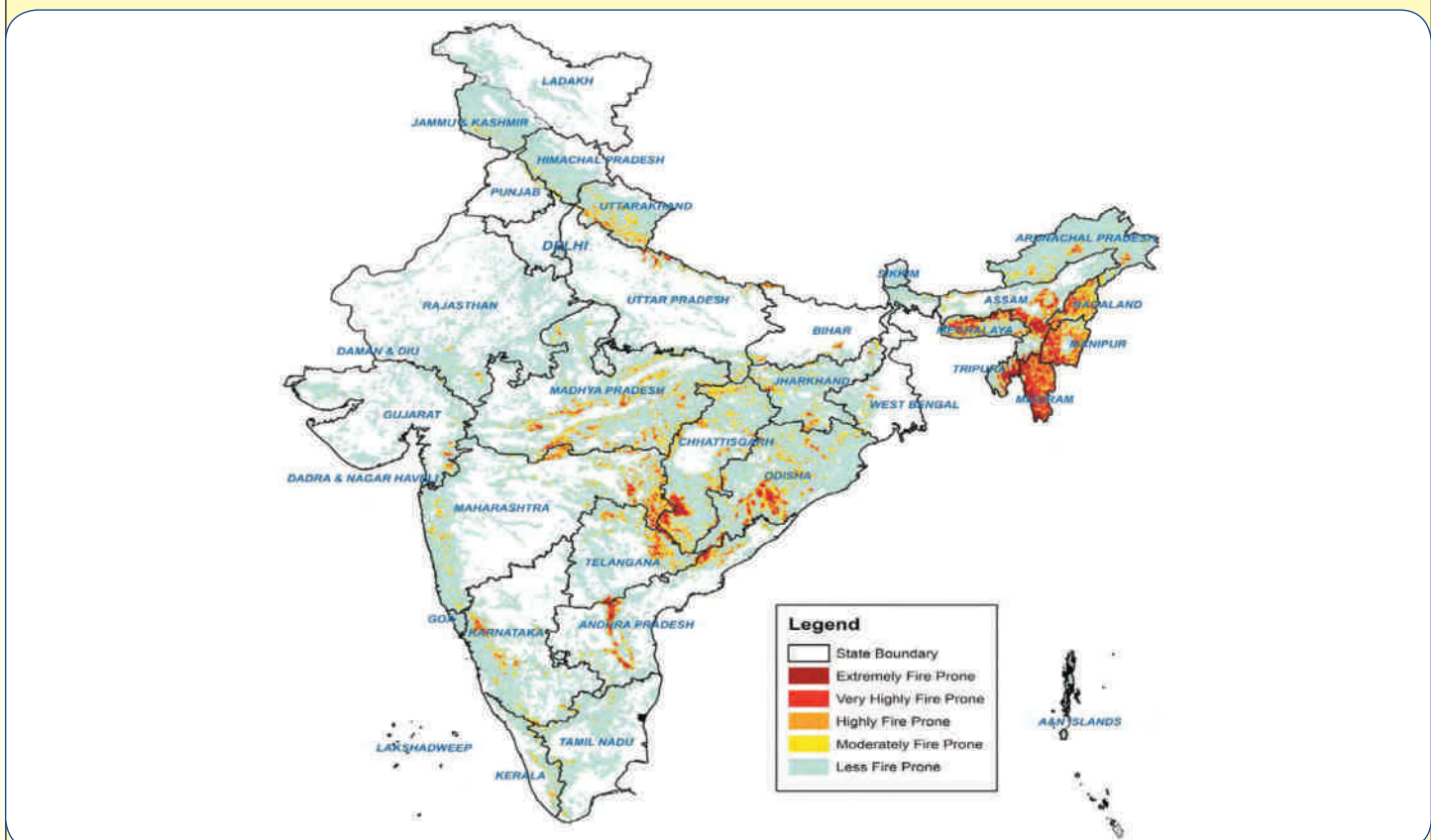
1. Forest Cover Map 2019



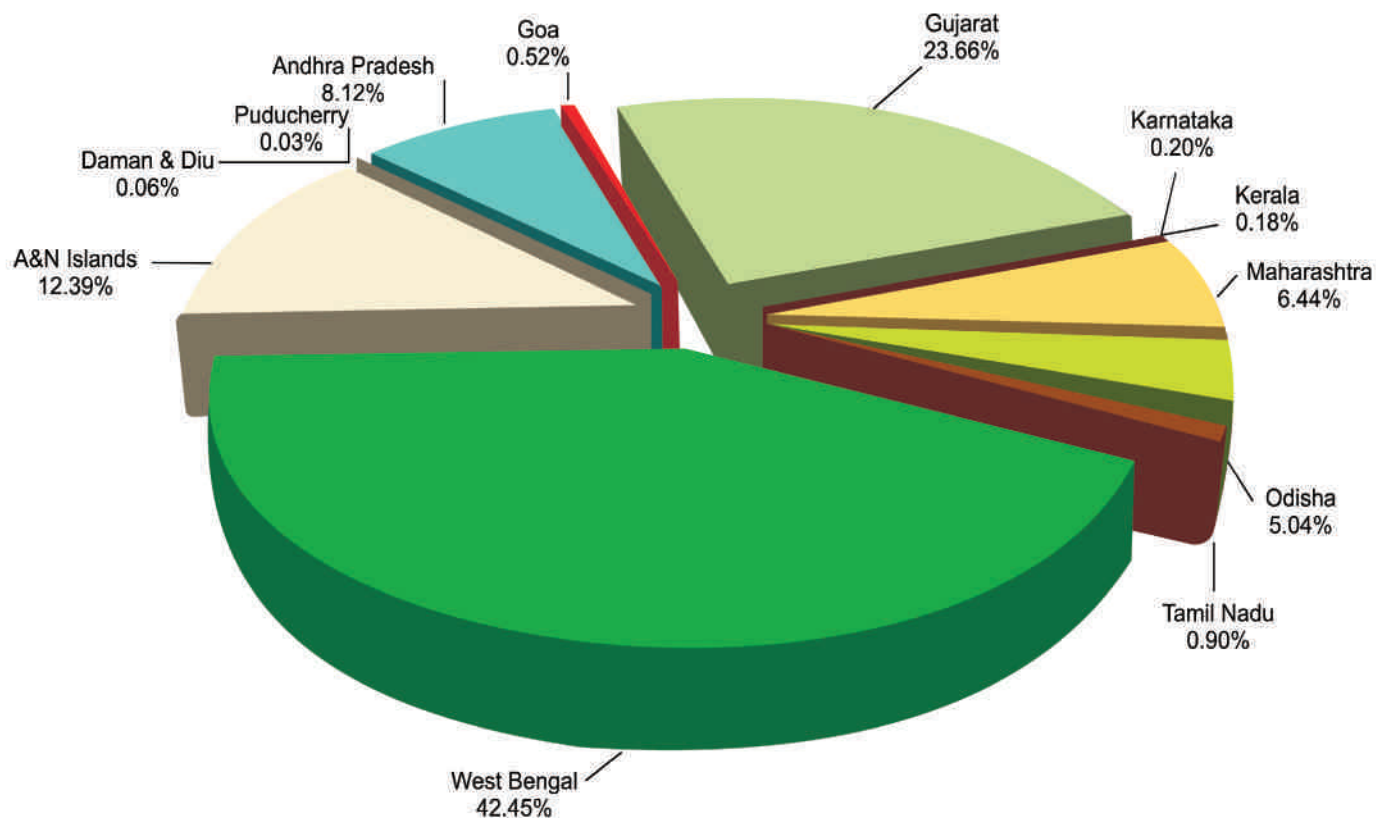
2. Forest Type Mapping - 2019



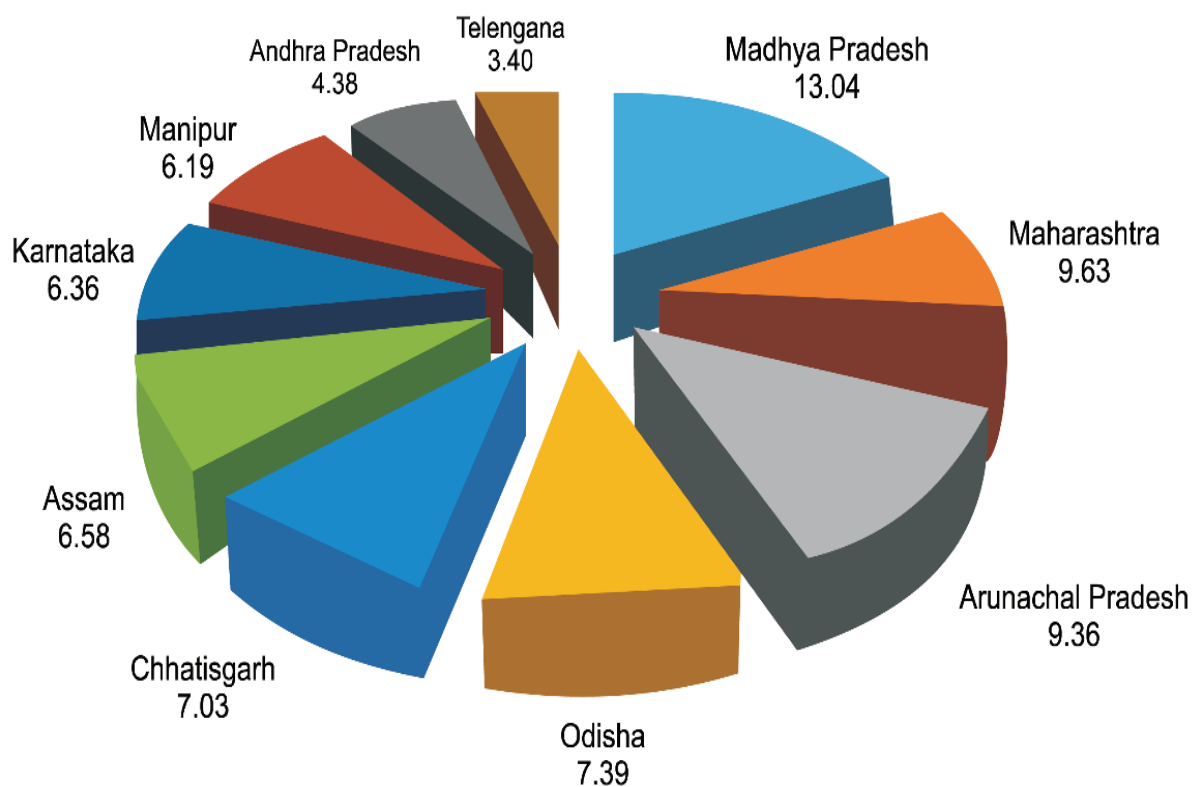
3. Forest Areas Under Different Fire Prone Classes



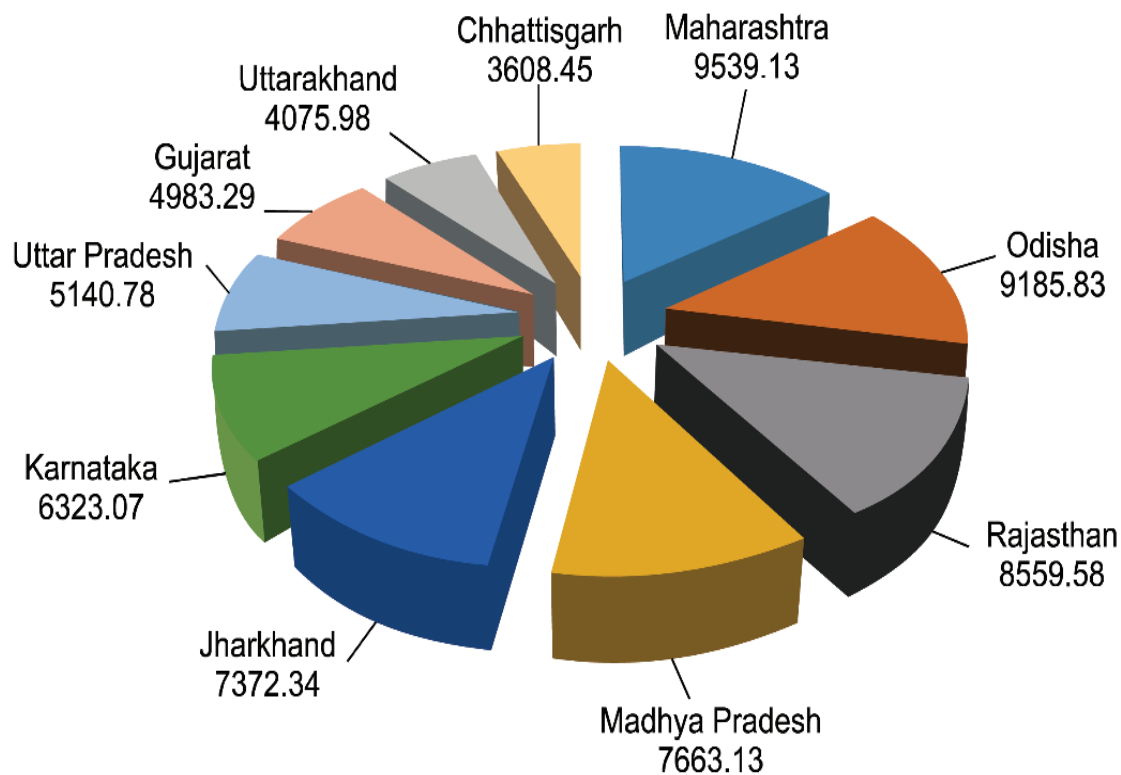
4. Mangrove Cover in Different States & UTs



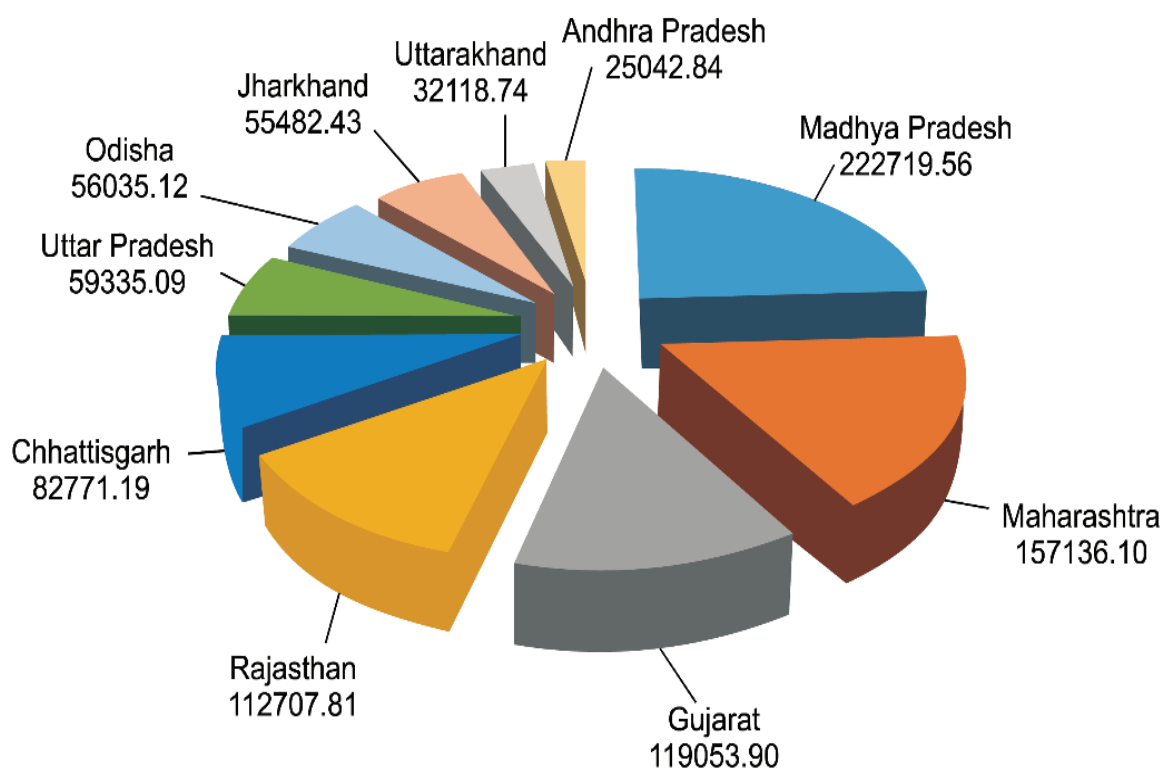
5. Top 10 States in term of Bamboo Bearing Area (%)



6. Top States in term of Dependence on Forest for Fuelwood ('000 tonnes)



7. Top 10 States in term of Dependence on Forest for Fodder ('000 tonnes)



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**Mohit Mehrana
(Rank-1)**



**Jeetinder Joshi
(Rank-2)**

We wish you success in all your future endeavors

AN INTRODUCTION

Dhyeya IAS, a decade old institution, was founded by Mr. Vinay Singh and Mr. Q.H. Khan. Ever since its emergence it has unparalleled track record of success. Today, it stands tall among the reputed institutes providing coaching for Civil Services Examination (CSE). The institute has been very successful in making potential realize their dreams which is evidents from success stories of the previous years.

Quite a large number of students desirous of building a career for themselves are absolutely less equipped for the fairly tough competitive tests they have to appear in. Several others, who have a brilliant academic career, do not know that competitive exams are vartly different from academic examination and call for a systematic and scientifically planned guidance by a team of experts. Here one single move my invariably put one ahead of many others who lag behind. Dhyeya IAS is manned with qualified & experierenced faculties besides especially designed study material that helps the students in achieving the desired goal.

Civil Services Exam requires knowledge base of specified subjects. These subjects though taught in schools and colleges are not necessarily oriented towards the exam approach. Coaching classes at Dhyeya IAS are different from classes conducted in schools and colleges with respect to their orientation. Classes are targeted towards the particular exam. classroom guidance at Dhyeya IAS is about improving the individuals capacity to focus, learn and innovate as we are comfortably aware of the fact that you can't teach a person anything you can only help him find it within himself.

DSDL Prepare yourself from distance

Distance learning Programme, DSDL, primarily caters the need for those who are unable to come to metros fro economic or family reason but have ardent desire to become a civil servant. Simultaneously, it also suits to the need of working professionals, who are unable to join regular classes due to increase in work load or places of their posting. The principal characteristic of our distance learning is that the student does not need to be present in a classroom in order to participate in the instruction. It aims to create and provide access to learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance. Realizing the difficulties faced by aspirants of distant areas, especially working candidates, in making use of the institute's classroom guidance programme, distance learning system is being provided in General Studies. The distance learning material is comprehensive, concise and examoriented in nature. Its aim is to make available almost all the relevant material on a subject at one place. Materials on all topics of General Studies have been prepared in such a way that, not even a single point will be missing. In other words, you will get all points, which are otherwise to be taken from 6-10 books available in the market / library. That means, DSDL study material is undoubtedly the most comprehensive and that will definitely give you added advantage in your Preliminary as well as Main Examination. These materials are not available in any book store or library. These materials have been prepared exclusively for the use of our students. We believe in our quality and commitment towards making these notes indispensable for any student preparing for Civil Services Examination. We adhere all pillars of Distance education.

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