

PERFECT 7

Weekly Current Affairs

An Initiative of Dhyeya IAS



1 | Farm Laws and Judicial Overreach

An Analysis

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| 2 New WhatsApp Policy and Data Privacy: Related Issues | 5 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and India: Resetting Equation |
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DHYEYA IAS : AN INTRODUCTION



Vinay Kumar Singh
Founder & CEO

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

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



Q.H. Khan
Managing Director

Dhyeya IAS is an institution that aims at the complete development of the student. Our faculty are hand-picked and highly qualified to ensure that the students are given every possible support in all their academic endeavors. It is a multi-disciplinary institution which ensures that the students have ready access to a wide range of academic material. Our brand of education has broad horizons as we believe in exposure. Our students are encouraged to widen their knowledge base and study beyond the confinements of the syllabus. We aim to lend a gentle guiding hand to make our students recognize their inner potential and grow on their own accord into stalwarts of tomorrow's society.

PERFECT 7 : AN INTRODUCTION



Kurban Ali
Chief Editor

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

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



Ashutosh Singh
Managing Editor

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 vital and full of challenges. 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 'misinformation' or 'overdose of information'. Focussing on civil services examination 'Perfect 7' embodies in itself perfect friend and guide in your preparation. This weapon is built to be precise yet comprehensive. It is not about bombardment of mindless facts, rather an analysis of various facets of the issues, selected in a systematic manner. We adopted the 'Multi Filter' and 'Six Sigma' approach, in which a subject or an issue is selected after diligent discussion on various levels so that the questions in the examination could be covered with high probability.

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

Your suggestions and popular demands always motivate us and keep our morale high.

May this version of 'Perfect 7' instill a new energy and a new spirit in you. We wish that the bond of affection between you and Dhyeya IAS reaches at a new height.



Send us your suggestions, comment, views and feedback for guiding us on

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PREFACE



Dhyeya family has decided to bring a new colourful and vibrant version of **'Perfect 7'** – a panacea for current affairs, which will add positive and dynamic energy in your preparation.

'Perfect7' is an outstanding compilation of current affairs topics as per the new pattern of Civil Services 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 CSE. 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

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

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

Rajat Jhingan

Editor
Dhyeya IAS

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Weekly Current Affairs

An Initiative of Dhyeya IAS

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(Ex. Editor Rajya Sabha, TV) & by Team Dhyeya IAS
(Broadcasted on YouTube & Dhyeya-TV)

7 IMPORTANT ISSUES

01

Farm Laws and Judicial Overreach: An Analysis

Why in News?

- ◆ The Supreme Court has stayed the implementation of three agricultural laws against which farmers have been protesting. The farmers believe that the new laws undermine their livelihood and open the path to the corporatisation of the agricultural sector.
- ◆ The difference between staying a law and staying the implementation of a law is not immediately clear. The order did not flesh this out, except for saying that the court has the powers to halt executive actions under a law.

Background

- ◆ The issues in the farm bills are complex. But no matter which side you are on, you should now worry about how the Supreme Court is interpreting its function.
- ◆ It appears a clear case of judicial overreach and may potentially shake the foundation of India's representative democracy by undermining the legislative organ of the state, diluting the Constitutional tenet of broad separation of powers between the legislative, executive and the

judiciary — thereby upsetting the delicate balance on which the republic is founded.

- ◆ A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India SA Bobde and Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian in a ruling, stayed until further orders the implementation of three laws — Farmers (Empowerment & Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance & Farm Services Act 2020, Farmers Produce Trade & Commerce (Promotion &

Facilitation) Act & Amendment to Essential Commodities Act.

- ◆ Although the court's order acknowledges that there is a presumption in favour of Constitutionality of any legislation, it is, effectively, blurring the boundaries of Parliament's power to legislate, and the court's powers of judicial review.
- ◆ "This Court cannot be said to be completely powerless to grant a stay of any executive action under a statutory enactment," the court noted in its order.



- ◆ The court's decision seriously violates the separation of powers enshrined in the Constitution. To stay the implementation of a law without even a single hearing on its merits and demerits sets a dangerous precedent for parliamentary democracy.
- ◆ Instead, the court has constituted a four-member committee of agri-experts comprising Bhupinder Singh Mann of All India Kisan Coordination Committee, Pramod Kumar Joshi, former director of International Food Policy Research Institute, agricultural economist Ashok Gulati and Anil Ghanwat, chief of Shetkari Sanghatana Maharashtra to "hear all the parties and stakeholders" and present its report to the court.
- ◆ This could be an embarrassing development for the apex court, but there are graver implications of judicial overreach.
- ◆ The staying of the laws, duly passed by an elected government, impinges on the government's ability to make laws. Since the Parliament represents democracy and the will of the people, suspension of laws passed by a majority of elected representatives may indicate that the will of the people do not count.
- ◆ As former Supreme Court judge Markandey Katju's opinion, "when a law is made by Parliament, it is only Parliament which can repeal or suspend its operation by making another law. The Court can no doubt declare a law ultra vires if it finds it unconstitutional, but it has no power to temporarily stay its enforcement even without recording a finding that it is prima facie unconstitutional."
- ◆ The suspension also sends a terrible signal that any interest or pressure

Pressure Groups Subverting Democracy

- ◆ Despite the Supreme Court's decision to suspend the laws, the farmers have vowed to continue protests until the government repeals the laws.



group within the state may force the government to rescind a law, duly passed by the Parliament, if it succeeds in gathering a large enough crowd in a country of billions to demand attention, and their demands will be met as long as there is a threat of disruption and the laws are challenged in court.

- ◆ Framers have rejected the committee of experts citing that the experts are in favour of the laws. The Supreme Court has said that it was disappointed by the "unnecessary aspersions" cast on the expert panel that it had formed to address the farmers' grievances about the agricultural laws. The court took strong objection to being called biased. "How can you play with people's reputation like this?" Justice Bobde asked the farmers' groups. "You malign people according to majority opinion?"

Hurt Maxim Over Legal Precedence

- ◆ The court's action has, given rise to a strange situation where a stay order has been passed without examining the spectrum of legal and constitutional questions involved and specifying the reasons why the laws are prima facie unconstitutional or against the public interest.
- ◆ It obscures established judicial procedures and the rule of precedent. At the same time, it elucidates a reluctance to specify the normative basis on which the court's actions are based.
- ◆ Instead, a never-heard-before "hurt" maxim has apparently moved the court, as it notes that staying the farm laws "may assuage

the hurt feelings of the farmers and encourage them to come to the negotiating table with confidence and good faith.”

- ◆ Bereft of legal reasoning, this order may well have dragged the Supreme Court into the political thicket where the top court has embarked on managing the administrative exigencies stemming from the farm laws — it now has a committee to assist it in this job — instead of a genuine hearing on the substantive matter at hand.

Previous Position

- ◆ The court’s stand on the farm laws is in stark contrast to its position in previous instances when it underlined the presumption of constitutionality even in executive orders without the backing of legislation.
- ◆ This argument was made in 2015 in the challenge to Aadhaar when only an order of the Planning Commission backed the scheme. The court had referred the challenge to a larger bench but refused to stay the implementation of the scheme.
- ◆ In the challenge to the electoral bonds scheme, in which the petitioners in 2017 argued that it would irreversibly change the landscape of political funding, the court refused to stay the law holding that it has to first test the laws against the cornerstone of the Constitution.

- ◆ When the Executive and the Parliament had passed the committee on Judicial Accountability Act in 2012, the Supreme Court had gotten a large bench together and struck down that law. The court, which is so zealous, when it comes to guarding its own domain, from encroachment by the executive, at the same time feels free to wade into those territories.

Disruption as a Roadblock to Reforms

- ◆ The judiciary is mandated with scrutinising the legality and Constitutionality of a law, but if the court starts making policy prescriptions too, then the very validity of Parliament is thrown in doubt. This is a worrisome development in a democracy.
- ◆ The government is frequently blamed for not implementing reforms. Any reform worth its salt will upset status quo and go against some interest group or the other. If the majority stands to benefit from the step, then it must be persisted with.
- ◆ The protesting farmers, who represent a fraction of their community, has so far refused to budge even an inch from their stand. If they are rewarded for their maximalist approach, then the vast majority of farmers who are ostensibly in favour of the reforms will be wronged, and it may also encourage extortionary tactics in the future.

Way Forward

- ◆ K.K. Venugopal, the Attorney General of India, said that he questioned the judges’ intervention on the laws on three grounds. He also said that a law can be stayed or struck down only on one of these three grounds. One is that it has been passed without legislative competence, two that it is violative of fundamental rights, and third that it is violative of other provisions of the Constitution.
- ◆ India is a vibrant democracy where the right to be heard and protest are legitimate participation methods. But organs of the state ignoring the separation of powers in response to pressure group tactics is worrisome. Though India does not have strict separation of power like United States but the balance between legislation and interpretation of laws should be upheld.



General Studies Paper- II

Topic:

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

Topic:

- Separation of powers between various organs, dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions.

Q. Farmers protest against the agricultural laws is their right to participate in a democracy. But threat of causing disruption and blockading national capital is undemocratic. Supreme Court stay of agricultural laws without hearing is more grave threat to the democratic setup. Discuss.

02

New WhatsApp Policy and Data Privacy: Related Issues

Why in News?

- ◆ The government has written to WhatsApp head Will Cathcart asking him to “respect the informational privacy and data security of Indian users” and withdraw the latest terms and privacy policy in India proposed by the messaging service for users. In a letter, it has expressed strong concerns over the change in policy.

Background

- ◆ WhatsApp on January 4 2021, updated its privacy policy to allow it to share user data with its parent company Facebook and other group firms. The data includes location and phone number. The move has triggered a backlash across the world and led to a surge in the downloading of alternative messaging apps such as Signal and Telegram. India is WhatsApp's biggest market with 400 million users.
- ◆ WhatsApp saw a 35 per cent decrease in downloads in India, from 2 million between January 1 and 5 to 1.3 million between January 6 and 10, as per Sensor Tower. In comparison, Signal's 24,000 Indian app downloads between January 1 and 5 increased to 2.3 million between January 6 and 10.
- ◆ Although WhatsApp has subsequently postponed the rollout of its new privacy policy to May 15 2021, for users to review and accept the new terms, all eyes are on the Budget session of the Parliament in February, where a Joint Parliamentary Committee is expected to table its report on

the draft Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill, 2019. The Bill is a result of the Supreme Court declaring privacy as a Fundamental Right in 2017, and it not only has provisions for individual consent and control over private online data, but also outlines strong obligations for companies that use and process this data.

Government Action on WhatsApp

- ◆ The government has sent a questionnaire to WhatsApp seeking more details about its data-sharing protocols and business practices. It has sought the exact categories of data that the application collects from Indian users, details of the permissions and user consent sought by and utility of each of these with respect to the functioning and specific service provided. The service has been asked whether it profiles users based on their use of the application.
- ◆ The government has also sought details of the difference between WhatsApp's privacy policies in India and other countries along with details of its data security, information security, cyber-security, privacy, and encryption policies.
- ◆ The government has highlighted the latest policy will lead to the collection of “a vast amount of highly invasive and granular metadata”.
- ◆ With this, any meaningful distinction between WhatsApp and Facebook companies will cease to exist. Given the huge user base of WhatsApp and Facebook in India, the consolidation of this sensitive

information also exposes a very large segment of Indian citizens to greater security risks and vulnerabilities creating a honeypot of information.

- ◆ The letter noted the “integration of data between WhatsApp and other Facebook companies” denies the user the choice to opt out of the policy.
- ◆ The government has “raised strong objections against the differential treatment by WhatsApp to its users in India and in the European Union”. It added this has triggered serious criticism and “shows lack of respect for the rights and interests of Indian citizens, who form one of the largest user bases for WhatsApp”.
- ◆ The government underlined such treatment is “prejudicial to the interests of Indian users and is viewed with serious concern.”
- ◆ In this context, it [the letter] reminds WhatsApp that the Government of India owes a sovereign responsibility to its citizens to ensure that their interests are not compromised and therefore it calls upon WhatsApp to respond to concerns raised in this letter.
- ◆ Europe's stringent General Data Protection Regulation, more popularly called GDPR, prevents such sharing between apps. Users there are in control of their data much more than anywhere else in the world.

Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019

- ◆ The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 (“PDPB”) was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister

of Electronics and Information Technology, on December 11, 2019. The purpose of this Bill is to provide for protection of privacy of individuals relating to their Personal Data and to establish a Data Protection Authority of India for the said purposes and the matters concerning the personal data of an individual. The Bill proposes to supersede the Information Technology Act, 2000 (Section 43-A) deleting the provisions related to compensation payable by companies for failure to protect personal data. The PDPB inter alia, prescribes the manner in which personal data is to be collected, processed, used, disclosed, stored and transferred.

- ◆ The PDPB proposes to protect "Personal Data" relating to the identity, characteristics trait, attribute of a natural person and "Sensitive Personal Data such as financial data, health data, official identifier, sex life, sexual orientation, biometric data, genetic data, transgender status, intersex status, caste or tribe, religious or political beliefs.
- ◆ According to the provisions of the bill, all Internet companies will have to mandatorily store critical data of individuals within the country. However, they can transfer sensitive data overseas after explicit consent of the data owner to process it only for purposes permissible under the proposed legislation.
- ◆ A company's executive in-charge of conduct of the data business would face a jail term of up to three years if found guilty of knowingly matching

anonymous data with publicly available information to find out the identity of an individual, called as 're-identify de-identified data' in technical parlance, under the proposed law.

- ◆ Social media companies will be required to come up with a mechanism to identify users on their platform who are willing to be identified on a voluntary basis. It will be voluntary for individuals if they want to get verified or not.
- ◆ The bill had provisions to grant the right to be forgotten to data owners as well as the right to erase, correct and porting of data.

Online "Consent"

- ◆ Online "consent" is, a false choice for most Indians. However, consent is also the fulcrum of India's fast-growing data ecosystem. Many users don't read or understand the terms and conditions mentioned in the privacy policy before clicking 'I Agree'.
- ◆ With reams of legal jargon, most are as difficult to read as the Harvard Law Review. A survey of 155 college students in Delhi found that even law students could understand only about half the clauses. Most policies are exclusively in English, which is clearly inadequate in a country where no more than 12 per cent are comfortable with the language. A human-centric study across India found that even people who couldn't read or write, when made aware of what they were consenting to, cared deeply about it.
- ◆ The Data Protection Bill under consideration by Parliament lists

consent as a legal ground for data processing. It also requires that consent be freely given, specific, informed, unambiguous and revocable — all legally-sound objectives, but difficult to achieve in practice.

- ◆ Last year, NITI Aayog sought public comments on the Data Empowerment and Protection Architecture (DEPA), a system that will connect an individual's financial, health, telecom and other data so that it can be moved from one provider to another. DEPA intends to use consent to ensure that users remain in control of their data.

Way Forward

- ◆ Several privacy policy experts, while pointing out that the European Union has a very strict data protection law, have called for urgent and prompt implementation of the data protection Bill that has been in the works in India for some time now.
- ◆ While taking note of this, the letter said that WhatsApp's change in privacy policies for Indian users, at a time when Parliament was deliberating the new Personal Data Protection bill, "puts the cart before the horse".

General Studies Paper- II

Topic:

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

Q. Discuss the issue of data privacy and India being too late in passing Data Protection Bill while being one of the largest consumer base for tech-giants.

03

Vaccination and Citizen's Right to Health

Why in News?

- ◆ The prime minister had launched the inoculation drive (vaccination) on January 16, 2021 with the government prioritising three crore health and frontline workers for the initial phase. In the initial phase, the vaccine is free for all the intended beneficiaries.
- ◆ But the authorities are grappling with hesitancy among the intended beneficiaries, amid concerns expressed by some over the vaccines' safety and efficacy.

Background

- ◆ The largest vaccination drive in history has been initiated in India, with free COVID vaccine being administered across the nation only to "prioritised beneficiaries" which includes three crore healthcare and frontline workers. Even though states like Delhi, West Bengal, Bihar and Kerala have assured free vaccines for everyone, there is no commitment from the central government to ensure that the benefit of vaccination is universal for all Indians. In a country like India, the Centre should ensure that there is a right to free vaccine for all Indians.
- ◆ Even as India is tentative in declaring free COVID vaccines for all, countries such as the United States, France, Japan, Russia, Norway and Bahrain have pledged free vaccines for all their citizens.
- ◆ Though surprisingly, nations like Pakistan who has been frontrunner in sponsoring terrorism and other human right violations are jumping to sign open letters, asking for free vaccine and raising humanitarian concerns.

- ◆ India is at the forefront of humanitarian exercise to provide free vaccine. Indian government has sent free doses to Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives — more than 3.2 million in total. Donations to Mauritius, Myanmar and Seychelles are set to follow. Sri Lanka and Afghanistan are next on the list. The shipments reflect one of India's unique strengths: It is home to a robust vaccine industry, including Serum Institute of India, one of the world's largest vaccine makers.

India's Right to Health

- ◆ Studies from the United Kingdom and the United States have shown that death due to COVID-19 is proportionally related to poverty. Maybe such aspects weighed in favour of free COVID-19 treatment offered by Kerala, which has shown one of the least death rates among big states in India. As Nelson Barbosa, former Finance Minister of Brazil, opined, market solutions are not optimal to fight a pandemic. Therefore, the public healthcare system, including free vaccination and free treatment are essential to deal with such a massive public health crisis.
- ◆ The right to health flows directly from Article 21 of the Constitution of India as has been held consistently by the Supreme Court in a catena of judgments, starting from the 1984 case of *Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India* and *Ors.* This inviolable right naturally encompasses the right to access affordable treatment, as iterated by the Supreme Court in a suo

moto case pertaining to the proper treatment of COVID-19 patients. The apex court held the state responsible for making provisions to cap the charges levied by private hospitals on incoming COVID-19 patients and noted that even if one managed to survive COVID-19, the individual would be rendered financially compromised due to the high cost of the treatment.

- ◆ In light of the above, if the right to health is a guaranteed fundamental right for an Indian citizen, she also possesses a right to free vaccine as it is a sub-set of the right to life which is guaranteed by our Constitution.
- ◆ There is also the apprehension that prioritising the administration of the vaccine at the behest of the bureaucracy may lead to arbitrariness. It is well-recorded that in such situations, it is the poor who end up with the short end of the stick. Therefore, in order to ensure that there is complete equity in the availability and accessibility of the vaccine, it would be prudent to dispense the vaccine for free to all.

Vaccines

- ◆ Covishield is developed by Oxford University in collaboration with AstraZeneca. The Serum Institute of India is its manufacturing and trial partner.
- ◆ While Covaxin is India's first indigenous vaccine against Covid-19. It has been developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research and the National Institute of Virology.

Politics Over Vaccine

- On January 2, India's central drug authority, the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), announced formal approval for the coronavirus vaccines of Oxford-AstraZeneca—manufactured by the Serum Institute in India—and, of Bharat Biotech, saying that both vaccines would be administered in two doses each. The approval by the DCGI was given on the basis of recommendations submitted by a coronavirus subject expert committee (SEC) of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO). V.G. Somani, head of the DCGI, said both firms submitted data on their trial runs of the coronavirus vaccines and both had been granted permission for “restricted use” in emergency situations.
- Many politicians readily jumped to use vaccine for their political gains. The ruling party at the centre promised free vaccine in Bihar, while CM of Delhi promised free vaccine in Delhi, opposition leaders raised doubts over the safety and efficacy of the vaccines, UP's ex-CM categorically named the vaccine as belonging to a particular political brand. It seems that politicians across the spectrum had been trying to benefit politically by raising controversy over a scientifically manufactured vaccine.
- Dispelling fears around the safety of India's two Covid-19 vaccines, Bharat Biotech's Covaxin and Serum Institute of India's Covishield, Prime



Minister Narendra Modi has said that politics was kept out of the vaccine exercise, which was driven entirely by scientific principles.

- He said that as soon as the vaccine was ready, it was decided that health workers would be given priority.
- Modi added that the vaccines had gone through various stages of trials to prove that there is no major side effect and that they are safe.

Challenges

- Despite being home to one of the world's largest health programmes, vaccinating a billion people for the first time is bound to be a daunting challenge and the government will have to navigate rough administrative, societal and financial terrains.
- While the intention behind the promises of free vaccine is laudable and in consonance with the principles enshrined in our Constitution, there is a need to examine the plausibility of such open-ended statements through the prism of ground realities.

- In this context, the ultimate methodology that can be effectuated for free pan-India vaccination would be one that can successfully take a leaf out of the playbook of the practice that was implemented for eradicating smallpox and polio.
- Enabling vaccine equity will also lead to long-term financial benefits for the government as the national lockdown wreaked havoc on the economy. A healthy society is directly proportional to a healthy economy.

Way Forward

- Any step towards compulsory vaccination has to be premised on larger public interest. The government has been providing free vaccination in initial phase, the official nod for national policy is awaited. Though free-vaccine in itself is not purely free as the tax-payers money is used by the government to purchase the vaccines from the manufacturers. What is being asked is free administration of vaccine to the citizens in order to provide a free benefit to not just the poor, but as a right to all the citizens. 📌📌📌

General Studies Paper- II

Topic:

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

Q. Discuss the issue of vaccination related rights of the citizens. Also, highlight India's efforts in providing vaccine as a humanitarian gesture to its neighbours.

04

Reforms Needed in Higher Education For Enabling Research

Why in News?

- ◆ Amid three major academic publishers seeking ban on free-to-all academic websites, over 2,000 researchers, scientists and students from across the country have signed a petition demanding free access to knowledge.

Background

- ◆ Sci-Hub and Libgen, both online repositories which provide free access to academic studies and articles which are otherwise paywalled, are under legal fire in India.
- ◆ Elsevier (which publishes the prestigious Cell and Lancet), Wiley India, Wiley Periodicals and American Chemical Society have all filed an injunction request in the Delhi HC, asking that both the websites be blocked, citing piracy and copyright violation issues.
- ◆ Sci-Hub, with around 85 million articles, calls itself “the first pirate website in the world to provide mass and public access to tens of millions of research papers to remove all barriers in the way of science”.
- ◆ Padmanabhan Balaram, former director of the Indian Institute of Science, made a statement supporting the “Robin Hoods” of the cyber space. “The websites are serving public good in the way perhaps Robin Hood was serving public good,” Balaram told The Telegraph. “We have to understand the circumstances and conditions under which Robin Hood did what he did.”

- ◆ The defendants in the case include Sci-Hub founder Alexandra Elbakyan, Libgen, the Department of Telecom (DoT) and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). One of the major precedents cited by the prosecution include the 2019 Delhi High Court order on UTV software; the court had permanently restrained 30 torrent sites from hosting, streaming, reproducing, distributing or making available to the public by any means the movies, music, shows or any content which violated the copyright of film production companies like Twentieth Century Fox and UTV Software. Justice Manmohan, in the order, directed internet service providers (ISPs) to block access to these websites.

Stake Holder's Respond

- ◆ The Delhi high court has agreed to hear representations from scientists, researchers and students before passing any interim order in the copyright infringement claim filed by three academic publishing houses seeking to block popular online repositories Sci Hub and Libgen in India.
- ◆ The court's decision came after Delhi Science Forum, Society for Knowledge Commons and a group of 20 scientists and scholars filed an application that said blocking free-to-download websites, which provide access to research, will deprive scientific researchers in poor and developing countries.

Standardisation Hurting Higher Education

- ◆ In the latter half of the 20th century, globalisation led to the imperative of applying “global” standards to higher education. As global standards have been unofficially understood as the prevailing practices in American and European institutions, this has posed a serious dilemma for institutions in the global south.
- ◆ Such parameters are often not compatible with the educational systems that have historically evolved in countries like India, with a colonial past and a persisting “non-industrial” present. Precise point-based measurements currently applied to measure knowledge production appear to be misplaced in knowledge ecosystems of the global south.
- ◆ In India, UGC has been the regulatory body responsible for maintaining standards in higher education, while addressing challenges of globalisation. Processes of UGC mandated “standardisation” have in particular impacted social sciences and humanities research in Indian universities.
- ◆ Over the years, UGC has linked institutional funding to ranking and accreditation systems like NAAC and NIRF.
- ◆ In order to evaluate institutions, these bodies have evolved “objective” criteria, which rank universities based on faculty research measured by citations in global journal databases like SCOPUS.

- ◆ Even for faculty promotions and eligibility for research supervision, it is articles published in such databases that are considered valid. In comparison, importance granted to research outputs like books or other forms is declining.
- ◆ It is more of an imposition of STEM (science, technology, engineering and management) criteria on social sciences and humanities. While in STEM disciplines, research is often highly objective and quantified, and conclusions can be published more easily as reports, short studies or articles, in social sciences and humanities research is subjective, analytical and argumentative.
- ◆ In disciplines like history, sociology, politics, philosophy, psychology and literature, researchers spend years writing books that engage with ideas in complex ways. The same is always not possible in a series of articles published over years.

Professional Growth Linked to Publishing and Review

- ◆ Since continuous production and publication has become necessary for professional growth, teachers spend most of their productive time writing articles and getting them published, thereby missing out on quality engagement with pedagogy and research.
- ◆ This has led to a surfeit of articles on any possible subject competing with each other for citations. Moreover, with long review processes associated with journal articles, it is not really as efficient a measure of research output as is claimed.

- ◆ While professional growth in universities bases itself on quantified indices, the process of peer review itself is subjective, and depends upon the knowledge, inclination and availability of time of the particular reviewer.
- ◆ It is often quite challenging for scholars to meet peer-review standards of A-listed journals. This has actually required the UGC to expand its own list, ending up including and subsequently deleting a large number of locally published journals.
- ◆ Further, the ghettoisation of research in paywalled journal databases makes research inaccessible for students as universities continue to cut down library budgets. Students and teachers, access articles through pirated sites like Libgen and Scihub, prone to be shut down at any point of time as evident from the litigations. Clearly, access to knowledge is structurally made inequitable in favour of the elite and/or moneyed institutions and their constituents.

Researcher's Discontent

- ◆ The scientific community, is upset with the court case, to seek a ban of accessible scientific content, and has strongly opposed the alleged "commoditisation of research information."
- ◆ Contending the allegations of infringement by the publishers, scientists said publishers such as LibGen and Sci-Hub do not violate

any norm of ethics or intellectual property rights, as the research papers are actually intellectual products of the authors and the institutions.

- ◆ It is important to note that Sci-Hub and LibGen have lost similar cases in other countries and that can weigh in as a factor when the court takes up the case for hearing

Way Forward

- ◆ The way exchange of scientific knowledge works today is through papers. And the subscription fees are so high for each journal that students find it difficult to subscribe to any of those. Some research institutes have institution subscriptions, but that is also limited by the institute funding. As most institutes are facing fund cuts, the first thing they do is to discontinue subscriptions.
- ◆ India's higher education needs to unplug from the western notion of research and must follow its own practice where knowledge generation is a cumulative process in which the input of many scholars and previous researches are involved.



General Studies Paper- II

Topic:

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

Q. Research in higher education requires the researcher to access articles, findings, reports etc to expand his/her understanding. Pay to view articles and expensive subscriptions in the name of copyright is disservice to research capabilities of a nation. Discuss.

05 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and India: Resetting Equation

Why in News?

- ◆ India being a major global power is balancing the geopolitical realignment of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation or SCO which is being appreciated by both Russia and other Central Asian member countries. To give greater economic teeth to this regional security organisation, in future countries like Japan, South Korea and Vietnam may be included.
- ◆ The 'SCO Council of Heads of Government' Summit which took place on November 2020 in Moscow and the 'Council of Heads of Government (Prime Ministers)' of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit on November 30 at New Delhi reflected the state of affairs of both global and regional geopolitics. Some of the major developments that took place prior to the meetings were: the global pandemic and its impact on the conduct of international relations; growing 'isolation' of China at the international fore for its omission and commission during the pandemic crisis.

Background

- ◆ SCO started off nearly two decades ago as a mechanism to resolve borders among the initial members, its contemporary mission to promote regional security is largely focused on the conflict in Afghanistan and thwarting the spread of Islamic terrorism.

- ◆ India only recently joined the SCO, gaining full membership in 2017 along with its neighbour Pakistan.
- ◆ At the time, there were concerns that the ever-present India-Pakistan hostility would further hamstring the SCO's mission of sustainable and cooperative regional security. The China-India standoff has only added to questions about the grouping's efficiency.

Growing Chinese Aggression

- ◆ World is witnessing the 'expansionist' and 'imperial' policy being pursued by China towards its neighbours.
- ◆ A good instance in this regard is the recent Chinese aggressive intrusion in Galwan Valley located in the Union Territory of Ladakh of India. This aggressive move on part of China in pursuing an hostile posture towards India, raises a fundamental question about

whether China, is still pursuing its age-old 'Middle Kingdom Complex' strategic doctrine in its foreign policy?

- ◆ The consequences of aggressive behaviour by China towards its neighbours resulted in the emergence of a new kind of strategic realignment both within the Asian continent as well as at the global geopolitical structural framework.
- ◆ The growing rapprochement among the countries of Indo-Pacific region like India, Australia, Japan, the United States and formation of the strategic Quad is a reflection of this trend. The Foreign Ministers of Quad in their latest meeting held in October 2020 expressed their indignation over China's "expansionist tendencies".
- ◆ Russia, which considers itself as a closest strategic ally of China is also in recent years is also questioning

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation, the creation of which was announced on 15 June 2001.
- The organisation has two permanent bodies — the SCO Secretariat based in Beijing and the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) based in Tashkent.
- The SCO comprises eight member states, namely the Republic of India, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan;
- The SCO counts four observer states, namely the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Belarus, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Mongolia;
- The SCO has six dialogue partners, namely the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the Republic of Turkey, and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

China's "imperial ambitions". The apprehension of Russia is gaining momentum after the Vladivostok fiasco in which China claimed its historical right over the city.

Ineffective SCO

- ◆ While the SCO may prove to be a zone of convergence, pulling the two back from the brink of conflict, current trends point in the opposite direction. As China deepens its relations with Russia and its ally Pakistan pushes to marginalize New Delhi's role in the group, India looks set to remain the odd one out in the SCO.
- ◆ When it comes to expansion, aggression and co-existence, it is pertinent to mention here that China is not complying with international law and "rule-based world order".
- ◆ Charter of SCO explicitly mentions in its Article 2 : "non-use of force or threat of its use in international relations, seeking no unilateral military superiority in adjacent areas". However, looking at its strategic behaviours in the last couple of years, China, is consistently violating Article 2 of the SCO Charter and making a mockery of it.
- ◆ Similarly, by aligning with the failed state of Pakistan, China is directly or indirectly supporting terrorists and other radical forces. It is an acknowledged fact that China is bailing out Pakistan at the UN and not allowing any sanctions on it including financial sanctions for its role in promoting cross-border terrorism.



- ◆ Similarly, SCO created an anti-terrorist Centre at Tashkent to fight against "radicalism, terrorism and extremism". However, a closer scrutiny shows China and Pakistan are actually supporting the 'evil forces'.
- ◆ Charter of SCO in Article 3 " Areas of Cooperation" highlights that "support for, and promotion of regional economic cooperation in various forms, fostering favourable environment for trade and investments with a view to gradually achieving free flow of goods, capitals, services and technologies". However, looking at the pattern of trade of China with the SCO member countries it is largely asymmetric in nature. The trade pattern is basically skewed in favour of China. The same is the case of Russia also. Over a period of times as studies suggest both Russia and the Central Asian countries are becoming 'clients' of China.

Convergence of Indian Interests

- ◆ India's role in SCO has to be looked at from two strategic perspectives. Firstly, India's relations with Russia and Central Asian countries (who are members of SCO) is one major factor shaping its role in this group.
- ◆ In fact, it has been argued that despite China's initial inhibitions, Russia and the Central Asian countries welcomed India's decision to join the SCO. Clearly these post-Soviet countries perceive that India can provide the necessary leadership to counter the growing dominance of China in the Eurasian space.
- ◆ Secondly, there is a growing perception from certain quarters that India can play a greater role in the post-Soviet Eurasian space through the SCO. However, it needs to be underlined here that even without SCO, India is a leading player in the post-Soviet geopolitics of Eurasia.

- ◆ In the wide-ranging menu for socio-economic cooperation contained in the Declarations issued by the Summit and the Meeting, two areas are relevant for India. These are the role of connectivity projects and an emerging digital economy driven by high technology (including information technology) to accelerate sustainable economic cooperation.
- ◆ The declarations issued at both the Summit and the Meeting supported China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) connectivity projects. India abstained from both these decisions, due to her consistent opposition to the violation of her sovereignty and territorial integrity by the BRI's China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) through Indian territory in Jammu and Kashmir.
- ◆ Member nations in SCO has prioritised support for Indian efforts in three major global connectivity projects. These are the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) connecting the European Union through Russia and Iran to India and ASEAN; the Chabahar Port and railway connecting India through Iran to Afghanistan, Central Asia and Russia; and the Vladivostok-Chennai sea lane of communication connecting India to Russia's Far East as well as countries partnering India in her "Act East" policy.



- ◆ A proactive Indian partnership with SCO members like Kazakhstan, which has proposed the creation of a pool of SCO technology parks; and Uzbekistan, which has proposed a SCO platform for interaction between the heads of information technology agencies; will be relevant for ensuring an Indian presence in the SCO's digital space. Specific areas identified for Indian initiatives in the SCO using digital technologies would include the education, healthcare, and small/medium enterprise (SME) sectors.
- ◆ India should also initiate an alternative regional grouping involving Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines and Kazakhstan in the Indo-Pacific region. Though Kazakhstan is a leading Eurasian country, over the years, it is engaging diplomatically with the above -mentioned countries (particularly with India, Japan and South Korea) through its "multi vector policy" for promoting trade and commerce. 🇮🇳🇯🇵🇰🇷

Way Forward

- ◆ The success of the SCO's (and India's) attempt at creating a region of mutually beneficial cooperation in Eurasia will be measured and supported by the role of the shared values and links between the peoples of the region that reinforce the principles of the SCO Charter.

General Studies Paper- II

Topic:

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

Topic:

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

Q. What is Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)? What are the strategic benefits of SCO to India? Also highlight the impact of a Chinese centred multi-lateral body and scope for India to push for "rule-based world order".

06

Viability of Bad Banks in the Indian Economy

Why in News?

- ◆ With commercial banks set to witness a spike in NPAs, or bad loans, in the wake of the contraction in the economy as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das recently agreed to look at the proposal for the creation of a bad bank.

Background

- ◆ US-based Mellon Bank created the first bad bank in 1988, after which the concept has been implemented in other countries including Sweden, Finland, France and Germany.
- ◆ However, resolution agencies or ARCs set up as banks, which originate or guarantee lending, have ended up turning into reckless lenders in some countries.
- ◆ In India, Bad bank concept was tried with the setting up of Industrial Reconstruction Corporation of India in 1971, for the rehabilitation of sick industrial undertakings.
- ◆ It was later rechristened to Industrial Reconstruction Bank of India (IIRBI) in 1985, and tasked to buy bad loans of commercial banks and recover the debt.
- ◆ During Rajan's tenure as RBI Governor, RBI had then initiated an asset quality review (AQR) of banks and found that several banks had suppressed or hidden bad loans to show a healthy balance sheet.
- ◆ The idea of forming a 'bad bank' in India was initially floated in January 2017 when the Economic Survey of India suggested setting up a Public Sector Asset Rehabilitation Agency (PARA).
- ◆ The central bank RBI, too, came up with a suggestion to form two entities to clean up the bad loan

problems ailing PSBs -- PAMC (Private Asset Management Company) and NAMC (National Assets Management Company).

- ◆ It said PAMC would be formed by roping in banks and global funding companies. This would invest in areas where there's a short-term economic viability.
- ◆ It said the NAMC would be formed with the government support, which would invest in bad assets with short-term stress but good chances of turnaround and economic benefit.
- ◆ However, the idea remained on paper amid lack of consensus on the efficacy of such an institution.
- ◆ ARCs have not made any impact in resolving bad loans due to many procedural issues.
- ◆ Now, with the pandemic hitting the banking sector, the RBI fears a spike in bad loans in the wake of a six-month moratorium it has announced to tackle the economic slowdown.

Bad Bank

- ◆ Technically, a bad bank is an asset reconstruction company (ARC) or an asset management company that takes over the bad loans of commercial banks, manages them and finally recovers the money over a period of time.
- ◆ The bad bank is not involved in lending and taking deposits, but helps commercial banks clean up their balance sheets and resolve bad loans.
- ◆ The takeover of bad loans is normally below the book value of the loan and the bad bank tries to recover as much as possible subsequently.

Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs)

- ◆ An Asset Reconstruction Company is a specialized financial institution that buys the NPAs or bad assets from banks and financial institutions so that the latter can clean up their balance sheets. Or in other words, ARCs are in the business of buying bad loans from banks.
- ◆ The Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (SARFAESI) Act, 2002; enacted in December 2002 provides the legal basis for the setting up ARCs in India.
- ◆ The SARFAESI Act helps reconstruction of bad assets without the intervention of courts. Since then, large number of ARCs were formed and were registered with the RBI which has got the power to regulate the ARCs.

Non-Performing Asset (NPA)

- ◆ A nonperforming asset (NPA) refers to a classification for loans or advances that are in default or in arrears.
- ◆ A loan is in arrears when principal or interest payments are late or missed.
- ◆ A loan is in default when the lender considers the loan agreement to be broken and the debtor is unable to meet his obligations.
- ◆ Currently, loans in which the borrower fails to pay principal and/or interest charges within 90 days are classified as NPAs and provisioning is made accordingly.

Need for Bad Bank

- ◆ Despite a series of measures by the RBI for better recognition and provisioning against NPAs, as well

as massive doses of capitalisation of public sector banks by the government, the problem of NPAs continues in the banking sector, especially among the weaker banks.

- ◆ As the Covid-related stress pans out in the coming months, proponents of the concept feel that a professionally-run bad bank, funded by the private lenders and supported the government, can be an effective mechanism to deal with NPAs.
- ◆ The bad bank concept is in some ways similar to an ARC but is funded by the government initially, with banks and other investors co-investing in due course.
- ◆ The presence of the government is seen as a means to speed up the clean-up process. Many other countries had set up institutional mechanisms such as the Troubled Asset Relief Programme (TARP) in the US to deal with a problem of stress in the financial system.

Proposal by the Banking System

- ◆ The banking sector, led by the Indian Banks' Association, had submitted a proposal for setting up a bad bank to resolve the NPA problem, proposing equity contribution from the government and banks.
- ◆ The proposal was also discussed at the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) meeting, but it did not find favour with the government which preferred a market-led resolution process.
- ◆ The banking industry's proposal was based on an idea proposed by a panel on faster resolution of stressed assets in public sector

banks headed by former Punjab National Bank Chairman Sunil Mehta.

- ◆ This panel had proposed a company, Sashakt India Asset Management, for resolving large bad loans two years ago.
- ◆ During the pandemic, banks and India Inc were also pitching for one-time restructuring of loans and NPA reclassification norms from 90 days to 180 days as relief measures to tackle the impact of the lockdown and the slowdown in the economy.

NPAs Scenario

- ◆ Bad loans in the system are expected to balloon in the wake of contraction in the economy and the problems being faced by many sectors.
- ◆ The RBI noted in its recent Financial Stability Report that the gross NPAs of the banking sector are expected to shoot up to 13.5% of advances by September 2021, from 7.5% in September 2020, under the baseline scenario, as "a multi-speed recovery is struggling to gain traction" amidst the pandemic.
- ◆ The report warned that if the macroeconomic environment worsens into a severe stress scenario, the ratio may escalate to 14.8%.
- ◆ Among bank groups, the NPA ratio of PSU banks, which was 9.7% in September 2020, may increase to 16.2% by September 2021 under the baseline scenario.

K V Kamath Committee

- ◆ It helped the RBI with designing a one-time restructuring scheme, noted that corporate sector debt worth Rs 15.52 lakh crore has

come under stress after Covid-19 hit India, while another Rs 22.20 lakh crore was already under stress before the pandemic.

- ◆ This effectively means Rs 37.72 crore (72% of the banking sector debt to industry) remains under stress. This is almost 37% of the total non-food bank credit.
- ◆ The panel led by Kamath, a veteran banker, has said companies in sectors such as retail trade, wholesale trade, roads and textiles are facing stress.
- ◆ Sectors that have been under stress pre-Covid include NBFCs, power, steel, real estate and construction. Setting up a bad bank is seen as crucial against this backdrop.

Way Forward

- ◆ The government should start with setting up bad bank as the major benefit of forming a bad bank is asset monetisation. Bad assets would stay in the 'risky' category, while the good one stays in the other category, saving them from mixing together.
- ◆ The real benefit for a bank comes when its investors are sure of its financial health, which helps it in the long run in raising capital, borrow, and lend money to other companies.



General Studies Paper- III

Topic

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

Q. What are bad banks and why are they needed in the economy? Also mention the issue of rising NPAs and its impact of banking governance structure.

07

Crop Diversification: Delivering Resilience and Food Security

Why in News?

- ◆ Amidst the ongoing protests against the three agri laws and the demand for legal sanctity to minimum support price (MSP), experts have raised questions on the sustainability of the wheat-paddy cycle of farming and pointed that if peasants, especially those in Punjab, want to increase their income, they must opt for crop diversification – something that has remained a distant dream in the state.

Background

- ◆ The relevance of the time-tested wheat-paddy cropping pattern has come under scrutiny during the ongoing debate over the new farm laws.
- ◆ Experts who have been following and participating in debates on crop diversification are of the view that considering the Centre's attempts to tinker with the procurement system and the alarming decline in the water table, Punjab needs to diversify to an alternative cropping pattern.
- ◆ The debate on diversification in Punjab is much older. A committee headed by eminent economist Sardara Singh Johl, constituted in 1986, had recommended that at least 20 per cent area under wheat and paddy be shifted to other crops, especially fruits and vegetables. Since then, various

committees have been set up, including another led by Johl in 2002, and multiple reports have been submitted, but to no avail. Another agriculture expert, Prof GS Kalkat, brought in the state's first-ever agriculture policy in 2013. He asked the government to establish the agriculture price stabilisation fund so that farmers could diversify to other crops. But no government ever implemented as MSP has been always a major election winning plank.

- ◆ A report by the United Nations Organisation has predicted famines of 'biblical proportions' and urged the UN Security Council to 'act fast'. The World Food Programme (WFP) reported that the global spread of Covid-19 sparked off "the worst humanitarian crisis since World

War Two". The WFP has warned of more frequent natural disasters and changing weather patterns, saying that "we are already facing a perfect storm".

- ◆ With millions of people in conflict-scarred nations teetering on the brink of starvation, famine is a 'very real possibility', leaving no room for complacency even in 'food-secure' nations like India.

Need for Optimal Agri-food Policy

- ◆ Framing an optimal agri-food policy in India is the need of the hour. The policy should look at issues pertinent to not only the short run but also try to address medium to long-term challenges. UN population projections (2019) indicate that India is likely to be the most populous country by 2027. By 2030, the country is likely to have



almost 600 million people living in urban areas, who would need safe food from the hinterlands. Indian agriculture has an average holding size of 1.08 hectare (2015-16 data), while engaging 42 per cent of the country's workforce. Cultivable land and water for agriculture are limited and already under severe pressure. The agri-food policy should be focussed on the following criteria:

- ◆ One, it should be able to produce enough food, feed and fibre for its large population.
- ◆ Two, it should do so in a manner that not only protects the environment — soil, water, air, and biodiversity — but achieves higher production with global competitiveness.
- ◆ Third, it should enable seamless movement of food from farm to fork, keeping marketing costs low, save on food losses in supply chains and provide safe and fresh food to consumers.

- ◆ And, finally, consumers should get safe and nutritious food at affordable prices.
- ◆ At the centre of all these is the farmer, whose income needs to go up with access to best technologies and best markets in the country, and abroad.
- ◆ Basic hunger has been more or less conquered, but the biggest challenge for next 10 years is that of malnutrition, especially amongst children. It is a multi-dimensional problem. From women's education, to immunisation and sanitation, to nutritious food, all have to be addressed on a war footing.

Crop Diversification for Economic Good

- ◆ Agricultural crop diversification is an important stress-relieving option for economic growth of the farming community.

- ◆ Diversification of agriculture in the first Green Revolution areas such as Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh seems need of the hour.
- ◆ Crop diversification refers to the addition of new crops or cropping systems to agricultural production on a particular farm taking into account the different returns from value-added crops with complementary marketing opportunities.
- ◆ Crop diversification and inclusion of the new varieties can be one of the important technologies in increasing the farmers' income to a certain extent, if not double. The aim of crop diversification is to increase crop portfolio so that farmers are not dependent on a single crop to generate their income.
- ◆ When farmers go for single crop type they are exposed to high risks in the event of unforeseen climate events that could severely impact agricultural production, such as emergence of pests and the sudden onset of frost or drought.

Responding to Climate Change Crisis

- ◆ Introducing a greater range of varieties in a particular agro - ecosystem leads to diversification of agricultural production which can also increase natural biodiversity, strengthening the ability of the agroecosystem to respond to these stresses.
- ◆ The introduction of new cultivated species and improved varieties



of crop is a technology aimed at enhancing plant productivity, quality, health and nutritional value and/or building crop resilience to diseases, pest organisms and environmental stresses. It reduces the risk of total crop failure and also provides alternative means of generating income, as different crops will respond to climate scenarios in different ways.

- ◆ While the cold may affect one crop negatively, production in an alternative crop may increase. Crop diversification in India is generally viewed as a shifting from traditionally grown less remunerative crop(s) to more remunerative crop(s).
- ◆ Crop diversification and growing of large number of crops are practised in dryland areas to reduce the risk factor of crop failures due to recurring droughts. Crop substitution and crop shift are also taking place in the areas suffering with some specific soil related problems, like salinity, sodicity, acidity etc.
- ◆ Conclusively, major advantages of crop diversification include income increases of small farm holdings; less risk for price fluctuation, climatic variability etc.; balancing food demand; increasing the production of quality fodder for

livestock animals; beneficial for conserving natural resources; minimize environmental pollution; reduce dependence on off-farm inputs; and community food security can be increased.

Measures to be Taken

- ◆ Three prolonged strategies focused on (i) development initiatives, (ii) technology and (iii) policy reforms in agriculture are needed to double farmers' income.
- ◆ High demand of lands for non-agricultural sectors limits the possibility for further expansion of the land for cultivation.
- ◆ Besides, the productivity of the most of the crops is low in the country, and there is a huge scope to raise the productivity to enable doubling the farmers' income.
- ◆ Even within the country, there is huge yield variation of different crops among the states. Bridging yield gaps among the states is important in improving national productivity.
- ◆ In the marketing segment also, for most of our agri-commodities, our costs remain high compared to several other developing countries due to poor logistics, low investments in supply lines and high margins of intermediaries.

Dedicated Freight Corridor could act as a major contributor in solving this problem.

Way Forward

- ◆ Crop diversification provides better conditions for food security and enables farmers to grow surplus products for sale at market and thus help to obtain increased income to meet other needs related to household well-being.
- ◆ Crop diversification can enable farmers to gain access to national and international markets with new products, food and medicinal plants. Diversifying from the monoculture of traditional staples can have important nutritional benefits for farmers in developing countries and can support a country for becoming more self-reliant in terms of food production. <<<

General Studies Paper- III

Topic:

- Major crops - cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems - storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; e-technology in the aid of farmers.

Q. Crop-diversification in India is needed not just to battle climate-crisis and food security, but also to increase farmer's income. Discuss.

7

IMPORTANT BRAIN BOOSTERS

01

India's Opportunity for Wheat Export

1. Why in News?

- Recently, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) upped its forecast of Indian wheat exports for 2020-21 (July-June) to 1.8 million tonnes (mt), as against its earlier estimate of one mt which would be the highest ever in the last six years.



2. Rising Demand for India's Wheat

- Due to surging international prices from Chinese stockpiling and ultra-low interest rate, money increasingly finding its way into agri-commodity markets. After rice, India is set to turn a major exporter of wheat as well.
- Due to rising global prices, wheat future contracts for March delivery at the Chicago Board of Trade exchange are currently at \$244.35 per tonne (18.3% higher than the \$206.59 a year ago). This opens up possibilities for Indian exports to nearby markets, especially Bangladesh that buys mostly from Russia.
- With the Russia government levying a 25 euros-per-tonne export tax on wheat effective from February 15 – in response to high domestic prices, Bangladesh is beginning to shift its purchases towards India.

3. Domestic Situation

- According to the agriculture ministry, wheat prices in Uttar Pradesh have increased from around Rs 1,575 a quintal to Rs 1,700. In Madhya Pradesh, wheat has gone up from around Rs 1,500 to Rs 1,710 in Ujjain district, while in Indore, the price has climbed from Rs 1,700 to Rs 1,850 a quintal.
- The Centre had fixed the minimum support price of Rs 1,925 a quintal for the 2019-20 (July-June) crop year. The wheat that is arriving in the market is the stock held back by traders or farmers after the harvest of the rabi crop in April.
- Wheat is grown during November-March, with harvest taking place around February-end in states such as Gujarat and March-end or early April in other parts of the country.
- Until now, India's exports have been minimal with its domestic support price (MSP) making it uncompetitive. But with strong global demand and tight exportable supplies from traditional exporters resulting in high prices, India is now relatively competitive to its nearby markets such as Bangladesh with its forecasting rising to the highest in six years.

5. Bumper Crop

- Prospects for the upcoming wheat harvest (2020-21) are bright.
- Record sown area and benign weather have combined to raise the prospects of harvest to well over 100 mt, possibly close to 105 mt. Of course, as it happens often, the government's production estimate, due by end-February, may turn out to be even higher.
- This will be the third successive year of massive harvest in the country. As on January 1, acreage is estimated at 32.5 million hectares, higher than the 5-year average of 30.3 million ha.
- The eventual planted area may well touch 34 million ha — slightly higher than 33.6 million ha of 2020 crop.

4. Wheat Economics for Exports

- For farmers, cultivating wheat is easy as input costs are less and MSP is guaranteed. They need to put in much less effort compared to crops such as paddy. It is also a safe bet as diseases in wheat plants have been controlled.
- Gujarat Rabi wheat crop, which is expected to be harvested in February, could be exported since prices there are usually lower than MSP.
- The USDA expects India to more than offset the lower exports projected from Argentina and Russia in the global market this year.
- According to the USDA, India could be left with 31.31 million tonnes of wheat carryover stocks this April when the Centre begins its procurement for buffer stocks used for the public distribution system.

02

Notice Period Not Mandatory Under Special Marriage Act

1. Why in News?

- Recently, Allahabad High Court has ruled that couples seeking to solemnise their marriage under the Special Marriage Act, 1954 can choose not to publish the mandatory 30-day notice of their intention to marry.



2. Background

- The court was hearing a habeas corpus petition filed by one Abhishek Kumar Pandey, alleging that his wife's father has stopped her from staying with him. His wife had converted to Hinduism from Islam to marry Pandey.
- While the case was settled after the woman and her father accepted the marriage, the couple informed the court that they could not solemnise their wedding under the Special Marriage Act because of the 30-day notice period.
- They asserted that it was an invasion of their privacy and would have caused "unnecessary social pressure/interference in their free choice with regard to their marriage".

3. Provisions under Special Marriage Act, 1954

- The Special Marriage Act to provide a framework for inter-caste and inter-religious marriages was originally enacted in 1872.
- Section 5 of the Act requires couples intending to marry under the law to give a 30-day notice period to a marriage officer of the district in which at least one of the parties has resided in the last 30 days. The notice is supposed to be published under Section 6 of the Act.
- During these 30 days, anyone can object to the marriage if it contravenes conditions such as age, capacity to consent, incest, etc. If there are no objections, the marriage can be solemnised at the end of the 30-day period, according to Section 7 of the Act.
- The court has now said a couple while giving the 30-day notice under the law can request the marriage officer to publish or not publish it for inviting objections.

4. Arguments for the Judgement

- The procedure of publication of notice and inviting objections to the intended marriage in Act of 1954 thus has to be such that would uphold the fundamental rights and not violate the same.
- In case the same on their simplistic reading are held mandatory, as per the law declared, they would invade in the fundamental rights of liberty and privacy, including within its sphere freedom to choose for marriage without interference from state and non-state actors, of the persons concerned.
- The court noted that despite the secular law for marriage, a majority of marriages in the country happen as per religious customs. It said that when marriages under personal law do not require a notice or invitation for objections, such a requirement is obsolete in secular law and cannot be forced on a couple.

5. Previous Rulings by the Supreme Court and Other High Courts

- The landmark progressive ruling on the right to privacy by the Supreme Court, including the 2017 Aadhaar case, recognised the right to privacy as a fundamental right.
- The 2018 ruling which held that the right to choose a partner is a fundamental right in the case involving Hadiya, a medical student who converted to Islam to marry a Muslim.
- The 2018 ruling in which the court decriminalised homosexuality.
- In 2012, the Himachal Pradesh High Court had struck down similar provisions that required notice of intention in case of religious conversion in the Himachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 2006, citing that it violates the fundamental right to privacy. However, the state, repealing the 2006 law, enacted a law in 2019 with the same provisions that the court struck down.
- The Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, declared conversion of religion by marriage to be unlawful, mandates a 60-day notice to the District Magistrate and also requires the Magistrate to conduct a police inquiry to ascertain the real intention behind the conversion.

03

Third Phase of Flagship Skilling Scheme - PMKVY 3.0

1. Why in News?

- The third phase of the government's flagship skilling scheme Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY 3.0) was recently launched in 600 districts across all states of the country.
- The launch will be done by the Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.



2. Key Highlights

- Skill India Mission PMKVY 3.0 envisages training of eight lakh candidates over a scheme period of 2020-2021 with an outlay of Rs. 948.90 crore.
- This phase will focus on new-age and COVID-related skills.
- The 729 Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKKs), empanelled non-PMKK training centres and more than 200 industrial training institutes under Skill India will be rolling out PMKVY 3.0 training to build a robust pool of skilled professionals.
- On the basis of the learning gained from PMKVY 1.0 and PMKVY 2.0, the Ministry has improved the newer version of the scheme to match the current policy doctrine and energize the skilling ecosystem affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- PMKVY 2.0 broadened skill development with inclusion of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and focus on training. With the advent of PMKVY 3.0, the focus is on bridging the demand-supply gap by promoting skill development in areas of new-age and Industry 4.0 job roles.

3. PMKVY 3.0: Scope

- The third phase of the scheme is designed to make skill development more demand-driven and decentralised in its approach, with focus on digital technology and Industry 4.0 skills.
- In the third phase, District Skill Committees (DSCs), under the guidance of State Skill Development Missions (SSDM), shall play a key role in addressing the skill gap and assessing demand at the district level.

4. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana

- PMKVY is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) implemented by National Skill Development Corporation.
- The objective of this Skill Certification Scheme is to enable a large number of Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them in securing a better livelihood.
- Individuals with prior learning experience or skills will also be assessed and certified under Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

5. Benefits

- The Skill India Mission which was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on July 15, 2015 has gained momentum through the launch of its flagship scheme PMKVY to unlock the vision of making India the 'Skill Capital' of the world.
- While the National Educational Policy puts focus on vocational training for a holistic growth and increased employability, the role of PMKVY 3.0 will be of a propagator of vocational education at an early level for youth to capitalise on industry-linked opportunities.
- The new scheme will be more trainee- and learner-centric addressing the ambitions of aspirational Bharat.
- PMKVY 3.0 will encourage healthy competition between states by making available increased allocation to those states that perform better.

04

Secret Indo-Pacific Strategy: US Perception of China

1. Why in News?

- The document, declassified by the outgoing Trump administration's National Security Adviser, states that China's influence will "continue to increase in the near-term and challenge the US ability to achieve its national interests in the Indo-Pacific"
- The document made it clear that the US administration under President Donald Trump intended to maintain America's primacy against an "illiberal" and increasingly powerful China.



2. US Perception of China

- The 'US Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific' is essentially one of the operational policy documents that follows the overarching strategy laid out in 'National Security Strategy (NSS) 2017'.
- While the NSS mentioned China 33 times, it did not call Beijing out as a threat to US pre-eminence in the Indo-Pacific, and US interests globally, which the Framework document clearly does. It foresees that 'strategic competition' between the US and China will persist, given systemic divergence and opposite goals.
- The US sees China as a strategic competitor bent on circumventing international rules and norms and a key security concern across the Indo-Pacific region, where Beijing wants to establish "new, illiberal spheres of influence", according to a newly declassified strategy document.

3. Observing China's Advances

- The strategy document states that China "seeks to dominate cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence and bio-genetics", and use them in the "service of authoritarianism".
- China's dominance in these technologies poses "profound challenges to free societies", and China's proliferation of "digital surveillance, information controls, and influence operations will damage US efforts to promote our values and national interests in the Indo-Pacific region" and even in the Western hemisphere, the document adds.
- The strategy also envisages China taking "increasingly assertive steps to compel unification with Taiwan".

4. Increased Importance to India

- New Delhi might also be thankful that the document is out in public, because it means the incoming Joe Biden administration won't find it easy to backslide on any of its commitments.
- The strategy is based on the assumption that a "strong India, in cooperation with like-minded countries, would act as a counterbalance to China", and that New Delhi's "preferred partner on security issues" is Washington.
- Among the "desired end states" or goals of the strategy is India-US cooperation to "preserve maritime security and counter Chinese influence in South and Southeast Asia and other regions of mutual concern", and India maintaining "the capacity to counter border provocations by China".

6. Progress in Partnership

- Over the past three years, the US has signed three key defence agreements, one at each of the 2+2 ministerial meetings, to facilitate the real-time sharing of sensitive military information and transfer of sophisticated technology.
- These agreements are the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), the Industrial Security Annex to the General Security of Military Information Agreement, and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA).
- The four members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or Quad – India, Australia, Japan and the US – elevated the body to the ministerial level in 2019 and the second ministerial meeting was held in Tokyo last year.

5. Steps to Accommodate India

- The strategy also sets the goal of ensuring that India remains "preeminent in South Asia and takes the leading role in maintaining Indian Ocean security, increases engagement with Southeast Asia, and expands its economic, defense, and diplomatic cooperation with other US allies and partners in the region".
- The strategy states that the US will take action on several fronts, including diplomatic, military and intelligence, to "accelerate India's rise and capacity to serve as a net provider of security and Major Defense Partner" and to address challenges emanating from China, including the border dispute.
- Among the actions the US will take in this regard is offering "support to India – through diplomatic, military, and intelligence channels – to help address continental challenges such as the border dispute with China and access to water, including the Brahmaputra and other rivers facing diversion by China".

05

Russia's Exit From Open Skies Treaty

1. Why in News?

- Recently, Russia announced that it was pulling out of the Open Skies treaty, saying that the pact, which allows unarmed surveillance flights over member countries, had been seriously compromised by the withdrawal of the United States.



2. Open Skies Treaty (OST)

- It was first proposed in 1955 by former US President Dwight Eisenhower as a means to deescalate tensions during the Cold War.
- The landmark treaty was eventually signed in 1992 between NATO members and former Warsaw Pact countries following the demise of the Soviet Union.
- It went into effect in 2002 and had 35 signatories, including key players US and Russia, along with one non-ratifying member (Kyrgyzstan).
- The OST aims at building confidence among members through mutual openness, thus reducing the chances of accidental war.
- Under the treaty, a member state can “spy” on any part of the host nation, with the latter’s consent. A country can undertake aerial imaging over the host state after giving notice 72 hours before, and sharing its exact flight path 24 hours before.

3. Usefulness of the Treaty

- The treaty is one of the few remaining avenues for arms control compliance verification that doesn’t rely on “national technical means”—a country’s unilateral ability to spy or observe from afar.
- Arms control is a cheaper and safer alternative to military competition.
- The information gathered, such as on troop movements, military exercises and missile deployments, has to be shared with all member states.
- Open Skies is remarkable in that, by expressly facilitating overflights between the two countries, it overcame the “intrusive inspection” barrier.
- If any country believes that the treaty does, or should, prohibit the observation of certain things, that country has the right—and normative obligation—to raise the issue with the treaty’s consultative committee. Under Article XVI, state parties may also propose amendments to Open Skies and, with the support of at least two other state parties, convene a conference to discuss the proposal. If a state feels that some element of the treaty is inadequate, Article XVI provides the means to amend it.

4. Rationale Behind US Pulling Out

- While it was envisaged as a key arms control agreement, many in Washington had for over a decade accused Russia of non-compliance with OST protocols, blaming Moscow of obstructing surveillance flights on its territory, while misusing its own missions for gathering key tactical data.
- In May 2020, the Trump administration announced its intention of withdrawing from the OST, accusing Russia of “flagrantly and continuously violating the Treaty in various ways for years”, and left it in November that year.

6. Major Concerns

- The failure of the Open Skies Treaty follows the demise of another significant arms control accord, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, after both the US and Russia left it in 2019.
 - ☛ The INF Treaty was signed between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1987, in which both powers agreed to destroy two categories of lethal missile systems from their own stocks as a means to decelerate the nuclear arms race.
- Experts now worry about the fate of the much larger US-Russia ‘New START’ nuclear arms control agreement, which is slated to expire on February 5, 2021.

5. Rationale Behind Russia Pulling Out

- A contentious issue regarding Russia’s compliance with the OST was its alleged reluctance to allow flights over Kaliningrad, its exclave in Eastern Europe that sits between NATO allies Lithuania and Poland.
- Russia defended its position by saying that the restrictions were permissible under treaty rules, and gave the example of the US imposing similar limits on flights over Alaska.
- After the US left the OST, Russia sought assurances from NATO allies who continued to remain on the treaty that they would not transfer data collected by their flights over Russia to Washington. In its statement, Russia said that these requests were not backed by the NATO members, prompting it to leave the treaty.

06

PMFBY Completes Five Years

1. Why in News?

- The Central Government's flagship crop insurance scheme has successfully completed 5 years of its operation. In a historic step towards strengthening risk coverage of crops for farmers, the government approved the scheme in 2016.



2. About Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yajana (PMFBY)

- PMFBY was launched on January 13, 2016 with an aim to provide a comprehensive risk solution at the lowest uniform premium across the country for farmers.
- Under the scheme, premium cost over and above the farmer share is equally subsidized by States and central government. However, central government shares 90% of the premium subsidy for North Eastern States to promote the uptake in the region.

3. Scope of the Scheme

- The average sum insured per hectare has increased from Rs. 15,100 during the pre-PMFBY Schemes to Rs. 40,700 under PMFBY.
- As an end-to-end risk mitigation mechanism for farmers, the scheme extends coverage for the entire cropping cycle from pre-sowing to post-harvest including coverage for losses arising out of prevented sowing and mid-season adversities.
- Individual farm level losses arising out of localized calamities and post-harvest losses are also covered due to perils such as inundation, cloudburst and natural fire.
- Integration of land records with the PMFBY portal, crop insurance mobile app for easy enrolment of farmers and usage of technology such as satellite imagery, remote-sensing technology, drones, artificial intelligence and machine learning to assess crop losses are some of the key features of the scheme.
- The scheme makes it easier for the farmer to report crop loss within 72 hours of occurrence of any event through the crop insurance app, common service centre or the nearest agriculture officer

4. Benefits So Far

- The Scheme covers over 5.5 crore farmer applications year on year.
- So far, 29 crore farmers have insured their crops under the scheme.
- Till date, claims worth Rs 90,000 crores have already been paid out under the Scheme.
- For speedy disbursal of claims and crop assessment, the centre is using satellite and is working closely with the state governments.
- A crop insurance mobile app, where farmers can get all information related to the scheme, is also made available.
- Aadhar seeding has helped in speedy claim settlement directly into the farmer accounts. Even during COVID lockdown period, nearly 70 lakh farmers benefitted and claims worth Rs 8,741.30 crores were transferred to beneficiaries, according to the ministry data.

5. Case Examples

- Some notable examples of these crop insurance covers are prevented sowing claims over Rs 500 crore in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka during the kharif 2019 dry spell, and localised calamity claims of over Rs 100 crore in Haryana during kharif 2018 hailstorm.
- Claims to the tune of Rs 5,000 crore in Maharashtra during the kharif 2019 unseasonal rainfall and mid-season adversity claims of nearly Rs 30 crore in Rajasthan during rabi 2019-20 locust attack are also another examples.

07

US Puts Cuba Back on 'state sponsor of terrorism' List

1. Why in News?

- Recently, the US State Department put Cuba back on a blacklist designating it a "state sponsor of terrorism".
- Cuba was removed from the list in 2015 by then-president Barack Obama as he moved to normalize relations with the country.
- Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced the move in a statement, noting Cuba's harbouring of US fugitives as well as its support for Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro.

2. Major Impact on Cuba

- The terror designation has major consequences for Havana and everyday Cubans.
- Foreign investors will now risk US prosecution for transactions in Cuba.
- The reinstated sanctions also include major restrictions barring most travel between the US and Cuba.
- The sanctions also curb money transfers between the two countries, hitting hard the incomes of Cubans who have relatives in the US.
- Only three other countries are currently on the "state sponsor of terrorism" list, including: North Korea, Syria and Iran.

3. Actions Taken during Trump's Administration

- Since taking office in 2017, Trump has taken a hard-line stance on Communist-led Cuba.
- He reversed many of the policies of the Obama administration, moving to tighten restrictions on US travel and remittances.
- The Trump administration also imposed sanctions on Venezuelan oil shipments to Cuba.
- Trump's Cuba policy was popular among Cuban-Americans in Florida, contributing to his electoral win in the state — although he ultimately lost the November election to Biden.

4. Reasons Cited by US for Sanctions

- Cuba returns to the list following its "broken commitment" to stop supporting terrorism as a condition of its removal by the previous administration in 2015.
- On May 13, 2020, the State Department notified Congress that it had certified Cuba under Section 40A(a) of the Arms Export Control Act as "not cooperating fully" with US counterterrorism efforts in 2019.
- Cuba also harbours several US fugitives from justice wanted on or convicted of charges of political violence, many of whom have resided in Cuba for decades.
- The Cuban intelligence and security apparatus has infiltrated Venezuela's security and military forces, assisting Nicholas Maduro to maintain his stranglehold over his people while allowing terrorist organizations to operate.
- The Cuban government's support for FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) dissidents and the ELN (National Liberation Army - Colombia) continues beyond Cuba's borders as well, and the regime's support of Maduro has created a permissive environment for international terrorists to live and thrive within Venezuela.



5. Future Actions

- In order to take Cuba off the list again, incoming President Biden's administration will have to carry out a formal review.
- Secretary of State nominee Antony Blinken would have to call for the review and it would need to be proven that the Cuban government did not engage in terrorism within the past six months.
- The process takes time, meaning Cuba could remain on the list for months.
- Biden has said he would reverse many of Trump's policies on Cuba upon entering office.

7 MCQ's WITH EXPLANATORY ANSWERS

(Based on Brain Boosters)

01 India's Opportunity for Wheat Export

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. Wheat is grown during November-March, with harvest taking place around February-end in states such as Gujarat and March-end or early April in other parts of the country.
2. For farmers, cultivating wheat is not so easy as input costs are high and MSP is not guaranteed.
3. As on January 1, acreage is estimated at 32.5 million hectares, higher than the 5-year average of 30.3 million ha.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- | | |
|------------|----------------------|
| a) 1 only | b) 1 and 3 |
| c) 2 and 3 | d) None of the above |

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statements 1 and 3 are correct. Wheat is grown during November-March, with harvest taking place around February-end in states such as Gujarat and March-end or early April in other parts of the country. As on January 1, acreage is estimated at 32.5 million hectares, higher than the 5-year average of 30.3 million ha.

Statement 2 is incorrect. For farmers, cultivating wheat is easy as input costs are less and MSP is guaranteed. They need to put in much less effort compared to crops such as paddy. It is also a safe bet as diseases in wheat plants have been controlled.



02 Notice Period Not Mandatory Under Special Marriage Act

Q. With reference to the recent Allahabad High Court judgement on 30-day notice for marriage, consider the following statements:

1. Special Marriage Act, 1954 provides a framework for inter-caste and inter-religious marriages and was originally enacted in 1872.
2. The court has now said a couple while giving the 30-day notice under the law can request the marriage officer to publish or not publish it for inviting objections.

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 the statements are correct. Special Marriage Act, 1954 provides a framework for inter-caste and inter-religious marriages and was originally enacted in 1872.

Section 5 of the Special Marriage Act, 1954 requires couples intending to marry under the law to give a 30-day notice period to a marriage officer of the district in which at least one of the parties has resided in the last 30 days. The notice is supposed to be published under Section 6 of the Act. The court has now said a couple while giving the 30-day notice under the law can request the marriage officer to publish or not publish it for inviting objections.



03 Third Phase of Flagship Skilling Scheme - PMKVY 3.0

Q. With reference to the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, consider the following statements:

1. The third phase of the government's flagship skilling scheme Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY 3.0) was launched in 600 districts across all states of the country.
2. PMKVY is a flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) implemented by Ministry of Human Resource and Development.

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. The third phase of the government's flagship skilling scheme Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY 3.0) was launched in 600 districts across all states of the country.

Statement 2 is incorrect. PMKVY is a flagship scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) implemented by National Skill Development Corporation.



04 Secret Indo-Pacific Strategy: US Perception of China

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. The 'US Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific' is one of the operational policy documents that follows the overarching strategy laid out in 'National Security Strategy (NSS) 2017'.
2. The strategy document states that China "seeks to dominate cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence and bio-genetics", and use them in the "service of authoritarianism".

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 the statements are correct. The 'US Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific' is one of the operational

policy documents that follows the overarching strategy laid out in 'National Security Strategy (NSS) 2017'.

The strategy document states that China "seeks to dominate cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence and bio-genetics", and use them in the "service of authoritarianism". China's dominance in these technologies poses "profound challenges to free societies", and China's proliferation of "digital surveillance, information controls, and influence operations will damage US efforts to promote our values and national interests in the Indo-Pacific region" and even in the Western hemisphere, the document adds.



05 Russia's Exit From Open Skies Treaty

Q. With reference to the Open Skies Treaty, consider the following statements:

1. It was first proposed in 1955 by former US President Dwight Eisenhower as a means to deescalate tensions during the Cold War.
2. Under the treaty, a member state can "spy" on any part of the host nation, with the latter's consent.
3. A country can undertake aerial imaging over the host state after giving notice 48 hours before, and sharing its exact flight path 24 hours before.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- | | |
|------------|---------------|
| a) 1 only | b) 1 and 2 |
| c) 1 and 3 | d) 1, 2 and 3 |

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statement 1 and 2 are correct. OST was first proposed in 1955 by former US President Dwight Eisenhower as a means to deescalate tensions during the Cold War. The landmark treaty was eventually signed in 1992 between NATO members and former Warsaw Pact countries following the demise of the Soviet Union.

Under the treaty, a member state can "spy" on any part of the host nation, with the latter's consent.

A country can undertake aerial imaging over the host state after giving notice 72 hours before, and sharing its exact flight path 24 hours before.



06 PMFBY Completes Five Years

Q. With reference to the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yajana, consider the following statements:

1. PMFBY was launched on January 13, 2015 with an aim to provide a comprehensive risk solution at the lowest uniform premium across the country for farmers.
2. Under the scheme, premium cost over and above the farmer share is subsidized by States and central government in 40:60 ratio respectively.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d)

Explanation: Both the statements are incorrect.

PMFBY was launched on January 13, 2016 with an aim to provide a comprehensive risk solution at the lowest uniform premium across the country for farmers.

Under the scheme, premium cost over and above the farmer share is equally subsidized by States and central government. However, central government shares 90% of the premium subsidy for North Eastern States to promote the uptake in the region.



07 US Puts Cuba Back on 'state sponsor of terrorism' List

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. Cuba is the only country on the "state sponsor of terrorism" list of USA.
2. The Trump administration also imposed sanctions on Venezuelan oil shipments to Cuba.

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. Only three other countries are currently on the "state sponsor of terrorism" list, including: North Korea, Syria and Iran.

Statement 2 is correct. The Trump administration also imposed sanctions on Venezuelan oil shipments to Cuba.



7 IMPORTANT NEWS

01

Rise of Shadow Entrepreneurship

- Recently, a professor at a business school allegedly misused his faculty position to provide fake certificates to students whom he had compelled to attend an online course that he taught.
- He essentially took advantage of India's rising pre-pandemic gig economy in education. When authorities at the institution discovered the racket, they suspended him. This is a cautionary tale for the global rise of shadow entrepreneurship, not just in education but other sectors such as finance (for easy loans), the betting economy (online games) and healthcare (e-pharmacies).

Who are Shadow Entrepreneurs?

- Shadow entrepreneurs are individuals who manage a business



that sells legitimate goods and services but they do not register their businesses.

- This means that they do not pay tax, operating in a shadow economy where business activities are performed outside the reach of government authorities.
- Types of businesses include unlicensed taxicab services, roadside food stalls and small landscaping operations.

- The study conducted by Imperial College Business School found that after Indonesia, India has the second highest rate of shadow entrepreneurs.

Impact on Economy

- The shadow economy results in loss of tax revenue, unfair competition to registered businesses and also poor productivity— factors which hinder economic development.
- As these businesses are not registered it takes them beyond the reach of the law and makes shadow economy entrepreneurs vulnerable to corrupt government officials.



02

Promotion of Risa

- Recently, Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb has of late made it his style statement to sport the Risa.

What is Risa?

- Risa is one of the three parts of customary Tripuri female attire,

the other two being the Rignai and Rikutu.

- The Risa, which is essentially a customary handwoven cloth, is used as a head gear, stole, female upper cloth or presented to honour a distinguished recipient.

- The Rignai is primarily used to cover lower part of the body and literally translates into 'to wear'.
- The Rikutu covers the upper half of the body, wrapping it all around. However, it is also used like a 'chunri' or a 'pallu' of the Indian saree. It is also used to cover the

head of newly married Tripuri women.

Importance

- ◆ Apart from its beautiful designs, the Risa plays a host of crucial social utilities. Adolescent Tripuri girls are first given risa to wear when she reaches 12-14 years in
- ◆ an event called RisaSormani. The event involves prayers to a Lampra god, where her elder women pray for her wellbeing throughout her life.
- ◆ Risa is primarily used as a breast cloth and is woven in different colourful designs. However, it is also used in religious festivals like the Garia
- ◆ Puja, a customary festival of the tribal communities.
- ◆ The complete Tripuri attire is claimed to have originated even before the Manikya kings' rule. In the ancient days, they used to judge a woman's intelligence in these communities by her woven Rignai and Risa designs. <<<

03

Plastic Waste Management Rules-2016

- ◆ The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Ministry of Environment and Forests to finalise the "Extended Producer Responsibility" (EPR) regime for plastic waste within three months.
- ◆ NGT has also held that plastic pens are covered under Plastic Waste Management Rules. Even though pen is not specifically mentioned under the rules, the same is certainly covered by definition of 'plastic' under Rule 3 (o) of the Plastic Waste Management Rule, 2016. Thus, pen is also covered by the statutory framework.
- ◆ EPR (Under Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016) puts the onus on the manufacturers for the treatment, recycling, reuse or disposal of products after a consumer has used and disposed them.



About EPR

- ◆ Faced with increasing amounts of waste, many governments have reviewed available policy options and concluded that placing the responsibility for the post-consumer phase of certain goods on producers could be an option.
- ◆ EPR is a policy approach under which producers are given a significant responsibility – financial and/or physical – for the treatment or disposal of post-consumer products. Assigning such responsibility could in principle provide incentives to prevent wastes at the source, promote product design for the environment and support the achievement of public recycling and materials management goals. <<<

04

Second Edition of India Innovation Index-2020

- ◆ NITI Aayog has released the second edition of the India Innovation Index-2020 today. The index demonstrates the government's continued commitment towards transforming the country into an innovation-driven economy.
- ◆ **Key Highlights**
 - ◆ To ensure a fair comparison, states have been categorised under three segments, viz. North-East (NE) and Hill States, Union Territory (UT) and City States, and Major States.
 - ◆ Amongst the Major States, the average innovation score is 25.35. Karnataka tops at 42.5, which is attributable to its strong number of venture capital deals, registered GIs and ICT exports. Karnataka's high FDI inflow has also enhanced

- the innovation capabilities of the state. Maharashtra follows second at 38, while Bihar finishes last at 14.5.
- ◆ The NE and Hill states achieve an average innovation score of 17.89, with Himachal Pradesh as the best performer with a score of 25, followed by Manipur (22.77) and Sikkim (22.28), respectively.
- ◆ The innovation score of UT and City States averages at 26.01. Delhi, the best performer among all groups, naturally tops the ranking in the group of union territories as well. Chandigarh follows second with a score of 38.57, whereas Lakshadweep and Jammu and Kashmir occupy the last two positions in the group respectively.
- ◆ Delhi's performance is attributable to its conducive business environment, especially in terms of internet penetration, which is the highest in the country. The national capital also has 202.71 internet subscribers per 100 population. <>>

05

Motor Bike Ambulance 'Rakshita' Handed to CRPF



- ◆ This bike ambulance is useful not only for the paramilitary and military forces but has potential civil applications too.

Significance

- ◆ The bike ambulance will help in overcoming the problems faced by Indian security forces and emergency healthcare providers.

- ◆ It will provide life-saving aid for evacuation of injured patients from low intensity conflict areas. This will be handy in the congested streets and remote locations, where access through ambulance is difficult and time consuming.

- ◆ Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), Delhi based DRDO laboratory, handed over Rakshita, a bike-based casualty transport emergency vehicle to Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

Key Highlights

- ◆ Rakshita is fitted with a customized reclining Casualty Evacuation Seat (CES), which can be fitted in and taken out as per requirement.

- ◆ Other major features are the head immobilizer, safety harness jacket, hand and foot straps for safety, adjustable footrest, physiological parameter measuring equipment with wireless monitoring capability and auto warning system for driver.
- ◆ The vital parameters of the patient can be monitored on the dashboard mounted LCD. It is also equipped with air splint, medical and oxygen kit for on spot medical care.

- ◆ The bike can respond to a medical emergency need of patients faster than a four-wheeler due to its functionality and integrated emergency medical support system. <>>

06

Smart Anti Airfield Weapon

- ◆ Hindustan Aeronautics Limited has successfully test fired a Smart Anti Airfield Weapon (SAAW) from the Hawk-i aircraft off the coast of Odisha. The indigenous stand-off weapon developed by Research Centre Imarat (RCI), DRDO is the first smart weapon fired from an Indian Hawk-Mk132.



About SAAW

- ◆ The SAAW is an aircraft launched, advanced, precision strike weapon of 125 kg category used to attack and destroy enemy airfield assets such as radars, bunkers, taxi tracks, runways within a range of 100 km. SAAW has been earlier successfully test fired from Jaguar aircraft.

- ◆ The light weight weapon with inertial guidance operates in 'fire and forget' principle. Carrying high explosive warhead, it can penetrate deep into the enemy territory with an error probability of less than three metre. The guided weapon was earlier test fired successfully from Jaguar aircraft.

About Hawk-i

- ◆ The Hawk-i is HAL's internally funded programme offering the Indian Armed Forces an upgrade and combat capability for the Hawk, transforming it into an advanced jet trainer providing training on sensors and weapons in peacetime into a potent combat platform during conflict.

07

Gucchi Mushroom

- ◆ A geographical indication (GI) tag has been sought for one of the costliest mushrooms, Guichi, or Morel, the mushroom in the world that grows in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district.
- ◆ The mushroom, priced at over Rs. 20,000 a kg, is a forest produce collected by local farmers and tribals. Last June, saffron from the State had been granted a GI tag.



yellow in colour with large pits and ridges on the surface of the cap, raised on a large white stem.

- ◆ The spongy, edible fungus that is said to have medicinal and anti-inflammatory properties is found in the temperate forests of the Doda district.
- ◆ GI tag will create branding and commercial interest for this rare

heirloom crop, thereby helping the tribal populace dependent on it for their livelihoods.

- ◆ The mushrooms are cherished for their antioxidant and antimicrobial properties. They are also considered a rich source of potassium, protein, copper, carbohydrates, Vitamin D and Vitamin B.
- ◆ The mushrooms cannot be cultivated commercially and grow in conifer forests across temperature regions, and the foothills in Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, and Jammu and Kashmir.

Key Highlights

- ◆ Guichi mushroom is a species of fungus in the family Morchellaceae of the Ascomycota. They are pale

7

IMPORTANT PRACTICE QUESTIONS (For Mains)



01



03



05

01

Do you agree that Centre's farm laws are transgressing Constitution's federal structure? Discuss.

02

Society's values need to be informed by a sense of justice. Explain.

03

What is reverse migration? What was its impact on the economy and social order in Indian states during the COVID-19 lockdown?

04

Examine the status of forest resources of India and its resultant impact on climate change.

05

Critically examine the role of NITI Aayog in mitigation and management of COVID-19 in India.

06

What are the key features of the National Poshan Mission initiated by the Government of India?

07

What teachings of Buddha are most relevant today and why? Discuss.

7

IMPORTANT FACTS (For Prelims)



01



03



05

01

Who will become the first woman fighter pilot to take part Republic Day 2021 parade?

Flight Lieutenant Bhawana Kanth

02

Which state has renamed dragon fruit as 'Kamalam'?

Gujarat

03

Which country has signed pact with India to make 'STARStreak Air Defence System'?

United Kingdom

04

What is the rank of India in Global Firepower Index -2021?

Fourth

05

Which state has secured first position in the major states category of India Innovation Index -2020?

Karnataka

06

Which country is conducting a bilateral air exercise, Desert Knight-21 with India?

France

07

Who has been appointed as the new Chairman of world famous Somnath Temple Trust?

Narendra Modi

7

IMPORTANT QUOTES (For Essay and Answer Writing)



01



03



05

01

"Achieving gender equality requires the engagement of women and men, girls and boys. It is everyone's responsibility"

Ban Ki-Moon

02

"There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on one wing"

Swami Vivekanand

03

"Poverty is like a punishment for a crime you didn't commit."

Eli Khamarov

04

"It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves honored by the humiliation of their fellow beings"

Mahatma Gandhi

05

"If agriculture fails, everything else will fail"

M S Swaminathan

06

"Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself"

Leo Tolstoy

07

"The beginning is the most important part of the work"

Plato

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 evident 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 vastly different from academic examination and call for a systematic and scientifically planned guidance by a team of experts. Here one single move invariably put one ahead of many others who lag behind. Dhyeya IAS is manned with qualified & experienced faculties besides especially designed study material that helps the students in achieving the desired goal.

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Distance learning Programme, DSDL, primarily caters the need for those who are unable to come to metros for 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 exam-oriented 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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