

PERFECT 7

**Weekly
Current Affairs**

An Initiative of Dhyeya IAS



1 | Amphan at the Time of COVID-19

Double Jeopardy

2 | Self-reliance in Defence Production :
Needs Promotion

3 | Workplace Safety during Coronavirus
Pandemic

4 | MGNREGA : Time to Re-think on
Its Design

5 | Reforms to Reshape the Architecture
of Agriculture Sector

6 | Major Push to Revive the Financial
Health of Ailing Power Sector

7 | Role of Social Media and
COVID-19

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

PERFECT 7

Weekly
Current Affairs

An Initiative of Dhyeya IAS

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Contents

➤ 7 Important Issues & Subjective Questions Based on Them	01-19
➤ Amphan at the Time of COVID-19: Double Jeopardy	
➤ Self-reliance in Defence Production : Needs Promotion	
➤ Workplace Safety during Coronavirus Pandemic	
➤ MGNREGA : Time to Re-think on Its Design	
➤ Reforms to Reshape the Architecture of Agriculture Sector	
➤ Major Push to Revive the Financial Health of Ailing Power Sector	
➤ Role of Social Media and COVID-19	
➤ 7 Important Brain Boosters	20-26
➤ 7 Important MCQs (based on Brain Boosters)	27-29
➤ 7 Important News	30-34
➤ 7 Important Practice Questions (for Mains)	35
➤ 7 Important Facts (for Prelims)	36
➤ 7 Important Quotes (for Essay and Answer Writing)	37

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(Broadcasted on YouTube & Dhyeya-TV)

7 IMPORTANT ISSUES

01

Amphan at the Time of COVID-19 : Double Jeopardy

Why in News?

- ◆ The deaths and devastation that Cyclone Amphan has left in West Bengal and Odisha demonstrates, once again, the fragile state of eastern coastal States during the storm season.
- ◆ At least 72 people are dead in Bengal and normal life is paralysed for millions in Kolkata and in the rural areas of both the States.

Introduction

- ◆ COVID-19 has, for the moment, pushed climate change to the margins of global attention. But, as a group of scientists from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other premier global higher education institutes write in Nature, pandemic preparedness and climate change action—along with related disaster preparedness—can no longer be mutually exclusive.
- ◆ Studies and data analyses show that storms, flooding, and droughts will likely cause the displacement of millions over

the next 12-18 months, with low-income nations in the Global South bearing the worst brunt.

- ◆ The Gulf Coast of the US is bracing for a severe hurricane season even as Louisiana, which was

Naming of the Cyclones

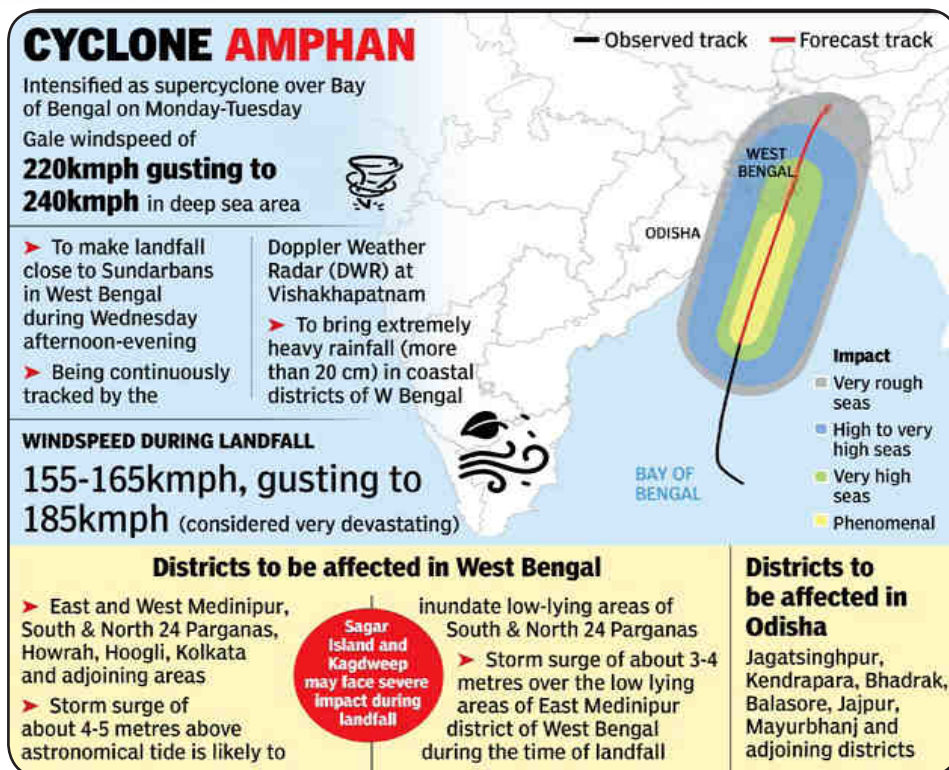
- Tropical cyclones and subtropical cyclones are named by various warning centers to provide ease of communication between forecasters and the general public regarding forecasts, watches, and warnings. The names are intended to reduce confusion in the event of concurrent storms in the same basin. Generally once storms produce sustained wind speeds of more than 33 knots (61 km/h; 38 mph), names are assigned in order from predetermined lists depending on which basin they originate. However, standards vary from basin to basin: some tropical depressions are named in the Western Pacific, while tropical cyclones must have a significant amount of gale-force winds occurring around the centre before they are named in the Southern Hemisphere.
- Cyclones that form in every ocean basin across the world are named by the regional specialised meteorological centres (RSMCs) and Tropical Cyclone Warning Centres (TCWCs). There are six RSMCs in the world, including the India Meteorological Department (IMD), and five TCWCs.
- As an RSMC, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) names the cyclones developing over the north Indian Ocean, including the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea, after following a standard procedure. The IMD is also mandated to issue advisories to 12 other countries in the region on the development of cyclones and storms.
- "Amphan", pronounced as "Um-pun", means sky. The name was given by Thailand in 2004, years ago.
 - "Amphan" was the last name on the current list before a new one starts.
 - The last cyclone was named by Bangladesh - "Fani" which means snake.
- Recently, IMD has released a new list with the names of 169 tropical cyclones that are likely to emerge over the north Indian Ocean, including the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean.
- The list contains the names of 13 cyclones for the 13 member countries out of the total 169 names. The names of cyclones that may emerge in the future in India are Gati, Tej, Murasu, Aag, Vyom, Jhar, Probaho, Neer, Prabhanjan, Ghurni, Ambud, Jaladhi and Vega, the report said.
- Some other names include Biparjoy, Arnab and Upakul. The list also includes names such as Nisarga for Bangladesh and Nivar for Iran.

battered by Katrina, has become the country's COVID-19 mortality hotspot.

- ◆ In Zimbabwe, several millions will be without access to clean drinking water, let alone water for washing hands, and "at risk of acute food insecurity" during June-September 2020.
- ◆ Predicted intense heatwaves in many countries are likely to lead to a spike in heat-related morbidity and mortality, straining the already-buckling healthcare systems in many countries further.
- ◆ All this, while lockdowns and distancing requirements are already disrupting global and local food supply chains, worsening food security for nearly 200 million people in the world, as per the World Food Programme.

About Cyclone Amphan

- ◆ Super Cyclonic Storm Amphan



was a very powerful and deadly tropical cyclone that caused widespread damage in East India and Bangladesh in May 2020.

- ◆ It was the strongest tropical cyclone to strike the Ganges Delta

since 2007 season and the first super cyclonic storm to occur in the Bay of Bengal since the 1999 Odisha cyclone.

- ◆ Causing over US\$13 billion of damage, Amphan is also the costliest cyclone ever recorded in the North Indian Ocean, surpassing the record held by Cyclone Nargis of 2008.
- ◆ Amphan originated from a low-pressure area persisting a couple hundred miles (300 km) east of Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 13 May 2020.
- ◆ A super cyclone usually travels with wind speed velocity of almost 250 kmph and makes a tremendous impact on landfall causing large-scale destruction.
- ◆ Coastal areas in Odisha—as well as Kolkata, Hooghly, Howrah, East Midnapur, North 24 Parganas, and South 24 Parganas in West Bengal—were affected by the cyclone. It also caused significant

NDRF

- The National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF), constituted under Section 46 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, supplements SDRF of a State, in case of a disaster of severe nature, provided adequate funds are not available in SDRF.
- National Disaster Response Fund is defined in Section 46 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 (DM Act) as a fund managed by the Central Government for meeting the expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation due to any threatening disaster situation or disaster.
- NDRF is constituted to supplement the funds of the State Disaster Response Funds (SDRF) of the states to facilitate immediate relief in case of calamities of a severe nature.
- The DM Act defines "disaster" to mean 'a catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or man-made causes, or by accident or negligence which results in substantial loss of life or human suffering or damage to, and destruction of, property, or damage to, or degradation of, environment, and is of such a nature or magnitude as to be beyond the coping capacity of the community of the affected area.'
- The July 2015 guidelines states that natural calamities of cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslide, avalanche, cloud burst, pest attack and cold wave and frost considered to be of severe nature by Government of India and requiring expenditures by a state government in excess of the balances available in its own SDRF will qualify for immediate relief assistance from NDRF.

destruction in Bangladesh.

Steps Taken by the Government

- ◆ The States along the east coast have evolved a code of practice for a storm coming under category 3 and above: evacuations, arranging for backup power, warning people to stay far from the coasts, designating strong buildings as cyclone shelters, and providing for at least a week's supply of cooked food besides bolstering medical supplies.
- ◆ India's cyclone warning system has made major advances for being able to provide clear warnings and saving lives but the precarious lives led by millions of citizens have once again been subjected to a severe shock.
- ◆ Some vital activities such as functioning of the Kolkata airport were restored a day after the cyclone struck.
- ◆ Facilitating movement of essentials.
- ◆ Additional NDRF personnel dispatched to restore normalcy.

Challenges Faced by the Government

- ◆ The challenge was to provide pre-fabricated facilities for safe shelter in outlying areas, such as

the Sunderbans.

- ◆ Use off-the-shelf solutions such as solar power to mobilise communities.
- ◆ Many who were working in distant States have just returned to Odisha and Bengal in the wake of the economic paralysis caused by COVID-19, and need sustained support after the storm.
- ◆ There is an additional challenge, as thousands of people have been moved to crowded shelters where the COVID-19 pandemic poses a continuing threat. Adhering to hygienic practices, monitoring those requiring medical assistance and testing for the virus is a high priority.

Way Forward

- ◆ Countries will need to carefully balance disaster-preparedness with pandemic-preparedness. While this will call for risk assessment at the intersections—of a wide range of health, climate, economic and social progress indicators—this also calls for preemptive deployment of measures rather than trying to reconcile disaster response with pandemic response.
- ◆ Countries will have to cast wide safety nets for nutritional security, access to water and healthcare,

and even infrastructural needs—as Amphan shows—such as climate resilient housing. Else, the double whammy of climate change-related disasters and the COVID pandemic will increase socioeconomic and health vulnerabilities to a scale that becomes hard for nations to manage, let alone reverse.

- ◆ The Centre and the governments of the affected States, including those in the Northeast lashed by heavy rain, must help people already weighed down by a severe lockdown pick up their lives again.
- ◆ While the battle against the virus may yet be won sooner or later, India must strengthen its response capabilities for a never-ending cycle of storms along its coastline. ☒☒

General Studies Paper- II

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

General Studies Paper- III

Topic: Disaster and disaster management.

Q. What are the major challenges faced by the government and the people when a 'Cyclone Amphan' wreaked havoc while India is already battling a pandemic?

02

Self-reliance in Defence Production : Needs Promotion

Why in News?

- ◆ The measures, recently announced by the Finance Minister, to promote self-reliance in defence production, address long-standing strategic and national security concerns about the extent of India's external dependence for its defence-preparedness.
- ◆ COVID-19 has, once again, focused minds on the impact of supply chain disruptions on both civil and defence sectors.

Background

- ◆ For most of the past decade, India had the dubious distinction of being the world's largest arms importer, accounting for about 12% of global arms imports.
 - ◆ But according to the latest data by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), for the first time, India has figured on a list of global arms exporters, making a modest entry at number 23.
- ◆ Saudi Arabia jumped to first place in 2018 and 2019, but India still takes over 9% of global imports.
- ◆ This external dependence for weapons, spares and, in some cases, even ammunition creates vulnerabilities during military crises.
- ◆ It is a no-brainer that with its security environment, its great power ambitions and its technological capacities, India



should have a robust defence manufacturing capacity.

- ◆ The facts that new Defence Procurement Procedures (DPP) 2020 are under formulation and that the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) is tasked with promoting indigenous equipment in the armed forces, provide a conducive backdrop to this initiative.

Defence Procurement Procedure 2020

- ◆ The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has released the draft Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) 2020. The new draft DPP amends existing military procurement rules in line with Governments' long-running targets to boost indigenous defence capability and reduce reliance on imports under its 'Make in India' initiative.

Major changes proposed in the new DPP are:

- ◆ In view of the experience gained by the domestic industry, the Draft proposed increasing the Indigenous

Content (IC) stipulated in various categories of procurement by about 10% to support the 'Make in India' initiative. A simple and realistic methodology has been incorporated for verification of indigenous content for the first time.

- ◆ Use of raw materials, special alloys and software incentivised as use of indigenous raw material is a very important aspect of 'Make in India' and Indian Companies are world leaders in software.
- ◆ Assurance of procurement on a single vendor basis from Aero Engine manufacturing unit and chips from FAB manufacturing units established in the country.
- ◆ New Category Buy (Global – Manufacture in India) has been introduced with minimum 50% indigenous content on cost basis of total contract value. Only the minimum necessary will be bought from abroad while the balance quantities will be manufactured in

India. This would be in preference to the 'Buy Global' category as manufacturing will happen in India and jobs will be created in the country.

- ◆ Leasing has been introduced as a new category for acquisition in addition to existing 'Buy' & 'Make' categories to substitute huge initial capital outlays with periodical rental payments. Leasing is permitted under two categories i.e, Lease (Indian) where Lessor is an Indian entity and is the owner of the assets and Lease (Global) where Lessor is a Global entity. This will be useful for military equipment not used in actual warfare like transport fleets, trainers, simulators, etc.
- ◆ A comprehensive Chapter introduced for 'Make' to cover procurement from manufacturers in India including start-ups and innovators and from research projects of Defence Research and Development Organisation(DRDO).

Significance of the Reform

- ◆ The decision to notify a list

of weapons systems for sourcing entirely from Indian manufacturers, the promise to progressively expand this list and a separate Budget provision for domestic capital procurement will encourage the private defence manufacturers, whose research capacities, technological skills and quality commitment are often better appreciated by foreign clients for whom they are subcontractors.

- ◆ There is a range of platforms and subsystems, developed in India and qualified in trials, some of which face hurdles to their induction by the armed forces because of foreign competition. These include missile systems such as Akash and Nag, the Light Combat Aircraft and the Light Combat Helicopter, artillery guns, radars, electronic warfare systems and armoured vehicles.

Indigenous Defence Industry

- ◆ The government has promised a time-bound defence procurement process, overhauling trial and testing procedures and

establishing a professional project management unit. The significance of these measures is underscored by the fact that over the past five years, the Indian government has approved over 200 defence acquisition proposals, valued at over ₹4 trillion, but most are still in relatively early stages of processing.

- ◆ However this delay now provides the opportunity to re-examine them and to prioritise those with indigenous research and development. The CDS could also examine them from a tri-service angle, to avoid redundancy of capacities across the services.

Corporatisation of Ordnance Factory

- ◆ The decision to corporatise the Ordnance Factory Board is a long overdue reform. Over the decades, the ordnance factories have been the backbone of indigenous supplies to Indian armed forces, from weapons systems to spares, ammunition and auxiliaries (including uniforms and boots).
- ◆ Their structure, work culture and product range now need to be responsive to technology and quality demands of modern armed forces.
- ◆ Corporatisation, including public listing of some units, ensures a more efficient interface of the manufacturer with the designer and end user. The factories would



be better integrated into the larger defence manufacturing ecosystem.

- ◆ Coexistence of Indigenous Research with Import of Cutting-Edge Military Technologies
- ◆ The government has rightly clarified that self-reliance would not be taken to overzealous extremes. The thrust for indigenous research and development will coexist with the import of cutting-edge military technologies to obviate near-term defence vulnerabilities.
- ◆ At the same time “realistic” specifications for the desired weapons platforms, based on the requirements of India’s defence strategy, rather than on aspirational considerations which may lead to a single foreign vendor.
- ◆ It is also imperative that when we import weapon systems, we should plan for the ammunitions and spares for them to be eventually manufactured in India so that we are not driven to seek urgent replenishments from abroad during crises.
- ◆ The same goes for repair, maintenance and overhaul facilities and, at the next level, the upgrade of weapons platforms.

FDI Impact

- ◆ The liberalisation of foreign direct investment in defence manufacturing, raising the limit under the automatic route to 74%, should open the door to more joint ventures of foreign and Indian companies for defence manufacturing in India.
- ◆ It would also sustain a beehive of domestic industrial activity in the research, design and manufacture of systems and sub-systems.
- ◆ Indian companies, which have long been sub-contractors to prominent defence manufacturers abroad, would now get the opportunity to directly contribute to Indian defence manufacturing.

Measures to be Taken

- ◆ DPP 2020 should incorporate guidelines to promote forward-looking strategic partnerships between Indian and foreign companies, with a view to achieving indigenisation over a period of time for even sophisticated platforms.
- ◆ Cost evaluation has to evolve from mechanical application of the L1 (lowest financial bid) principle to prioritising indigenous content.
- ◆ The definition of indigenisation itself needs to privilege technology over value or volume.

- ◆ Investment, Indian or foreign, will be viable only if the door to defence exports is opened, with a transparent policy.
- ◆ To give private industry a level playing field for developing defence technologies, conflicts of interest, created by the role of our DRDO as the government’s sole adviser, developer and evaluator of technologies have to be addressed.

Way Forward

- ◆ The development of a thriving indigenous defence industry needs an overhaul of existing regulations and practices.
- ◆ A long-term integrated perspective plan of the requirements of the armed forces should give industry a clear picture of future requirements.
- ◆ Above all, a radical reset has to overcome resistance to change. Of the key components of any major reform — money, method and mindset — mindset is the most critical and the most intractable. It takes a crisis to change it. ☒☒☒

General Studies Paper- II

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

Q. COVID-19 crisis which has caused supply chain disruptions has forced government to go for in-house defence production. Keeping in mind the complex security environment of India, this step is meant to provide strategic depth to defence sector. Discuss.

03

Workplace Safety during Coronavirus Pandemic

Why in News?

- ♦ As the country has entered in the fifth phase of nationwide coronavirus-induced lockdown and first phase of unlock (Unlock 1.0), the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has issued guidelines outlining the preventive and response measures to be observed to contain the spread of COVID-19 in workplace settings.

Introduction

- ♦ Opening up economic production from a lockdown, even partially, when the COVID-19 pandemic has not peaked in the country poses an extraordinary challenge.
- ♦ Countries around the world are focusing on making the workplace safe, and issuing guidelines to help workers return to their jobs.
- ♦ Reducing the number of people present at any given time is a universal principle, either through resort to shifts, or arrangements to enable employees to work from home.
- ♦ The Union Health Ministry has addressed the issue through a manual of preventive measures that covers all types of workplaces and depends heavily on behavioural change, with some additional requirements for confined spaces such as offices.

Technological Surveillance

- Employee monitoring software is the need of the hour. As remote work culture kicks in and it is here to stay. There's no denial in the fact that – 70% of the companies all over the world are going to favor the remote work. It's time to get prepared for the New future of work. For more company owners encouraging workers to operate from home or satellite locations, there's an increasing need to ensure employees remain on the task and productive. And for this, we definitely need an exceptional, feature-rich employee monitoring software by our side.

Preventive Guidelines by Health Ministry to Contain COVID-19 Spread in Workplace Settings

- ♦ The guidelines have been issued following a revision of the testing pattern where, in addition to earlier criteria, the strategy has been widened to include front line workers involved in containment and mitigation of COVID-19, all hospitalised patients who develop Influenza Like Illness (ILI) symptoms and all symptomatic ILI among returnees and migrants within 7 days of illness.
- ♦ According to the Centre's guidelines, the entire office building need not be closed if one or two positive cases are reported there and work can resume after it is disinfected as per protocol.

Getting your workplace ready for #COVID19



#Coronavirus



Keep workplaces clean and hygienic

Promote regular and thorough handwashing

Promote good respiratory hygiene

Consult national travel advice before going on business travel

Advise those who are sick to stay home

- ◆ However, if there is a larger outbreak, the entire building will have to be closed for 48 hours after thorough disinfection. All the staff will work from home, till the building is adequately disinfected and is declared fit for re-occupation.
- ◆ Any staff reportedly suffering from a flu-like illness should not attend office and seek medical advice from local health authorities. Such persons, if diagnosed as a suspect or confirmed case of COVID-19 should immediately inform office authorities.
- ◆ Any staff requesting home quarantine based on the containment zone activities in their residential areas should be permitted to work from home. Department of Personnel Training (DoPT) guidelines with respect to organizing meetings, coordinating visitors shall be scrupulously followed.
- ◆ The high-risk exposure contacts will be quarantined for 14 days

- identify the hazards;
- identify who might be harmed and how;
- evaluate the risk, and identify and decide on the safety and health risk control measures;
- record who is responsible for implementing which risk control measures and the time frame; and
- record the findings, monitor and review the risk assessment and update when

Five-step Approach to Workplace Risk Assessment : ILO

➤ A careful examination of COVID-19 and its characteristics reveals the precautions needed to prevent harm to those at risk. A five-step approach of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to the assessment of risks in the workplace can be used:

and they will follow the guidelines on home quarantine and undergo testing as per Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) protocol while low-risk exposure contacts shall continue to work and closely monitor their health for next 14 days.

- ◆ Since offices and other workplaces are relatively close setting with shared spaces like corridors, elevators and stairs, cafeteria,

meeting rooms and conference halls, coronavirus infection can spread relatively fast among officials, staff and visitors.

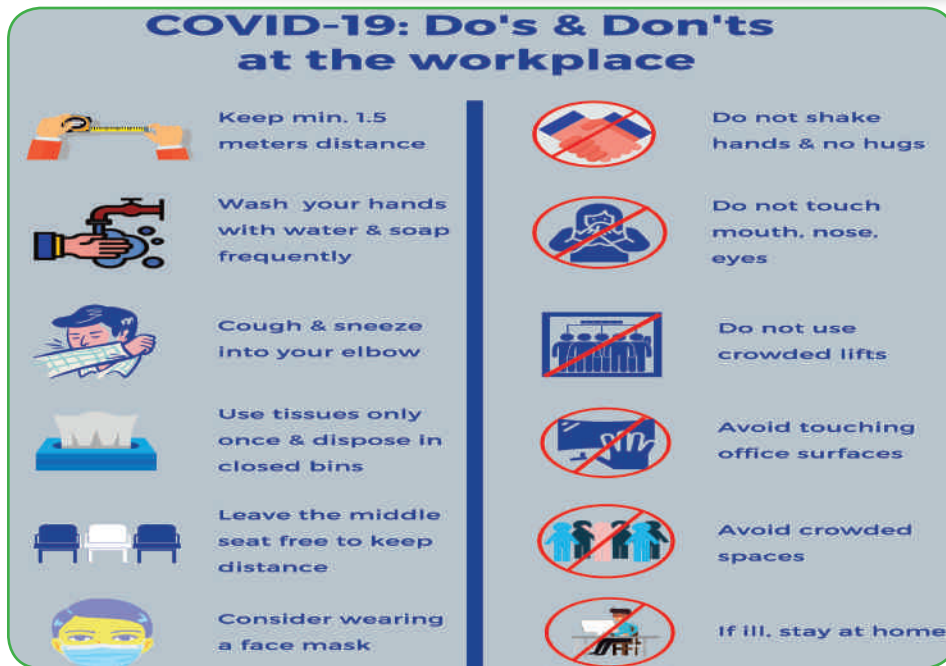
- ◆ Thus there is a need to prevent importation of infection in workplace settings and to respond in a timely and effective manner in case a suspect case of COVID-19 is detected in these settings so as to limit the spread of infection.

Is Automation a Solution ?

- This global crisis has pushed companies to innovate like never before. Leaders who may have been slow to adopt automation technologies—such as Robotic Process Automation (RPA), artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning (ML)—have begun leveraging them as a way to cut costs during economic turmoil, provide faster service to customers, and revamp their operations for distributed work.
- The automation work done today will pave the way for a better future tomorrow.
- Through optical character recognition (OCR) technology, software robots can read all but the trickiest handwriting. They can then translate handwritten forms into structured data that can be passed to other systems and speed up unemployment claim processing

- ◆ The basic preventive measures include simple public health measures that are to be followed to reduce the risk of infection with COVID-19. These measures need to be observed by all (employees and visitors) at all times. These include:

1. The physical distancing of at least one meter to be followed at all times;
2. Use of face covers/masks to be mandatory;
3. Practice frequent hand washing



(for at least 40-60 seconds) even when hands are not visibly dirty and use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers (for at least 20 seconds);

4. Respiratory etiquettes to be strictly followed. This involves the strict practice of covering one's mouth and nose while coughing/sneezing with a tissue/handkerchief/flexed elbow and disposing of used tissues properly; and
5. Self-monitoring of health by all and reporting any illness at the earliest.

Way Forward

- ◆ The Centre's protocol for symptomatic cases at the workplace, requiring testing, and, where warranted, quarantining

of both the worker and close contacts, and a two-day closure of offices experiencing an outbreak, should underscore to employers the importance of prevention.

- ◆ Responsibility, however, does not devolve entirely on offices and establishments, and it is imperative for other activities, such as public transport used by many workers, to meet COVID-19 requirements.
- ◆ Some institutions are mandating installation of the Aarogya Setu app by employees returning to work, when the legal basis of this monitoring mechanism remains shaky and there are no assured benefits in terms of health care.
- ◆ At this stage of the pandemic, when a gradual resumption of

economic activity in multiple sectors ranging from construction to food takeaways is a necessity, the most feasible interventions at the workplace are voluntary and those that cost the least.

- ◆ There may still be occasion to resort to intermittent lockdowns if opening up leads to mounting cases. A prudent course would be to navigate the present with a minimalist approach, as the quest for a medical breakthrough makes progress. 

General Studies Paper- II

Topic: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

General Studies Paper- II

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

Q. Highlight the guidelines issued by the government related to the employee safety norms with respect to coronavirus crisis for conducting normal business operations.

04

MGNREGA : Time to Re-think on Its Design

Why in News?

- ♦ To provide work to migrants returning from cities to villages, the Central government has provided an additional Rs 40,000 crore to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) for 2020-21, which will take the scheme's allocation for the year to Rs 1.015 trillion, of which Rs 11,500 crore has to be spent on clearing pending dues from the previous year.
- ♦ Excluding the pending dues, spending on the scheme is estimated to be Rs 90,000 crore.

Introduction

- ♦ The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was enacted to offer lean-season employment households that were seeking it and to create basic infrastructure to put livelihoods and agriculture on a sound footing in these areas. The Act has by and large succeeded in meeting its core objective of providing employment. While the objective of creating quality infrastructure has not been realised to its full potential, it is nevertheless true that the MGNREGA has been helpful to small and marginal farmers and rain-fed farmers like no other government programme.
- ♦ The general perception about MGNREGA being a dole for



“digging pits and filling them up” — that is, largely unskilled earthen or “kaccha” work — has contributed to periodic suggestions for converting it into a skilling programme or to create more “pukka” infrastructure from it. The reality, however, is that the MGNREGA works require immense skill to plan and implement and also represent a huge convergence between scientific methods and traditional people’s knowledge.

- ♦ It is also important to recognise that the MGNREGA at its best stipulates that the planner, the labourer and the user of the infrastructure are the same people, which assures both location-specific relevance and quality.
- ♦ There is strong evidence to suggest that the average person-days and the demand for work

recorded by the MGNREGA nationally in the best of times is less than the actual demand for such work. This is because state capacities, especially in very poor areas, inhibit the absorption of more MGNREGA funds and effectively end up rationing demand for work

Work and Job

- ♦ According to data available on the MNREGA website, close to 265.4 crore person days worth of employment was provided under the scheme in 2019-20 compared to nearly 268 crore person days worth of employment in the previous year. Since April this year, over 16.9 crore person days worth of employment has been provided under the scheme.
- ♦ Given the restrictions imposed during the nationwide lockdown, which began in last week of March

this year, employment under the flagship rural jobs guarantee programme fell to a five-year low last month.

- ◆ According to a January report from the Accountability Initiative of the Centre for Policy Research, the pending liabilities under MGNREGA have risen steadily from Rs 591 crore in FY15 to Rs 4,193 crore in FY19. Till the end of the third-quarter of FY20, total payments due stood at Rs 6,430 crore.
- ◆ The additional allocation will enable nearly 300 crore persondays of work in 2020-21, almost 7.04 per cent more than the initial estimate of 280.26 crore persondays of work in 2020-21. This will mean that on average around 25 crore persondays of work can be provided under the scheme depending upon the demand each month.
- ◆ So far in May 2020 till the 16th, around 53 million person days of work has been provided under MGNREGA in 2020, while in 2019 around 369.53 million person days of work was provided during the entire month of May.
- ◆ Government is planning to continue the MGNREGA works in the monsoon as well with works related to plantations, horticulture and livestock.
- ◆ The estimated average cost per day per person for the scheme for this year is Rs 296.34, which translates into a revised expenditure of around Rs 89,000 crore.

Need for Urban MGNREGA

- ◆ The urban poor have been hit harder than their rural counterparts by COVID, but policy attention is missing.
- ◆ Due to MGNREGA, which has served to provide some sort of subsistence income to the rural poor and landless, and State-level schemes such as 'RythuBandhu' for the peasantry (on which the PM-KISAN is modelled), there is a semblance of a social safety net for the rural population, however inadequate its scope.
- ◆ But for the urban working poor, those who have left rural India in search of better opportunities, there is nothing to fall back on in an emergency.
- ◆ A combination of MGNREGA and the construction boom in urban areas kept wages, on the whole, rising. Urbanisation has also led to a demand for services provided by the 'gig economy'. These incomes have propelled a remittance economy in rural India, while fuelling a low-cost production and services economy in urban centres.
- ◆ The exodus from cities is perhaps also being driven by the prospect of migrants securing extra food grains in their villages. The need for a 'one-nation-one-ration-card' scheme that works in urban areas and an urban job guarantee programme cannot be wished away.

Steps to Ensure the MGNREGA Lives up to Its Potential

- ◆ Given the scale and depth of the current crisis, this additional

allocation too will be under stress, as both the number of people demanding work and the number of days of work they demand will go up dramatically. Nevertheless, since enough funds are now available to meet at least the immediate demands for work, the government must undertake some immediate steps to ensure the MGNREGA lives up to its potential.

- ◆ First, state governments must ensure that public works are opened in every village. Workers turning up at the worksite should be provided work immediately, without imposing on them the requirement of demanding work in advance.
- ◆ Second, local bodies must proactively reach out to returned and quarantined migrant workers and help those in need to get job cards.
- ◆ Third, at the worksite, adequate facilities such as soap, water, and masks for workers must be provided free of cost. For reasons of health safety, MGNREGA tools should not be shared between workers. The government should provide a tool allowance to all workers — some states are already providing such an allowance.
- ◆ Fourth, procedures for implementing MGNREGA must be simplified but not diluted. The pandemic has demonstrated the importance of decentralised governance. Gram panchayats and elected representatives need to be provided with

adequate resources, powers, and responsibilities to sanction works, provide work on demand, and authorise wage payments to ensure there are no delays in payments.

- ◆ Fifth, as per a study by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), more than half the districts in the country are under-banked. The density of bank branches in rural India is even more sparse. At this time, payments need to not only reach bank accounts on time, but cash needs to reach the workers easily and efficiently. The limited coverage of bank infrastructure in rural areas must not be made a hurdle. Attempts to distribute wages in cash, sans biometric authentication, must be rolled out.
- ◆ Sixth, there needs to be flexibility in the kinds of work to be undertaken, while ensuring that the community and the workers are the primary beneficiaries. While many governments will possibly prioritise individual land-based works to comply with instructions of physical

distancing, it is important to also keep community works going to ensure that landless workers are not crowded out of the programme.

Way Forward

- ◆ With very little autonomy, gram panchayats had begun to find implementation cumbersome. Barring a few exceptions, state governments were only interested in running the programme to the extent funds were made available from the Centre. Allocating work on demand, and not having enough funds to pay wages on time was bound to cause great distress amongst the workers and eventually for the state too. As a result, state governments had begun to implement MGNREGA like a supply-driven scheme, instead of running it like a demand-based guarantee backed by law. With nearly eight crore migrant workers returning to their villages, and with an additional allocation for the year, this could be a moment for the true revival of MGNREGA. A revival led by workers themselves.

- ◆ The additional financial support for MGNREGA needs to be fully appreciated. The increased allocation must be combined with simplification of MGNREGA to ensure that people get work easily and get paid on time. This includes keeping one large worksite open in each village, removing the requirement to demand work, and even cash payment of wages. ☒☒☒

General Studies Paper- II

Topic: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

General Studies Paper- II

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

Q. Highlight the need and importance of MGNREGA during the time of pandemic and how it can help to sustain the livelihood at the rural level?

05

Reforms to Reshape the Architecture of Agriculture Sector

Why in News?

- Recently, the Union Government in May 2020, unleashed three crucial, long-pending reforms to reshape the architecture of farmer-market ties, allowing them to sell their produce without any restrictions, and also unveiled a Rs 1 lakh crore fund to build agri infrastructure to raise productivity and make the sector globally competitive.
- Agriculture sector is one of the most badly hit sector in the economy due to Covid. Government has taken this crisis as an opportunity to reform this sector which is the backbone of Indian economy from past many centuries.

Background

- The first two instalments of the stimulus programme announced comprised schemes worth a total Rs. 8.4 lakh crore. They included Rs 3 lakh crore credit guarantee for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and support for migrant labour and street vendors.
- Together with this latest Rs 1.5 lakh crore measures, the Rs 1.7 lakh crore package announced by the government in April and Rs 5.24 lakh crore support by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the measures add up to a total Rs 16.84 lakh crore, leaving a balance of Rs 3.16 lakh crore.

Reforms in Agriculture

- The three reforms regarding agricultural marketing were the reforms in:
 - Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act;
 - Essential Commodities Act; and
 - Contract farming.
- Farmers currently have to sell agricultural produce to licensees in agricultural produce market committees (APMCs). That will

change, giving farmers greater freedom to sell produce at higher prices. A separate legal framework will also be created to enforce a standard mechanism for predictable prices of crops.

- Farmers will be able to engage with food-processing companies, retailers and exporters, and get assured returns or a fixed price for the produce, even before they begin sowing.

Ending APMC Monopoly

- Ending the monopoly of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) markets or mandis is being viewed as one that has more far-reaching effects than the 1991 economic reforms of the P V Narasimha Rao government. If politically-backed APMCs being weakened are the first reason for the change being welcomed with open arms, the second reason is that it is for the first time that the Centre is focussing on strengthening the output side of farming.
- The major reason for this is that until now governments have only focussed on the input side of agriculture such as fertiliser, power, fuel, seeds, insecticides and pesticides. No effort had been made to develop the marketing part of agriculture.
- The third reason why ending APMCs' monopoly is a historic decision is that farmers until now have been more connected to middlemen than the market. As a result, the middlemen have ended up benefiting the most.
- The fourth reason is how two earlier experiments to end the APMC monopoly played out. While one has yielded result, the other, the much-publicised electronic National Agricultural Marketing (eNAM) has faced its share of woes.
- The fifth reason why the decision is seen as a landmark one is because for the first time, it is in tune with the emerging situation. The current coronavirus situation demands agriculture market reforms as consumers are looking for delivery at their doorstep.

- ◆ The Essential Commodities Act will be amended to deregulate trade in cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onion and potato, and stock limits for these will be imposed only in exceptional circumstances. A new central law will be formulated to provide barrier-free inter-state trade of farm produce and more freedom for farmers to sell directly or even online. The deregulation in trade of cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onion and potato, and removal of stock limits will free up the market for these commodities and also encourage more processing, which will yield better prices for farmers.
- ◆ Curbs or stock limits will not be placed on these commodities except in certain situations such as national calamity.
- ◆ Besides, farmers will have access to a nationwide market across state boundaries.
- ◆ Agriculture Produce Price and Quality Assurance reform was aimed at allowing contract farming. Earlier, it was based on the discretion of states and it was on a case-by-case basis but now there will be a central law to allow direct buying from farmers. The quality of farm products would improve as large retail buyers would insist on quality. Most importantly, it will allow the markets to intervene. Farmers will not sow looking at prices in the past but prices in future. So, the sowing pattern will change in a sense as the market demand. It will pave way for private participation in agriculture.

Additional Reforms

- ◆ The Rs 1.5-lakh-crore package seeks to strengthen farm gate infrastructure and logistics for the sector and build capacities for intervention if needed. It will include a Rs 1 lakh crore financing facility through National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD) for funding agriculture infrastructure projects at the farm gate and aggregation points for produce such as cooperatives, farmer producer organisations (FPOs), agriculture entrepreneurs and startups.
- ◆ In addition, a Rs 10,000-crore dedicated fund will be set up to aid micro food enterprises brand and market their products globally. The government will also set up a Rs 20,000-crore fund, announced in the budget, to support aquaculture and fisheries. A separate Rs 15,000-crore fund is proposed for animal husbandry infrastructure as well as Rs 4,000 crore to support herbal cultivation, Rs 500 crore for bee keeping and Rs 500 crore for strengthening supply chains.
- ◆ The Centre recently integrated an additional 38 new mandis with the e-NAM (National Agriculture Market) platform, reaching a milestone of 1,000 mandis on this pan-India electronic agri produce trading portal.

3RD TRANCHE OF ECONOMIC STIMULUS: KEY MEASURES

- Setting up of Rs 1 lakh cr agriculture fund for farm-gate infrastructure
- Rs 4,000cr for herbal cultivation in India
- Rs 10,000cr scheme for formalisation of micro food enterprises (MFE)
- Rs 20,000cr for fishermen through Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana
- Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development fund worth Rs 15,000cr
- Rs 500 crore scheme for infrastructure development related to bee-keeping
- Amendments to Essential Commodities Act to enable better price realisation for farmers



- Agriculture marketing reforms to provide marketing choices to farmers
- Extension of 'Operation Greens' to all fruits and vegetables
- Legal framework to help farmers fix their own price for products
- Launch of National Animal Disease Control Programme for foot and mouth disease with outlay of Rs 13,343cr

Significance

- ◆ Reforms unveiled by the government will help improve the linkage of the farm sector with markets and also give an impetus

A ₹1.6 LAKH CR HARVEST FOR FARMERS

KEY REFORMS

- Amendments to Essential Commodities Act to enable farmers to get better prices
- Cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onions, potato to be deregulated
- Stock limit to be imposed under exceptional circumstances like national calamities
- Agriculture marketing reforms to give farmers marketing choices

CENTRAL LAW WILL BE ANNOUNCED TO PROVIDE:

- Adequate choices to farmer to sell produce at attractive price
- Barrier free inter-state trade; framework for e-trading of produce

AGRI PRODUCE PRICE & QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Legal framework will be created to enable farmers to engage with processors, aggregators, large retailers, exporters in fair & transparent manner; will allow pvt sector investment in inputs, knowhow

Package	Date	Amount (₹ L cr)
PM Garib Kalyan Yojana	March 26	1.7
RBI measures	March-April	5.2
Tranche 1	May 13	5.9
Tranche 2	May 14	3.2
Tranche 3	May 15	1.6
Total so far		17.7
Total package		20
To be announced		2.3

Big Numbers: ₹1L cr agri infra fund; ₹20,000cr for fishermen; ₹15,000cr animal husbandry infra development fund; ₹10,000cr fund to help micro food units build brands and go global



to contract farming while private sector involvement will help attract better technology, inputs and market knowledge for farmers.

- ◆ The amendment to the EC Act will deregulate agriculture foodstuffs, including cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onion and potato. Unlike the existing law, the new one will impose stock limits under very exceptional circumstances like national calamities or an unexpected surge in prices.

- ◆ The announcement of reforms in agricultural marketing by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in May, has been hailed by some as the “1991” moment for agriculture.

Way Forward

- ◆ The Covid pandemic has pressured farm incomes, upending the farm-to-fork supply chain, despite full exemptions to the farm sector. A nationwide curfew caught farmers by surprise on March 24. During its the initial days, labour shortage and empty wholesale markets led farmers to dump new harvest, especially perishables.

- ◆ Although agriculture accounts for 16.5% of India’s gross domestic product (GDP), nearly half the population in the country depends on a farm-based income, underscoring the sector’s importance for livelihoods. These reforms are a major tectonic shift in the agricultural sector which has opened new vistas and empowered the producer who tills the land. 🇮🇳🌾

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.

General Studies Paper- III

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

Q. The reforms in agriculture sector during the pandemic were hailed as major reforms like 1991. Highlight the reforms being introduced and their significance.

06

Major Push to Revive the Financial Health of Ailing Power Sector

Why in News?

- In a major push to revive the financial health of ailing power distribution companies (discoms), the government of India has decided to infuse one time relief of Rs 90,000 crore through Power Finance Corporation and Rural Electrification Corporation (PFC-REC).

Introduction

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman announced that power distribution companies (DISCOMs) would receive Rs 900 billion (~\$12.03 billion) as part of the Government of India's (GOI) stimulus package to help the Indian economy recover from the coronavirus crisis.
- This one-time liquidity injection will be infused through the Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) in two equal installments.

- Central public sector power generation companies have also been ordered to give rebates to DISCOMs, which will, in turn, be passed on to the final consumers (industrial).
- These funds are intended to help DISCOMs out of this unprecedented situation as their revenues have dropped drastically, Sitaraman noted, adding that loans would be given against state guarantees solely for clearing liabilities to power generating companies.
- At the end of March 2020, DISCOMs owed renewable energy generators ₹68.37 billion (~\$914.5 million) in outstanding payments spread across 307 pending invoices, according to data from the Ministry of Power's (MoP) payment ratification and analysis portal (PRAPTI). This included dues of ₹311 million (~\$4.2 million) under dispute.

- The government has been trying to assist ailing distribution companies in these trying times. For instance, power generators (including renewables) in the country have been ordered to maintain an uninterrupted supply of power across states even if the distribution companies deposit Letters of Credit for 50% of the cost of power they want to be scheduled. For payments delayed beyond 45 days (from March 24, 2020, and June 30, 2020), the late payment surcharge has now been reduced to 12% per annum from the earlier 18%.

Need for Injecting Money

- Energy consumption, especially electricity and refinery products, is usually linked to overall demand in the economy.
- With at least 10 states losing about a third of the power supplied to their consumers in distribution losses, their over dues have not only hit power producers, but have also contributed to stress in the banking sector.
- The electricity demand load shifted to homes during the lockdown, resulting in lower realizations. With peak electricity demand coming down, commercial and industrial power demand has taken a hit after many factories shut down.
- Domestic electricity connections account for around a quarter of India's power demand and contribute towards a bulk of India's average aggregate technical

DISCOM PERFORMANCE

Financial Parameters	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19*
Loss (Rs cr)	51,562	38,080	15,132	28,036
AT&C losses (%)	20.81	20.28	18.80	18.19
ACS-ARR gap (Rs/ kWh)	0.60	0.42	0.17	0.27

*Based on provisional/unaudited data entered by states/discoms on UDAY portal; *AT&C and ACS-ARR gap for FY19 based on data submitted by 28 states, P&L data based on submissions by 27 states, rest from Q3FY19 or latest available data on UDAY portal (as on Sept 27); Source: Govt data*

and commercial (AT&C) losses of 21.4%. Also, the gap between the cost of electricity bought (average cost of supply) and supplied (average revenue realized) for discoms is still substantial in most states and ranges from Rs2.13 per unit in Andhra Pradesh to Rs0.09 in Chhattisgarh.

Other In-Line reforms

- ◆ The present government has readied a raft of power sector reforms, including implementing the direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme in the electricity sector for better targeting of subsidies, promoting retail competition and introducing financial discipline. According to the draft Electricity Act (Amendment) Bill, 2020 to the Electricity Act, 2003, the government has pitched for a cost reflective tariff and setting up an Electricity Contract Enforcement Authority to enforce power purchase agreements (PPAs).
- ◆ The JAM trinity solution—Jan DhanYojana, Aadhaar and mobile numbers—as a game-changing reform for better targeting of subsidies.
- ◆ The other measures in the works include allowing a one time relaxation in working capital borrowing limits imposed under Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY), targeted at turning around debt-ridden state power distribution companies. The

State of Affairs

➤ Discoms essentially purchase power from generation companies through power purchase agreements (PPAs), and then supply it to their consumers (in their area of distribution). The key issue with the power sector currently is the continuing problem of the poor financial situation of state discoms.

➤ This has been affecting their ability to buy power for supply, and the ability to invest in improving the distribution infrastructure. Consequently, this impacts the quality of electricity that consumers receive.

➤ India, electricity price for certain segments such as agriculture and the domestic category (what we use in our homes) is cross-subsidised by the industries (factories) and the commercial sector (shops, malls). This affects the competitiveness of industry.

➤ Aggregate Transmission and Distribution Losses (AT&C), which is a technical term that stands for the gap between the cost of the electricity that a discom gets from the generating company, the bills that it raises and the final realisation from the collection process from end-consumers.

➤ While there are regulatory bodies such as the Regulatory Commissions of the state (SERCs), which are largely responsible for ensuring that tariff revisions happen regularly and a discom recovers the money for the electricity that it supplies to each customer, this has not been that successful on the ground. As a result the discoms are perennially short of funds, even to pay those supplying power to them, resulting in a cascading impact up the value chain.

DISCOMS will be allowed working capital borrowings from banks and financial institutions that may be upto 25% of the last year's revenues to clear their dues to conventional and renewable power generation and transmission firms.

relief, and they, in turn, can pay their suppliers such as Coal India Ltd or GAIL (coal and gas suppliers) and L&T or BHEL (equipment, civil works contractor). But apart from these interventions, the power sector in India is in dire need for major reforms to overhaul the entire industry. ☒☒☒

Way Forward

- ◆ The intervention announced seeks to ensure time-bound funding assistance to DISCOMS through PFC and REC, so that they can clear their bills. In turn, generating and transmission companies that are upwards in the value chain will get

General Studies Paper- III

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

Q. Recently the government of India has announced the fund infusion of Rs 90,000 Crore in the power sector to clear the dues of the DISCOMS. What caused the need for such money infusion into this sector? Discuss.

07

Role of Social Media and COVID-19

Why in News?

- ◆ Today, social media such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, have become primary sources of information. They are also vehicles for fake news and disinformation.
- ◆ During a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, how should social media be mastered and employed in a responsible way is a potent question left for the stakeholders to answer.

Background

- ◆ Mass media have long been recognized as powerful forces shaping how we experience the world and ourselves. This recognition is accompanied by a growing volume of research, that closely follows the footsteps of technological transformations (e.g. radio, movies, television, the internet, mobiles) and the zeitgeist (e.g. cold war, 9/11, climate change) in an attempt to map mass media major impacts on how we perceive ourselves, both as individuals and citizens.
- ◆ Are media (broadcast and digital) still able to convey a sense of unity reaching large audiences, or are messages lost in the noisy crowd of mass self-communication? Do social media provide solace or grounds for misinformation, (de)humanization, and discrimination? Can we harness the flexibility and ubiquity of media technologies to increase the public's adherence to the safety measures suggested by global health organizations to combat the spread of COVID-19? How can different media industries and channels for mass communication promote

adaptive responses to foster positive health attitudes and adherence to preventive measures? How media impact the dynamics in the private domain (e.g. strengthen family bonds versus domestic conflict and violence)?

Rise of Social Media

- ◆ Social media was born in 1997, with the launch of the website SixDegrees.com. It allowed people to connect with one another on the Internet more personally than was possible through email. In 2001, Wikipedia democratised and decentralised user-generated information.
- ◆ In 2004, with the launch of Facebook, social media and human interaction changed forever. Today, Facebook has well over 2 billion user accounts and social media has become a behemoth that has permeated into the fabric of human communication.
- ◆ In 2005, YouTube videos changed how humans access and communicate information. A year later, Twitter and real-time communication allowed instant updates on major events.
- ◆ Studies revealed that tweets about earthquakes spread faster than the seismic waves themselves!

Social Media Taking on COVID-19

- ◆ The players in the social media domain have made efforts on their part to cater to relevant information to millions.
- ◆ **Facebook:** Social media giant Facebook has launched a dedicated 'Coronavirus (Covid-19) Information Centre', which claims to serve "all the info" about the pandemic "in one place". The Facebook Information Centre has updates from health organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health & Family

Welfare, tips on keeping ourselves and people around us safe and resources that can come to our rescue in any eventuality. Apart from catering links and information from government offices/ministries and other authorities, Facebook is also helping people with 'ways to deal with staying at home'. The platform is further supporting the WHO raise funds for the purpose.

- ◆ **Twitter:** The microblogging site is focusing on providing country-specific information on the pandemic to its users. In its bid to keep a check on fake news, Twitter is offering an option to directly surf through tweets from Indian authorities, including the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Even before logging in, Twitterati can switch to the 'COVID-19 LIVE' section. On the top is a featured video of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation announcing the extension of national lockdown till May 3. Other Twitter handles that have been included in the list are authorities such as the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), public broadcaster All India Radio News, all ministers of Union Cabinet, and representatives of different state governments. The focus is also on promoting hashtags by authorities, including the WHO.
- ◆ **Instagram:** The photo/video sharing app has kept its focus on advocating social distancing and self-isolation. One of the most remarkable steps taken by the app is banning search for COVID-19 AR effects, as it manifests the seriousness in Instagram's approach over the issue. Notably, Instagram had faced the ire of many at the beginning for the same. The

app has also tweaked its algorithm to ensure that COVID-19 information from relevant sources appears on the top of its feed. These sources include the WHO and the health ministries of different countries. Besides, the app is encouraging its users to remain in their homes, and for the purpose, they have rolled out stay home stickers and introduced a tool to browse Instagram together with friends over video chat.

- ♦ **Likee:** The short video platform has taken several initiatives to raise awareness about the novel virus, starting with the launch of a dashboard powered by data from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and the World Health Organization (WHO). Apart from coming up with relevant hashtags, Likee also backed the Indian government's call for social distancing by spreading the message on television channels during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's televised address announcing the lockdown extension. Also, the app collaborated with cricketer Yuvraj Singh-backed doorstep healthcare provider Healthians to hold a series of live interactive sessions wherein doctors, and other healthcare professionals addressed queries and clarified doubts related to the virus.
- ♦ **LinkedIn:** LinkedIn, a social media app for professionals has dedicated a page- News and Resources on coronavirus- formulated by LinkedIn editors that contain updates

regarding the pandemic. Additionally, it contains tips and resources for navigating through the COVID-19 crisis, all curated by LinkedIn Editors. Additionally, you can find the latest updates from official sources of information and can cross-check the sources.

Mis-information Campaign

- ♦ Within every bit of news, there can be a potential admixture of fake information, with the major challenge being teasing out the truth. This health-related misinformation becomes all the more crucial during a pandemic like this when the fear of an unknown infection without a definitive cure mixes with an anxious mind that tends to easily accept fast solutions and theories, irrespective of visible loopholes in their logic and reasoning.
- ♦ One senseless forward of a wrong message, in the wrong hands, can snowball the spread, increasing the acceptability as it moves along the chain. Often, names of credible public health agencies like the WHO, Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), etc., are tagged along wrongly to make the piece of false news more acceptable.
- ♦ This is where we need to warn for the dark side of social media and its role in spreading fake news. Platforms have been slow in acknowledging their responsibility in helping platform users distinguish fake news from facts, but they are taking steps

in the right direction. Instagram, for example, announced to only include COVID-19 related posts and stories in their recommendation section that are published by official health organizations.

Way Forward

- ♦ Contrary to popular belief, COVID-19 is not the first 'digital infodemic'. In the recent past, outbreaks of Zika in Brazil, Ebola in Africa, Influenza in Europe and Nipah in India had similar bidirectional relationships with media. However, the degree of 'media panic', the amount of media consumption and the consequent change in public reaction have been much higher during COVID-19. Health communication and understanding of public health depends a lot on how the data about an illness is interpreted by the masses. 📧📧📧

General Studies Paper- III

Topic: Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention.

Q. What do you understand by 'digital infodemic'? Also discuss the role of social media in the era of COVID-19.

7

IMPORTANT BRAIN BOOSTERS

01

Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme

1. Why in News?

- The Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) has been formulated as a specific response to the unprecedented situation caused by COVID-19 and the consequent lockdown, which has severely impacted manufacturing and other activities in the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector.

2. Scheme Details

- The Scheme aims at mitigating the economic distress being faced by MSMEs by providing them additional funding of up to Rs. 3 lakh crore in the form of a fully guaranteed emergency credit line.
- The main objective of the Scheme is to provide an incentive to Member Lending Institutions (MLIs), i.e., Banks, Financial Institutions (FIs) and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) to increase access to, and enable availability of additional funding facility to MSME borrowers, in view of the economic distress caused by the COVID-19 crisis, by providing them 100 % guarantee for any losses suffered by them due to non-repayment of the Guaranteed Emergency Credit Line (GECL) funding by borrowers.
- Guarantee coverage will be provided by National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC).



3. Implementation

- All MSME borrower accounts with outstanding credit of up to Rs. 25 crore as on February 29, 2020, which were less than or equal to 60 days past due as on that date, and with an annual turnover of up to Rs. 100 crore would be eligible for GECL funding under the scheme.
- The amount of GECL funding to eligible MSME borrowers either in the form of additional working capital term loans (in case of banks and FIs), or additional term loans (in case of NBFCs) would be up to 20 per cent of their entire outstanding credit up to Rs. 25 crore as on February 29.
- For Guaranteed Emergency Credit Line (GECL), the Government has provided a corpus of Rs 41,600 crore, which will be spread over four years starting with the current fiscal.

4. National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company

- National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd (NCGTC) was set up by the Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, Government of India incorporated under the Companies Act 1956 on March 28, 2014.
- NCGTC, inter alia, act as a common trustee company to manage and operate various credit guarantee trust funds.
- At present, there are five dedicated credit guarantee Trusts under the Management of NCGTC viz.
 - Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Educational Loans (CGFEL);
 - Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Skill Development (CGFSD);
 - Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Factoring (CGFF);
 - Credit Guarantee Fund for Micro Units (CGFMU); and
 - Credit Guarantee Fund for Stand Up India (CGFSI).
- The idea of common trustee company to manage above five multiple guarantee trust funds by NCGTC was intended to achieve operational efficiencies and economies of scale through sharing of combined resources such as technology, premises, manpower, risk management solutions and other support services.

02 Odisha to Adopt Contract Farming

1. Why in News?

- The government of Odisha has brought in two ordinances that would allow and facilitate the operation of multiple marketing channels through contract farming.
- Odisha has joined Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Gujarat who over the last one-and-a-half months have changed their existing agricultural marketing laws for comprehensive reforms in the sector.

2. Understanding Contract Farming

- The process of contract farming involves cultivating and harvesting for and on behalf of big business establishments or Government agencies and forwarding the produce at a pre-determined price. In return the contract farmers are offered high price against their farm produce.
- The rapid industrialization process in India has created shortage of farmland, which in turn has necessitated organized farming practice in India.
- The process of contract farming in India involves scientific and optimum use of land and farm resources for maximum output of agriculture produce
- The growth of retail industry in India has propelled the growth of farm retail in India, which caters fresh vegetables and fruits from the farms to the Indian mass.

3. Key Benefits of Contract Farming

- Improved access to local markets.
- Assured markets and prices (lower risks) especially for non-traditional crops.
- Assured and often higher returns.
- Enhanced farmer access to production inputs, mechanization and transport services, and extension advice.
- Assured quality and timeliness in delivery of farmers' products.
- Improved local infrastructure, such as roads and irrigation facilities in sugar out grower areas, tea roads, dairy coolers/collection centers, etc.
- Lower transport costs, as coordinated and larger loads are planned, an especially important feature in the case of more dispersed producers.



4. Model Contract Farming Act, 2018

- The agriculture ministry in May 2020, released the Model Contract Farming Act, 2018, which lays emphasis on protecting the interests of farmers, considering them as weaker of the two parties entering into a contract.
- In addition to contract farming, services contracts all along the value chain, including pre-production, production and post-production, have been included in the Act.
- The Act says that the contracted produce will be covered under crop/ livestock insurance in operation. Also, contract farming will be outside the ambit of Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act.
- A Contract Farming Facilitation Group (CFFG) for promoting contract farming and services at village and panchayat level will be provided.
- Protecting farmers, the Act says that no permanent structure can be developed on farmers' land or premises.
- No right, title of interest of the land shall vest in the sponsor. Promotion of Farmer Producer Organization (FPOs) /Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) to mobilise small and marginal farmers has been provided.

5. Other Steps taken by Odisha Government

- In the draft Agricultural Policy of Odisha 2019, the state government aims to promote the use of IoT (internet of things) sensors to keep the real-time check on the supply and consumption of inputs like seeds, fertilizers and pesticides etc. Similarly, it will initiate measures for setting up technology system for automated grading and sorting of crops using robotics and machine vision. It will reduce efforts and wastage in the supply chain.
- Similarly, it will initiate measures for setting up technology system for automated grading and sorting of crops using robotics and machine vision. It will reduce efforts and wastage in the supply chain.
- The state government will also strengthen the use of drones for remote monitoring, procurement of high-resolution satellite imagery, weather analysis from Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) as well through private partnerships.
- Among others, a decision support system would be developed under the Analytics for Decision-making and Agricultural Policy Transformation (ADAPT) program which will be an integrated platform for all the relevant datasets in the agriculture department for the purpose of effective management of the activities carried out by the department.
- The state government will set up a project management unit (PMU) and data science team for managing the technology operations and promote the usage of data.

03

Geotextiles

1. Why in News?

- The central government has decided to construct roads in rural areas across the country under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY-III) by using 'Coir Geotextiles' as the basic ingredients.
- Meanwhile, according to the Ministry of Micro and Small Industries, the roads comprising 164 km in Andhra Pradesh and 121 km in Telangana are said to be taken up with this new technology.



2. What is Geotextile?

- Geotextiles are permeable fabrics which, when used in association with soil, have the ability to separate, filter, reinforce, protect, or drain.
- Typically made from polypropylene or polyester, geotextile fabrics come in three basic forms: woven (resembling mail bag sacking), needle punched (resembling felt), or heat bonded (resembling ironed felt).
- Geotextile composites have been introduced and products such as geogrids and meshes have been developed. Geotextiles are able to withstand many things, are durable, and are able to soften a fall if someone falls down. Overall, these materials are referred to as geosynthetics and each configuration—geonets, geosynthetic clay liners, geogrids, geotextile tubes, and others—can yield benefits in geotechnical and environmental engineering design.
- It can be used in road work, railway works, agriculture, drainage, river, canals and coastal works.
- Geotextiles are a wonderful treasure of natural eco friendly, erosion control blankets.
- Totally biodegradable, geotextiles help soil stabilisation and renew vegetation in varying slopes.

3. Coir Geotextiles

- Coir geotextiles are permeable fabric, which are natural, strong, highly durable, resistant to rots, moulds and moisture.
- It is free from any microbial attack.
- Coir geotextiles protect land surface and promote quick vegetation.
- It will give a big boost to the coir industry.
- The decision also opens up a huge market potential for coir geotextiles in the country.
- The new policy of using this technology is bound to be eco-friendly, low-cost and durable roads.

4. About Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana

- The central government has permitted for the use of coconut fibres in the construction of 1,674 km of rural roads in seven states of the country.
- In the past, roads in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu were effectively made using coconut fibre.
- As per the PMGSY new technology guidelines for road construction, 15 per cent length of roads in each batch of proposals is to be constructed using new technologies. Out of this 5 per cent roads are to be constructed using Indian Roads Congress (IRC) accredited technology.
- The IRC has now accredited coir geotextiles for construction of rural roads.
- As per these instructions, 5 per cent length of the rural roads under PMGSY-III will be constructed using coir geotextiles.
- Accordingly, 164 km of road will be constructed using coir geotextiles in Andhra Pradesh, 151 km in Gujarat, 71 km in Kerala, 328 km in Maharashtra, 470 km in Odisha, 369 km in Tamil Nadu and 121 km in Telangana.

04

Complete Solarisation of Konark Sun Temple

1. Why in News?

- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has taken up the Complete Solarisation of Konark Sun Temple and Konark town in Odisha.



2. Understanding Contract Farming

- The process of contract farming involves cultivating and harvesting for and on behalf of big business establishments or Government agencies and forwarding the produce at a pre-determined price. In return the contract farmers are offered high price against their farm produce.
- The rapid industrialization process in India has created shortage of farmland, which in turn has necessitated organized farming practice in India.
- The process of contract farming in India involves scientific and optimum use of land and farm resources for maximum output of agriculture produce
- The growth of retail industry in India has propelled the growth of farm retail in India, which caters fresh vegetables and fruits from the farms to the Indian mass.

3. Konark Sun Temple

- Konark Sun Temple (Surya Mandira) is a 13th-century CE Sun temple at Konark about 35 kilometres (22 mi) northeast from Puri on the coastline of Odisha, India.
- The temple is attributed to king Narasimhadeva I of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty about 1250 CE.
- Declared a UNESCO world heritage site in 1984, it remains a major pilgrimage site for Hindus, who gather here every year for the ChandrabhagaMela around the month of February.

4. Solar Energy

- India is endowed with vast solar energy potential. About 5,000 trillion kWh per year energy is incident over India's land area with most parts receiving 4-7 kWh per sq. m per day.
- Solar photovoltaics power can effectively be harnessed providing huge scalability in India.
- Solar also provides the ability to generate power on a distributed basis and enables rapid capacity addition with short lead times.
- Off-grid decentralized and low-temperature applications will be advantageous from a rural electrification perspective and meeting other energy needs for power and heating and cooling in both rural and urban areas.
- From an energy security perspective, solar is the most secure of all sources, since it is abundantly available.
- Theoretically, a small fraction of the total incident solar energy (if captured effectively) can meet the entire country's power requirements.

05

Ecologically Sensitive Areas in Western Ghats

1. Why in News?

- Recently, six states which form the Western Ghats, asked Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar to expedite the process to notify the ecologically sensitive areas (ESAs) in the global biodiversity hotspot for clarity.
- The chief ministers of Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu raised the issue during a video interaction with the Union minister.



2. Ecologically Sensitive Areas(ESA) in Western Ghats

- The MadhavGadgil Commission, formed in 2010, recommended in its report submitted to the government in August 2011 that 64 per cent of the Western Ghats be declared ecologically sensitive.
- In 2012, the Environment Ministry formed a working group on Western Ghats under Indian space scientist K Kasturirangan to examine the Gadgil Commission report and recommended 37 per cent of the Ghats be declared ESAs.
- The committee recommended that identified geographical areas falling in the six states of Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu may be declared ecologically sensitive.
- Declaring an area as ESA means putting restriction on mining, quarrying, thermal power plants, setting up of industries and construction to ensure buffer areas of a protected zone, in this case, the Western Ghats, remains protected.

3. Ecologically Fragile Areas (EFAs)

- Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) or Ecologically Fragile Areas (EFAs) are areas in India notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of India around Protected Areas, National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.
- The purpose of declaring ESZs is to create some kind of "shock absorbers" to the protected areas by regulating and managing the activities around such areas.
- They also act as a transition zone from areas of high protection to areas involving lesser protection.

4. Global Biodiversity Hotspot

- A biodiversity hotspot is a biogeographic region that is both a significant reservoir of biodiversity and is threatened with destruction.
- The term biodiversity hotspot specifically refers to 25 biologically rich areas around the world that have lost at least 70 percent of their original habitat.
- Four Biodiversity Hotspots in India: The Western Ghats ; The Himalayas; Indo-Burma Region and Sundaland.
- To be called a hotspot, a region has to be able to fulfil at least two criteria including:
 - ☛ It should comprise of at least 1500 species of vascular plants i.e. more than 0.5% of the world's total plants.
 - ☛ It should have lost greater than or equal to 70% of its original habitat

5. Related Controversy

- On October 3, 2019, the Union Environment Ministry had proposed a draft of the ESA in the Western Ghats — 56,825 square kilometres (sqkm) spanning six states and covering 37% of the Western Ghats — of which 17,340 sqkm (2,133 villages) were in Maharashtra. So far, the state forest department has excluded 358 of the 2,133 villages from the ESA.
- The Maharashtra government's proposal to exclude previously identified villages in its final Western Ghats ESA notification and open them up for industrial and mining activities has received objections.
- The state had proposed the inclusion of 2,092 of 2,133 villages or 15,359 sq km of the originally proposed 17,340 sq km, thereby excluding 11.4% area from the draft Western Ghats ESA, and leaving out crucial wildlife corridors, buffer areas of tiger reserves and sanctuaries. The state proposed exclusion of 17 villages for industrial activities and 13 for mining based on suggestions from the industries department and mining bodies.

06

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

1. Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet has approved the "Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana - a scheme to bring about Blue Revolution through sustainable and responsible development of fisheries sector in India" with highest ever investment of Rs. 20050 crores in fisheries sector.
- Government has made it clear that 'Blue Revolution' or 'NeeliKranti' has the potential to attain the first place in the world in fish production.



2. Aims and objectives of PMMSY

- Harnessing of fisheries potential in a sustainable, responsible, inclusive and equitable manner.
- Enhancing of fish production and productivity through expansion, intensification, diversification and productive utilization of land and water.
- Modernizing and strengthening of value chain - post-harvest management and quality improvement.
- Doubling fishers and fish farmers incomes and generation of employment.
- Enhancing contribution to agriculture gross value addition (GVA and exports).
- Social, physical and economic security for fishers and fish farmers.
- Robust fisheries management and regulatory framework.

3. Implementation strategy

- PMMSY will be implemented as an umbrella scheme with two separate components namely (a) Central Sector Scheme (CS) and (b) Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS).
- Under the Central Sector Scheme Component an amount of Rs. 1720 crores has been earmarked. Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) Component, an investment of Rs. 18330 crores has been envisaged.
- Majority of the activities under the Scheme would be implemented with active participation of States/UTs.
- 'Cluster or area-based approach' would be followed with requisite forward and backward linkages and end to end solutions.
- Thrust will be given for infusing new and emerging technologies like Re-circulatory Aquaculture Systems, Biofloc, Aquaponics, Cage Cultivation etc. to enhance production and productivity, quality, productive utilization of waste lands and water for Aquaculture.
- Special focus on Coldwater fisheries development and expansion of Aquaculture in Brackish Water and Saline Areas.
- Youth would be engaged in fisheries extension by creation of 3347 'SagarMitras' in coastal fisher village.
- Collectivization of fishers and fish farmers through Fish Farmer Producer Organizations (FFPOs) to increase bargaining power of fishers and fish farmers.
- Activities like Mariculture, Seaweed cultivation and Ornamental Fisheries having potential to generate huge employment will be promoted.
- Aquaparks as hub of fisheries and aquaculture activities with assured, affordable, quality inputs under one roof, post-harvest infrastructure facilities, business enterprise zones, logistic support, business incubation centers, marketing facilities etc.
- Focused attention would be given for fisheries development in Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Islands, Northeast, and Aspirational Districts through area specific development plans.
- Annual livelihood support for fishers during ban/lean period would be provided.

4. Major Impacts

- Enhancing fish production from 137.58 lakh metric tons (2018-19) to 220 lakh metric tons by 2024-25.
- Sustained average annual growth of about 9% in fish production.
- An increase in the contribution of GVA of fisheries sector to the Agriculture GVA from 7.28% in 2018-19 to about 9% by 2024-25.
- Double export earnings from Rs.46,589 crores (2018-19) to about Rs.1,00,000 crores by 2024-25.
- Enhancing productivity in aquaculture from the present national average of 3 tonnes to about 5 tonnes per hectare.
- Reduction of post-harvest losses from the reported 20-25% to about 10%.
- Enhancement of the domestic fish consumption from about 5-6 kg to about 12 kg per capita.
- Generate about 55 lakhs direct and indirect employment opportunities in the fisheries sector along the supply and value chain.

07 Solar Minimum

1. Why in News?

- While we on Earth suffer from coronavirus, our star—the Sun—is having a lockdown all of its own.
- The researchers have revealed that the Sun is heading towards solar minimum now as sunspots were relatively higher in 2014 and the count has been significantly going down with every year passing. The researchers are expecting the count to be lower than before in 2019-2020 as well.



2. What is Solar Minimum?

- According to NASA's recent revelation, our Sun is filled with many sunspots and magnetic explosions. However, after every 11 years or so, these sunspots fade away. The fading away of these sunspots brings a period of relative calm which is scientifically denoted as Solar Minimum.
- The coronal holes are reportedly considered as vast regions in the Sun's atmosphere. These vast regions are openings of Sun's magnetic field that allow streams of solar particles to escape the Sun as the fast solar wind.
- These vast regional holes are present and visible throughout a solar cycle. However, during the time of Solar Minimum, coronal holes can last for a long time (expectedly six months or more). According to research, Solar Minimum will affect the Earth's magnetic field due to the streams of solar wind and will change the space weather effects near Earth.
- Every 11 years or so, the burning heart of our solar system swings between energetic peaks and lows. When the Sun peaks in activity - the solar maximum - more sunspots and solar flares erupt.

4. Solar Cycle

- The solar cycle is based on the Sun's magnetic field, which flips around every 11 years, with its north and south magnetic poles switching places. It's not known what drives these cycles - recent research suggests it has to do with an 11.07-year planetary alignment - but the poles switch when the magnetic field is at its weakest, also known as solar minimum.
- In between flips, the total radiation from the Sun - known as total solar irradiance - waxes and wanes in a semi-regular cycle by up to 0.15 per cent.

3. Effect on Earth

- The phenomenon has led many over the years to speculate climate change could be regulated by the Sun's 11-year cycle.
- And though solar activity has contributed to brief periods of cooling in 1650 and 1715, alongside other factors such as volcanic eruptions, there is no indication the current rate of climate change is being driven by the Sun.
- The Solar wind from coronal holes will temporarily create disturbances in the Earth's magnetosphere, called geomagnetic storms, auroras, and disruptions to communications and navigation systems.
- The space weather during solar minimum will also affect Earth's upper atmosphere on satellites in low Earth orbit changes.
 - This means that the Earth's upper atmosphere will cool down which is generally heated and puffed up by ultraviolet radiation from the sun. However, the heat at the upper atmosphere of our planet helps Earth to drag debris and keep the low Earth orbit clear of manmade space junk.
- According to NASA's Global Climate Change team, "there is no impending 'mini ice age'" and human activity is to blame.
- Apart from this, the solar minimum will change the space weather significantly which will lead to an increase in the number of galactic cosmic rays that reach Earth's upper atmosphere. These Galactic cosmic rays are high energy particles which are a result of distant supernova explosions and other violent events in the galaxy.

7 MCQ's WITH EXPLANATORY ANSWERS

(Based on Brain Boosters)

01 Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the 'Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme':

1. It aims at mitigating the economic distress being faced by power sector by providing them additional fund in the form of a fully guaranteed emergency credit line.
2. Guarantee coverage will be provided by National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC).
3. NCGTC was set up under the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect. The Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) has been formulated as a specific response to the unprecedented situation caused by COVID-19 and the consequent lockdown, which has severely impacted manufacturing and other activities in the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector. The Scheme aims at mitigating the economic distress being faced by MSMEs by providing them additional funding of up to Rs. 3 lakh crore in the form of a fully guaranteed emergency credit line.

Statement 2 is correct. Guarantee coverage will be provided by National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC).

Statement 3 is incorrect. National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd (NCGTC) was set up by the Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, Government of India incorporated under the Companies Act 1956 on March 28, 2014.

02 Odisha to Adopt Contract Farming

Q2. With reference to the 'contract farming', consider the following statements:

1. The process of contract farming involves cultivating and harvesting for and on behalf of big business establishments or Government agencies.
2. Odisha along with Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Gujarat has changed its existing agricultural marketing laws for comprehensive reforms in the sector.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c)

Explanation: Both statements are correct. The process of contract farming involves cultivating and harvesting for and on behalf of big business establishments or Government agencies and forwarding the produce at a pre-determined price. In return the contract farmers are offered high price against their farm produce.

The government of Odisha has brought in two ordinances that would allow and facilitate the operation of multiple marketing channels through contract farming. Odisha has joined Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Gujarat who over the last one-and-a-half months have changed their existing agricultural marketing laws for comprehensive reforms in the sector.

03 Geotextiles

Q3. With reference to the 'coir geotextiles', consider the following statements:

1. Coir geotextiles are permeable fabric, which are natural, strong, highly durable, resistant to rots, moulds and moisture.
2. Geotextiles are fabrics which, when used in association with soil, have the ability to separate, filter, reinforce, protect, or drain.
3. It can be used in road work, railway works, agriculture, drainage, river, canals and coastal works.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d)

Explanation: All statements are correct. Coir geotextiles are permeable fabric, which are natural, strong, highly durable, resistant to rots, moulds and moisture.

Geotextiles are permeable fabrics which, when used in association with soil, have the ability to separate, filter, reinforce, protect, or drain. Typically made from polypropylene or polyester, geotextile fabrics come in three basic forms: woven (resembling mail bag sacking), needle punched (resembling felt), or heat bonded (resembling ironed felt). Therefore, it can be used in road work, railway works, agriculture, drainage, river, canals and coastal works.

04 Complete Solarisation of Konark Sun Temple

Q4. Consider the following statements with reference to the 'complete solarisation of Konark Sun Temple':

1. Government of Odisha has launched the Scheme to develop the historical Sun temple town of Konark in Odisha as 'Surya Nagri'.
2. This scheme is the part of India's 1,00,000 MW grid-connected solar power capacity.

3. The temple is attributed to king Narasimhadeva I of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty about 1250 CE.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c)

Explanation: Statement 1 and 2 are incorrect.

Government of India has launched the Scheme with an objective to take forward the Prime Minister's vision to develop the historical Sun temple town of Konark in Odisha as 'Surya Nagri', to convey a message of synergy between the modern use of solar energy and the ancient Sun Temple and the importance of promoting solar energy.

Implementation of this Project will be done by Odisha Renewable Energy Development Agency (OREDA).

Statement 3 is correct. Konark Sun Temple (Surya Mandira) is a 13th-century CE Sun temple at Konark about 35 kilometres (22 mi) northeast from Puri on the coastline of Odisha, India. The temple is attributed to king Narasimhadeva I of the Eastern Ganga Dynasty about 1250 CE.

05 Ecologically Sensitive Areas in Western Ghats

Q5. With reference to the 'ecologically sensitive areas in the Western Ghats', consider the following statements:

1. Union Ministry of Environment has declared 64 per cent of the Western Ghats as ecologically sensitive.
2. In 2011, the MadhavGadgil Commission had recommended that 64 per cent of the Western Ghats be declared ecologically sensitive.
3. Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) are areas in India notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change around Protected Areas, National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect. Recently, six states which form the Western Ghats, asked Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar to expedite the process to notify the ecologically sensitive areas (ESAs) in the global biodiversity hotspot for clarity.

Statement 2 and 3 correct. The MadhavGadgil Commission, formed in 2010, recommended in its report submitted to the government in August 2011 that 64 per cent of the Western Ghats be declared ecologically sensitive.

Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) or Ecologically Fragile Areas (EFAs) are areas in India notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change around Protected Areas, National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries. They also act as a transition zone from areas of high protection to areas involving lesser protection.



06 Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

Q6. With reference to the 'Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana', consider the following statements:

1. Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare will implement the scheme throughout the country.
2. The Scheme will be implemented during a period of 5 years from 2020-21 to 2024-25.

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. PMMSY will be implemented as an umbrella scheme with two separate components namely (a) Central Sector Scheme (CS) and (b) Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS). However, majority of the activities under the Scheme would be implemented with active participation of States/UTs.

Statement 2 is correct. The Scheme will be implemented during a period of 5 years from 2020-21 to 2024-25. Government has made it clear that 'Blue Revolution' or 'NeeliKranti' has the potential to attain the first place in the world in fish production.



07 Solar Minimum

Q7. Consider the following statements with reference to the 'Solar Minimum':

1. A solar minimum, which is a "regular part of the sunspot cycle," means that the Sun's magnetic field is weak.
2. The solar cycle is based on the Sun's magnetic field, which flips around every 11 years.
3. Solar Minimum will affect the Earth's magnetic field due to the streams of solar wind and will change the space weather effects near Earth.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d)

Explanation: All statements are correct. According to NASA's recent revelation, our Sun is filled with many sunspots and magnetic explosions. However, after every 11 years or so, these sunspots fade away. The fading away of these sunspots brings a period of relative calm which is scientifically denoted as Solar Minimum.

According to research, Solar Minimum will affect the Earth's magnetic field due to the streams of solar wind and will change the space weather effects near Earth.

The solar cycle is based on the Sun's magnetic field, which flips around every 11 years. Every 11 years or so, the burning heart of our solar system swings between energetic peaks and lows. When the Sun peaks in activity - the solar maximum - more sunspots and solar flares erupt.



7 IMPORTANT NEWS

01

Mizoram Grants 'Industry' Status to Sports

- ◆ The Mizoram Cabinet has granted industry status to sports, a move aimed at generating employment. Mizoram is known for its love for sports — especially football which is played competitively through the Mizoram Premier League, the state's highest football league. At least 100 Mizo players are part of the Indian Super League, one of the top premier football leagues in India.

Key Highlights

- ◆ The main aim of the decision is to professionalise sports in the state. We need to sustain sports and games and make it more meaningful to players. Gone are the days where sports is just entertainment and
- ◆ Not just football, there are pro-leagues for other sports too: volleyball, basketball, boxing, — these are all played in the league level. There are also a number of indigenous games such as inbuan



enjoyment — it needs to be more than that so that players can earn a livelihood out of it.

(wrestling), insuknawr (stick fighting) etc.

- ◆ The State has also done well in hockey and weightlifting in recent years.

Benefits

- ◆ Through the new status, the government hopes to commercialise sporting endeavours and woo investors.
- ◆ It will attract private companies to invest in sports here so that it will benefit the state in terms of subsidy, loans and concessions. The government had also recognised tourism as an industry in 2019 for the same reason. 

02

Antarctic Impulsive Transient Antenna

- ◆ With the help of NASA's Antarctic Impulsive Transient Antenna (ANITA), a team of researchers have succeeded in finding "a fountain of high-energy particles erupting from the ice" in Antarctica which according to the researchers could be proof of a parallel universe.
- ◆ ANITA succeeded in detecting the 'fountain' of high-energy particles in 2006 and 2014 but the researchers initially thought them
- ◆ as background noise or glitches. In 2016 the researchers conducted a closer inspection of the data and found phenomenon resembling an "upside-down cosmic-ray shower".

What is ANITA?

- ◆ ANITA is a radio telescope which is used to detect ultra-high energy cosmic-ray neutrinos from a scientific balloon flying over Antarctica. ANITA is the first NASA

observatory for neutrinos of any kind.

- ◆ ANITA-I was launched from McMurdo, Antarctica in 2006 and ANITA-II, a modified instrument with 40 antennas, was launched from McMurdo Station in 2008. The researchers then launched ANITA-III, which was equipped with systems to improve sensitivity by a factor of 5–10, in December 2014. ANITA-IV was launched in

December 2016 and it was loaded with tunable notch filters and an improved trigger system.

- ◆ ANITA has made four flights of Antarctica continent and managed to detect numerous cosmic rays coming from the sky within the field of view of the experiment. These radio waves are created by cosmic ray air showers and they are reflected off the ice before they reach ANITA.



- ◆ The neutrinos have energies on the order of 10^{18} eV and they are capable of producing radio pulses

in the ice because of the Askaryan effect. Researchers believed that high-energy cosmic neutrinos result from interaction of ultra-high-energy (10^{20} eV) cosmic rays with the photons of the cosmic microwave background radiation. This is the main reason why it was hoped that ANITA can help in explaining the origin of these cosmic rays.



03

Ramkinkar Baij and Purandara Dasa

- ◆ Ministry of Culture's National Gallery of Modern Art has organised virtual tour titled "Ramkinkar Baij | Journey through silent transformation and expressions" to commemorate the 115th Birth Anniversary of Ramkinkar Baij on 26th May 2020.

About Ramkinkar Baij

- ◆ Ramkinkar Baij, one of the most seminal artists of modern India, was an iconic sculptor, painter and graphic artist. Ramkinkar Baij (1906-1980) was born in Bankura, West Bengal, into a family of little economic and social standing and grew by his sheer determination into one of the most distinguished early modernists of Indian art.
- ◆ In 1925, he made his way to Kala Bhavana, the art school at Santiniketan and was under the guidance of Nandalal Bose. Encouraged by the liberating, intellectual environment of Santiniketan, his artistic skills and intellectual horizons blossomed, thus acquiring greater depth and



complexity. Soon after completing his studies at Kala Bhavana he became a faculty member, and along with Nandalal Bose and Benodebehari Mukherjee played a pivotal role in making Santiniketan one of the most important centres for modern art in pre-Independent India. Ramkinkar's monumental sculptures are established landmarks in public art. One of the earliest modernists in Indian art, he assimilated the idioms of the European modern visual language and yet was rooted in his own Indian ethos.

- ◆ The Department of Archaeology, Heritage and Museums will soon commence field research work at Keshavapura in Araga Gram Panchayat (GP) of Tirthahalli taluk, to explore definitive archaeological evidences that may put an end to speculations regarding the birthplace of Purandara Dasa.
- ◆ As 'Purandara Vithala' was the pen name of his compositions, it was widely believed that the mystic poet was born in Purandharagad, Maharashtra. However, many in Malnad claimed that he hailed from this region.

About Purandara Dasa

- ◆ Purandara Dasa (1484–1564) was a Haridasa, great devotee of Lord Krishna and a saint.
- ◆ He was a disciple of the celebrated Madhwa philosopher-saint Vyasatirtha, and a contemporary of yet another great Haridasa, Kanakadasa. He was a composer,

singer and one of the chief founding proponents of the South Indian classical music (Carnatic Music). He was the pioneer who blended the rich musical streams, namely the Dravidian and Aryan music, into a single stream known as Carnatic music. In honor of his significant and legendary contributions to Carnatic Music,

he is widely referred to as the father of Carnatic Music.

- ◆ He introduced the raga Mayamalavagowla as the first scale to be learnt by beginners in the field – a practice that is still followed today. He is noted for composing Dasa Sahithya, as a Bhakti movement vocalist, and a music scholar.



04

Three New Plant Species in Western Ghats

- ◆ A team of scientists of the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) have reported the discovery of three new plant species from the evergreen forest patches of the southern end of the Western Ghats in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The three new species are *Eugenia sphaerocarpa* of the Myrtaceae or Rose apple family; *Goniothalamus sericeus* of the Annonaceae family of custard apple and *Memecylon nervosum* of the Melastomataceae (Kayambo or Kaasavu in local parlance) family.

Kakkayam area of the Malabar wildlife sanctuary in Kerala above 800 m. The specific epithet 'sphaerocarpa' denotes to the large, showy lemon-yellow spherical fruits. The fruits of *Eugenia* species are known for their palatability and many of them are harvested from the wild with some under cultivation.

- ◆ A small number of *Goniothalamus sericeus* plants has been found in the Kanyakumari wildlife sanctuary in Tamil Nadu. The plants were found at an altitude of 1400 m and the team recorded 50 saplings and 10 flowering plants within an area of 1 square kilometre. Mature flowers with characteristic greenish-yellow to

beige petals are fragrant while the fruits are very showy and an attractive golden yellow in colour. The specific epithet 'sericeus' refers to the presence of dense silky hair on the petals.

- ◆ A small population of *Memecylon nervosum* was also found at the same sanctuary at an altitude between 700-900 m with more than 10 sub-populations located along the banks of a perennial rivulet. The species has showy purplish-blue flowers and mauve to purplish red fruits. The specific epithet 'nervosum' alludes to the presence of prominently raised lateral and intramarginal veins on the lower surface of the lamina.



About Species

- ◆ A good population of *Eugenia sphaerocarpa* is growing in the

05

BS-VI Emission Norms for Quadricycles

- ◆ The government has notified BS-VI emission norms for quadricycles, paving the way for higher production of the new category of vehicle that was introduced less than two years ago. The emission norms are on the lines of the European

Union's World Motorcycle Test Cycle (WMTC). In 2018, the government had introduced the quadricycle segment with necessary standards to produce the vehicle. It had approved the vehicle for both commercial and private use.

What is Quadricycles?

- ◆ According to the road transport ministry, a quadricycle is the size of a three-wheeler but with four tyres and is fully covered like a car. It has an engine like that of a three-wheeler. This makes it a cheap and safe mode of transport

for last-mile connectivity. A quadricycle cannot be more than 3.6 metres long, should have an engine smaller than 800cc, and should not weigh more than 475 kilograms.

- Currently, only a few automobile players in India manufacture quadricycles. After the government had allowed the introduction of the vehicle in 2018, Bajaj Auto Ltd was the first



to commercially launch 'Qute' under this segment.

About WMTC

- WMTC is a system of driving cycles used to measure fuel consumption and emissions in motorcycles. The methods are stipulated as part of the Global Technical Regulation established under the UN World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations, also known as WP.29.



06

Dr Harsh Vardhan as WHO Executive Board Chairman

- Maharashtra Governor has Modified Law on Forest Rights
- Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari has modified the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, allowing rightful claimants of forest rights to appeal against decisions of the district level committee (DLC).

Key Highlights

- The Governor has modified Section 6 of the Act, in its
- The notification applies to areas covered in the Panchayats

application to Scheduled Area of the State of Maharashtra, in exercise of the powers conferred on him by Schedule V of the Constitution.

- The Governor's office said the notification is important to provide justice to tribals whose 'individual or community forest right' has been rejected by the DLC, constituted under the Forest Rights Act (FRA).

(Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act in the State and allows appeal provision against the DLC's decision.

- The notification states that divisional level committees under the chairmanship of divisional commissioners have been constituted to hear the appeals against the DLC's decisions. In the case of an order passed by the DLC before commencement of the notification, the application for appeal needs to be made within six months from the date of issue of notification. However, if an order has been passed after commencement of the notification, the application has to be made within 90 days of the date of communication of the DLC's order.
- Despite a large number of applications being rejected, by DLCs, previously there was no provision in the Act for appeal against the decision.



Criticism

- ◆ Activists, however, are concerned that this will lead to further delays in implementation of forest laws. They say the

notification is a double-edged sword. A tribal farmer will find it difficult to make it to the district headquarters. Further, they fear that this committee will further

delay implementation of FRA. Delay means denial of justice to genuine claimants and increased scope for fake claims.

**07**

Indian Olympic Association

- ◆ The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has constituted an 11-member committee led by Athletics Federation of India president Adille Sumariwala to monitor annual grant and affiliation fee of its members for the 2020-2021 cycle.

Key Highlights

- ◆ The committee will review and monitor issues concerning the disbursement of its grant to its members in coordination with the finance department.
- ◆ All pending issues regarding previous year, 2019-2020, will have to be submitted to the IOA president within two months.

About IOA

- ◆ The Indian Olympic Association is the governing body for the Olympic Movement and the



Commonwealth Games in India. As an affiliated member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF), Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) and Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC), the IOA administers various aspects of sports governance and athletes' welfare in the country. In this

regard, the IOA oversees the representation of athletes or teams participating in the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and other international multi-sport competitions of IOC, CGF, OCA and ANOC. The Indian Olympic Association is recognised by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.



7

IMPORTANT PRACTICE QUESTIONS (For Mains)



01 COVID-19 crisis will provide an opportunity to plug the gaps in Indian health infrastructure in both urban and rural areas. Do you agree? Discuss with suitable examples.

02 In order to achieve the sustainability, central government, state governments and private organisations should give emphasis on the use of technology as a water conservation tool. Discuss.

03 Discuss the concept of 'Nagar Van' (city forest). Discuss how it will change the shape of urban forestry.

04 Highlight the role of media in disaster management.

05 The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the need of expansion of India's Strategic Oil Reserves and Energy Security. Explain.

06 As the world's largest free market democracy India deserves to be a member of not just a G-12 but of even a new G-7. Evaluate.

07 What is Inner Line Permit? How is it connected to the Citizenship Amendment Act? Discuss.

7

IMPORTANT FACTS (For Prelims)



01



03



05

01

Which country will sell Rafale jets to India?

France

02

Which technology platform has been launched to help the smaller MSMEs by solving their grievances, encouraging and supporting them to march into the big league as national and global companies?

Champions

03

Which company has become the first private company to send humans into space?

SpaceX

04

Which country has prohibited the outward shipment of alcohol-based hand sanitizers in containers with dispenser pump?

India

05

Who has been appointed as India's next High Commissioner to the United Kingdom?

Gaitri I Kumar

06

Which country has launched international video blog competition 'MyLifeMyYoga' ahead of International Yoga Day on June 21?

India

07

Which state has made collection of Aadhar Card mandatory for the Salons, beauty parlors and spas service providers as preventive measures against COVID-19?

Tamil Nadu

7

IMPORTANT QUOTES (For Essay and Answer Writing)



01



03



05

01

"Education is the manifestation of perfection present already in man."

Swami Vivekanand

02

"It is the duty of every citizen according to his best capacities to give validity to his convictions in political affairs."

Albert Einstein

03

"A country should be defended not by arms, but by ethical behaviour."

Acharya Vinoba Bhave

04

"A room without books is like a body without a soul."

Marcus Tullius Cicero

05

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

Mahatma Gandhi

06

"Loyalty to country ALWAYS. Loyalty to government, when it deserves it."

Mark Twain

07

"To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society."

Theodore Roosevelt

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.

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