

PERFECT 7

**Weekly
Current Affairs**

An Initiative of Dhyeya IAS

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Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
Government of India



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help you

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)



Protect yourself and others!

Follow these **Do's** and **Don'ts**

Do's ✓



Practice frequent hand washing. Wash hands with soap and water or use alcohol based hand rub. Wash hands even if they are visibly clean



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Throw used tissues into closed bins immediately after use



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Touch your eyes, nose and mouth



Spit in public

Don'ts ✗

Together we can fight Coronavirus

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DHYEYA IAS : AN INTRODUCTION



Vinay Kumar Singh
Founder & CEO

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

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



Q.H. Khan
Managing Director

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

PERFECT 7 : AN INTRODUCTION



Kurban Ali
Chief Editor

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

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



Ashutosh Singh
Managing Editor

We have not only given the name 'Perfect 7' to our magazine, but also left no stone unturned to keep it 'near to perfect'. We all know that beginning of a task is most vital and full of challenges. So we met the same fate.

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

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

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

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



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

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PREFACE



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

'Perfect7' is an outstanding compilation of current affairs topics as per the new pattern of Civil Services Examination (CSE). It presents weekly analysis of information and issues (national and international) in the form of Articles, News Analysis, Brain Boosters, PIB Highlights and Graphical Information, which helps to understand and retain the information comprehensively. Hence, **'Perfect 7'** will build in-depth understanding of various issues in different facets.

'Perfect7' is our genuine effort to provide correct, concise and concrete information, which helps students to crack the CSE. This magazine is the result of the efforts of the eminent scholars and the experts from different fields. **'Perfect 7'** is surely a force multiplier in your effort and plugs the loopholes in the preparation.

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

Omveer Singh Chaudhary

Editor
Dhyeya IAS

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

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

Rajat Jhingan

Editor
Dhyeya IAS

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PERFECT 7

Weekly
Current Affairs

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(Ex. Editor Rajya Sabha, TV) & by Team Dhyeya IAS
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7 IMPORTANT ISSUES

01

Oil Prices Dropped Below Zero : An Unprecedented Wipeout

Why in News?

- ◆ By the time most Indian woke up on the morning of 22nd April 2020, crude oil prices had fallen below zero for the first time in history. A negative price suggests sellers were paying buyers to take deliveries in a bid to avoid incurring of storage cost, as oil demand crashed globally.
- ◆ The most shocking part is that the analysts world wide has claimed that this phenomena can happen again.

Background

- ◆ Global demand for oil has plunged

due to widespread lockdowns and travel restrictions in response to the coronavirus pandemic, and major producers have failed to cut their output in response.

- ◆ The West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil price, the main United States (US) benchmark, tumbled to the lowest level since trading started nearly four decades ago, settling at minus \$37.63 a barrel.
- ◆ With no buyers as economies are shut down and concerns about US storage capacity maxing out (meaning there is nowhere to put the unwanted oil), the price fell into negative territory.

- ◆ Negative pricing is when the cost of selling oil is below the cost of producing and transporting it, setting up the prospect of producers essentially paying traders to take the oil.

Unable to Stop Production

- ◆ Oil supply has not fallen as fast. Oil producing countries agreed in early April to collectively slash global output by an unprecedented 10 million barrels a day, or about 10 per cent. But demand has dropped by 30 million barrels a day or more meaning there's far more oil than the world needs.
- ◆ While demand has fallen, supply has held up. Oil wells can't simply be turned off and on like a tap. It costs money to shut down and more money to start them up again. So oil producers have an incentive to keep production flowing, even if they are operating at a loss and, in extreme circumstances, actually paying people to take crude off their hands.

Impact on India

- ◆ The Indian crude oil basket does not comprise WTI — it only has

The Oil Market

- Historically, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), led by Saudi Arabia, which is the largest exporter of crude oil in the world (single-handedly exporting 10% of the global demand), used to work as a cartel and fix prices in a favourable band. It could bring down prices by increasing oil production and raise prices by cutting production.
- In the recent past, the OPEC has been working with Russia, as OPEC+, to fix the global prices and supply.
- The global oil pricing is by no stretch an example of a well-functioning competitive market. In fact, its seamless operations crucially depend on oil exporters acting in consort.
- Beyond oil's physical characteristics, there is a quirk of the markets that has sent prices below zero. Oil is mostly traded on futures contracts. These are agreements between two parties, with one agreeing to pay the other a defined price for a given number of barrels to be delivered at a set place on a particular day; or to sell a given quantity at a set price on a particular day.
- This allows companies to fix in a price and to hedge their exposure to fluctuations (and speculators to make money). But with the price plunging and storage filling up, no one in the market wants to be on the hook for actually taking delivery of oil when there may be nowhere to store it.

Brent and oil from some of the Gulf countries — so there is no direct impact. But oil is traded globally and weakness in WTI is mirrored in the falling prices of the Indian basket as well.

- ◆ There are two ways in which this lower price can help India. If the government passes on the lower prices to consumers, then, whenever the economic recovery starts in India, individual consumption will be boosted. If, on the other hand, governments (both at the Centre and the states) decide to levy higher taxes on oil, it can boost government revenues.

Retail Prices not Coming Down

- ◆ Crude oil prices in the international market fell below zero for the first time ever, but still, petrol and diesel prices in India are hovering near Rs 70 per litre and Rs 62 per litre, not falling at all in line.
- ◆ In the build-up of petrol price in India, the base price, which is governed by the crude oil price, plays only a 40 per cent role in determining the overall price of petrol.
- ◆ The fall in crude oil prices has not transmitted into the retail prices of petrol and diesel. However, the plunge in consumption of various fuels, especially during the lockdown period, would have an adverse impact on the state governments' revenues.
- ◆ To take advantage of the cheap raw material, the government is

also trying to collect more taxes from fuel, which can be used to offset other losses.

- ◆ Excise duty on petrol and diesel was hiked by Rs 3 per litre last month and the special excise duty on petrol was hiked by Rs 2 to Rs 8 per litre in case of petrol and to Rs 4 in case of diesel. Additionally, road cess was also raised by Rs 1 per litre each on petrol and diesel to Rs 10. Though the government is trying to make the most out of the rising crude prices, it is not expected to make a significant difference to the financials.
- ◆ The subsidy extended by the Government of India on petroleum products, budgeted at Rs 41,000 crore for the current financial year 2020-21, forms the smallest component of major subsidies, hence, any savings on this front will pale in comparison to the expected loss of tax revenues during the lockdown period
- ◆ Strict lockdown across the country has restricted the movement of vehicles, causing a severe slump in fuel demand. This has also caused tremendous loss to the oil marketing companies (OMCs). In order to take care of those losses, the oil companies are not allowing the benefits to pass on to the retailers, and are instead using low crude oil prices to offset their own losses. Even apart from these reasons, there are multiple factors including USD-INR exchange rate, etc. that play an equally important role in determining the overall retail prices of petrol and diesel.

Way Forward

- ◆ It is important to note that it was the WTI price for May in the US markets that went so low. Crude oil prices elsewhere fell, too, but by not so much. Moreover, at least for now, oil prices for June and the coming months are pegged between \$20 and \$35 a barrel.
- ◆ It is possible that this was a one-off event where prices dropped below zero because of an existing glut in WTI oil, which is found inland, and there was no space to store or transport it in a hurry.
- ◆ Investment budgets of exploration and production companies are expected to drop in the face of financial turmoil due to low shale oil prices. Normally, this should force oil exporting countries to cut back production and negate the excess supply, restoring some balance in the oil markets.
- ◆ But one cannot rule out a repeat of 22nd April's trend because, with COVID-19 continuing to spread, global oil demand is falling every day. In the coming quarter, some estimates claim that total demand will fall by 30%.
- ◆ In the end, it would be the demand-supply mismatch (adjusted for how much can be stored away) that will decide the fate of oil prices. <<<>>>

General Studies
Paper- III

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

Q: Describe the reasons as to why the brent crude oil price fell below zero in the month of April amidst the coronavirus crisis and why people still could not get cheap oil in India?

02

National Panchayati Raj Day 2020 : Time for Self-reliance

- ◆ "When the panchayat raj is established, public opinion will do what violence can never do." –Mahatma Gandhi
- ◆ "The voice of the people may be said to be God's voice, the voice of the Panchayat." –Mahatma Gandhi

Why in News?

- ◆ On the National Panchayati Raj Day, the Prime Minister (PM) addressed sarpanches from across the country through a video conference.
- ◆ National Panchayati Raj Day is celebrated on April 24 every year as it was on this day that the panchayati raj system got constitutional recognition during P.V. Narasimha Rao's tenure as PM.
- ◆ The first National Panchayati Raj Day was celebrated in 2010.

Introduction

- ◆ The PM has called for self-reliance at a time when the pandemic has upended the world economy, with trade and manufacturing output facing an unprecedented decline.
- ◆ The PM said, "Every village has to be self-sufficient enough to provide for its basic needs. Similarly, every district has to be self-sufficient at its level, every state has to be self-reliant at its level and the whole country has to be self-reliant at its level."
- ◆ He also appealed to panchayat representatives to ensure that every person in their panchayat downloads the app (ArogyaSetu) and uses it as a "personal bodyguard".



Swamitva Yojana



Know all about Swamitva Yojana

 **Launched on National Panchayati Raj day on pilot basis in 6 states**

 **Mapping of rural inhabited land through drones & new technology**

 **Title deeds to be issued on basis of mapping**

 **"Swamitva" to people through identification of property rights**

Swamitva Yojana

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Mapping of rural inhabited land through drones & new technology

Title deeds to be issued on basis of mapping

"Swamitva" to people through identification of property rights

- ◆ Complimenting villages for showing the way with their simple definition of social distancing, he said the phrase "Do gajdoori (a distance of two yards)" has been a mantra used in Indian villages for social interactions.
- ◆ The PM also pointed out that the crisis had offered India an "opportunity to become self-dependent in the medical sector" and urged the ministers to suggest new sectors where the country could become export hubs.
- ◆ During this event he launched a 'unified e-GramSwaraj Portal' mobile application and 'Swamitva Scheme'.

About Panchayati Raj

- ◆ Vedic Era: In the old Sanskrit scriptures, word 'Panchayatan' has been mentioned which means a group of five persons, including a spiritual man. In the Rigveda, there is a mention of Sabha, Samiti and Vidatha as local self-units.
- ◆ As per the Mahabharata, 'Gramik' was the chief official of the village, 'Dashap' was the chief of ten

villages, 'VinshyaAdhipati', 'Shat Gram Adhyaksha' and 'Shat Gram Pati' were the chiefs of 20, 100, and 1,000 villages, respectively.

- ◆ The famous Mayo's resolution of 1870 gave impetus to the development of local institutions by enlarging their powers and responsibilities.
- ◆ Following the footsteps of Mayo, Lord Rippon in 1882 provided the much needed democratic framework to these institutions.
- ◆ Mahatma Gandhi advocated Panchayati Raj as the foundation of India's political system, as a decentralized form of government in which each village would be responsible for its own affairs.
- ◆ Post-Independence Period: After the Constitution came into force, Article 40 made a mention of panchayats and Article 246 of the Indian Constitution empowers the state legislature to legislate with respect to any subject relating to local self-government.
- ◆ In 1992 a major change in the Panchayat system of India came in the form of the passage of

the Panchayati Raj Act (73rd Amendment). The act came into existence with effect from April 24, 1993.

- ◆ The Panchayat Raj system was first adopted by the state of Rajasthan in Nagaur district on 2nd Oct 1959 but first started by Andhra Pradesh.
- ◆ The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) is responsible for the work of advocacy, monitoring and implementation of Constitution 73rd Amendment.
- ◆ The role of the MoPR involves strengthening the administrative infrastructure, basic services etc. by leveraging technology and capacity building of the functionaries of Rural Local Body (RLB). Ministry's roadmap to realise the above objective is through three pillars:
 1. Provision of basic services through the Finance Commission Funding;
 2. Capacity building of RLBs through Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA); and
 3. Convergent & holistic planning through inclusive & participatory process through Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) and advocacy work.

E- Panchayat

- ◆ As per the World Bank, "E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government.

- ◆ Government of India, with an intention to transform the governance landscape by ensuring participation of citizens in policy making and providing ease of access to information to the citizens, introduced the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) in 2006.
- ◆ "e- Panchayat" is one of the Mission Mode Project (MMP), currently being implemented with a vision to empower and transform rural India.

Mission Mode Project on e-Panchayat

Under the e-Panchayat MMP, a suite of Core Common Applications has been developed collectively called Panchayat Enterprise Suite (PES) Applications. Following are some of the key activities undertaken under the e-Panchayat MMP during the year:

- ◆ Unified portal focusing on work based accounting: Unified Portal is a new initiative of the Ministry, which will provide the Gram Panchayats (GPs) with a single interface to prepare and implement their Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP). Unified portal would reduce the number of data entries that GP user performs. It will bring in a more user-friendly interface with ease of navigation that would make it hassle-free for the GPs to track, monitor and modify their action plan.
- ◆ On-boarding of schemes on PRIASoft-PFMS integration for real time payments by GPs: The Ministry has put in place a robust

mechanism capturing the entire gamut of activity right from the stage of planning to monitor the various stages of work, recording the expenditure incurred for the works to providing a complete detail of the asset created. Around one lakh GPs have on-boarded this interface.

- ◆ Gram Manchitra: 'Gram Manchitra' is a Spatial Planning Application, which is used for facilitating and supporting GP users to perform planning at GP level with the use of geo-spatial technology. It provides a single/unified Geo Spatial platform to better visualize the various developmental works to be taken up across the 29 sectors and provide a decision support system for GPDP.

Balwantrai Mehta was appointed as the chairman of the Committee. As per the Committee's report, it recommended a decentralised three Panchayati Raj hierarchy. It includes-

- 1) Gram Panchayat at the Village level;
- 2) PanchayatSamiti at the Block level; and
- 3) ZilaParishad at the District level

Names of representatives of the Panchayats were decided to be Pradhan, Mukhiya or Sarpanch, who is responsible for the rural development of their respective zones.

Challenges

- ◆ The 73rd amendment only mandated the creation of local self-governing bodies, and left the decision to delegate powers, functions, and finances to the state

legislatures, therein lays the failure of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

- ◆ The first failure of the 73rd Amendment is that, it did not mandate the transfer of governance functions—like the provision of education, health, sanitation and water—to them. Instead, the amendment listed the functions that ‘could’ be transferred and left it to the state legislature to actually devolve functions. There has been very little devolution of authority and functions in the last 27 years.

Committees	Constituted	for
Recommendations		regarding
Panchayati Raj in India:		
Balwant Rai Mehta	1957	
V.T. Krishnamachari	1960	
Takhatmal Jain Study Group	1966	
Ashok Mehta Committee	1978	
G.V.K. Rao Committee	1985	
Dr. L.M. Singhvi Committee	1986	
P.K. Thungon Committee	1989	
S. Mohinder Singh	2013	

- ◆ The second failure of the 73rd Amendment is the lack of finances for PRIs. Local governments can either raise their own revenue through local taxes or receive

intergovernmental transfers; the constitutional amendment recognized both but did not mandate either. The amendments left it to state legislatures—a choice that most states have not exercised

- ◆ Further, the interference of area MPs and MLAs in the functioning of panchayats also adversely affected their performance.

Conclusion

- ◆ Seeking to empower rural local bodies financially and politically, the 73rd constitutional amendment stipulated transferring 29 items to local bodies, setting up state election commissions and finance commissions to conduct elections and enhance resources for local bodies, reserving one-third seats for women and, in proportion to their population, for SCs and STs in all three tiers, apart from forming gram sabhas with people’s participation.
- ◆ Even though it has been more than two decades since local bodies have been constitutionally empowered, the devolution of 29 subjects to panchayats is not satisfactory in many states. It

appears that a majority of states are showing little interest in devolving power and funds to local bodies and are taking only half-hearted measures. Ideally, the PRIs should be formulating their own plans and executing them. But they remain dependent on Central and state government funds.

- ◆ While states are seeking more powers and rightly so, they are not showing the same interest in devolving powers to local bodies along with the three Fs — funds, functions and functionaries. 🔄🔄🔄

General Studies Paper- II

Topic: Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

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. While states are seeking more powers and rightly so, they are not showing the same interest in devolving powers to local bodies along with the three Fs — funds, functions and functionaries. Evaluate.

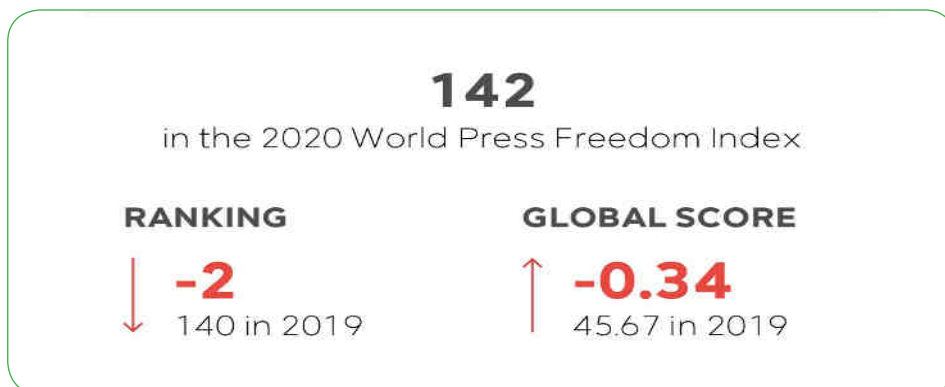
03 World Press Freedom Index 2020 : An Overview

Why in News?

- India has dropped two places on a global press freedom index to be ranked 142nd out of 180 countries in the annual Reporters Without Borders (RSF) analysis released on 22, April 2020.
- The World Press Freedom Index assesses the level of pluralism, media independence, the environment for the media and self-censorship, the legal framework, transparency, and the quality of infrastructure that supports the production of news and information. It does not evaluate government policy.

Key Findings

- Norway has topped the Index for the fourth year in a row in 2020, while Finland is again the runner-up. Denmark (up 2 at 3rd) is next as both Sweden (down 1 at 4th) and the Netherlands (down 1 at 5th) have fallen as a result of increases in cyber-harassment.
- The other end of the Index has seen little change. North Korea (down 1 at 180th) has taken the last position from Turkmenistan, while Eritrea (178th) continues to be Africa's worst-ranked country.
- Malaysia (101st) and the Maldives (79th) registered the biggest rises in the 2020 Index – 22nd and 19th, respectively.
- The third biggest leap was by Sudan (159th), which rose 16 places after Omar al-Bashir's removal.



- The list of biggest declines in the 2020 Index is topped by Haiti, where journalists have often been targeted during violent nationwide protests for the past two years. After falling 21 places, it is now ranked 83rd. The other two biggest falls were in Africa – by Comoros (down 19 at 75th) and Benin (down 17 at 113th), both of which have seen a surge in press freedom violations.
- South Asia in general features poorly on the index, with Pakistan dropping three places to 145, and Bangladesh dropping one place to 151.
- It is the Asia-Pacific region that saw the greatest rise in press freedom violations (up 1.7%). Australia (down 5 at 26th) used to be the regional model but is now characterised by its threats to the confidentiality of sources and to investigative journalism. Two other countries also made significant contributions to the increase in the region's press freedom violation score. One was Singapore (158th), which fell seven places, in large part thanks to its Orwellian "fake news" law, and joined the countries coloured black on the press freedom map. The other was Hong Kong, which also fell seven places because of its treatment of journalists during pro-democracy demonstrations.
- The Eastern Europe/Central Asia region has unsurprisingly kept its second-to-last place in the regional ranking, the position it has held for years, while the Middle East and North Africa continues to be the world's most dangerous region for journalists. The recent detention of RSF's correspondent in Algeria (down 5 at 146th) showed how the

The Index - Region by Region

- Europe continues to be the most favourable continent for media freedom, despite oppressive policies in certain European Union and Balkan countries. It is followed by the Americas – North, Central and South – even if the regional heavyweights, the United States and Brazil, are becoming models of hostility towards the media. Africa, which is third, has also suffered major reversals, above all in the forms of prolonged arbitrary detention and online attacks.

authorities in some countries have taken advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to settle scores with independent journalists.

the situation in Kashmir, where it has become “virtually impossible” for journalists to do their job.

India and Press Freedom Index 2020

- ◆ With no murders of journalists in India in 2019, as against six in 2018, the security situation for the country’s media might seem, on the face of it, to have improved. However, there have been constant press freedom violations, including police violence against journalists, ambushes by political activists, and reprisals instigated by criminal groups or corrupt local officials.
- ◆ The report attributes India’s rank to the Narendra Modi government “tightening” its grip on the media, and pressuring it to “toe the Hindu nationalist government’s line”.
- ◆ Among other issues, it has listed coordinated social media hate campaigns against journalists reporting on issues that “annoy Hindutva followers”, criminal prosecutions to gag journalists critical of authorities and police violence against journalists.
- ◆ The report also suggests that India’s rank is heavily affected by

Crises Threatening Journalism’s Future

- ◆ This 2020 edition of the Index, suggested that the next ten years will be pivotal for press freedom because of converging crises affecting the future of journalism:
 1. A geopolitical crisis (due to the aggressiveness of authoritarian regimes);
 2. a technological crisis (due to a lack of democratic guarantees);
 3. A democratic crisis (due to polarisation and repressive policies);
 4. A crisis of trust (due to suspicion and even hatred of the media); and
 5. An economic crisis (impoverishing quality journalism).

Geopolitical Crisis

- ◆ One of the most salient crises is geopolitical, caused by leaders of dictatorial, authoritarian or populist regimes making every effort to suppress information and impose their visions of a world without pluralism and independent journalism. Authoritarian regimes

have kept their poor rankings.

- ◆ China, which is trying to establish a “new world media order,” maintains its system of information hyper-control, of which the negative effects for the entire world have been seen during the coronavirus public health crisis.
- ◆ China, Saudi Arabia (up 2 at 170th) and Egypt (down 3 at 166th) are the world’s biggest jailers of journalists. Russia (149th) is meanwhile deploying increasingly sophisticated resources to control information online, while India (down 2 at 142nd) has imposed the longest electronic curfew in history in Kashmir. In Egypt, accusations of “fake news” are used as grounds for blocking access to websites and webpages and for withdrawing accreditation.

Technological Crisis

- ◆ The absence of appropriate regulation in the era of digitalised and globalised communication has created information chaos. Propaganda, advertising, rumour and journalism are in direct competition. The growing confusion between commercial, political and editorial content has destabilised democratic guarantees of freedom of opinion and expression. This encourages the adoption of dangerous laws which, on the pretext of restricting the spread of fake news, facilitate tougher crackdowns on independent and critical journalism.
- ◆ Like Singapore, Benin has established a new law that is supposedly intended to combat disinformation and cyber-crime



but is liable to be used to arbitrarily restrict the freedom to inform. The pandemic has amplified the spread of rumours and fake news as quickly as the virus itself. State troll armies in Russia, India, Philippines (down 2 at 136th) and Vietnam (175th) use the weapon of disinformation on social media.

Democratic Crisis

- ◆ The previous two editions of the World Press Freedom Index reflected a crisis caused by growing hostility and even hatred towards journalists, and this crisis has now worsened. It has resulted in more serious and frequent acts of physical violence, and therefore an unprecedented level of fear in some countries. Leading politicians and those close to them continue to openly foment hatred of journalists.
- ◆ The democratically elected presidents of two countries, Donald Trump in the United States (up 3 at 45th) and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil (down 2 at 107th), continue to denigrate the media and encourage hatred of journalists in their respective countries.

Crisis of Trust

- ◆ Mistrust of media outlets suspected of broadcasting or publishing news contaminated by unreliable information continues

to grow. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer, which studies the public's trust in institutions, 57% of the people polled in its latest international survey thought the media they used were contaminated with untrustworthy information.

- ◆ Undermined by this crisis of trust, journalists become the targets of the public's anger during big street protests taking place in many parts of the world, including Iraq, Lebanon (down 1 at 102nd), Chile (down 5 at 51st), Bolivia (down 1 at 114th) and Ecuador (down 1 at 98th), as well as in France (down 2 at 32nd), where journalists are also the victims of police violence.

Economic Crisis

- ◆ The digital transformation has brought the media to their knees in many countries. Falling sales, the collapse in advertising revenue and the increase in production and distribution costs linked above all to increases in the price of raw materials have forced news organisations to restructure and lay off journalists.
- ◆ In the United States, for example, half of the media jobs have been lost over the past ten years. These economic problems have social consequences and an impact on the editorial freedom of media around the world. Newspapers that

are in a much weaker economic situation are naturally less able to resist pressure.

Way Forward

- ◆ Like the coronavirus, censorship knows no borders and can wreak havoc. News and information manipulation is a major obstacle to human progress. It restricts free will and destroys the ability to discern. By distorting the parameters of the debate, it inevitably leads to bad decisions which, in turn, must be covered up by new lies.
- ◆ The 2020 World Press Freedom Index, showed that the coming decade will be decisive for the future of journalism, with the COVID-19 pandemic highlighting and amplifying the many crises that threaten the right to freely reported, independent, diverse and reliable information. <>>

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. Discuss the reasons behind the low ranking of India on the World Press Freedom Index 2020.

04

India Joined Indian Ocean Commission as an Observer

Why in News?

- ◆ Last month, India became the fifth observer of Indian Ocean Commission, another body which is important for Indian Ocean and India's ocean diplomacy and the vision of 'Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)'.

Prosperity via Oceans

- ◆ The oceans and world's waterways are global commons. VasudhaivaKutumbakam—the concept of whole world as a family—is perhaps most vividly witnessed on the oceans of the planet that connect us all. Its politics is turbulent, and its challenges complex. At the same time, the oceans are the lifelines of global prosperity. They present us with great economic opportunities to build our nations.
- ◆ Over 90% of global merchandise trade is carried on the oceans. Over the last 15 years, its value has grown from about 6 trillion dollars to about 20 trillion dollars. Oceans are critical for the global energy security as over 60% of world's oil production moves through sea routes.
- ◆ Our ability to reap economic benefits from the oceans rests on our capacity to respond to the challenges in the maritime domain. The threat of sea borne terror, of which India has been a direct victim, continues to endanger the regional and global peace and stability. Piracy too remains a strong challenge.

- ◆ The threat of natural disasters like tsunamis and cyclones is ever present. Manmade problems such as oil spills, climate change continue to risk the stability of the maritime domain.
- ◆ A peaceful and stable maritime environment is, therefore, critical for the regional and global security. It is also a must to harvest the riches of the oceanic ecosystems.
- ◆ Given the scale and complexity of modern-day challenges, the international maritime stability cannot be the preserve of a single nation. It has to be a shared goal and responsibility of all the seafaring countries.
- ◆ The Indian Ocean, occupy a vital place in India's national security and economic prosperity. The waters of the Indian Ocean touch the shores of over 40 countries. About half of world's container traffic; and close to one-third of world's cargo traffic passes through this region.
- ◆ 90% of our trade by volume and 90% of our oil imports are carried on the seas. India's 1200 island territories, and our huge Exclusive Economic Zone of 2.4 million square kilometers makes clear the economic significance of the Indian Ocean. For us, it also serves as a strategic bridge with the nations in our immediate and extended maritime neighbourhood.

Indian Ocean Commission

- ◆ It is an intergovernmental organization that links African Indian Ocean nations: Comoros,

Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion (an overseas region of France), and Seychelles.

- ◆ The commission was created in 1982 in Port-Louis, Mauritius, and institutionalised in 1984. The secretariat is based in Mauritius. The current secretary-general is Hamada Madi.
- ◆ India became the fifth observer to this international body. The other four observers: China, Malta, European Union and International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF).
- ◆ The COI works on four pillars which have been adopted in 2005 by the Summit of Heads of States:
 - ◆ Political and diplomatic cooperation;
 - ◆ Economic and commercial cooperation;
 - ◆ Sustainable development in a globalisation context, cooperation in the field of agriculture, maritime fishing, and the conservation of resources and ecosystems; and
 - ◆ Strengthening of the regional cultural identity, cooperation in cultural, scientific, technical, educational and judicial fields.

SAGAR Vision

- ◆ India has unveiled its strategic vision for the Indian Ocean i.e. Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) in 2015.
- ◆ India's vision for the Indian Ocean is encapsulated by the concept of SAGAR. SAGAR has both various distinct and inter-related elements – such as deepening economic and security cooperation in the littorals, enhancing capacities

to safeguard land and maritime territories, working towards sustainable regional development, blue economy, and promoting collective action to deal with non-traditional threats like natural disasters, piracy, terrorism etc.

Net Security provider and First Responder in Indian Ocean

- ◆ The Indian Navy has come a long way since 2013, when former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh declared that India was a 'net security provider' in the Indian Ocean and is committed in its efforts to improve the maritime environment.
- ◆ The Indian Navy has demonstrated its capability to assume the role of a 'net security provider' in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) in recent years by positioning itself as a "first responder" along the Indian Ocean littorals.

The Blue Economy

- ◆ The economic potential as well as realising the benefits from coastal and marine resources constitutes the focus of blue economy debates and policies.
- ◆ A consortium of UN agencies in preparation for the World Conference of Sustainable Development (Rio + 20) outlined priorities under the title 'A Green Economy in Blue World'. In a concept note prepared on blue economy, it highlighted that oceans provide a substantial portion of the global population with food and livelihood, as well as transportation for 80 per cent of global trade. The seabed currently provides 32 per cent of the global supply of

hydrocarbons, with exploration expanding. New technologies are opening frontiers of marine resource development from bio-prospecting to mining of seabed mineral resources. The sea also offers vast potential for renewable "blue energy" production from wind, wave, tidal, thermal and biomass sources.

- ◆ Seychelles became one of the first countries in the world to create a Department of Blue Economy, with a minister to oversee its role.

Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance

- ◆ The IOR and its hinterland form the locus of about seventy percent of the world's natural disasters resulting from earthquakes, cyclones, tsunamis, and floods. By assuming a benign role and deploying assets, the Indian Navy continues to be at the forefront of HADR operations in coastal areas, both in India and in the maritime neighborhood. Indian navy undertook various operations related to Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Non-combatant Evacuation (NEO), and Search and Rescue (SAR) Operations.

Significance

- ◆ The five-member grouping is important given India's plans to expand in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) which is strategically connects the Indian Ocean to the South-eastern coast of Africa and beyond.
- ◆ The move will also counter the growing influence of China in the IOR through its ambitious projects

like maritime silk route (part of Belt and Road Initiative) and string of pearls.

- ◆ The critical relevance of SAGAR emerges when seen in conjunction with India's other policies impacting the maritime domain 'like Act East Policy', 'SAGARMALA', 'Project Mausam', India as 'net security provider', focus on blue economy, etc. which symbolise India's maritime resurgence. SAGAR contributes to the effective implementation of all these policies by acting as an enabler to create a positive environment in the IOR.

Way Forward

- ◆ While all elements of SAGAR require equal attention, developing an effective response mechanism to address humanitarian crisis and natural disasters is one of the most visible elements in India's evolving Indian Ocean strategy.
- ◆ As a major stakeholder in the Indian Ocean with maritime security high on the agenda, India will continue to pursue its interests and tackle maritime security challenges at the macro level in the region. However, as an observer of the IOC, a specific, parallel opportunity to embrace bottom-up regionalism presents itself.



General Studies Paper- II

Topic: India and its neighborhood- relations.

Q. The induction of India into Indian Ocean Commission as a fifth observer will be crucial for Indian Ocean and India's ocean diplomacy and the vision of 'Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)'. Comment.

05

Islamophobia in India : Is It Real or Hyped

Why in News?

- ◆ The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation has urged India to take 'urgent steps' to protect the rights of its minority Muslim community and stop the incidents of 'Islamophobia' in the country.

Background

- ◆ The OIC has urged the Indian Government to take urgent steps to stop the growing tide of Islamophobia in India and protect the rights of its persecuted Muslim minority as per its obligations under international Human Rights law.
- ◆ Twitter posts condemning what it called "unrelenting vicious #Islamophobic campaign in #India maligning Muslims for spread of #COVID-19 as well as their negative profiling in media subjecting them to discrimination & violence with impunity."
- ◆ Reports of maltreatment of Indian Muslims have surfaced after a spike in COVID-19 cases that was seen as due to a congregation hosted last month by Islamic missionary group Tablighi Jamaat.
- ◆ But there was also an instance of the use of the fake Twitter handle posing as Omani princess Sayyida Mona bint Fahd Al Said, on an attempt to sow social discord in India as well as India's ties with the Gulf nations.
- ◆ In February, 2020, too on the violence in Delhi regarding the Citizenship Amendment Bill, OIC

asked New Delhi to take steps to stop violence against Muslims and expressed concerns over the situation.

India's Response

- ◆ India slammed the OIC for its remark that 'Islamophobia' is rising in India.
- ◆ The Government of India has said that, India is a "heaven for Muslims" and ruled out any discrimination on the basis of religion.
- ◆ The OIC statement was "deeply regrettable" and "was factually inaccurate and misleading." In these challenging times when the world was focussed on battling the spread of the pandemic, the person said that the OIC should not try to communalise the fight against the disease.

About OIC

- The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is an international organization founded in 1969, consisting of 57 member states, with a collective population of over 1.8 billion as of 2015 with 53 countries being Muslim-majority countries.
- The organisation states that it is "the collective voice of the Muslim world" and works to "safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony".
- The OIC has permanent delegations to the United Nations and the European Union. The official languages of the OIC are Arabic, English, and French.

OIC: Accused of Duplicity

- ◆ None of the Muslim-majority nations treat non-Muslims as equal citizens. Minorities are

discriminated against in every Islamic nation. Even in 'modern and liberal' Dubai, a non-Muslim has to hide and eat during Ramzan so as to not offend fasting Muslim 'first citizens'.

- ◆ India has had four Muslim Presidents, four Chief Justices of the Supreme Court, an Intelligence Bureau chief, a chief election commissioner and four cricket captains. The world's richest Muslim entrepreneur, Azim Premji, is an Indian.
- ◆ In India, the Muslims are the only population that has grown both in the terms of rate and overall percentage, whereas in Pakistan and Bangladesh, both OIC countries, Hindus and other minorities have shrunk to near-oblivion.
- ◆ Also the timid reaction of OIC countries to China's maltreatment of Chinese Muslims is much a toned down version, given the horrendous atrocities committed on them. China being the biggest buyer of Gulf oil.
- ◆ Though many experts emphasise that the existence of OIC itself is a communal ideology as grouping is based on religion and not on region or any other objective criteria.

India and OIC

- ◆ India was invited to attend the first summit of the OIC 50 years ago in 1969 in Morocco. But the Indian delegation had to return midway due to a withdrawal of the invitation after Pakistan's objection.

- ◆ India's phenomenal economic success in the subsequent years and its growing relationship with the United States had the demonstration effect of the monarchs in the Gulf making a bee-line for India to find ways of marrying their hydrocarbon and financial resources with India's skills, human resource talent and exponentially growing market. This effort at building asymmetric complementarities eclipsed the hitherto important religious dimension of the relationships. In this context, during his State visit to Delhi in January 2006, King Abdulla bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia proposed that India join the OIC as an 'Observer' member.
- ◆ During the 45th meeting of the Council of Ministers in Dhaka in 2018, the Bangladeshi foreign minister called for reforms paving the way for countries like India, non-Muslim majority countries, to join as observers in the organization.
- ◆ India's External Affairs Minister (EAM) Late Sh. Sushma Swaraj addressed the inaugural session of the 46th Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers on March 1, 2019, in Abu Dhabi as a "guest of honor" invited by that year's OIC host country, the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- ◆ The Ministry of External Affairs had said that the invitation was a "welcome recognition of the presence of 185 million Muslims in India and of their contribution to its pluralistic ethos, and of India's contribution to the Islamic world".
- ◆ The first-time invitation to India to be a Guest of Honour at the Plenary had been a significant diplomatic victory for New Delhi, especially at a time of heightened tensions with Pakistan.
- ◆ India's presence at the 46th OIC meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers is historic, but it still remains a stepping stone toward larger engagement with the OIC and the Muslim world. Article 4 (1) of the OIC Charter states the need for consensus among the OIC Council of Ministers for deciding on granting observer status to a state.
- ◆ Individually, India has excellent relations with almost all member nations of the OIC. Ties with the UAE and Saudi Arabia, especially, have looked up significantly in recent years.

Way Forward

- ◆ The criticism by OIC of India's internal affairs and particularly to the treatment of muslims is more of a theatrical play than a substantive diplomacy. The relationship between West-Asia and India is more important in the era of energy diplomacy and growing economic and strategic partnerships.
- ◆ India being the second largest democracy is open to criticism and transparency in its dealings are very well established.
- ◆ Minorities in India are very well protected and has been flourishing since independence. There are various provisions regarding minorities in the constitution and laws which are strictly implemented to protect their interests and future prospects.



General Studies Paper- II

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

Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Q. Is Islamophobia rising in India? Do you agree? Give your opinion.

06 Changes in FDI Policy of India : Preventing Opportunistic Takeovers

Why in News?

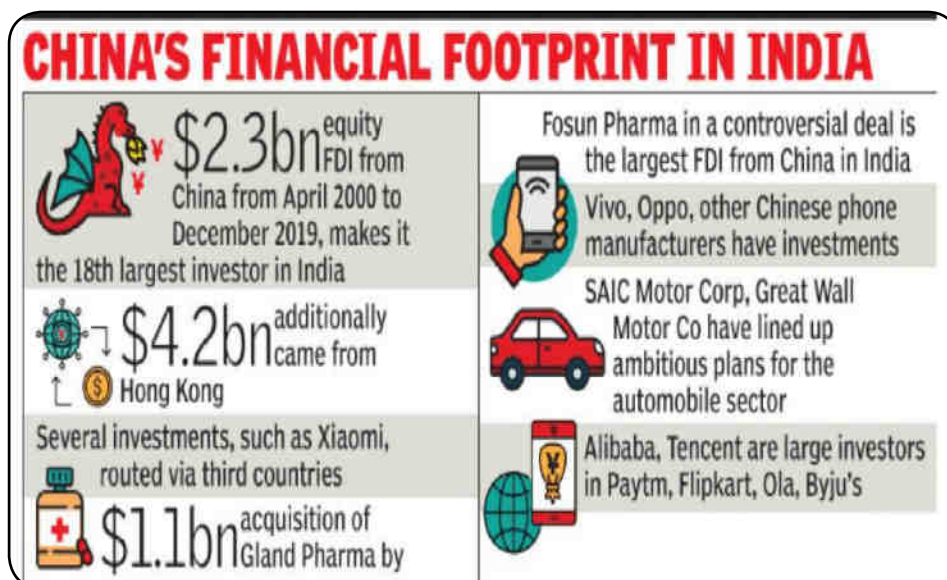
- India recently revised its Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy with the objective of preventing “opportunistic takeovers” of firms hit by the lockdown induced by the COVID-19 outbreak.
- The curbs, which were already in force for investments from Pakistan and Bangladesh, will extend to entities where Chinese citizens have “beneficial ownership” to ensure that the restrictions are not circumvented by routing investments via Hong Kong, Singapore or other countries.

Introduction

- While the note did not name any country, analysts see the amendments as aimed at possible Chinese investments. The decision came days after China’s central bank, the People’s Bank of China (PBoC) had raised its shareholding in HDFC to over 1 per cent. HDFC vice chairman and CEO Keki Mistry had said that PBoC had been an existing shareholder, owning 0.8% as of March 2019.

Present Position

- A non-resident entity can invest in India, subject to the FDI Policy except in those sectors/activities which are prohibited. However, a citizen of Bangladesh or an entity incorporated in Bangladesh can invest only under the Government route. Further, a citizen of Pakistan or an entity incorporated in Pakistan can invest, only under the Government route, in sectors/



activities other than defence, space, atomic energy and sectors/activities prohibited for foreign investment.

Revised Position

- A non-resident entity can invest in India, subject to the FDI Policy except in those sectors/activities which are prohibited. However, an entity of a country, which shares land border with India or where the beneficial owner of an investment into India is situated in or is a citizen of any such country, can invest only under the Government route. Further, a citizen of Pakistan or an entity incorporated in Pakistan can invest, only under the Government route, in sectors/activities other than defence, space, atomic energy and sectors/activities prohibited for foreign investment.
- In the event of the transfer of ownership of any existing or future FDI in an entity in India, directly or indirectly, resulting in

the beneficial ownership falling within the restriction/purview of the (a), such subsequent change in beneficial ownership will also require Government approval.

Chinese Investment in India

- China’s FDI has grown five-fold since 2014 and, as of December 2019, its cumulative investment in India exceeded \$8 billion — “far more” than investments by other countries that share borders with India, according to the Chinese government. A Brookings India paper pegs the total current and planned Chinese investment in India at over \$26 billion.
- Some of the key investments are given below:
 - Alibaba and Tencent have been the two biggest investors in India, together participating in funding rounds that exceed \$3 billion. Alibaba’s investment in Paytm, Zomato, FirstCry and Big Basket and Tencent’s

investments in Ola, Flipkart, Byju's and investment in Practo.

- Chinese companies have recently started making inroads in highway construction and the railways sector.
- In the past three years, Chinese and Chinese-origin investors have poured in about \$3.7 billion into Indian startups.
- China's drug giant FosunPharma spent \$1.09 billion acquiring a 74% stake in India's Gland Pharma.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

- A foreign direct investment (FDI) is an investment made by a firm or individual in one country into business interests located in another country. Generally, FDI takes place when an investor establishes foreign business operations or acquires foreign business assets in a foreign company. However, FDIs are distinguished from portfolio investments in which an investor merely purchases equities of foreign-based companies.

Routes through which India gets FDI

- Automatic Route: The non-resident

or Indian company does not require prior nod of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) or government of India for FDI.

- Government Route: The government's approval is mandatory. The company will have to file an application through Foreign Investment Facilitation Portal, which facilitates single-window clearance. The application is then forwarded to the respective ministry, which will approve/reject the application in consultation with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce. DPIIT will issue the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for processing of applications under the existing FDI policy.

FDI Prohibition

- There are a few industries where FDI is strictly prohibited under any route. These industries are
- Atomic energy generation;
- Any gambling or betting businesses;
- Lotteries (online, private, government, etc.);
- Investment in chit funds;
- Nidhi company;

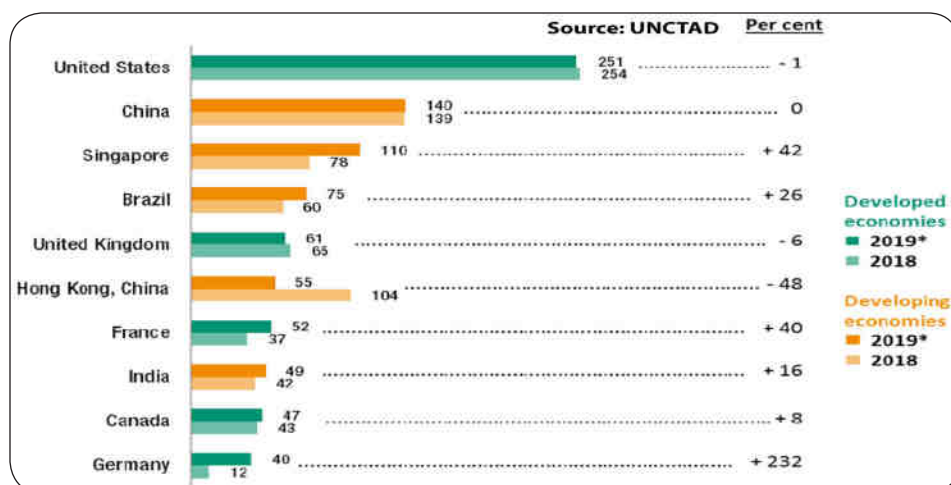
- Agricultural or plantation activities (although there are many exceptions like horticulture, fisheries, tea plantations, pisciculture, animal husbandry, etc.);
- Housing and real estate (except townships, commercial projects, etc.);
- Trading in TDR's; and
- Cigars, cigarettes, or any related tobacco industry.

China's Response

- China has called for India to revise these "discriminatory practices" and treat investments from different countries equally.
- China said that the additional barriers set by Indian side for investors from specific countries violate World Trade Organization's (WTO's) principle of non-discrimination, and go against the general trend of liberalization and facilitation of trade and investment.
- More importantly, they do not conform to the consensus of G20 leaders and trade ministers to realize a free, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent, predictable and stable trade and investment environment, and to keep our markets open.

India's Argument

- India maintains the policy is not aimed at any one country and that the move is aimed at curbing "opportunistic" takeovers of Indian firms, many of which are under strain.
- The amendments are not prohibiting investments. India has just changed the approval route for



these investments. There are many sectors in India that are already subject to this approval route.

- ◆ The government of India has not banned foreign investment from China. It has only put a filter to have an oversight to examine the implications of the investment, alarmed by the People's Bank of China raising its stake in the country's largest mortgage lender, HDFC Ltd, from 0.8% to 1.01% through open-market purchases in the March quarter. The move led to concerns that India's most valued companies could be susceptible to hostile takeovers as their market values have taken a severe hit because of COVID-19 related uncertainties.
- ◆ Further, many other countries are also taking such measures.
 - ◆ Before India, the European Union and Australia had initiated similar measures. These, again, were seen as being targeted at Chinese investments.

Impact

- ◆ The government's effort to ring fence Indian industry from opportunistic acquisitions by China may dry up access to Chinese investments in the post-

COVID-19 world.

- ◆ India's decision may come in the way of home-grown unicorns and startups that aim to expand their businesses. At least 18 of the 23 Indian unicorns, including Paytm, Snapdeal, OYO Rooms, Ola, Swiggy, Zomato, and BigBasket, are backed by Chinese investors such as Alibaba, Tencent and Ant Financial.
- ◆ The new FDI norms may force these investors to postpone or even stop these funds from topping up their investments or respecting the agreed term sheets. Therefore, the unicorns, which depend on their largest investors to keep the cash flowing, may now have to start looking for new anchor investors. Growth-stage startups may also see investments drying up.

Way Forward

- ◆ Over the years, India has regularly liberalized foreign direct investment norms and policies. Most FDI equity inflows made into the country are under the automatic route, where a prior approval from the government is not required.
- ◆ The new rules are not in violation of WTO norms that

allow countries to make such changes when issues of national security are at stake. India is not the only country to make such modifications in policy, the person said, pointing to several countries in Europe that had changed their laws or made new ones to cope with similar situations.

- ◆ However, the government should lay out a clear roadmap for the approval process for investments from Chinese companies. It should ensure that proposals are considered in a time-bound manner and restrictions should not have any adverse impact on bonafide investments in these challenging times, wherein Indian companies are in need of funds.



General Studies Paper- III

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

Q. Recently, India revised its Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy with the objective of preventing "opportunistic takeovers" of firms hit by the lockdown induced by the COVID-19 outbreak. Discuss its impact on Indian economy as well as on Indian startups.

07

Rice-Fish Farming in India : Needs Promotion

Context

- ◆ In India, agriculture is the lifeline of the economy and contributes nearly one-fourth of the national gross domestic product (GDP) and sustains livelihood of about two-thirds of population. It is projected that to meet the food requirement of 1.5 billion people by 2050, the food grain production has to increase by 185% which is in fact possible through enhancement of productivity, crop diversification and cropping intensity.
- ◆ Rapid human population growth poses many challenges, especially food shortages, malnutrition, limited means of irrigation and shrinking land resources besides deteriorating environmental quality. Sustainable intensification of agricultural production systems is needed today to address the ever-increasing pressure on food and the environment. Rice-fish farming is one of the sustainable ways which can be used to address the issues mentioned above.

Background

- ◆ Rice is a major food commodity and staple food for many, and adding fish to flooded rice paddies has been a farming tradition practiced in some Asian countries for many centuries.
- ◆ The cultivation of most rice crops in irrigated, rainfed and deepwater systems offers a suitable environment for fish and other aquatic organisms. Over 90% of the world's rice, equivalent to approximately 134 million hectares, is grown under these flooded conditions providing not only home to a wide range

of aquatic organisms, but also offering opportunities for their enhancement and culture.

- ◆ It is no longer an agro-production practice but an agro-culture pattern. Co-culture of rice and aquatic creatures combining animal production (for example fish, shellfish, crab, shrimp and ducks) in paddy rice systems has been proposed as a technique to maximise the use of land and water resources to provide both grain and animal protein.
- ◆ Today, the impact of rice cultivation on the environment, including its effect on greenhouse gases (GHGs) emission, is a matter of concern for all of us. Global climate change is closely linked to agricultural production.
- ◆ Two major GHGs from agricultural sectors are methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide. Methane emission depends on anaerobic degradation of organic complexes such as plant residues, organic matter and organic fertilisers under submerged conditions where there is a lack of oxygen. A total of 10-20 per cent of methane in the atmosphere comes from paddy fields. This is significant as the Global Warming Potential (GWP) of methane is 25 times more than that of carbon dioxide.

Benefits

- ◆ Agriculture, integrated with fish farming, supports rural and indigenous communities and can significantly help countries address the challenges of poverty alleviation as well as improved food and nutrition security.
- ◆ The real and potential impact of rice-fish farming in terms of improved income and improved nutrition is significant but generally underestimated and undervalued.

Hidden benefits of rice-fish farming such as risk reduction through diversification of the farming system may have a strong attraction to many farmers and their families.

- ◆ Fish can be sold directly, or may reduce the dependence of families on other livestock which can then be traded for income. Also, fish from the rice fields may not be sold but the production may be used to feed relatives and those who assist in rice harvesting, a benefit which could almost be considered essential in families with a labour shortage.
- ◆ Research has shown that the rice-fish cultivation system is capable of lowering the emission of methane and other GHGs. Aquatic creatures especially bottom feeders (crabs and carps) disturb the soil layers by their movement or sometimes searching for food, and thus they influence the CH₄ production processes.
- ◆ Potentially, aquatic creatures increase diluted oxygen in field water and in soil, which shifts anaerobic digestion to aerobic digestion and helps to reduce CH₄ emissions. Recently, it has been estimated that methane emission from rice-fish cultivation system is 34.6 per cent less than that from a rice monoculture cultivation system.
- ◆ The method of rice-fish is also beneficial to restore soil fertility and avoid soil degradation, which

is a major global environmental issue. The rice-fish system requires only a small amount of pesticide and fertiliser as it is a low input system.

- ♦ Rice yields from the rice-fish system were 10-26 per cent higher, labour input 19-22 per cent lower and material inputs were seven per cent lower. Additionally, fish production increased net income. Indonesian figures show that the rice-fish system yielded a 27 per cent higher net return with fish, as compared to a single crop of rice.

Benefits of Integrated Farming/ or Rice cum Fish Culture System

- Improves the soil fertility & soil health.
- Increasing economic yield per unit area.
- Reduction in production costs.
- Decreases farm input requirements.
- Multiple income sources.
- Family income support.
- Efficient utilization of family labour.
- Reduction in animal feeding requirements.
- Minimize the use of chemical fertilizers.
- Provides balanced nutritious food for the farmers.
- Solves the energy problems with biogas.
- Avoids degradation of forests.
- Enhance employment generation.
- Pollution free environment.
- Recycling of resources.
- Improves the status & livelihood of the farmer.

Modification of Rice Fields for Fish Culture

- ♦ Several physical modifications have been devised over the years in order to make the rice field better suited for fish culture. Most are common to many countries and may have

been developed independently from each other as a result of a "common sense" approach that characterizes many traditional practices. The modifications are:

- ♦ Increasing Dike (Bund) Height: Rice field embankments are typically low and narrow since the usual rice varieties do not require deep water. To make the rice field more suitable for fish, the height of the embankment needs in most cases to be increased.
- ♦ Provisions of Weirs or Screens: Once the fish are inside the rice field, efforts are made to prevent them from escaping with the water, regardless of whether it is flowing in or out. To prevent loss of the fish stock, farmers install screens or weirs across the path of the water flow.
- ♦ Provision of Drains: In general rice fields are not equipped with gates for management of water levels. The common practice is to temporarily breach a portion of the embankment to let the water in or out at whatever point is most convenient.
- ♦ Fish Refuges: A fish refuge is a deeper area provided for the fish within a rice field. This can be in the form of a trench or several trenches, a pond or even just a sump or a pit. The purpose of the refuge is to provide a place for the fish in case water in the field dries up or is not deep enough.

Way Forward

- ♦ Rice-fish system in India is in urgent need of conservation and promotion. A full recognition of its multi-ecological functions must be achieved, such as its role in preserving biodiversity, protecting food security, enriching the soil and lowering greenhouse gas emissions.
- ♦ This method of Rice-fish co-culture would definitely enhance farm production, reduce environmental degradation and improve the quality of life of farmers.
- ♦ In light of the present situation of rice-fish farming in India, basic research on the rice-fish ecosystem should be emphasised, including research on basic techniques of rice-fish farming and technology required for engineering intervention.
- ♦ The policymakers should consider the problems of initial investment for poor rural communities and compensate them with farmer-friendly policies, easy loan schemes etc. 🔄🔄🔄

General Studies Paper- III

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

Q. What do you understand by rice-fish farming? Discuss how it could help India to address the challenges of poverty alleviation as well as improved food and nutrition security.

7

IMPORTANT BRAIN BOOSTERS

01

World Bank Report on Remittance

1. Why in News?

- The World Bank has released a report titled “Migration and Development Brief 32: COVID-19 Crisis through a Migration Lens”.



2. Key Findings

- Global remittances are projected to decline sharply by about 20 percent in 2020 due to the economic crisis induced by the COVID-19 pandemic and shutdown.
- Remittances to low and middle-income countries (LMICs) are projected to fall by 19.7 percent to \$445 billion, representing a loss of a crucial financing lifeline for many vulnerable households.
- Even with the decline, remittance flows are expected to become even more important as a source of external financing for LMICs as the fall in foreign direct investment is expected to be larger (more than 35 percent).
- Remittance flows are expected to fall across all World Bank Group regions, most notably in Europe and Central Asia (27.5 percent), followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (23.1 percent), South Asia (22.1 percent), the Middle East and North Africa (19.6 percent), Latin America and the Caribbean (19.3 percent), and East Asia and the Pacific (13 percent).
- The global average cost of sending \$200 remains high at 6.8 percent in the first quarter of 2020, only slightly below the previous year. Sub-Saharan Africa continued to have the highest average cost, at about 9 percent.
- In India, remittances are projected to fall by about 23 per cent in 2020, to USD 64 billion - a striking contrast with the growth of 5.5 percent and receipts of USD 83 billion seen in 2019.
- In Pakistan, the projected decline is about 23 per cent, totalling about USD 17 billion, compared to a total of USD 22.5 billion last year, when remittances grew by 6.2 per cent.
- In Bangladesh, remittances are projected at USD 14 billion this year, a likely fall of about 22 per cent.
- Remittances to Nepal and Sri Lanka are expected to decline by 14 per cent and 19 per cent, respectively, this year.

4. Cause for Concern

- The economic crisis induced by COVID-19 is deeper and more pervasive than any other pandemic-induced crisis since the 1900s.
- Families in developing countries are often reliant on the income generated by remittances, with some 800 million people living in households that receive them.
 - Many of those who receive remittances do not have any other social safety net, so the reduction in remittances will hit them hard.
- Unfortunately, when the cut in remittances is combined with other shocks hitting poor countries, like the collapse of tourism and steep declines in exports, there is going to be a steep increase in global poverty.
- The report said this decline of 20% is “unprecedented,” with the closest comparison being the Global Financial Crisis, when remittances fell around 5%.

3. Significance

- Remittances are a vital source of income for developing countries.
- Remittances are crucial in low- and middle-income countries, financing household and family expenses — such as on higher education.
- Higher remittances improve nutritional outcomes by increasing investments in higher education, a fall in these remittances puts these outcomes at risk.
- Remittance costs for some channels in South Asia are below 3%, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target.
- South Asia also has the lowest remittance costs of any region — in some corridors in the region they were above 10% due to a lack of competition, regulatory concerns and low volumes.

02

Amendment to the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897

1. Why in News?

- The central government has brought an ordinance to end violence against health workers by amending the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, which will allow imprisonment from 6 months to 7 years for those found guilty.
- The President has given his assent for promulgation of the Ordinance.

2. Need for the Ordinance

- During the current COVID-19 pandemic, there have been instances of the most critical service providers i.e. members of healthcare services being targeted and attacked by miscreants, thereby obstructing them from doing their duties.
- Members of the medical community, even as they continue to perform relentlessly round the clock and save human lives, have unfortunately become the most vulnerable victims as they have been perceived by some as carriers of the virus. This has led to cases of their stigmatization and ostracization and sometimes worse, acts of unwarranted violence and harassment.



3. Key Highlights

- The amendment makes acts of violence cognizable and non-bailable offences.
- Violence as defined in the Ordinance will include harassment and physical injury and damage to property.
- Healthcare service personnel include public and clinical healthcare service providers such as doctors, nurses, paramedical workers and community health workers; any other persons empowered under the Act to take measures to prevent the outbreak of the disease or spread thereof; and any persons declared as such by the State Government, by notification in the Official Gazette.
- The penal provisions can be invoked in instances of damage to property including a clinical establishment, any facility identified for quarantine and isolation of patients, mobile medical units and any other property in which the healthcare service personnel have direct interest in relation to the epidemic.
- Commission or abetment of such acts of violence shall be punished with imprisonment for a term of three months to five years, and with fine of Rs.50,000/- to Rs.2,00,000/-.
- In case of causing grievous hurt, imprisonment shall be for a term six months to seven years and with fine of Rs.1,00,000/- to Rs.5,00,000/-.
- In addition, the offender shall also be liable to pay compensation to the victim and twice the fair market value for damage of property.
- Offences shall be investigated by an officer of the rank of Inspector within a period of 30 days, and trial has to be completed in one year, unless extended by the court for reasons to be recorded in writing.

4. Ordinance in Indian Constitution

- Article 123 of the Indian Constitution grants the President certain law making powers to promulgate Ordinances when either of the two Houses of Parliament is not in session and hence it is not possible to enact laws in the Parliament.
- An Ordinance may relate to any subject that the Parliament has the power to legislate on. Conversely, it has the same limitations as the Parliament to legislate, given the distribution of powers between the Union, State and Concurrent Lists.
- The President cannot promulgate an Ordinance unless he is satisfied that there are circumstances that require taking 'immediate action'.
- Ordinances must be approved by Parliament within six weeks of reassembling or they shall cease to operate. They will also cease to operate in case resolutions disapproving the Ordinance are passed by both the Houses.

03

Kerala's Kasaragod Model

1. Why in News?

- Kerala's Kasaragod, one of the earliest spots on India's COVID-19 map, as one of the success stories of the containment exercise.
- Kerala has bucked the national trend for novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) with a doubling time of 72.2 days — which means that the number of cases in the state doubled in that many days — against a national average of 7.5 days.



2. Background

- According to figures uploaded by the Kerala government, Kasaragod has had 169 cases and zero deaths until April 19, a unique achievement in itself, given the fact that a large proportion of the district's population have settled abroad. Of those infected, 123 people have recovered so far, leaving only 46 active cases among the original 169.
- In the initial days of the epidemic, almost all index cases were people who had caught the virus during their travels abroad (about 15.38%). The second wave in the district happened after people started coming back from the Middle East from March 16.
- The district is far from major cities, so that the isolation exercise was smoother.
- However, this distance also presented an additional challenge. When expatriates returned in large groups, they landed in various airports and took various public transport options — railways, road etc — to reach home, which had the potential to leave contacts all along the way.

3. About Kasaragod Model

- The district administration relied on aggressive testing, technology, foolproof contact tracing, and an effective public awareness campaign on social distancing to achieve the results it can now show.
- In Kasaragod, as in other districts, the state government appointed a special officer to coordinate functioning of the district administration and for effective coordination between line departments at field and secretariat levels. Section 144 was imposed in the entire district, with seven drones employed for surveillance.
- Under the care for Kasaragod initiative, a detailed action plan — common coordinated action plan — was drawn up for combating COVID-19 so that all stakeholders could turn to it when the situation arose.

5. The Scale of the Exercise

- A total of 17,373 people were quarantined. On an average, 100-150 samples were tested every day and new testing labs were started.
- The medical college in Kasaragod with 200 beds and an ICU facility was operationalized in four days. There is also a 709-bed COVID-19 care center. ASHAs and health inspectors carried out household surveys.
- All primary and secondary contacts of high-risk cases (those aged 60 or above) were quarantined in isolation centers. This was done as many homes did not have separate toilets.

4. The Action Plan of the Model

- All quarantined people were tracked using GPS. All essentials were home-delivered in the containment/cluster zones, irrespective of whether they were rich or poor.
- A campaign on social distancing called "Break the Chain" was carried out to deliver the message of social distancing. Core teams were formed with incident commanders to rush to various areas and take quick action.

04

Use of Rice to Make Hand Sanitisers

1. Why in News?

- The government of India has approved that surplus rice available with Food Corporation of India (FCI) can be converted into ethanol in order to manufacture alcohol-based hand sanitisers and also for blending with petrol.

2. Introduction

- The decision was taken at a meeting of the National Biofuel Coordination Committee (NBCC) under the Chairmanship of the Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas.
 - Wherein it was approved that the surplus rice available with FCI may be converted to ethanol for utilization in making alcohol-based hand-sanitizers and in blending for Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme.
- National Policy on Biofuels, 2018 envisages that during an agriculture crop year when there is projected over supply of food grains, the policy will allow conversion of these surplus quantities of food grains to ethanol, based on the approval of NBCC.
- The government also allowed sugar companies and distilleries to make hand sanitizers using ethanol. Sugar companies supply ethanol to oil marketing companies for blending with petrol.
- This will lead to utilization of part of a huge stockpile of 30.57 million tonnes (mt) of rice (as of March 10) —almost 128 per cent more than the buffer stock and strategic requirement norms.



3. Concern

- Several international food organizations, however, predict the occurrence of food crises in several countries because of lockdowns. The situation of starvation may worsen in India if excess grains are not used to feed the hungry.
- Many poor people are unable to get the benefit out of it, due to loopholes in the Public Distribution System network.
- The National Food Security Act implemented in 2013 based on the Census of 2011, had not factored in the population increase in over nine years, leaving a large chunk of people out of the government sop.
- Several countries strongly rely on food imports and restrictions imposed by major exporting countries could lead to food crises, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) warned.

5. Way Forward

- India is in a better position as the FCI currently has 77 million tonnes of food crop, four times more than buffer stock of 21 million tonnes.
- India will be able to sustain for four to five months with this stock if the lockdown is extended.
- While world is going through tough time India should ensure that food should be adequate and ought to reach to its people at any cost.

4. About FCI

- FCI was setup under the Food Corporation's Act 1964, in order to fulfill following objectives of the food policy:
 - Effective price support operations for safeguarding the interests of the farmers.
 - Distribution of food grains throughout the country for public distribution system.
 - Maintaining satisfactory level of operational and buffer stocks of food grains to ensure National Food Security.

05

Sujalam Sufalam Jal Sanchay Abhiyan

1. Why in News?

- The Gujarat state government has launched the 3rd edition of the 'SujalamSufalamJalSanchayAbhiyan (SSJSA)' to prepare the water bodies before the monsoon.

2. Background

- The scheme was started in 2018 after a weak monsoon, and till date, the state's water storage capacity has increased by 23,000 lakh cubic feet due to deepening of lakes, check-dams, rivers and reservoirs.
- Under the scheme, the state undertook various tasks of water conservation like deepening of village ponds, desilting of check dams, cleaning of canals etc.
- The second edition was launched in February of 2019. The water storage capacity has increased by 2.3 billion cubic feet till date.
- The drive runs on a Public Private Partnership mode and contribution from the government shall remain 60% of the expenditure of the work while 40% share will be from people's contribution.
- The state government claimed that they had succeeded in accumulating 11,000 lakh cubic meter water through the drive that was held last year. Around 14,000 lakes and reservoirs across the state were deepened.



3. Achievements So Far

- ◆ As per the details provided, 30,416 works related to water conservation were completed in the last two years under the SSJA campaign.
- ◆ This increased water storage capacity in the state by 23,553 lakh cubic feet. These works included deepening of 12,279 ponds and desilting of 5,775 check dams.
 - ◆ Out of them, 9,700 ponds and 4,600 check dams have been completely filled up with fresh water. Also, the campaign generated employment of 100 lakh man days.
- ◆ Gujarat has been standing first in the NITIAYog's Composite Water Management Index for the past three years and SSJSA played a key role in it.
- ◆ Water scarcity for domestic purpose and for the livestock of more than 14,000 villages has been resolved at the local level.

4. Shortfalls

- International Water Management Institute (IWMI), a global non-profit, scientific research organisation, has found glaring discrepancies in the campaign, ranging from politicians influencing the selection of sites for desilting, absence of tenders, misuse of excavated silt and disparity in wages paid to the workers under MGNREGA.
- The study found that the government departments did not issue tenders for desilting work, while local politicians influenced the site for the desilting operation.
- There was also little technical support or guidelines from the government regarding the depth at which desilting was required to take place.
- The study also found wide variations in the wages paid to the workers involved in the desilting work under MGNREGA. The wages paid were as low as Rs 126 per day at some place in Anand district to Rs 194 in ChhotaUdepur and about Rs 250 in Kutch.

06

Feluda Test

1. Why in News?

- Scientists at the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology have come up with a low-cost coronavirus test that will not require any expensive machines for detection of the pathogen.
- It is named after 'Feluda', the detective character in legendary filmmaker Satyajit Ray's stories.

2. Feluda Test

- The test has been developed by Debojyoti Chakraborty and Souvik Maiti as a simpler way of detecting SARS-CoV-2 presence in clinical samples.
- The total time required for the test is less than one hour.
- The test is based on a bacterial immune system protein called Cas9.
- It starts the same way as a normal real time reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR), which is extraction of ribonucleic acid (RNA) and its conversion to deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA).
- It then differs by using a specifically designed PCR reaction to amplify a part of the viral nucleic acid sequence. Then a highly specific CRISPR, Fncas9 binds to that sequence.
- Using the innovative chemistry on a paper strip, the CRISPR complex, bound to that specific sequence, can be visualised as a positive band – like one sees in simple pregnancy tests.
- Any throat/nose swab sample can be taken and then you do an RT-PCR which converts the RNA and makes multiple copies of DNA. Once you have multiple copies of DNA, then you complicit with the Crispr-Cas9 system and you put it into the strip. Once you put it in the strip, the result will come out in one minute.



3. Naming Feluda

- ◆ Researchers at MIT and University of California, Berkeley also use CRSIPR, but different technologies. They have named the tests as 'Detector' and 'Sherlock', so 'Feluda' was an Indian version
- ◆ Feluda is also an acronym for the scientific name of the test — Fncas9 Editor Linked Uniform Detection Assay.

5. About RT-PCR

- Most of the tests being rolled out against COVID-19 are based on reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR), and with good reason.
- In the RT-PCR tests, the RNA is converted to DNA by using specific primers and probes, with fluorescent reporters, to amplify and detect viral nucleic acid presence. It requires expensive Real Time PCR machines.
 - The RT-PCR test starts with a throat or nasal swab, which is designed to capture virus genetic material.
 - SARS-CoV-2 is an RNA virus, so its genetic material is more transient and fragile than DNA.
- ◆ An ideal diagnostic is both specific and sensitive, which means that people who test positive truly have the disease and none of the people carrying the virus slip through the test as a false negative. RT-PCR meets both criteria, with specificity and sensitivity rates of 90 percent and above.

4. Advantages of Feluda

- This research would allow the test to be done in local path-labs that do not have expensive real-time PCR machines, but simple cheap thermo-blocks used for conventional PCR.
- It can be done rapidly and can be used at any basic community health centre.
- It will reduce dependence on imported Chinese test kits.
- This technology is not limited to COVID-19 and can work on any DNA-RNA or single mutations, disease mutations etc.

07

Global Report on Food Crisis - 2020

1. Why in News?

- Global Network Against Food Crises which comprises of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, the World Food Programme and 14 other organisations has published the 2020 edition of the Global Report on Food Crises.
- It provides an analysis of the drivers that are contributing to food crises across the globe, and examines how the COVID-19 pandemic might contribute to their perpetuation or deterioration.

2. Key Highlights

- At the close of 2019, 135 million people in 55 countries and territories faced acute food insecurity, and required urgent action.
- Around 17 million children in these 55 countries and territories suffered from wasting due to acute malnutrition, and as many as 75 million had stunted growth due to chronic malnutrition.
- Over 183 million people were in stressed food insecurity conditions, at high risk of sliding into acute food insecurity if confronted by additional shocks – which is particularly worrisome in light of the anticipated evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Yemen is facing the world's worst food and malnutrition crisis. The number of acutely food-insecure people in Yemen is expected to exceed 17 million.



3. Outlook for 2020

- Some of the poorest nations may face an excruciating trade-off between saving lives or livelihoods or, in a worst-case scenario, saving people from the coronavirus to have them die from hunger.
- Africa had the largest numbers of acutely food-insecure people in need of assistance in countries badly affected by weather events, particularly in the Horn of Africa and Southern Africa, followed by Central America and Pakistan.
- The drivers of food crises, as well as lack of access to dietary energy and diversity, safe water, sanitation and health care will continue to create high levels of child malnutrition, while COVID-19 is likely to overburden health systems.
- The pandemic may well devastate livelihoods and food security, especially in fragile contexts and particularly for the most vulnerable people working in the informal agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. A global recession will majorly disrupt food supply chains.

5. Global Food Panic

- Russia, the world's largest wheat exporter, is limiting grain exports from April to June.
- Egypt, the world's biggest wheat importer, has ramped up grain purchases and stopped exports of legumes.
- Argentina, the world's largest exporter of soybean products, closed the roads in major soybean production areas.
- Seasonal laborers from Eastern Europe are missing on the farms of Spain, Germany, Italy, and France.
- India has limited rice exports due to labor shortages.
- With planes grounded, Canadian imports of onions and eggplants from India have plummeted over the past two weeks.

4. What is Food Insecurity?

- Food insecurity refers to the lack of secure access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food for normal human growth and development and an active and healthy life.
- Acute food insecurity is any manifestation of food insecurity at a specific point in time of a severity that threatens lives, livelihoods or both, regardless of the causes, context or duration
- Chronic food Insecurity is a long-term or persistent inability to meet dietary energy requirements (lasting for a significant period of time during the year), FAO defines this as 'undernourishment' and it is the basis for the SDG indicator 2.1.1.
- Along with COVID-19, conflict/insecurity, climate change-driven shocks such as weather extremes, desert locusts and economic shocks are the key drivers of acute food insecurity.

7

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

01 World Bank Report on Remittance

Q. With reference to the 'Migration and Development Brief 32: COVID-19 Crisis through a Migration Lens', consider the following statements:

1. It has been released by the International Monetary Fund.
2. Global remittances are projected to decline sharply by about 20% in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and shutdown.
3. In India, remittances are projected to fall by about 23% in 2020.

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: (b)

Explanation: **Statement 1 is not correct.** The World Bank has released a report titled "Migration and Development Brief 32: COVID-19 Crisis through a Migration Lens".

Statement 2 and 3 are correct. Global remittances are projected to decline sharply by about 20 percent in 2020 due to the economic crisis induced by the COVID-19 pandemic and shutdown.

In India, remittances are projected to fall by about 23 per cent in 2020, to USD 64 billion - a striking contrast with the growth of 5.5 percent and receipts of USD 83 billion seen in 2019.

02 Amendment to the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897

Q. Consider the following statement with reference to the amendment to the 'Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897':

1. The central government has brought an ordinance to end violence against health workers by amending the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897.
2. The amendment makes acts of violence cognizable and non-bailable offences.
3. Article 124 of the Indian Constitution grants the President

certain law making powers to promulgate Ordinances when either of the two Houses of Parliament is not in session.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a)

Explanation: **Statement 1 and 2 are correct.** The amendment makes acts of violence cognizable and non-bailable offences. Violence as defined in the Ordinance will include harassment and physical injury and damage to property.

Statement 3 is incorrect. Article 123 of the Indian Constitution grants the President certain law making powers to promulgate Ordinances when either of the two Houses of Parliament is not in session and hence it is not possible to enact laws in the Parliament.

03 Kerala's Kasaragod Model

Q. With reference to the 'Kerala's Kasaragod Model', consider the following statements:

1. The model was relied on the aggressive testing, technology, foolproof contact tracing, and an effective public awareness campaign on social distancing.
2. A campaign on social distancing called "Break the Chain" was carried out to deliver the message of social distancing.

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 district administration relied on aggressive testing, technology, fool proof contact tracing, and an effective public awareness campaign on social distancing to achieve the results it can now show.

A campaign on social distancing called "Break the Chain" was carried out to deliver the message of social distancing. Core teams were formed with incident commanders to rush to various areas and take quick action.

04

Use of Rice to Make Hand Sanitisers

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. Rice can be converted into ethanol to manufacture alcohol-based hand sanitisers.
2. National Policy on Biofuels, 2018 has allowed conversion of surplus quantities of food grains to ethanol.

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 government of India has approved that surplus rice available with Food Corporation of India (FCI) can be converted into ethanol in order to manufacture alcohol-based hand sanitisers and also for blending with petrol.

National Policy on Biofuels, 2018 envisages that during an agriculture crop year when there is projected over supply of food grains, the policy will allow conversion of these surplus quantities of food grains to ethanol, based on the approval of NBCC.

05

Sujalam Sufalam Jal Sanchay Abhiyan

Q. With reference to the 'Sujalam Sufalam Jal Sanchay Abhiyan', consider the following statements:

1. It is joint water conservation drive of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.
2. The objective of scheme is to channelised the flood water of Narmada river along the coastal regions of both states.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d)

Explanation: Both statements are incorrect. The Gujarat state government has launched the 3rd edition of the 'Sujalam Sufalam Jal Sanchay Abhiyan (SSJSA)' to prepare the water bodies before the monsoon. The scheme was started in 2018 after a weak monsoon.

Under the scheme, the state undertook various tasks of water conservation like deepening of village ponds, desilting of check dams, cleaning of canals etc.

06

FeludaTest

Q. With reference to the 'Feluda Test', consider the following statements:

1. It has been jointly developed by Council of Scientific and

Industrial Research and World Health Organisation.

2. The test is based on a bacterial immune system protein called Cas9.
3. This technology is not limited to COVID-19 and can work on any DNA-RNA or single mutations, disease mutations etc.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect. Scientists at the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology have come up with a low-cost coronavirus test that will not require any expensive machines for detection of the pathogen.

Statement 2 and 3 are correct. The test is based on a bacterial immune system protein called Cas9. It starts the same way as a normal real time reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR), which is extraction of ribonucleic acid (RNA) and its conversion to deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA).

It then differs by using a specifically designed PCR reaction to amplify a part of the viral nucleic acid sequence. Then a highly specific CRISPR, FncAS9 binds to that sequence. This technology is not limited to COVID-19 and can work on any DNA-RNA or single mutations, disease mutations etc.

07

Global Report on Food Crisis - 2020

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the '2020 edition of Global Report on Food Crises':

1. It has been released by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation.
2. It said around 135 million people in 55 countries and territories faced acute food insecurity, and required urgent action.
3. Yemen and Somalia are facing the world's worst food and malnutrition crisis.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect. Global Network Against Food Crises which comprises of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, the World Food Programme and 14 other organisations has published the 2020 edition of the Global Report on Food Crises.

Statement 2 is correct. At the close of 2019, 135 million people in 55 countries and territories faced acute food insecurity, and required urgent action.

Statement 3 is incorrect. Yemen is facing the world's worst food and malnutrition crisis. The number of acutely food-insecure people in Yemen is expected to exceed 17 million.

7

IMPORTANT NEWS

01 No 100% Quota for Tribal Teachers: Supreme Court

- ◆ A five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court held it unconstitutional to provide 100% reservation for tribal teachers in schools located in Scheduled Areas across the country. The Bench led by Justice Arun Mishra said it was an “obnoxious idea” to have only tribals teach tribals.

Key Highlights

- ◆ The court held that 100% reservation is discriminatory and impermissible. The opportunity of public employment is not the prerogative of few. A 100% reservation to the Scheduled Tribes has deprived Scheduled Castes and

Other Backward Classes also of their due representation. The court referred to the Indira Sawhney judgment, which caps reservation at 50%.

“Citizens have equal rights, and the total exclusion of others by creating an opportunity for one class is not contemplated by the founding fathers of the Constitution of India,” Justice Mishra wrote.

Background

- ◆ The case stemmed from a legal challenge to January 10, 2000 order issued by the erstwhile State of Andhra Pradesh Bench providing 100% reservation to the

Scheduled Tribe candidates, out of whom 33.1/3% shall be women, for the post of teachers in schools located in the Scheduled Areas of the State. The court said the 2000 notification was “unreasonable and arbitrary”.

Impact

- ◆ Some states have cited socio-educational backwardness while others fallen back on economic backwardness to exceed the cap and many petitions challenging such decisions are pending in the SC. This ruling may impact them, as this one indicated the court’s reasoning on the issue. <>>

02 Ambubachi Mela

- ◆ For the first time in recorded history, Maa Kamakhya Devalaya has decided not to organise the annual menstruation, Ambubachi Mela (fair), of the presiding Goddess at Guwahati’s Kamakhya Temple, in view of the possibility of spreading COVID-19 infection. The festival will not be held for the first time in six centuries, but priests of the temple will perform the rituals in-house while

maintaining social distancing. The fair is organised from June 21-25 every year.

About Festival

- ◆ The festival symbolises the fertility cult of goddess Kamakhya.
- ◆ Kamakhya is one of 51 shaktipeeths or holy sites for the followers of the Shakti cult, each representing a body part of the Sati, Lord Shiva’s companion. The temple’s sanctum

sanctorum houses the yoni – female genital – symbolised by a rock.

Importance

- ◆ Temple priests said the ritualistic fair celebrating the Goddess’ period is one of the reasons why taboo associated with menstruation is less in Assam compared to other parts of India. The attainment of womanhood of girls in Assam is celebrated with a ritual called Tuloni Biya, meaning small wedding.

- ◆ Ambubachi Mela is also an occasion to promote menstrual hygiene through the use of sanitary pads.

About Temple

- ◆ Legends say the temple atop the Nilachal Hills, whose northern face

slopes down to the Brahmaputra river, was built by the demon king Narakasura. But records are available only from 1565 when Koch king Naranarayana had the temple rebuilt.

Other Facts

- ◆ A similar custom is followed at the Devi Temple at Chengannur town in Alleppey district of Kerala. The temple is shut for the days the Goddess there is believed to undergo her period. 

03

World Malaria Day 2020

- ◆ World Malaria Day is celebrated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) every year on April 25. The theme of World Malaria Day 2020 was 'Zero malaria starts with me'. World Malaria Day was established on April 25 in 2007 by the 60th session of the World Health Assembly, WHO's decision-making body.

Key Highlights

- ◆ 'Zero malaria starts with me' is a grassroots campaign that aims to keep malaria high on the political agenda, mobilize additional resources, and empower communities to take ownership of malaria prevention and care.
- ◆ Between 2000 and 2014, the number of malaria-related deaths

fell by 40% worldwide, from an estimated 743 000 to 446 000. But in recent years, progress has ground to a standstill. According to WHO's World malaria report 2019, there were no global gains in reducing new infections over the period 2014 to 2018. And nearly as many people died from malaria in 2018 as the year before.

Malaria and COVID-19

- ◆ As the COVID-19 pandemic spreads rapidly around the globe, there is an urgent need to aggressively tackle the novel coronavirus while ensuring that other killer diseases, such as malaria, are not neglected. The WHO Global Malaria Programme is leading a crosspartner effort to mitigate the

negative impact of the coronavirus in malaria-affected countries and, where possible, contribute towards a successful COVID-19 response. The work is being carried out in close collaboration with colleagues based at WHO headquarters, regional offices and country level.

About Malaria

- ◆ Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by Plasmodium parasites. The parasites are spread to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes, called "malaria vectors." There are 5 parasite species that cause malaria in humans, and 2 of these species – *P. falciparum* and *P. vivax* – pose the greatest threat. mosquitoes. 

04

April Commodity Markets Outlook 2020 : World Bank

- ◆ The World Bank has released its April 2020 edition of Commodity Markets Outlook.

Key Highlights

- ◆ The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted both demand for and supply of commodities: direct effects from shutdowns and disruptions to supply chains, indirect effects as economic growth stalls. Effects have already been dramatic, particularly

for commodities related to transportation.

- ◆ Oil prices have plunged and demand is expected to fall by an unprecedented amount in 2020.
- ◆ While most food markets are well supplied, concerns about food security have risen as countries announce trade restrictions and engage in excess buying.
- ◆ Further, COVID-19 is projected to bring most commodity prices down substantially in 2020.

- ◆ The pandemic has the potential to lead to permanent changes in the demand and supply of commodities, and especially to the supply chains that move those commodities from producers to consumers around the world.
- ◆ Energy and metals commodities are the most affected by the sudden stop to economic activity and the serious global slowdown that is anticipated.
- ◆ Agriculture prices are less tied to economic growth, and saw only

minor declines in the first quarter of 2020, except for rubber, which is used in transportation. Prices are expected to remain broadly stable in 2020 overall as production levels and stocks of most staple foods are at record highs. However, agricultural commodity production could face disruptions to the trade and distribution of inputs such

as fertilizer, pesticides, and labor availability.

- ◆ Importers and exporters of commodities are likely to see some long-term shifts in their markets due to the pandemic.
- ◆ These include increasing transport costs due to enhanced border checks, unwinding supply chains (companies might prefer to source

from closer by for instance), substituting for imports with domestic goods as transport costs rise and changing consumer behaviour.

- ◆ The break in emissions caused by the restrictions may also increase public pressure for greener transport and lowered fossil fuel use. <>>

05

e-Gram Swarajya App and Swamitva Scheme

- ◆ Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi interacted with Sarpanchs of Gram Panchayats throughout the country today through Video Conferencing, on the occasion of National Panchayati Raj Day 2020. During this event he launched a unified e-GramSwaraj Portal and mobile application and Swamitva Scheme.

About e-Gram Swarajya App

- ◆ The e-GramSwarajya helps prepare and execute Gram Panchayat Development Plans. The portal will ensure real time monitoring and accountability. The portal is a major step towards digitization down to the Gram Panchayat level.

About Swamitva Scheme

- ◆ The Swamitva scheme which is launched in pilot mode in 6 states helps to map rural inhabited lands using drones and latest survey methods. The scheme will ensure streamlined planning, revenue collection and provide clarity over property rights in rural areas. In simple words, it is meant to create a record of land ownership in rural areas using modern technology.
- ◆ The need for this Yojana was felt since several villagers in the rural areas don't have papers proving ownership of their land. In most states, survey and measurement of the populated areas in the villages has not been done for the purpose of attestation/verification of properties.

- ◆ Swamitva Yojana is aimed to fill the above gap to provide ownership rights to people in the villages. It is expected to go a long way in settling property rights in rural hinterlands and likely to become a tool for empowerment and entitlement, reducing social strife on account of discord over properties.
- ◆ The scheme will be carried out in close coordination with the Central Panchayati Raj ministry, Survey of India, Panchayati Raj departments and Revenue departments of various states.
- ◆ Property card for every property in the village will be prepared by states using accurate measurements delivered by drone-mapping. These cards will be given to property owners and will be recognised by the land revenue records department. <>>

06

Basava Jayanti 2020

- ◆ The Basava Jayanthi 2020 was observed on 26th April digitally. Basava Jayanti marks the birth anniversary of Lord Basavanna, the 12th-century poet-philosopher during the reign of the Kalachuri-dynasty king Bijjala I in Karnataka, and the founding saint of the Lingayat faith.

About Lord Basava

- ◆ A staunch follower of Shiva, Basava is believed to have born on the third day of Vaisakha month of the Anandanama (Samvatsara) in the year 1134 A.D. According to believers, the birth of the prophet Basavanna heralded a new era and

people refer to the year as 'Basava Era' or 'Basaveshwar Era'.

- ◆ Basavanna staunchly believed in a caste-less society where each individual had equal opportunity to rise up in life. To give force to the noble mission, he conceptualised Anubhava Mantapa – an academy of mystics, saints and philosophers

of the Lingayata faith and acted as the fountainhead of thoughts on common human values and ethics.

- ◆ Presided over another great mystic Allama Prabhu, the Anubhava Mantapa also had numerous Sharanas – people from the lower

strata of society – as participants.

- ◆ Basavanna himself joined as a participant in the Anubhava Mantapa with other greats like Akka Mahadevi and Channabasavanna.
- ◆ As a leader, he developed and inspired a new devotional

movement named Virashaivas, or “ardent, heroic worshippers of Shiva”. This movement shared its roots in the ongoing Tamil Bhakti movement, particularly the Shaiva Nayanars traditions, over the 7th- to 11th-century. 

07

Saudi Arabia has Abolished Flogging

- ◆ Saudi Arabia has abolished flogging as a form of punishment, the country's supreme court has announced. It is a major step forward in the reform programme launched by King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz and his son, the kingdom's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS).



will have to choose between fines and/or jail sentences, or non-custodial alternatives like community service.

Key Highlights

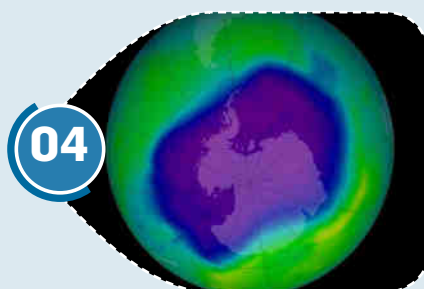
- ◆ The latest reform was intended to "bring the kingdom into line with international human rights norms against corporal punishment".
- ◆ Previously the courts could order the flogging of convicts found guilty of offences ranging from extramarital sex and breach of the peace to murder. In future, judges
- ◆ Criticism of Saudi Arabia's human rights record has grown since King Salman named his son Prince Mohammed crown prince and heir to the throne in June 2017.
- ◆ The abolition of corporal punishment in Saudi Arabia comes just days after the kingdom's

human rights record was again in the spotlight following news of the death from a stroke in custody of leading activist Abullah al-Hamid, 69.

- ◆ The most high-profile instance of flogging in recent years was the case of Saudi blogger Raif Badawi, who was arrested in 2012 and sentenced to seven years in prison and 600 lashes and then resented to 10 years and 1,000 lashes in 2014 for blogging about free speech and "insulting Islam". He was awarded the European Parliament's Sakharov human rights prize the following year. Badawi is currently serving his jail term. 

7

IMPORTANT PRACTICE QUESTIONS (For Mains)



- 01 During the COVID-19 lockdown, online teaching emerged as a viable option for learning. But direct human engagement is a crucial component of education. Analyse the limitations of online learning.
- 02 The government of India has made mandatory to download and use a mobile phone application called 'Aarogya Setu' to fight the COVID-19. How do contact tracing apps work? Which other countries are using them? What are the concerns around data & privacy?
- 03 What are human challenge trials, and why are they controversial? Discuss.
- 04 What do you understand by ozone holes? Also discuss the importance of ozone layer.
- 05 Critically evaluate how suspension of MPLAD scheme will help COVID-19 fight.
- 06 What do you understand by Earth Day? What is the significance of Earth Day 2020?
- 07 Evaluate the performance of Public Distribution System of India during the coronavirus pandemic lockdown.

7

IMPORTANT FACTS (For Prelims)



02



05



07

01

Which river water management authority has officially brought under the Union Ministry of Jal Sakti?

Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA)

02

Which nation has banned Iran-backed Hezbollah activity on its soil and designated it a terrorist organisation?

Germany

03

Which nation has hosted the '11th Session of Petersberg Climate Dialogue' held via video conferencing?

Germany

04

Which state has launched a fee reimbursement scheme 'Jagananna Vidya Deevena', to benefit poor students?

Andhra Pradesh

05

Which robot has been developed by CSIR lab, Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute, for the frontline healthcare workers in maintaining physical distance from those infected by coronavirus?

Hospital Care Assistive Robotic Device (HCARD)

06

Which nation has launched its first military satellite?

Iran

07

Which nation has become the first Arab nation to legalize cannabis for medicinal and industrial purposes?

Lebanon

7

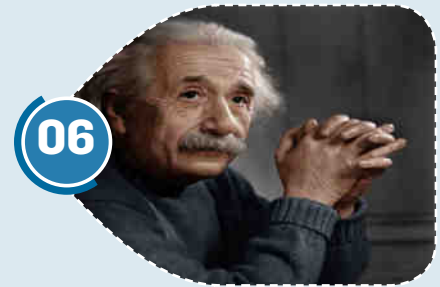
IMPORTANT QUOTES (For Essay and Answer Writing)



01



03



06

01

"Righteousness is the foundation stone of peace and good governance."

Confucius

02

"When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace."

William Gladstone

03

"I understand democracy as something that gives the weak the same chance as the strong."

Mahatma Gandhi

04

"It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it."

Aristotle

05

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

Theodore Roosevelt

06

"Science without Religion is lame and Religion without Science is blind."

Albert Einstein

07

"All thinking men are atheists."

Ernest Hemingway

AN INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

DSDL Prepare yourself from distance

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

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