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DHYEYA IAS : AN INTRODUCTION



Vinay Kumar Singh Founder & CEO

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Q.H. Khan Managing Director

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PERFECT 7 : AN INTRODUCTION



Kurban Ali Chief Editor

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

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



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Ashutosh Singh Managing Editor

to our magazine, but also left no stone unturned to keep it 'near to perfect'. We all know that beginning of a task is most vital and full of challenges. So we met the same fate.

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

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

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

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



PREFACE

hyeya 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



s a proud jewel of Dhyeya IAS, **'Perfect 7'** now comes in a new coloured avatar. **'Perfect 7'** is a quintessential part of your preparation strategy for Civil Services Examination. A

regular and manageable dose of current affairs will now reach you in new format, making it more reader friendly. Our humble attempt to serve you is surely rewarded by your appreciations. It encourages us to innovate and provide the best as per our ability.

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

Rajat Jhingan

Editor Dhyeya IAS

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Joe Biden as the New US President : What does It Mean for India

Why in News?

01

- Democratic candidate Joseph Robinette Biden Jr. aka Joe Biden has been elected as the 46th President of the United States (US) on November 7, beating incumbent President Donald Trump.
- Mr. Biden's running mate, Kamala Devi Harris, a US Senator from California, will also become the first woman and first Indian- and African-American Vice-President of the country.
- For India, it is a matter of concern since the change in administration does affect the closeness with the global superpower. In the light of deepening of Indo-US relations and emergence of Quad in response to China, there is much at the stake for India to analyse the impact of leadership change in US and its effect on India.

Background

 It was under a Republican administration led by George Bush in 2005 that the US had denied visa to the then Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi. A Democratic president, Barack



Obama, went around hugging Prime Minister Narendra Modi. His republican successor, Donald Trump, is prone to lash out at India over a few motorcycles, and yet the strategic ties between the two countries have only been growing. President Trump had shown many idiosyncrasies as he went from "Howdy Modi" to "filthy India".

But these are all singular events and when we talk about international relations and democracy, it is more prone to interest-based approach and pragmatism. Trump administration was based on individual's personality and choices where the office was handled by the kin (family members). But when it comes to Joe Biden, it must be kept in mind that he is a seasoned career politician and a diplomat who has a careerspanning over 50 years in politics. The choice of vice president and the higher proportion of technocrats in the White House during the Biden presidentship defines a lot different approach than Trump.

 Unlike President Trump who hid his strategy behind a brash style, the incoming President will be more predictable in dealing with the world. He is expected to be tough yet not confrontational with China, will mend fences with Europe and be slightly rough with Russia. PERFECT

Biden's Earlier Involvement with India

- For White House, the relationship with India is going to be a major priority. That's because there is a very strong bipartisan support for partnership with India, particularly given the US-China rivalry.
- With Trump, India was already on a road to become one of most important ally of the world's most powerful nation with four years of tried and tested approach to take cue from. With Biden, India can expect some changes to happen, owing to a different party running the US government.
- It is pertinent to note that India and the US ties saw an uptick in confidence-building during the Barack Obama government from 2008 to 2016, during which Biden served as the vice president.
- Obama was the first US President to visit India twice and was also the Chief Guest on India's Republic Day, the first US President do so. Biden was Obama's deputy and was part of the US government that gave a new direction to the Indo-US relations.
- Biden pushed the Republican government under George Bush to end sanctions against India back in 2001.
- Biden has played a significant role in the passage of the "historic" India-US civil nuclear deal as chairman of the US Senate foreign relations committee in 2008. "We can and should be natural allies" wrote Biden in an Op-Ed in India West, using a phrase first used

by late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee during a trip to the US in 1998.

Geopolitics

- The India-US defence and counterterror cooperation will remain intact and is likely to develop further in the face of a common threat of a rising China, flexing its muscles across Asia.
- Successive US governments, whether Republican or Democratic have realised India's centrality in the defence architecture of the Indo-Pacific region, where China is increasingly asserting its economic and military power. As a large democratic Asian nation, India fits the bill to counter an authoritarian China with its one-party rule.
- China's all-weather ally Pakistan also heaving a sigh of relief at the exit of President Trump but New Delhi believes that incoming administration will be tough on terrorism, particularly after the recent Islamist attacks in Europe by migrants.
- The president-elect will continue with past policy of exiting from Afghanistan but that won't be easy as the US intelligence agencies and Pentagon (Trump dismissed their advice) have been reporting the escalation of Taliban violence with the backing of Haqqani network and Quetta based Shura with direct involvement of Pakistan deep state.

Change of Guard and Defence Ties

 Obama-led US administration designated India a Major Defence Partner (MDP) in 2016. The two countries signed the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) which was first discussed between the two in early 2000s. The deal shows a level of confidence both countries have in each other as now they can share their military bases, even if for repair and replenishment of supplies.

- Donald Trump extended it. He started with India the '2+2' minister dialogue mechanism in September 2018 during which India and the US also signed another major defence deal. Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) that allows sale of high end technology to India and interoperability between India the US militaries. '2+2' platform is a defence and external affairs dialogue mechanism between two close allies to discuss strategic and security interests.
- Recently, the third edition of the dialogue was held in New Delhi during which India and the US signed another landmark defence deal, Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial cooperation (BECA). The BECA will help India in long-range missile targeting and navigation. This defence deal was long on the discussion table but the Chinese threat was one of the reasons that pushed India and the US to sign the deal finally. With the foundational defence troika, BECA, LEMOA and COMCASA in place, both countries can now go for large-scale military cooperation with classified intelligence on geo-spatial satellite and sensor data.





 So, in defence, what Obama administration started has only been strengthened by the Trump administration and both countries are expected to follow the path under the new US president, Joe Biden.

Soft on Immigration

- When it comes to IT industry, Trump has been particularly hostile. His anti-immigrant policy targets IT professionals from India. He saw H1B visa for IT professionals as a cheap labour programme and has vowed to end it. In July, he suspended the H1B visa programme. Biden, on contrary, looks like a saviour.
- Biden termed Trump's decisions on H-1B visas "sudden and harmful".
 Biden's campaign website has said that he will rollback the visa restrictions unleashed by the Trump administration.
- What has hurt Indians most are the stricter norms introduced for H-1B visas under the Trump administration.

Economic Partnership

- A Democrat administration in the US is expected to be more reasoned, mature and act towards India as if it were a friend and not club it with China and other countries on issues of trade, climate change, oil and defence exports.
- The US is India's top trading partner with bilateral trade of \$88.75 billion recorded in 2019-20, as per Indian government data. According to USTR data (which is calculated differently), total trade in goods and services for 2019 was over \$146 billion.

 Biden's focus is also on protecting the interests of the US companies but Obama-Biden administration worked amicably to rule out the trade differences between India and America and we may see the trade tension easing.

Pakistan-China Angle

- In 2008, Pakistan awarded Biden the second-highest civilian honour, 'Hilal-e-Pakistan.' Joe Biden and Senator Richard Lugar favoured a proposal to bring \$ 1.5 billion nonmilitary aid to Pakistan. Lugar was also awarded 'Hilal-e-Pakistan.'
- It was Biden who played a key role in forcing General Pervez Musharraf to quit as army chief and in "restoring democracy in Pakistan".
- Asif Ali Zardari, the then President of Pakistan, thanked the two for "consistently supporting Pakistan."
- In 2011, when American forces had killed Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan, Biden had criticised this operation which was carried out by US forces on Pakistani territory.

Ticking Points

- India is no Saudi Arabia for the US that it would look the other way.
 - Biden has expressed displeasure on India's handling of Kashmir and passing the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA) as law. "In Kashmir, the Indian government should take all necessary steps to restore rights for all the people of Kashmir....". Joe Biden has been disappointed by the measures that the government of India has taken with the implementation and aftermath of the National Register of Citizens



(NRC) in Assam and the passage of the CAA into law. "These measures are inconsistent with the country's long tradition of secularism and with sustaining a multi-ethnic and multi-religious democracy," said a post titled Joe Biden's Agenda on Muslim-American Communities on his campaign website.

 India labels it as interfering in India's internal matters.

Way Forward

- Democratic White House will be more value-based democracy and human rights will be central, but that does not mean that strategic ties with India will be affected.
- The pro-Pakistan tilt that some fear is because of remarks made by Biden and other Democratic leaders after India scrapped Kashmir's special status. There was also criticism about both the CAA and the Assam's NRC. Biden will certainly raise these issues with Indian leaders and call for India to maintain its traditional secular and inclusive values.
- As leader of the free world, an American President who champions democracy and human rights is good for the world, including India.

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. What does President-elect Joe Biden mean for India, its relationship with the United States? Discuss.

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Annual State of Education Report 2020 during COVID-19

Why in News?

- According to the Annual State of Education Report (ASER) survey, conducted in the month of September, about 33% (one in three) rural children had done no learning activity at all.
- A nationwide survey has also revealed that about while 80% children had textbooks, 20% per cent of rural children have no textbooks at home.

Introduction

- Beyond the health consequences of COVID-19, the pandemic has caused school closures as well as economic hardships due to migration and loss of livelihoods, among other reasons. ASER 2020 explored whether this unprecedented situation has caused shifts in education paradigms.
- Although the Centre has now permitted States to start reopening schools if they can follow COVID-19 safety protocols, the vast majority of the country's 25 crore students are still at home after seven straight months. The ASER survey provides a glimpse into the levels of learning loss that students in rural India are suffering, with varying levels of access to technology, school and family resources resulting in a digital divide in education.
- ASER is a nationwide survey of rural education and learning outcomes in terms of reading and arithmetic skills that has been conducted by the NGO Pratham for the last 15 years.
- ASER 2020 is the first ever phonebased ASER survey. Conducted in September 2020, the sixth month of national school closures, the survey explores provision of and access to distance education

mechanisms, materials and activities for children in rural India, and the ways in which children and families are engaging with these remote learning alternatives from their homes.

 ASER 2020 was conducted in 26 states and 4 Union Territories. It reached a total of 52,227 households and 59,251 children in the age group of 5-16 years, as well as teachers or head teachers from 8,963 government schools offering primary grades.

Household Resources for Rural Students

- While schools are closed, children rely mainly on the resources available at home to help them learn. These resources can consist of people who can help them to study (for example, educated parents); technology (TV, radio or smartphone); or materials (such as textbooks for the current grade).
- A relatively small proportion of students in school today are first generation school-goers. More than three out of four children have at least one parent who has completed primary school (Std V). More than a quarter have both parents who have studied beyond Std IX.
- Among enrolled children, more than 60% live in families with at least one smartphone. This proportion has increased enormously in the last two years, from 36.5% to 61.8% among enrolled children. The percentage point increase is similar in households of children enrolled in government and private schools. States that show an increase of more than 30 percentage points in the proportion of children whose families own a smartphone include

Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Tripura.

Whether acquired before or after school closures in March 2020, more than 80% (About 20% of rural children have no textbooks at home) children have textbooks for their current grade. This proportion is higher among students enrolled in government schools (84.1%) than in private schools (72.2%). Across states, the proportion of children with textbooks at home falls below 70% in only three states: Rajasthan (60.4%), Telangana (68.1%), and Andhra Pradesh (34.6%).

Access to Learning Materials and Activities

- Governments and others have ٠ used a variety of mechanisms to share diverse learning materials with students during school closures. These include activities using traditional materials like textbooks or worksheets; online or recorded classes; and videos or other materials shared via phone or in person, among others. ASER 2020 asked whether households had accessed or received any such materials from children's schools in the week prior to the survey in September 2020.
- Overall, about one third of enrolled children had received some form of learning materials or activities from their teachers during the week preceding the survey. This proportion was higher in higher grades than in lower ones; and higher among students in private schools than in government schools.



- However, there are significant
 variations by state in children's receipt of learning materials or activities during the reference week. States where less than a quarter of all children had received any materials include Rajasthan (21.5%), Uttar Pradesh (21%), and Bihar (7.7%).
- Regardless of school type, WhatsApp was the most common medium through which activities and materials were received. However, this proportion was much higher among children in private schools (87.2%) than those in government schools (67.3%).
- On the other hand, of children who had received some materials, those in government schools were much more likely to have received materials via personal contact with a teacher (31.8%) than those in private schools (11.5%), either when the teacher visited the household or else when a household member visited the school.

Small Shift towards Government Schools

- As compared to data from ASER 2018, data from ASER 2020 (September 2020) show a small shift in enrollment from private to government schools, across all grades and among both girls and boys.
- The proportion of boys enrolled in government schools rose from 62.8% in 2018 to 66.4% in 2020.
- Similarly, the proportion of girls enrolled in government schools rose from 70% to 73% during the same period.

Among the roughly two-thirds of all households that reported not having received learning materials during the reference week, the majority said that the school had not sent any materials.

Smartphone and Education

- In an academic year when learning has shifted almost entirely online platforms, the survey has found that smartphones – that one device that spells access this school year – have penetrated deeply.
- In 2018, ASER surveyors found that about 36% of rural households with school-going children had smartphones. By 2020, that figure had spiked to 62%. About 11% of families bought a new phone after the lockdown, of which 80% were smartphones.
- This may indicate why WhatsApp was by far the most popular mode of transmitting learning materials to students, with 75% of students who got some input receiving it via the messaging app. About a quarter of those who got input had personal contact with a teacher.
- But in a sobering reminder that smartphone ownership alone doesn't guarantee learning especially in households with more than one child in school and where multiple fault lines such as gender play out.

Pause in Enrolment

- It found that 5.3% of rural children aged 6-10 years had not yet enrolled in school this year, in comparison to just 1.8% in 2018.
- This seems to indicate that due to the disruptions caused by the pandemic, families are waiting for



the physical opening of schools to enrol their youngest children, with about 10% of six-year-olds not in school.

 Among 15-16-year-olds, however, enrolment levels are actually slightly higher than in 2018.

Way Forward

- State of education is finding very hard time in adjusting to the technological and other modes during the time of pandemic. Due to digital inequality and lack of training in the use of technology, it is sure that current dependence on technology is a temporary measure.
- Digital classrooms cannot replace the importance of physical classrooms and interaction between school teachers and the students.
- Distribution of books and other educational material during the pandemic is a challenging task. Not just government but citizens, civil society and other stakeholders need to pitch in the efforts. As during the pandemic, the health services takes priority along with tackling the dwindling economy, thus proactive steps are needed to be taken from all the interested parties.

General Studies Paper- II

Topic:

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

Q. During the time of the pandemic, the education system has been totally derailed. Depending on technology there have been severe handicaps with respect to digital equality. Consider the given statement in the light of recent ASER survey.

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Bhutan : A Time-tested Friend for India

Why in News?

- India-assisted Mangdechhu hydroelectric project (HEP) in Bhutan has been awarded the prestigious Brunel Medal for excellence in civil engineering by the UK-based Institute of Civil Engineers.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi had inaugurated the 720 MW project on August 17, 2019 during his visit to Bhutan.

Introduction

- India-backed hydropower projects in Bhutan are an example of winwin cooperation, providing a reliable source of inexpensive and clean electricity for New Delhi and generating export revenues for Thimphu.
- These projects while generating export revenue for Bhutan are also cementing the economic integration between the two sides.
- They are providing a reliable source of inexpensive and clean electricity to India too.
- India has so far constructed four
 Hydroelectric Projects in Bhutan including the 60 MW Kurichhu HEP; 1020 MW Tala HEP; the 336 MW Chukha HEP; and the 720 MW Mangdechhu HEP.
- Also, three Hydroelectric projects which are under construction include the 1200 MW Punatsangchhu-I, the 1020 MW Punatsangchhu-II and the 600 MW Kholongchhu.

And, out of these, Kholongchhu is the first Joint Venture model project between Bhutan and India. And is also the only hydroelectric project in the easternmost tip of Bhutan and the Concessional Agreement for this project was signed on 29 July 2020. This is expected to open a new chapter of beneficial cooperation between the two countries.

About Mangdechhu Project

- The run-of-river power plant, built on the Mangdechhu River in Trongsa Dzongkhag district of central Bhutan at a cost of Rs 4,500-crore, is seen as a symbol of friendship between the two countries.
- With the coming on stream of Mangdechhu project, Bhutan's electricity generation capacity created with India's assistance crossed 2,000 MW. Both
 countries have listed hydropower development as one of the most important areas of bilateral cooperation.
- Since its commissioning, the project has earned revenues of Rs 1,300 crore, higher than the projected target of Rs 1,200 crore. Most of the 18.7 million units generated every day by the project meet the energy needs of Bhutan, and the surplus is exported to India.
- During the project's construction between 2012 and 2019, authorities took up several social and environment projects for the

local community, including a basic health unit and infrastructure for schools in Trongsa district of Bhutan. The project, completed at an approximate cost of Rs 5,000 crore, was funded by India through a 70% loan and 30% grant.

 The construction of the plant began in 2012 and was completed in seven years

Brunel Medal

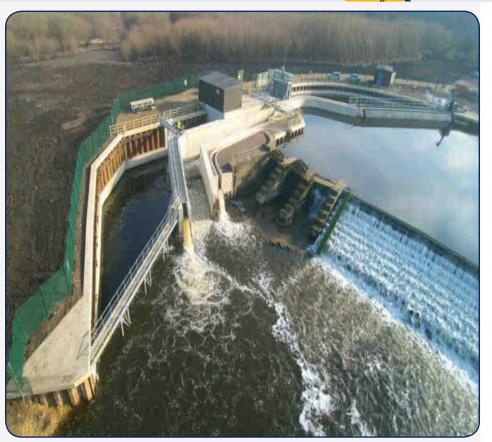
- The award, named after Isambard Kingdom Brunel who is known as 19th century engineering giant, was announced on October 5.
- The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) is an independent professional association for civil engineers and a charitable body in the United Kingdom. Based in London, ICE has over 25,000 members, of whom three-quarters are located in the UK, while the rest are located in more than 150 other countries.
- The ICE aims to support the civil engineering profession by offering professional qualification, promoting education, maintaining professional ethics, and liaising with industry, academia and government. Under its commercial arm, it delivers training, recruitment, publishing and contract services. As a professional body, ICE aims to support and promote professional learning (both to students and existing practitioners), professional managing ethics and safeguarding the status of engineers, and representing the interests of the profession in dealings with government, etc.



- The Brunel Medal is awarded to teams, individuals or organisations operating within the built environment and recognises excellence in civil engineering.
- The Brunel Medal was conferred on the Mangdechhu hydroelectric project authority on October 5. The Institute of Civil Engineers said the project provided employment opportunities to the local community, particularly families affected by the venture, and facilitated local people to take up business activities.
- The project also supported schools and health facilities by upgrading existing infrastructure. Several drinking water facilities and irrigation channels were developed by the project.

Warm Relationship

- Continuing India's attempt to foster a strong relationship with its neighbours under the "Neighbourhood First Policy," Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Bhutan for the second time on August 17-18.
- India and Bhutan have a strong historical, cultural, and economic relationship. With the intent of infusing a strong bound of equality in the bilateral relationship, India under the UPA government decided in 2007 to amend the 1949 Treaty of Peace and Friendship, paving the way for Bhutan to act independently in foreign and defence affairs.
- Coming to power in 2014, the BJP-led coalition under the



leadership of Modi considered fostering ties with neighbouring countries a major foreign policy priority. Thus, prime minister of Bhutan, along with other heads of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) states, was invited for the swearing in ceremony of the Modi government.

- Modi decided to make his first foreign trip as prime minister to Bhutan – a move that surprised many strategic and foreign policy experts in Delhi.
- The economic sector is an important aspect of this shift, with the two side trade having reached 92.28 billion Indian rupees (\$1.2 billion) in 2018. Modi launched the RuPay Card to ease financial transitions between the two countries and he also said that an addition \$100 million would be

available to Bhutan under a stand by swap arrangement to meet the foreign exchange requirement.

ERFECT

Bhutan's Transition to Democracy

- Bhutan was never colonised. Therefore, the formation of its national identity did not take place within the context of freedom struggles or wars of independence. It took place within a specific geographic zone and cultural space with strong Buddhist influences. Bhutanese nationalism, if we can call that, expressed in fighting series of Tibetan invasions from the north for over a century, British in the South and more recently the illegal immigrants and Indian militants in 1990s.
- The transformation of sociopolitical relationship has been driven less by nationalism and





more by the political space and opportunities that democracy provides.

- As Bhutan made its way out of the monarchial system, its relations with India underwent changes, too. In 2007, the Indo-Bhutan Friendship Treaty of 1949 was updated: if the original treaty provided that Bhutan was to be "guided" by India in its foreign policy, the amendment stated that the two countries will not let their respective territories be used for activities inimical to the national security and interests of the other. With the revision, India-Bhutan relations shed their colonial vestiges and the two recognised each other as sovereign states.
- Successive monarchs of the Wangchuck dynasty since 1907 are credited for paving the way for Bhutan's transition to democracy.
- The watershed event happened in 1998: the fourth king dissolved

the council of ministers and removed himself as its chairman, and gave parliament the power to remove the king through a twothirds vote. Moreover, the king allowed the legislature to elect majority of the Cabinet, though he reserved the right to assign portfolios.

- In 2001, the king issued a royal decree for the drafting of a Constitution and appointed a committee for the task.
- The committee submitted the draft to the king in 2005, following which the first draft was prepared through country-wide deliberations between the king and the citizens.
- On instructions of the king, civil servants re-organised themselves into political parties, and in December 2007, elections to the National Council were held. This was followed by general elections in 2008, in which two parties contested for seats to

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the National Assembly. The Druk Pheusum Tshogpa (DPT), led by a decorated former civil servant and ex-foreign minister, Jigme Yoezer Thinley, won the elections. Thinley thus became the first prime minister of Bhutan elected by its people.

 The Constitution was presented and adopted by the first parliament of Bhutan in July 2008.

Way Forward

While, Bhutan has been a timetested friend for India, the sustained high-level engagement and other cooperative measures including the inauguration of the Ground Station built by the India Space Research Organisation (ISRO) that will enable Bhutan to use the South Asian Satellite for communication, disaster management and also telemedicine, tele-education have significantly helped shaped the upward trajectory of the relationship. India should further take concrete efforts to address economic and other grievances on the part of Bhutan. It is only thereafter the relationship can touch a new height in the future. 000

General Studies Paper- II

Topic:

 India and its neighborhoodrelations.

Q. Discuss India-Bhutan relations and the importance of India's "Neighbourhood First" policy.







BECA : Final Pact of India-US Defence Cooperation

Why in News?

After Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) and Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), New Delhi and Washington have signed Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA), sealing a framework of mutual trust and long-term military and strategic The immediate cooperation. context is the common threat from an aggressive and expansionist China, but the potential for cooperation in the future is immense.

Introduction

- India and the United States (US) signed the last of the four foundational defence agreements, BECA, during the recent 2+2 ministerial dialogue.
- Both the sides said that the pact will aid greater informationsharing between New Delhi and Washington. Calling it a "significant achievement".
- BECA will help India get real-time access to American geospatial intelligence that will enhance the accuracy of automated systems and weapons like missiles and armed drones. Through the sharing of information on maps and satellite images, it will help India access topographical and aeronautical data, and advanced products that will aid in navigation and targeting.
- This could be key to Air Force-to-Air Force cooperation between India and the US. Just as our radio cab (or the GPS in our smartphone) helps us zero in on the path to our destination and help us reach it quickly and efficiently, BECA will provide Indian military systems with a high-quality GPS to navigate

missiles with real-time intelligence to precisely target the adversary.

- The signing of BECA flows from the commitment in the joint statement during President Donald Trump's visit in February this year, when the two sides said they looked forward to an "early conclusion" of BECA.
- The strengthening of the mechanisms of cooperation between the two militaries must be seen in the context of an increasingly aggressive China, which threatens a large number of countries in its neighbourhood and beyond, and which has been challenging several established norms and aspects of international relations.
- Amid the ongoing standoff on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh — the longest and most serious in three decades — India and the US intensified under-theradar intelligence and military cooperation at an unprecedented level, especially since June.

Data Sharing Under BECA

- The BECA pertains to exchange of Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT) information for use by the governments for defence and other purposes.
- Under BECA, geospatial maps and charts between US and India can be shared, which may have been acquired from multiple sources like satellites, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), reconnaissance aircraft, aerostats etc.
- Data shared from BECA will help in identifying, updating, and tracking of various types of targets and their positions, both on land and littoral.
- Data received under the agreement can be interpreted for long-range navigation and missile-targeting with enhanced accuracy.

- Most of the information shared will be unclassified. However, the pact includes a provision of sharing classified information with safeguards to prevent it from being shared with any third party.
- ٠ Under BECA, the US shall exchange technical and procedural information related to the standardization of methods. specifications and formats for the collection, processing and production of GEOINT information with India. This shall also include the Tools and Models to process GPS data and Transform Latitude, Longitude and Height coordinates across various Reference frames. Along with the GPS derived heights, an accurate geoid model will help determine the direction of water flows. The GNSS antenna calibration for the Antenna Reference Point (ARP) and North Reference Point (NRP) shall be part of the GEOINT for better Reference data.
- It is important to note that being a bilateral agreement, India is also expected to share similar data with the US, in the area of common interest.
- In this Indo-US Agreement, initially the Geographical range of GEOINT information and data exchanged shall be limited to the Indian sub-continent and contiguous bordering regions. However. there is a likelihood of a clause where this term may be modified (as mutually agreed) when India requests for Defence, humanitarian assistance or disaster management assistance, where the US may expand the geographical range for **GEOINT** information exchange well beyond the Indian borders.

Significance of BECA for India

• The BECA will allow US armed forces

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to provide advanced navigational aids and avionics on US-supplied aircraft to India.

- Sharing geospatial intelligence with the US through BECA will boost the Indian military's accuracy of automated hardware systems and weapons like cruise missiles, ballistic missiles and drones. It means that Indian missiles will be more deadlier and more accurate.
- Also, it is a key step for India when it comes to acquiring armed drones such as MQ-9B from the US.
- Amid India-China border standoff, Washington has recently approved arms sale to Taiwan, which too is witnessing rising tensions with Beijing as China's Communist Party — which claims democratically-run Taiwan as part of its territory — has steadily increased its diplomatic and military pressure on it.
- BECA is to help India and the US counter growing Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The two countries have also been ramping up engagement with Australia and Japan — two other members of the 'Quad'.
- India pulled out of the ASEAN-led trade Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) last November and in May this year, citing concerns over China.

Four Foundational Defence Agreements

 General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)
 2002: Technology cooperation in the military sector by sharing classified information between the US government and American companies, with the Indian Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSU) but not with Indian private • companies.

- Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) – 2016: Logistics support during port calls, joint exercises, training and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief. Also includes Bilateral 'replenishment at sea' of warships.
- Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)

 2018: Allows Indian Armed Forces to have secure encrypted communication through specialised equipment and access to Anti-Spoofing Module GPS system amongst others. These provisions are available for US origin military platforms like the C-17, C-130 and P-8Is. Non-US platforms like India warships, armoured vehicles etc. can also benefit through installation of these equipment onboard.
- Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) – 2020: facilitates exchange of geospatial information. (explained before)

German Presence in the Indian Ocean

- With an eye on China, Germany has decided to patrol the Indian Ocean by deploying a warship in the Indo-Pacific under Berlin's plan to manage China's influence in the region.
- Germany is working within NATO to expand relations with like-minded states such as Australia in the Indo-Pacific.
- China is Germany's biggest trading partner and this is the first time that Berlin has openly spoken about its concerns with China.



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 She is also the first German minister to confirm publicly that restriction on Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei would effectively exclude the company from Germany's 5G network.

Way Forward

- Today, India is the major defence partner and the largest trading partner of the US. Earlier this year, during the visit of President Donald Trump to India, the India-US relationship was elevated to a Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership. A decade ago, no one had imagined the relationship between US and India to be where it is today. Each deal and agreement signed between the two nations has added to confidence building.
- Threat of China, emergence of Quad and global pandemic is changing the equations in world politics at a nano-second pace. New situations call for new and pragmatic measures. Alliance of like-minded countries to protect the ethos of democracy and inclusiveness are must for all nations, be it big or small to co-exist.

General Studies Paper- II

Topic:

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

Q. What is BECA? Explain its significance and how it helps India's defence capabilities along with other **3** such defence foundational agreements signed between India and USA.







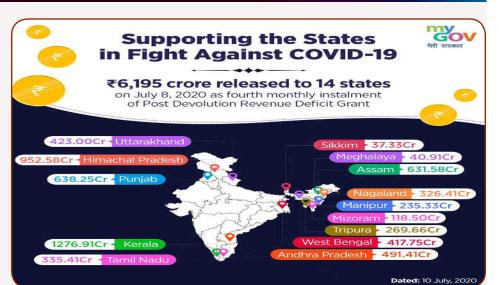
COVID-19 and Financial Health of State Governments

Why in News?

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released its annual publication entitled "State Finances: A Study of Budgets" which analyses the fiscal position of state governments on the basis of primary state level data.
- This year the majority of states had presented their budgets during February-March 2020, but the outbreak of COVID-19 delayed the presentation of budgets by a few states to the post lockdown period. This Report analyses the underlying dynamics of the combined budget estimates (BE) of all states/union territories for 2020-21 against the backdrop of actual and revised (or provisional accounts) outcomes for 2018-19 and 2019-20, respectively.

Introduction

- State budgets were mostly presented during February-March 2020, i.e., ahead of the pandemic which has taken a more grievous toll in some of the states relative to even some of the most affected nations in the world.
- No state or union territory in India has been spared by the pandemic, with the sole exception of Lakshadweep. The spread of infections has, however, been disproportionate and varied; policy responses and outcomes have also been diverse.
- The Indian economy has been hit hard, with the second largest caseload in the world and the COVID-19 curve yet to flatten on a sustained basis. With about



a quarter of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) already lost in Q1: 2020-21 (April-March) and the contraction estimated at close to 10 per cent in Q2, public finances have been subjected to severe strains.

- States have been at the forefront in the fight against the pandemic and the public health crisis it has spawned, besides the biggest migration in the world. The debilitating combination of compression in tax receipts and ramped-up expenditures has generated unprecedented pressures on fiscal positions at sub-national levels.
- These spatial and structural dimensions of the pandemic and the differential nature of responses of sub-national policy authorities are the defining features of the evolution of state finances in India in 2020-21, and the theme of this year's Report: "COVID -19 and its Spatial Dimensions in India".

Varied Impact

- Some states have been impacted quicker and harder than others, depending upon indigenous demographics and epidemiological features as well as availability and accessibility of health care resources.
- Supply chain disruptions have also been different depending on nature of businesses and other activities that various states specialise.
- With health social care, services and other critical aspects of containment being the responsibilities of state governments, testing, monitoring, and enforcing confinement and ensuring the continuity of provision of essential services has turned out to be a function of the digitisation base of states.
- Indian states had to contend with reverse migration from abroad as well as across states, with largescale implications for underlying



activity, conditional upon the extent of dependence of states on migrants for factor income, employment and performance of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). This had implications for state finances as well.

 The pandemic produced varied direct effects on fiscal conditions across states. On the one hand, fiscal pressures were intensified by the operation of 'scissor effects'- expenditures surging and revenues collapsing. On the other hand, fiscal sustainability risks were heightened by offbudget loans and guarantees.

Gross Fiscal Deficits (GFDs) of States

- In 2020-21, about half the states have budget the GFD-to-GSDP (gross state domestic product) ratio at or above the 3% threshold, although most of these budgets were presented prior to the onset of Covid-19, the RBI said.
- The direction of possible revision is evident from the fact that the average for states presenting their budget before the outbreak of the pandemic is 2.4% of GSDP, while it is 4.6% for the remaining states that made their budget presentations after the outbreak.
- States are grappling with the pandemic with constrained fiscal space. In terms of primary balances, most states are incurring primary deficits in 2019-20, as against primary surpluses at the onset of the global financial crisis, the RBI study said.

Bleak Outlook

- With states at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic, their finances have taken a body blow in the first half of 2020-21. State governments' gross fiscal deficit is projected to widen in 2020-21 beyond 4.0 per cent of GDP in the baseline scenario.
- The visitation of the pandemic + stalls a critical phase in the implementation of targeted structural reforms by the states - overhaul of the Agriculture Produce and Marketing Committee (APMC); restructuring state marketing boards; of land leasing for agriculture; ease of doing business (EoDB); improving logistics for exports, and simplification of labour regulations and labour reforms through amendments to Factories Act and Industrial Disputes Act, to call a few. States are also engaged in re-building the social and economic infrastructure, including public health, urban and digital infrastructure.
- The pandemic may also leave lasting scars on federalism in India. It will have a bearing on inter-generational transfers, with lower discretionary spending or higher taxation in future. States' indebtedness is set to rise, and if it is not accompanied by acceleration in growth, fiscal sustainability will become the casualty, overwhelming the modest gains of the prudence in recent years.

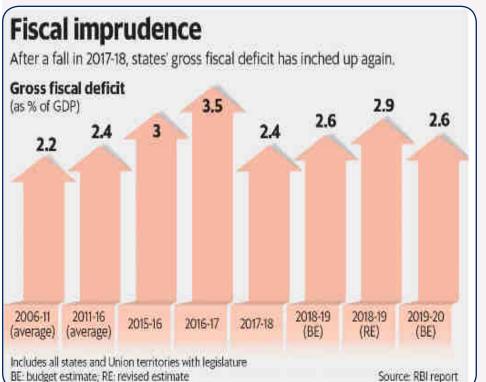
Future Roadmap

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- Reprioritising expenditures towards more productive high multiplier capital projects has to be made centre-stage and insulated from being sacrificed repeatedly at the altar of the expediency of short-sighted fiscal arithmetic.
- Investing in health care systems and social safety nets in line with the states' demographic and comorbid profiles and strengthening urban infrastructure have to be an integral part of the fiscal strategy.
- Protecting human capital is as important as investing in physical capital formation, with equally strong Keynesian multipliers. In this context, expanding states' spending on health towards achieving the universal health coverage goal of 2.5 per cent of GDP at the aggregate level must be brought forward in the agenda of fiscal priorities of states.
- Improving revenue mobilisation has to be frontloaded to make up for the tax base and accruals lost in the pandemic. Improving tax compliance, and greater digitalisation of the tax administration to expand the tax base.
- Digitalisation can give dual benefits:
 - It will help states lower cash dependence and physical access to banking infrastructure in times of social distancing and build resilience against future epidemics.





- Digitalisation can foster improvements in direct benefit transfer systems, including through e-governance initiatives. Digital platforms can also be utilised to reduce tax evasion and to expand the tax base.
- Maintaining fiscal transparency on assessing and quantifying the fiscal risks, particularly from 'below the line' items. Fiscal transparency also encompasses provision of ready access to reliable, comprehensive, timely, understandable, and internationally comparable information on government

activities, so that the electorate and financial markets could accurately and easily assess the government's financial position as well as the true costs and benefits of its activities. Linking higher borrowing with financing capital expenditure, and central transfers to transparent fiscal would bring in incentive-compatibility

- Way Forward
- Sustaining the recovery from the pandemic will reshape state finances, entailing boosting investment in health care systems and other social safety nets in line with the states' demographic and co-morbidity profiles; building



digital infrastructure to improve provision of public services more efficiently in a post-pandemic new normal and upgrading the urban infrastructure with increased engagement of local governments so as to improve the resilience of our COVID-scarred cities, which were severely hit during the pandemic.

 The quality of spending and the credibility of state budgets will assume critical importance. The next few years are going to be challenging for the states. They have played an important role in the frontline of the defence against the pandemic. Going forward, they need to remain empowered to provide growth impulses to the Indian economy and build resilience against future pandemics as well.

General Studies Paper- III

Topic:

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

Q. With the aftermath of pandemic, the states are looking towards massive deficits in their budgets. Discuss the term, 'scissor effect' and how state's can navigate out of this crisis.







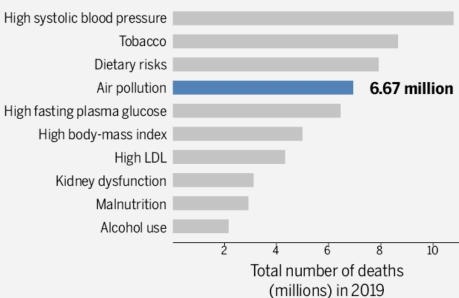
State of Global Air 2020 : An Introduction

Why in News?

The first-ever comprehensive analysis of air pollution's global impact on newborns found that outdoor and household particulate matter pollution contributed to the deaths of more than 1,16,000 Indian infants in their first month of life in 2019. However, the study found progress in reducing household air pollution exposures but levels stagnant for outdoor particulate matter 2.5 (PM2.5).

Introduction

- Exposure to air pollution has serious health consequences. Understanding these consequences — the risks faced by particular groups, the impacts of different pollutants, and the changes over time — is key to informing air quality interventions and saving lives.
- Understanding the burden of disease that air pollution places on society begins with the scientific evidence for its effects on health. An extensive body of scientific evidence has been amassed over several decades, including studies from many countries of the world.
- Short-term exposures to air pollution can harm health; for example, high-pollution days can trigger asthma symptoms and cause a local spike in hospitalizations or even deaths



Total number of deaths from all causes in 2019

Source: The State of Global Air report 2020

related to respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

- There is broad scientific consensus that long-term exposures to air pollution contribute to increased risk of illness and death from ischemic heart disease, lung obstructive cancer, chronic pulmonary disease (COPD), lower-respiratory infections (e.g., pneumonia), stroke, type 2 diabetes, and, more recently, adverse birth outcomes, and that the public health burden from these exposures is much larger than that from short-term exposures.
- In 2019, air pollution is estimated to have contributed to 6.67 million deaths worldwide, nearly 12% of the global total. Air pollution is the leading environmental risk factor for early death, with its

total impact exceeded only by high blood pressure, tobacco use, and dietary risks. Every year, far more people worldwide die as a result of air pollution exposure than die from traffic collisions, a number estimated at 1.28 million in 2019.

 US-based Health Effects Institute and Global Burden of Disease released the 'State of Global Air 2020' report analysing the impact of high air pollution on infant health. The report said that India had the highest burden of infant deaths due to air pollution followed by Nigeria (67,900), Pakistan (56,500), Ethiopia (22,900), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (1,200).

Infant Health and Air Pollution

 It is based on a growing body of research and evidence that





suggests mothers' exposure to polluted air during pregnancy is linked to increased risks to infants weighing under 2,500 grams at birth or those born before 37 weeks of gestation, as opposed to 38 to 40 weeks.

- Low weight and premature birth are linked to a higher risk of lower respiratory tract infections, diarrhoea, other serious infections as well as brain damage and blood disorders, jaundice that can be potentially fatal.
- Although the biological reasons for this linkage are not fully known, it is thought that air pollution may affect a pregnant woman, her developing foetus, or both through pathways similar to those of tobacco smoking, which is a well-known risk factor for low birth weight and preterm birth.
- Evidence from over 70 studies, including that of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in India, show that exposures to household and ambient air pollution are associated with adverse pregnancy outcomes.
- Of all neonatal deaths attributable to air pollution globally, household air pollution accounted for about 64% of them. The rest were due to outdoor air pollution. The highest percentage of deaths attributable to household air pollution (80%) was estimated to be in the sub-Saharan region. The lowest was in high-income regions (less than 2%).

India and Air Pollution

 India recorded the highest annual average PM 2.5 concentration exposure in the world last year, according to the State of Global Air 2020 (SOGA 2020) report.

- India was followed by Nepal, Niger, Qatar and Nigeria in high PM 2.5 exposures. This means people in India are exposed to the highest PM 2.5 concentrations globally.
- The report also said that India has been recording an increase in PM 2.5 pollution since 2010 contrary to Centre's claims that annual air pollution levels in the country are coming down. Out of the 20 most populous countries, 14 have recorded a gradual improvement in air quality but India, Bangladesh, Niger, Pakistan and Japan are among those that have recorded a modest increase in air pollution levels.
- India is also among the top ten countries with highest ozone (O3) exposure in 2019. Qatar recorded the highest O3 exposure followed by Nepal and India. Among the 20 most populous countries, India recorded the highest increase (17%) in O3 concentrations in the past ten years.
- The only silver lining for India though is that it has managed to reduce the number of people exposed to household air pollution. China reduced the percentage of its population exposed to household air pollution from 54% to 36%, while India reduced its percentage from 73% to 61% over the decade.
- Since 2010, over 50 million fewer people have been exposed to household air pollution. The

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana Household LPG programme and other schemes have helped to dramatically expand access to clean energy, especially for rural households, Health Effects Institute said in a statement.

Air Quality and COVID-19 Related Deaths

- SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19, is a respiratory virus that can affect the lungs, blood vessels, and many other parts of the body.
- Exposure to air pollution has been shown to affect the body's immune defense, making an individual more susceptible to respiratory and other infections. In addition, many of the health conditions that have been associated with increased vulnerability to COVID-19 such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and chronic obstructive lung diseases — are also caused by long-term exposure to air pollution.
- It is learned from the SARS-CoV-1 outbreak in 2002–2004 offers some insight into the interaction between air pollution and the effects of COVID-19.
- Several studies reported an association between higher air pollution concentrations and higher than expected death rates from SARS-CoV-1. A handful of early studies of COVID-19 appear to suggest that areas with higher air pollution concentrations — PM2.5 or NO2 in particular—





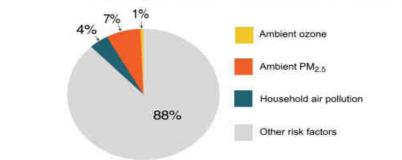
might similarly experience either higher infection rates or higher case fatality rates. Investigators around the world are hard at work trying to understand fully the linkages between COVID-19 and air pollution, and how exposure to air pollution might affect rates of COVID-19 infection, the severity of disease, or the likelihood of dying.

Threat of Worsening Crisis

- As winter sets in, the air hanging over north India thickens with smoke from burning fields, blocking out the Sun and making it hard to breathe. This year, that could spell disaster for the country's battle against the pandemic.
- With some of the most polluted cities on the planet and more than 8 million confirmed coronavirus cases, India is battling a medical calamity. Temperatures are falling and cases and pollution are spiking across major cities, including the capital New Delhi, one of the worst-affected areas for smog from the rural burning.
- With pollution and the virus both attacking lungs, India's creaking health-care system may come under a double strain of patients competing for the same equipment and resources. An

In 2019, air pollution contributed to 6.67 million deaths worldwide.

Percentage of global deaths attributable to individual pollutants.



increase in respiratory illnesses due to air pollution will send more people to hospitals with symptoms similar to COVID-19, making identifying and isolating the virus cases difficult.

 The World Health Organization estimates that dirty air kills 7 million people a year globally, with even short-term exposure causing or aggravating diseases including reduced lung function, asthma and most importantly now, respiratory infections.

Way Forward

 Mitigating air pollution is not just the responsibility of the governments but also need active participation by the public.
 A healthy and wholesome life is a right of all the citizens but also at the same time it is the duty of citizens to adopt environment friendly and sustainable technologies. From CNG driven to electric cars, preference to public transport, shifting to cooking gas, more thrust for solar and wind power etc are the positive ways in which the new progress could be made.

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General Studies Paper- II

Topic:

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

Topic:

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

Q. Discuss the issue of rising pollution in India and its impact of human health. Also discuss the issue of pollution related infant deaths in India and on a global scale.







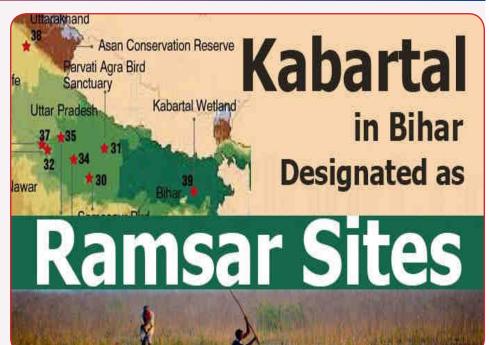
Kabartal and Asan : New Ramser Sites of India

Why in News?

 Kabartal, a freshwater marsh of North Bihar and Asan Barrage in Doon Valley of Uttarakhand were designated as Ramsar Sites. With these two sites, the network of Indian Ramsar Sites becomes the largest in South Asia.

Introduction

- India has named two new Wetlands of International Importance, bringing its total number of "Ramsar Sites" to 39 in the Ramsar Convention. The Sites are particularly important to the avian diversity of their States, with each hosting hundreds of bird species of which several are critically endangered. The Asan Conservation Reserve in Dehradun is the first wetland from Uttarakhand, to be recognised by Ramsar.
- In January this year, 10 wetlands in India were recognised by the Ramsar Convention as sites of international importance. These are Nandur Madhameshwar in Maharashtra, Keshopur-Miani, Beas Conservation Reserve and Nangal in Punjab, and Nawabganj, Parvati Agra, Saman, Samaspur, Sandi and Sarsai Nawar in Uttar Pradesh.
- The other Ramsar sites are in Rajasthan, Kerala, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir, Andhra



Pradesh, Manipur, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and Uttar Pradesh.

- Wetlands are a unique ecosystem flooded with water

 permanently or seasonally –
 and serve as seasonal habitats for migratory birds. Apart from biological support, they also perform water purification functions, store nutrients and stabilise shorelines.
- prominently, wetlands Most enable groundwater recharge and typically have the most diverse biological ecosystems, supporting a wide variety of plants, animals, fish, and various species of birds, waterfowls. especially local They also provide livelihood options for those engaged in fisheries. Wetlands also face the most prominent environmental degradation. The largest wetland in the world is the Amazon river basin.

About New Additions

- Asan Conservation
 - Asan Conservation Reserve has become Uttarakhand's first Ramsar site, making it a 'Wetland of International Importance', announced the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
 - Asan Conservation reserve is a 444-hectare stretch of the Asan River running down to its confluence with the Yamuna River in Dehradun district (Garhwal region) of Uttarakhand.
 - The site is a biodiversity hub that supports 330 species of birds including the critically endangered redheaded vulture (Sarcogyps calvus), white-rumped vulture (Gyps bengalensis) and Baer's pochard (Aythya baeri).



- It also supports large congregations of migratory birds like red-crested pochard and ruddy shelduck and is a known feeding, spawning and migrating site for over 40 fish species.
- Kabartal
 - Kabartal, also known as Kanwar jheel covers 2,620 hectares of the Indo-Gangetic plains, in Begusarai district of the state of Bihar.
 - The site acts as a vital flood buffer for the region besides providing livelihood opportunities to the local communities.
 - As a habitat to biodiversity, the wetland supports about 165 plant, 394 animals and around 50 fish species.
 - Kabartal is also an important stopover along the Central Asian Flyway, with 58 migratory waterbirds using it as a wintering site.
 - Besides, critically endangered vultures including red-headed
 vulture and white-rumped vulture also use the site as a habitat.

Ramsar Convention

- The Convention, signed in 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar, is one of the oldest inter-governmental accord for preserving the ecological character of wetlands.
- Also known as the Convention on Wetlands, it aims to develop a global network of wetlands for conservation of biological

diversity and for sustaining human life.

The Ramsar Sites Criteria

- The nine criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance are:
- Criterion 1: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or nearnatural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region.
- Criterion 2: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species threatened or ecological communities.
- Criterion 3: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports populations of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity of a particular biogeographic region.
- Criterion 4: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provides refuge during adverse conditions.
- Criterion 5: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds.
- Criterion 6: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals

in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird.

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- Criterion 7: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports a significant proportion of indigenous fish subspecies, species or families, life-history stages, species interactions and/or populations that are representative of wetland benefits and/or values and thereby contributes to global biological diversity.
- Criterion 8: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it is an important source of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/ or migration path on which fish stocks, either within the wetland or elsewhere, depend.
- Criterion 9: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of wetland-dependent non-avian animal species.
- Conservation Asan Reserve cleared five out of the nine criteria needed to be declared as a Ramsar site and get identified as a Wetland of International Importance. The criteria cleared by Asan Conservation Reserve to get Ramsar site tag include that it supports vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species, it supports populations of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity, it supports plant and/ or animal species at a critical





stage in their life cycles and it is an important source of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/or migration path on which fish stocks, either within the wetland or elsewhere, depend.

Domestic Laws are Needed

- India has numerous wetlands and rules for their protection; yet not one of the wetlands has been notified under domestic laws.
- Wetlands are regulated under the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017.
- The 2010 version of the Rules provided for a Central Wetland Regulatory Authority; the 2017 Rules replace it with state-level bodies and created a National Wetland Committee, which functions in an advisory role. The newer regulations removed some items from the definition of "wetlands" including backwaters, lagoon, creeks, and estuaries.
- The 2010 Rules required States to identify and prepare Brief Documents, submit them to the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, which was to notify them. Under the 2017 regulations, the whole process has been delegated to States.
- "We have a total of 7,57,060 wetlands, covering 1.6 crore hectares or 4.5% of India's area.

New Ramsar Sites in India

Punjab .

Nangal Wildlife Sanctuary, Keshopur Wetland (Gurdaspur Bird Sanctuary), Beas Wetland Site

Uttar Pradesh

Sarsai Nawar Jheel, Nawabganj Bird Sanctuary, Samaspur Bird Sanctuary, Sandi Bird Sanctuary, Parvati Arga Bird Sanctuary, Saman Bird Sanctuary

Maharashtra Nandur Madhyameshwar Bird Sanctuary

extended protection to 2,01,503 of these under Rule 4 of the 2010 Rules, and ordered authorities to notify sites. The wetlands were supposed to have been notified by March 25, 2019, 180 days after the 2017 Rules went into force (September 26, 2017). Yet so far, not a single wetland has been notified," said a petitioner who petitioned the Supreme Court for the protection of wetlands in India. The 2,01,503 wetlands, measuring over 2.25 hectares, were identified using ISRO's satellite imagery.

In October 2017, the Supreme Court expressed concern over the disappearance of wetlands, and observed, "If there are no wetlands left, it will affect agriculture and several other things. It is a very, very important issue."

In February 2017, the Court Way Forward

India's environmental actions have mostly been pro-active and driven by cultural leanings for environmental conservation. Ramsar Convention is a measure under which conservation and protection of wetlands is surely commendable and addition of more sites from India highlights work done by the government. But contrasting to international activism, lack of action on domestic front is worrying and needs immediate attention. Climate change and environmentalism must be practiced and implemented rather than preaching and posturing. 000

General Studies Paper- III

Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Q. What is Ramsar convention? Discuss any two sites of India being enlisted in the convention and its benefits.

19 NOVEMBER-2020 ⊕ ISSUE 02

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IMPORTANT BRAIN BOOSTERS

Jammu and Kashmir Land Laws

1. Why in News?

The central government has notified two orders — the Union Territory (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Reorganisation (Adaptation of Central Laws) Third Order and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Adaptation of State Laws) Fifth Order, 2020 — that repealed 12 Acts and amended 14 laws related to land in the erstwhile state.



4. Gupkar Declaration II

- In this declaration six political have vowed to fight collectively against the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special constitutional status.
- The six political parties include-- The National Conference (NC), the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the Indian National Congress, the J&K Peoples Conference (PC), the Communist Party of India (Marxist)(CPI (M)) and the Awami National Conference (ANC).
- The parties, in a joint statement, described the Centre's decision to alter the region's status under Article 370 as "grossly unconstitutional" and a "measure to disempower" the people of the erstwhile state.
- The first Gupkar Declaration was a resolution issued after an all-party meeting on 4 August, 2019 at the Gupkar Road residence of the NC president.
- Gupkar Declaration has been hailed by Pakistani politicians and has been widely publicised.
- Many political parties has expressed that they fear demographic change with no protection to ethnic population.

2. Key Provisions

- Under the new arrangements, no domicile or permanent resident certificate is required to purchase non-agricultural land in the UT.
- The Union home ministry has also notified the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016, paving way for the acquisition of land in J&K by all Indian citizens.
- Previously, article 35-A of J&K Constitution, watered down on August 5, 2019, placed prohibitions on the sale of land to those who were not state subjects.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has revoked 12 state laws as a whole while another 26 have been adapted with changes or substitutes. Laws which are repealed as a whole include the Jammu and Kashmir Alienation of Land Act, Jammu and Kashmir Big Landed Estates Abolition Act, Jammu and Kashmir Common Lands (Regulation) Act, 1956, Jammu and Kashmir Consolidation of Holdings Act 1962, Jammu and Kashmir Right of Prior Purchase Act, and the Jammu and Kashmir Utilization of Lands Act.

3. Other Changes

- The order also extends the operation of The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act (RERA), 2016 a central law to the UT.
- RERA seeks to protect home-buyers and also boost investment in the real estate industry. It allows an authority to regulate the real estate sector and also acts as an adjudicating body for speedy property dispute resolution.
- The order introduces a new section in the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services Decentralisation and Recruitment Act that recognises the spouse of a civil servant, posted in the UT, also as a domicile. The norm was earlier applicable only to the children of central government officials posted in the region for a period of not less than 10 years.
- Another significant amendment is the addition of a new clause in the Jammu and Kashmir Development Act. This new section allows the government, on the written request of an Army officer not below the rank of corps commander, to declare an area as a strategic area, for operational and training requirements.
- This will permit the defence forces to induct personnel in the strategic area, based on requirement and in case of an emergency.
- The government has also set up a new body called the J&K Industrial Development Corporation, under the Jammu and Kashmir Industrial Development Act, to speed up industrial development, invite investment, set up industrial units and promote corporate farming.





Sudan and Israel to Normalize Relations

1. Why in News?

Sudan has become the third Arab country (Two are Bahrain and United Arab Emirates (UAE)) in the past two months to normalize ties with Israel, continuing the trend of Arab states' willingness to advance ties with the Jewish state, even without a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

2. Steps Towards Normalization

- Sudan become the fifth Arab country to normalize relations with Israel. It is known that Egypt, Jordan, UAE, and Bahrain have previously reached a peace agreement with Israel.
- The expansion of the Abraham Accords to include Sudan relations with Israel is a significant step that will further enhance Israel's security and create opportunities for the Arab nation and Israel to deepen their economic ties and improve the lives of their people.
- Less than three months President Donald J. Trump has brokered a peace agreement between Arab-Muslim nation and Israel. Sudan have confirmed will normalize relations with Israel, ending decades of fierce hostility, through mediation by the United States (US).
- The normalization plan was announced after talks between the Prime Minister (PM) of Sudan, Abdalla Hamdok, with US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu on October 23, 2020.

3. Rocky Relations

- Since 1948, when the Arab nation start the war that birthed Israel, Israel's relationship with Sudan has been difficult. Sudan had been a foe of Israel since the latter's founding in 1948.
- Famously, it was the site of a declaration against normalisation with Israel in 1967, when the Arab League, meeting in the capital, Khartoum, swore "no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it".
- Moreover, when Omar al-Bashir's regime was hosting Osama bin Laden in Khartoum, The US put Sudan as one of the lists of state sponsors in 1993.
- In 2009, Sudan's ties with Iran were seen by Israel as a means for Hamas, in the Gaza Strip, to receive arms from Iranian militias.
- In 2012, Israel was blamed by Sudan for bombing a weapons factory in Yarmouk.

4. Changing Times

- The political dynamics changed with the overthrow last year of Sudan's long-time ruler Omar al-Bashir and his replacement by a transitional civilian-military council.
- Sudan's generals, who wield the real power, have supported establishing relations with Israel as a way to help get US sanctions on Sudan lifted and open the door to badly needed economic aid.
- Like the UAE and Bahrain, Sudan has not been in a war with Israel and has over the years enjoyed a degree of secret ties with Israel.
- In 1984, the Sudanese authorities assisted in an airlift of Ethiopian Jews to Israel. Sudan's leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan in February, 2020, met openly with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Uganda.
- > There are also thousands of refugees from Sudan's military conflicts living in Israel.
- U.S. president has announced that he would take Sudan off the terrorism list once it had deposited \$335 million it had pledged to pay in compensation. Khartoum has since placed the funds in a special escrow account for victims of al-Qaeda attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998.
- Announcing the normalisation, Mr Trump said "at least five more" Arab states wanted a peace deal with Israel.



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03

New Abortion Laws in Poland

1. Why in News?

Thousands of women are protesting against Poland's new abortion laws in cities across the country.

2. New Abortion Laws

- A court ruling has banned almost all abortions with exceptions only for cases of rape, incest, or where the mother's health is at risk.
- Abortions carried out when the foetus is malformed, which accounted for 98% of legal terminations last year, have now been outlawed.
- Poland already had some of the European Union's (EU) strictest abortion laws.

3. Justification

- In the ruling, the tribunal's president Julia Przylebska said that permitting abortions in the case of foetal deformities legalised "eugenic practices with regard to an unborn child, thus denying it the respect and protection of human dignity"
- Since the Polish constitution assures a right to life, Przylebska argued that an abortion based on a foetal malfunction was "a directly forbidden form of discrimination."



4. Protests against the Law

- Thousands of women have stormed the streets of Poland, protesting a recent court ruling that drastically restricts their right to access safe and legal abortions.
- Rights groups had urged the government not to increase restrictions.
- The Council of Europe's commissioner for human rights said the day marked a "sad day for women's rights".
- Fewer than 2,000 legal abortions are carried out in Poland each year, a majority of which are due to foetal defects. Abortions in cases of rape, incest or where there is a threat to the mother's life account for merely 2 per cent of all legal terminations. So the court's ruling essentially translates to a near complete ban on abortions in the country.
- Despite Poland being one of the most staunchly Catholic countries in Europe, a number of opinion polls have shown that a majority of its citizenry has been against a more restrictive abortion law over the years.

5. Liberal India

- In late January 2020, the Union Cabinet amended the 1971 Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act allowing women to seek abortions as part of reproductive rights and gender justice.
- > The amendment has raised the upper limit of MTP from 20 to 24 weeks for women including rape survivors, victims of incest, differently abled women and minors.
- Failure of contraception is also acknowledged and MTP is now available to "any woman or her partner" replacing the old provision for "only married woman or her husband."
- > The new law is forward looking, empathetic and looks at a very sensitive issue with a human face.
- The Indian amendment says there is no limit for gestational age in case of fetal abnormalities. This addresses maternal mortality and morbidity arising from unsafe abortions.
- > Women will also be spared the stress and agony of seeking permissions from courts as time runs out on them. The amendment clarifies the role of practitioners who hesitate to intervene in cases of rape and incest survivors.





) World Polio Day 2020

1. Why in News?

October 24 is observed as World Polio Day every year in order to call on countries to stay vigilant in their fight against the disease.



5. Resurgence of Polio

- In 2019, polio outbreaks were recorded in the Philippines, Malaysia, Ghana, Myanmar, China, Cameroon, Indonesia and Iran, which were mostly vaccine-derived (a rare strain of the virus genetically mutated from the strain in the vaccine.
- According to the WHO, if the oral vaccine-virus is excreted and allowed to circulate in a un- or underimmunised population for at least 12 months, it can mutate to cause infections.
- As per the CDC, Afghanistan and Pakistan are the two countries that are the last stronghold of the wild poliovirus.
- In Pakistan, the number of reported wild poliovirus cases has increased in 2020.
- On August 25, the African Region was certified as wild poliovirus free.

2. About Polio Day

- The World Polio Day was established by Rotary International over a decade ago to commemorate the birth of Jonas Salk, who led the first team to develop a vaccine against poliomyelitis.
- In the last three decades, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), led by national governments and the WHO, has been monitoring the disease situation globally.
- As per the CDC, Afghanistan and Pakistan are the last strongholds of the wild poliovirus. In Pakistan, the number of reported wild poliovirus cases has increased in 2020.
- Polio is a crippling and potentially fatal infectious disease. There is no cure, but there are safe and effective vaccines. Polio can be prevented through immunization.
- As per the World Health Organisation (WHO), since 1980, the cases of wild poliovirus have decreased by over 99.9 per cent as a result of vaccination efforts made around the world.

3. About Polio Disease

- Poliomyelitis, commonly shortened to polio, is an infectious disease caused by the poliovirus.
- The virus spreads from person to person and can infect a person's spinal cord, causing paralysis (can't move parts of the body).
- A smaller proportion of people with poliovirus infection will develop other, more serious symptoms that affect the brain and spinal cord:
 - Paresthesia (feeling of pins and needles in the legs)
 - Meningitis (infection of the covering of the spinal cord and/or brain) occurs in about 1 out of 25 people with poliovirus infection
- Paralysis (cannot move parts of the body) or weakness in the arms, legs, or both, occurs in about 1 out of 200 people with poliovirus infection
- Poliovirus is very contagious and spreads through person-to-person contact.
- It lives in an infected person's throat and intestines.
- The virus can live in an infected person's faeces for many weeks. It can contaminate food and water in unsanitary conditions.

4. India is Polio Free

- India was declared polio-free in January 2014, after three years of zero cases, an achievement widely believed to have been spurred by the successful pulse polio campaign in which all children were administered polio drops.
- The last case due to wild poliovirus in the country was detected on January 13, 2011.
- There are three variants of the poliovirus, numbered 1 to 3. For a country to be declared polio-free, the wild transmission of all three kinds has to be stopped. For eradication, cases of both wild and vaccine-derived polio infection have to be reduced to zero.

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Action of Parliamentary Committee Report on Data Protection

1. Why in News?

The e-commerce giant Amazon, first declined to depose before the Joint Committee of Parliament that is examining the draft Data Protection Bill, then after the report that Amazon's "refusal" amounts to a breach of parliamentary privilege, and the panel was unanimous about taking "coercive action" if no one from the company appears, then Amazon's top executives deposed before the committee and were questioned about the company's revenue model and how much tax it pays in the country.



6. Questioning Other Service Providers

- JPC has questioned representatives of Paytm and Google over the Data Protection Bill, 2019 and issues related to privacy in India.
- According to reports, both companies were asked about the revenue they earn in India and the extent of Chinese investment in the companies.
- The panel questioned Paytm representatives about the quantum of Chinese investment in the company and told them that the servers on which customer data is stored should be in India.
- Questions were also raised about the possible conflict of interest considering that Paytm also sells its own products on its e-commerce platform.

2. Parliamentary Committee

- The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 as introduced in Lok Sabha has been referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee of both the Houses, under the Chairperson of Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi.
- The bill seeks to provide for protection of personal data of individuals and establishment of a data protection authority for the same.
- Amazon, Twitter, Facebook, Google and Paytm are among the companies from whom the committee has sought views on data security and protection amid concerns that the privacy of users is being "compromised" for commercial interest.
- While representatives of telecom operators Reliance Jio and Airtel and cab aggregators Ola and Uber have been asked to appear before it.

3. Probing Amazon

- Members questioned the e-commerce major about its revenue mode, how much revenue it generates and what per cent of it, Amazon reinvests in India. The panel also asked questions about how much tax it pays in India.
- The committee asked Amazon to give answers to these questions in writing, signed by its top-most officials.

4. Facebook under Scanner

- Facebook India executives were asked whether they obtain the consent of its users before their data is shared with third parties.
- Facebook does sell data but arrived at inferences based on user behaviour.
- Members of the parliamentary panel, cutting across party lines, also asked the social media giant about its decision-making process, revenue model, method of paying taxes, advertisers and the process of choosing target audience for these advertisers, background verification of its users including the process to find out the age of a new user.
- During the meeting, a member suggested Facebook India should not share 'inferential data' of its users for commercial benefits of its advertisers.

5. Twitter Row

- A parliamentary committee came down heavily on Twitter for showing Ladakh as part of China, saying it amounted to treason and an explanation must be tendered by the US-based parent of the social media platform in form of an affidavit.
- Appearing before the joint committee of parliament on Data Protection Bill, representatives of Twitter India "begged apology".
- The Indian government on October 22 had warned Twitter about its location setting that showed Leh in China, saying any disrespect towards the country's sovereignty and integrity is totally unacceptable.





Bundi Architecture

1. Why in News?

The Ministry of Tourism's Dekho Apna Desh Webinar series titled "" on 24th October 2020 focused on Bundi, Rajasthan.



2. About Bundi

- Bundi is also known as City of stepwalls blue city and also as Chotti Kashi.
- Name, Chotti Kashi owing to presence of over hundred temples within and around the hada capital.
- Best example of medieval Indian city exhibiting water harvesting methods adopted at settlement level as well as finest examples of water architecture. Location of Baoris and Kunds outside the walled city was also influenced by social considerations as ascess to baoris and kunds were located within walled city was controlled.
- Most houses in Bundi have Jharokhas with some screens on upper floors opening on to street, providing light and ventilation. Apart from enabling movement and connectivity, these streets also performed the important role as facades of settlement fabric of walled city.
- Six typologies in Bundi Architecture are: Garh (Fort); Garh Mahal (Royal Palaces); Baori (Step wells); Kund (Stepped tanks); Sagar mahal (Lake Palaces); and Chhatri (Cenotaphs).

3. Temple Construction

- Temples constructed in early phase of Bundi's growth were is classical Nagara style, while in later phases new temple typologies emerged from amalgamation of architectural form of traditional haveli with the classical Nagara style.
- Jain temples formed third type of temple type constructed in an introvert form, integrating typical Jain temple features like serpentine Torna gateways at entrance, large cuboid opaque mass and central courtyard with and Nagara style shikars on its garbhagriha.
- Another temple type emerged in the form of raised or elevated temple. Absence of monumentality in their scale is a distinctive feature of temples in Bundi.
- One of the reasons for this was close relationship. The diversity in temple forms and liberty exercised in this creation departing from classical, established norms is indicative of freedom and involvement of local communities.

4. About Dekho Apna Desh

- > Dekho Apna Desh Webinar Series is an effort to showcase India's rich diversity under Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat.
- The Series is presented in technical partnership with National e Governance Department, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat programme aims to enhance interaction & promote mutual understanding between people of different states/UTs through the concept of state/UT pairing. The states carry out activities to promote a sustained and structured cultural connect in the areas of language learning, culture, traditions & music, tourism & cuisine, sports and sharing of best practices etc.
- Ministry of Tourism's Incredible India Tourist facilitator certification programme act as an enabler for transforming a local citizen with no specified skills having proficiency in a regional language into a potential bread earner for their households.
- > This will further help citizens to own up the local heritage, folklore and culture and show it to the visitors.

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) 4th India Energy Forum

1. Why in News?

Prime Minister of India has inaugurated the 4th India Energy Forum CERAWeek. The theme of this edition was "India's Energy Future in a world of Change".

2. Outlook

- This year has been challenging for the energy sector. Energy demand fell by almost one third. There has been price instability.
- Investment decisions have been impacted. And there will be a contraction in global energy demand over the next few years also.
- But, several agencies project India to emerge as a leading energy consumer. India is set to nearly double its energy consumption over the long term.
- India is the third largest and the fastest growing aviation market in terms of domestic aviation. Indian carriers are projected to increase their fleet size from 600 to 1200 by 2024.



6. About the Forum

- India Energy Forum by CERAWeek, now in its fourth year, is hosted by IHS Markit.
- IHS Markit is a world leader in critical information, analytics and solutions for the major industries and markets that drive economies worldwide. Its headquartered is in London.
- IHS Markit works closely with governments and organizations in the Indian subcontinent across core sectors of energy & natural resources; automotive; financial markets, maritime & trade; and engineering & product design.

3. India's Pro-active Measures

- India, view the energy sector as one that empowers people and furthers "Ease of Living".
 India has achieved 100% electrification. LPG coverage increased. These changes particularly helped our rural areas, our middle class and the women of India.
- In the last 6 years, more than 36 crore or 360 million LED bulbs were distributed. The cost of LED bulbs has also reduced 10 fold. In the last 6 years, Over 1.1 crore or 11 million smart LED street-lights were installed. These have enabled an estimated energy savings of 60 billion units per year.
- The estimated green-house gas emission reduction with this programme is over 4.5 crore or 45 million tonnes Carbon dioxide annually.
- Along with all this, we also saved around Rs 24,000 crore or Rs 240 billion annually. It is due to such interventions that reports have said that India is the most attractive emerging market for clean energy investment.

4. Key Pillars of India's Energy Strategy

- Rays of Sun brighten the journey of human progress. Like the seven horses driving the chariot of Sun god, India's energy map will have seven key drivers. These drivers of change are:
 - Accelerating our efforts to move towards a gas-based economy.
 - Cleaner use of fossil fuels particularly petroleum and coal
 - Greater reliance on domestic sources to drive bio-fuels.
 - Achieving the renewables target of 450 GW by 2030.
 - Increasing the contribution of electricity to de-carbonize mobility.
 - Moving into the emerging fuels including hydrogen
 - Digital innovation across all the energy systems.

5. On-going Reforms

- Reforms in Exploration and Licensing Policy were put in place in February 2019. The focus has shifted from 'revenue' to 'production' maximisation.
- There is also focus on greater transparency and stream-lined procedures.
- India is planning to grow its refining capacities from about 250 to 400 Million Metric tonnes Per Annum by 2025. Increasing domestic gas production has been a key government priority.
- India is also planning to achieve 'One Nation One Gas Grid' and shift towards gas-based economy.
- The annual interaction has gradually become one of the most important gatherings of not only intellectual debate but also of executive action.

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

01 Jammu and Kashmir Land Laws

Q1. Consider the following statements with reference to the changes in the land laws of the Union Territory of J&K:

- 1. Domicile is not a requirement to purchase nonagricultural land in the UT of J&K.
- 2. Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 has not been extended to the UT of J&K.
- 3. Defence personnel can request the government to declare an area in the UT as strategic area and can use that for operational and training purposes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statement 1 is correct. Under the new arrangements, no domicile or permanent resident certificate is required to purchase non-agricultural land in the UT.

Statement 2 is incorrect. The order also extends the operation of The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act (RERA), 2016 — a central law — to the UT. It allows an authority to regulate the real estate sector and also acts as an adjudicating body for speedy property dispute resolution.

Statement 3 is correct. The government, on the written request of an Army officer not below the rank of corps commander, can declare an area as a strategic area, for operational and training requirements.

Sudan and Israel to Normalize Relations

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. With Sudan normalizing its relations with Israel, it is now the Arab third country in 2020 and fifth county overall to normalize relations with Israel.

- 2. Sudan was placed under 'state sponsors of terror', list by US.
- Israel will gain more support and enhanced security, while Sudan will benefit with much needed economic aid.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer:	(d)

Explanation:

All the statements are correct. Sudan will become the third Arab country (Two are Bahrain and UAE) in the past two months to normalize ties with Israel. Sudan has become the fifth Arab country to normalize relations with Israel. It is known that Egypt, Jordan, UAE and Bahrain have previously reached a peace agreement with Israel.

The expansion of the Abraham Accords to include Sudan relations with Israel is a significant step that will further enhance Israel's security and create opportunities for the Arab nation and Israel to deepen their economic ties and improve the lives of their people.

In Sudan, Omar al-Bashir's regime was hosting Osama bin Laden in Khartoum, The US put Sudan as one of the lists of state sponsors in 1993. U.S. president has announced that he would take Sudan off the terrorism list once it had deposited \$335 million it had pledged to pay in compensation.

03 New Abortion Laws in Poland

- Q3. Consider the following statements with reference to the new abortion laws in Poland:
 - Protests in Poland over change in abortion laws was due to the fact that it banned abortions due to fetal abnormalities too, which is the cause of 98% abortions.



- 2. In India, as per Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, the gestational period for abortions is 20 weeks.
- 3. When it comes to fetal abnormalities, in India there is no limit for gestational period. Women can have abortions at any time.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

Explanation:

Statement 1 is correct. Thousands of women are protesting against Poland's new abortion laws in cities across the country. A court ruling has banned almost all abortions - with exceptions only for cases of rape, incest, or where the mother's health is at risk. Abortions carried out when the foetus is malformed, which accounted for 98% of legal terminations last year, have now been outlawed.

Statement 2 is incorrect. In late January 2020, the Union Cabinet amended the 1971 Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act allowing women to seek abortions as part of reproductive rights and gender justice. The amendment has raised the upper limit of MTP from 20 to 24 weeks for women including rape survivors, victims of incest, differently abled women and minors.

Statement 3 is correct. The Indian amendment says there is no limit for gestational age in case of fetal abnormalities. This addresses maternal mortality and morbidity arising from unsafe abortions.



) World Polio Day 2020

- Q4. With reference to the World Polio Day 2020, consider the following statements:
 - World Polio Day is celebrated to commemorate the mission taken up by WHO and to honour birth of Jonas Salk.
 - 2. India became polio free in 2014.
 - 3. Polio is a virus infectious disease which is still prevalent in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

Answer: (b)	
c) 1 and 2 only	d) 1, 2 and 3
a) 1 and 3only	b) 2 and 3 only

Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect. The World Polio

Day was established by Rotary International over a decade ago to commemorate the birth of Jonas Salk, who led the first team to develop a vaccine against poliomyelitis.

Statement 2 and 3 are correct. India was declared poliofree in January 2014, after three years of zero cases. The last case due to wild poliovirus in the country was detected on January 13, 2011.

As per the CDC, Afghanistan and Pakistan are the two countries that are the last stronghold of the wild poliovirus. In Pakistan, the number of reported wild poliovirus cases has increased in 2020.



Q5. Consider the following statements:

- The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 as introduced in Lok Sabha has been referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) of both the Houses.
- All major internet sites' representatives are being probed and consulted by the JPC.

Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?

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

Both the statements are correct. The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 as introduced in Lok Sabha has been referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee of both the Houses, under the Chairperson of Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi. The bill seeks to provide for protection of personal data of individuals and establishment of a data protection authority for the same.

Amazon, Twitter, Facebook, Google and Paytm are among the companies from whom the committee has sought views on data security and protection amid concerns that the privacy of users is being "compromised" for commercial interest.





Bundi Architecture

Q6. Consider the following statements with reference to the 'Bundi Architecture':

- 1. Bundi is also known as City of stepwalls blue city and also as Chotti Kashi.
- 2. Kund and Chhatri are the features of Bundi Architecture.
- 3. Temples constructed in early phase of Bundi's growth were classical Nagara style.

Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (d)

Explanation: All the statements are correct. Bundi is also known as City of stepwalls blue city and also as Chotti Kashi. The name Chotti Kashi, owing to presence of over hundred temples within and around the hada capital.

Six typologies in Bundi Architecture are: Garh (Fort); Garh Mahal (Royal Palaces); Baori (Step wells); Kund (Stepped tanks); Sagar mahal (Lake Palaces); and Chhatri (Cenotaphs).

Temples constructed in early phase of Bundi's growth were is classical Nagara style, while in later phases new temple typologies emerged from amalgamation of architectural form of traditional haveli with the classical Nagara style.



) 4th India Energy Forum

Q7. Consider the following statements:

- India's renewable energy target is 450 GW by 2030 and to take its gas refining capacity to 400 MMT pa by 2025.
- The theme of 2020's Fourth India Energy Forum was "India's Energy Future in a world of Change".

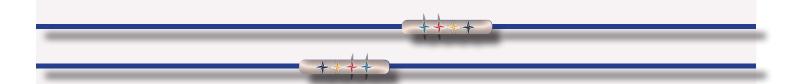
Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c)

Explanation: Both the statements are correct. India is planning to grow its refining capacities from about 250 to 400 Million Metric tonnes Per Annum by 2025. Increasing domestic gas production has been a key government priority.

Prime Minister of India has inaugurated the 4th India Energy Forum CERAWeek. The theme of this edition was "India's Energy Future in a world of Change". The theme of this edition is "India's Energy Future in a world of Change". Achieving the renewables target of 450 GW by 2030 and having a gas based economy are one of the key principles of India's energy strategy.



IMPORTANT NEWS



Recently, Tripura government has issued warning against hunting of migratory Amur falcons. With the onset of winter, migratory birds specially the Amur falcons are flocking to lakes and water bodies in large numbers across northeast India.

About Amur Falcons

- Amur falcons are known to breed in southeast Russia and northern China and migrate west through India and across the Arabian Sea to southern Africa where they spend their winters, making a round-trip of at least 20,000 km every year, travelling between their breeding and wintering grounds.
- This arduous journey includes a non-stop flight over the Arabian Sea after passing across India.



The resilient falcons arrive in large numbers, during October in Nagaland and a few other places in northeastern India.

Amur Falcons

 Nagaland already notified the order to save the birds. It said hunting, trapping, killing and selling of the bird could lead to three years of imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 25,000. Doyang Lake in Nagaland is better known as a stopover for the Amur falcons during their annual migration from their breeding grounds to warmer South Africa. Thus, Nagaland is also known as the "Falcon Capital of the World".

 It is categorized least concern under the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. It is also protected under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and the Convention on Migratory Species, to which India is a signatory (which means it is mandatory to protect the birds).



Provisional Provincial Status to Gilgit-baltistan

 On November 1, observed every year in Gilgit-Baltistan as "Independence Day", Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan announced that his government would give the region "provisional provincial status". When that happens, G-B will become the fifth province of Pakistan, although the region is claimed by India as part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu & Kashmir as it existed in 1947 at its accession to India.

India's Reaction

 India has rejected Pakistan's decision to accord 'provisional provincial status' to the Gilgit-Baltistan region saying that the region is an integral part of India



 India said that Pakistan's move to name Gilgit-Baltistan as its fifth province is meant to "camouflage its illegal occupation" of the area but it cannot "hide the grave human rights violations, exploitation and denial of freedom" to the people for over seven decades.

About Gilgit-Baltistan Region

 Gilgit-Baltistan is the northernmost territory administered by Pakistan, providing the country's only territorial frontier, and thus a land route, with China, where it meets the Xinjiang Autonomous Region.



The China Pakistan Economic Corridor has made the region vital for both countries. To Gilgit-Baltistan's west is Afghanistan, to its south is Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and to the east J&K.



T h o u g h
 Pakistan, like India,
 links Gilgit-Baltistan's
 fate to that of Kashmir,
 its administrative
 arrangements are
 different from those in
 PoK. While PoK has its
 own Constitution that

sets out its powers and their limits vis-à-vis Pakistan, G-B has been ruled mostly by executive fiat. Until 2009, the region was simply called Northern Areas.



 15 States have been identified for implementing Centrally Sponsored Pilot Scheme on Fortification of Rice & its distribution through Public Distribution System (PDS).

Key Highlights

- To initiate the process of taking the country towards nutritional security, Department of Food & Public Distribution (DFPD) has been running a "Centrally Sponsored Pilot Scheme on Fortification of Rice & its distribution through Public Distribution System".
- The Pilot Scheme has been approved for a period of three years beginning 2019- 2020 with a total budget outlay of Rs.174.6 Crore.
- Fifteen State Governments have identified their respective districts (1 district per state) for implementing the Pilot Scheme. Already 5 states of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh have started the distribution of fortified rice in their respective identified districts.

Fortification of Rice



 Special focus would be placed on supplying fortified rice to the 112 specially identified Aspirational Districts of the country.

Fortification of Rice

Fortification is the practice of deliberately increasing the content of an essential micronutrient, i.e. vitamins and minerals (including trace elements) in a food, so as to improve the nutritional quality of the food supply and provide a public health benefit with minimal risk to health.

Fortification of rice with iron is recommended as a public health strategy to improve the iron status of populations, in settings where rice is a staple food. A staple food, or simply a staple, is a food that is consumed regularly provides and an important proportion of the energy (calories)

and nutrient requirements. Its preparation is variable in different contexts and is closely linked to the most available foods in each setting.

- Fortification of rice with vitamin A may be used as a public health strategy to improve the iron status and vitamin A nutrition of populations.
- Fortification of rice with folic acid may be used as a public health strategy to improve the folate nutritional status of populations.







'Roshni Act' of Jammu and Kashmir

The Jammu and Kashmir government has declared the actions taken under the Jammu and Kashmir State Land (Vesting of Ownership to the Occupants) Act, 2001 or 'Roshni Act', as null and void.

About

- In 2001, Farooq Abdullah's government enacted the Jammu and Kashmir State Lands Vesting of Ownership to the Occupants Act. The law was to grant the ownership of state land to its occupants, for a fee determined by the government.
- The Act also sought the conferment of proprietary rights of around 20.55 lakh kanals of land (1,2,50 hectares) to the occupants. Additionally, legislators hoped the Act would help generate resources to finance power projects.

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- The law initially set 1990 as the cutoff year for encroachment on State land, based on which ownership would be granted.
- The state government had estimated an earning of Rs 25,000 crore from the 20 lakh kanals of land and had said that the fund would be used to set up hydroelectric electricity-generation projects.

But in 2014, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) found that only Rs 76 crore had been received from the exercise of transferring encroached land in a period of six years between 2007 and 2013.

Subsequent Amendments

- In 2005 the government relaxed the cutoff year to 2004.
- Subsequently with new government coming to power the cutoff was relaxed further to 2007.
- The government also gave ownership rights of agricultural land to farmers occupying it for free, charging them only Rs 100 per kanal as documentation fee.



 The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved funding to the tune of Rs. 1,810.56 crore for the 210 megawatt (MW) Luhri hydropower project on the Satluj River in Shilma and Kullu districts Himachal Pradesh.

Key Highlights

- The project will take 62 months to be completed and will generate 758.20 million units of electricity a year.
- The project will be implemented by the Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited on the "build-own-operatemaintain" model and would be supported by the Central and State governments.
- Government of India is also supporting this project by providing grants of Rs. 66.19 crore for enabling infrastructure which has helped in reducing power tariff.

Luhri Hydropower Project

- The clean energy produced by the project will lead to a reduction of 6.1 lakh tonnes of carbon dioxide annually.
- The construction will lead to jobs for around 2,000 people and free electricity worth Rs. 1,140 crore for Himachal during the 40-year
 life cycle of the project.
- The project-affected families will be provided with 100 units of free electricity per month for 10 years.

Build-Own-Operate-Maintain Model

 Build Own Operate Maintain is a project financing system used in the construction services where a single contractor is given the responsibility for construction, operation and maintenance of a facility for a specified period prior to handing it over to the client.

- The project owners invite contractors to submit their bids in a transparent tender process.
- The contractors submit their proposals following the specifications provided in the tender document.
- They have to propose the amount for the construction, and maintenance of the facility for the time period specified.
- A number of documents have to be submitted by the bidders that outline the necessary qualifications required to complete the project.
- In a competitive bidding process, the project owner usually awards the contract to the lowest bidder that meets qualifications
- After the contract is awarded, the contractor takes the responsibility of providing all the services from project design to execution.





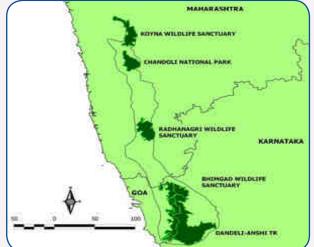


Sahyadri Tiger Reserve and Golden-backed Frog

 The unique species of Goldernbacked Frog (Indosylvirana caesari) has identified for the first time near Sahyadri Tiger Reserve (STR) in the Western Ghats.

Key Highlights

- The amphibian was earlier reported at Amboli, Sindhudurg.
- Endemic to the Western Ghats, the rare species is one of the six species of golden-backed frogs (four from Kerala and one each from Karnataka and Maharashtra). The species was named after wildlife photographer and well-known pathologist Caesar Sengupta.



The Maharashtra golden-backed frog differs from other members of its group based on characteristic features of its body and the sharper golden colour on its back.

About STR

The STR is located the Sahyadri Ranges in of the western ghats of maharashtra. These ranges form common boundary between Maharashtra, Karnataka and Goa. These areas constitute rich evergreen, semi-evergreen and moist deciduous forests. It is the first tiger reserve of western maharashtra and 4th tiger reserve of

maharashtra state spreading over two protected areas those of the koyana sanctuary and chandoli national park.



Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) Act

 All insults or intimidations to persons belonging to Dalit or tribal communities will not be an offence under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, the Supreme Court said in a judgment.

Key Highlights

- Supreme Court held that not every offending remark against a member of the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe will amount to an offence unless there is an intention to humiliate for the reason that the victim belongs to such caste.
- An offence is made out under the statute only if the insults or intimidations were made on account of the victim belonging to Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe.



- The court said the object of the Act is to punish the violators who inflict indignities, humiliations and harassment.
- It is intended to punish the acts of the upper caste against the vulnerable section of the society for the reason that they belong to a particular community.
- The bench said that the SC/ST Act is intended to punish the acts of upper caste against the vulnerable sections of the society for the reason that they belong to a particular community, and that the basic ingredients of the offence

under Section 3(1)(r) of the Act can be classified as-

- Intentionally insults or intimidates with intent to humiliate a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe and
- In any place within public view.
- The court was hearing an appeal filed by a man, Hitesh Verma, booked under the Act for allegedly abusing a Dalit woman in her house.
- The court found that allegations against Verma do not fulfil the basic ingredient under the Act that such humiliation should have happened in public view.
- Since the incident occurred within four walls in the absence of members of the public, allegations against Verma under the Act do not stand. He can be tried under ordinary criminal law.

IMPORTANT PRACTICE QUESTIONS (For Mains)





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(01) Which city will host '13th Edition of Aero India in 2021'?	
Ben	ngaluru
(02) Which state has launched India's first solar-powered miniature train?	
	Kerala
Which national reserve has been declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve under its 'World Network of Biosphere Reserves'?	
Panna Nationa	al Park
Which state has been adjudged the best governed state in the large state category in Public Affairs Independent 2020?	ex
	Kerala
(05) Who has been honoured with "Prof.A N Bhaduri Memorial Lecture Award-2020"?	
Dr. Susan	nta Kar
(06) Which ministry has launched 'Nurturing Neighborhoods Challenge'?	
Ministry of Housing and	Urban Affairs
(07) Which countries have topped the international Academic Freedom Index (AFI)?	
Uruguay and Po	ortugal
35 NOVEMBER-2020 @ ISSUE 02	

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IMPORTANT QUOTES (For Essay and Answer Writing)



AN INTRODUCTION

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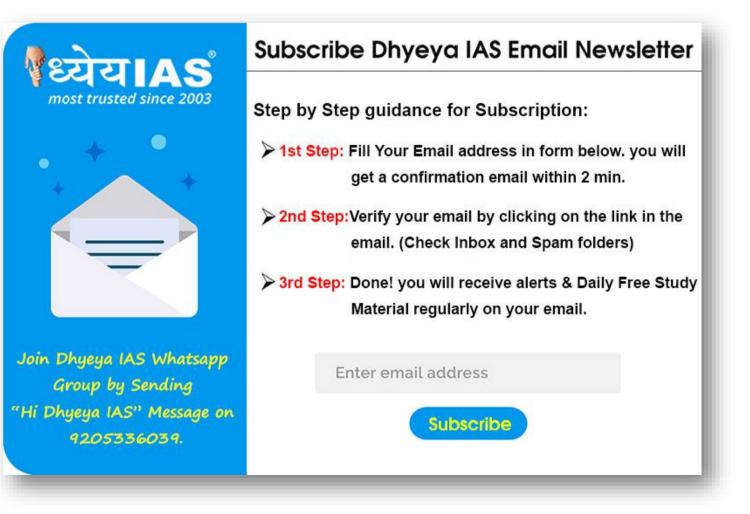


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