



PERFECT

WEEKLY
CURRENT AFFAIRS

Contents

September- 2018
Issue-2

Seven Important Issues

1-21

- Decriminalization of Begging: A Step Towards Dignity
- Odisha's Proposal for Legislative Council
- Repositioning of North East Council: Enhancing Effectiveness
- Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana: Housing for All
- RCEP and its Implications on India
- Venezuela Crisis: An Overview
- Drone Regulations 1.0: Fostering Development of Drones

Seven Subjective Questions with Model Answers

22-26

Seven Important National & International News

27-32

Seven Brain Boosters & Seven MCQ's Based on Them

33-41

Seven Important Facts For Prelims

42

Seven Important Awards-2018

43-44

Seven Practice Questions for Main Exam

45

SEVEN IMPORTANT ISSUES

I. DECRIMINALIZATION OF BEGGING: A STEP TOWARDS DIGNITY

Why in News?

A petition challenge the constitutionality and validity of Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959, as extended to the Union Territory of Delhi on the ground that it violates the fundamental rights guaranteed under Article 14, Article 19, Article 20, Article 21 and Article 22 of the Constitution of India. Delhi High Court declared the act as “unconstitutional” because of lack of distinction of types of begging: voluntary or forced.

Introduction

Begging is one of the most serious social issues in India. In spite of its rapid economic growth, India is a poverty-driven country, which is also leading to the growth of beggars in the country. According to the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959, which criminalize the begging. The provision not only criminalizes the begging in the Mumbai but also in various metropolitan cities such as Delhi. Through the amendment process, this act was extended to Delhi by the Central government in 1960. Simply, it made begging a punishable offence. On the first conviction, the law prescribes the detention of 3 years in beggar homes for begging. But in subsequent conviction, the person can be detained for upto 10 years for begging. Also, not only this act but several states and UTs enacted their own legislation or just adopted the other state's legislation.

A society that sees legislating inequality and homelessness into invisibility has unquestionably lost its way. It is well settled that the right to life is the right to live with dignity and with necessities of life required for it. Criminalization of begging by the Act deprives a person of the right to obtain basic necessities of life. The social contract between the citizen and the state is a contract by which in exchange for the citizen ceding her autonomy partially, the state promises her security over her person and a life with dignity. In our constitutional framework, this is guaranteed by Part III which enjoins the State not only to protect life but also to advance it and Part IV which mandates that the State shall allocate resources so as to further the common good.

Most importantly, the act violates the fundamental right of right to life the citizens. Besides, it takes the right to beg to survive. 74% of persons arrested for begging were from the informal labour sector such as those employed in small places like the staff at the shop, cart puller and construction. 45% of them were homeless and had nothing to eat.

The Delhi High Court held that “begging is a symptom of a disease, of the fact that the person has fallen through the socially created net. The government has the mandate to provide social security for everyone, to ensure that all citizens have basic facilities and the presence of beggars is evidence that the state has not

managed to provide these to all its citizens”.

Criminalising begging violates the most fundamental rights of some of the most vulnerable people in our society. People in this stratum do not have access to basic necessities such as food, shelter and health and in addition, criminalising them denies them the basic fundamental right to communicate and seek to deal with their plight.

The rationale behind anti-beggary laws has largely been seen as a tool to ensure public safety in public places against unwanted encounters with unhygienic elements, namely, beggars. And this is done under the pretext of implementing the Directive Principles of State Policy, which requires the state to ensure public health and safety, among other things. It is, therefore, no coincidence that the Act only targets individual beggars on the streets but not charitable institutions (who, when acting in groups, can be extremely aggressive and intimidating).

Definition of Begging as per Anti-Begging Law

- ♦ The Act defines a beggar as anyone Soliciting or receiving money, clothes or other things ordinarily given to a beggar, in a public place whether or not by singing, dancing, fortune telling, performing or offering any article for sale.
- ♦ Entering on any private premises for the purpose of soliciting or

receiving money, clothes or other things ordinarily given to a beggar.

- ◆ Exposing or exhibiting, with the object of obtaining or extorting money, clothes or other things ordinarily given to a beggar, any sore, wound injury, deformity of diseases whether of a human being or animal
- ◆ Having no visible means of subsistence and wandering, about or remaining in any public place in such condition or manner, as makes it likely that the person doing so exist soliciting or receiving money, clothes or other things ordinarily given to a beggar.
- ◆ Allowing oneself to be used as an exhibit for the purpose of soliciting or receiving alms.
- ◆ Soliciting or receiving money or food or given for a purpose authorized by any law is not begging.

Neither the Indian Penal Code nor the Act explain what is meant by “soliciting alms” or what constitutes a “public place” – leading to ambiguity, inconsistency and abuse in the practical implementation of the law. In particular, the failure to differentiate between forceful and non-forceful forms of begging, coupled with the definitional problems in relation to core concepts, make it difficult to construe the purpose of the law and what it seeks to achieve.

Provisions of the anti-begging laws are highly arbitrary; the implementation of the law is even more. Anti-begging squads are to raid public places such as railway stations, temples, mosques, bus terminus, and arrest anybody who looks poor and homeless. There have been situations where, homeless or disabled people were perceived to be beggars, based simply on the fact of their homelessness or disability.

Causes of Begging in India

Physical Factors

In India there is no adequate provision for treatment and social

rehabilitation of blind, deaf, dumb or the physically handicapped. In the absence of any reasonable alternative, such persons are constrained to beg.

Economic Factors

Economic factors which generally prompt people to take to begging. Among these factors poverty, unemployment, under - employment and loss of income are important.

Social Factors

Among the social factors, hereditary occupation, family disorganization and widowhood are causes of begging.

Natural Calamities

Our physical environment may frustrate us drastically at times through famines, earthquakes, drought, cyclones or floods. Sometimes all these natural calamities cause serious damage to property and agriculture and compel people to leave their homes and compel them to take to begging to overcome pangs of hunger.

Psychological Factors

Sometimes, due to bad psychology of the individual cause beggary. Frustration, unwillingness to work and tendency towards isolation are important among these factors.

Steps Needed to Rehabilitate Beggars

Begging has grown at a significant rate in India. It is estimated that half a million people in India are beggars. The government, varied organizations, activist's claim that many measures have been taken to abolish begging and it has been successful to a certain extent. But as the citizens of this country, it is our moral responsibility to stop this menace and the best way is to stop giving alms. Meanwhile, let the government continue with its poverty alleviation schemes and make India a better place to live in. Following footsteps may be taken to rehabilitate beggar:

Eradicate Poverty

Priority should be given to eradication of extreme poverty. Though many people take to begging owing to poverty, it has become a menace. Of late, begging has become part of an organised crime.

Rehabilitation

Small shelters have to be made and they need to be imparted skills that would help them land jobs. They should be made to earn their livelihood by working and not begging. The government and charitable organisations should look after people who are aged and physically challenged.

Vocational Training

The government should provide necessary vocational training to rehabilitate them. The expenses incurred should be borne by the government. A government - funded organisation should be constituted and personnel trained to oversee the rehabilitation programme. Beggars who are willing to work should be trained according to their ability, health and talent. The ill should be given medical care, food and other amenities. Necessary steps should be taken by the government to collect contributions from donors by allowing tax rebate.

Concerted Effort

Social issues associated with begging are drug trafficking, criminal activities and sexual exploitation of children. As part of the rehabilitation programme, the corporation has collaborated with a voluntary organisation towards providing food, clothing and medicines. To reduce the economic burden, the government should seek the aid of voluntary organisations. However, the activities of the voluntary organisations should be monitored and evaluated.

Needed Aid-agency

The rehabilitated should be provided free medical diagnosis, financial support and ration to the beggars. Slums may come up in cities and rehabilitation should be carried out in a judicious manner.

Create Awareness

People should discourage beggars. Begging flourishes because people tend to be generous. Awareness programmes need to be conducted for the poor to help them realise how shameful it is to beg.

Way Forward

Basic needs of man have traditionally been accepted to be three — food, clothing and shelter. The right to life is guaranteed in any civilized society. That would take within its sweep the right to food, the right to clothing, the right to decent environment and a reasonable accommodation to live in. It remains a hard reality that the state has not been able to ensure even the bare essentials of the right to life to all its citizens, even in Delhi. People beg on the streets not because they wish to, but because they

need to. Begging is their last resort to subsistence; they have no other means to survive.

If we want to eradicate begging, artificial means to make beggars invisible will not suffice. A move to criminalize them will make them invisible without addressing the root cause of the problem. The court rightly noted that the root cause is poverty that has many structural reasons behind it—illiteracy, absence of social protection, caste-based discrimination, physical and mental disabilities and consequent isolation, etc. are some that the court listed.

The law made no distinction between beggars and workers who were homeless, vagrants and even mendicants who beg for alms to fulfill religious obligations. Criminalizing begging is a wrong approach to deal with the underlying causes of the problem. It ignores the reality that people who beg are the poorest of the poor and marginalized in society. The state simply cannot fail to do its duty to provide a decent life to its citizens and add insult to injury by arresting, detaining and, if necessary, imprisoning such persons, who beg, in

search for essentials of bare survival, which is even below sustenance. A person who is compelled to beg cannot be faulted for such actions in these circumstances. The government should be framing policy to remedy the socio-economic ills that create beggars, not punishing people for falling victim to these.

General Studies Paper- I

Topic: Role of women and women's organizations, Population and associated issues, Poverty and developmental issues, Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

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 poverty and hunger.



2. ODISHA'S PROPOSAL FOR LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Why in News?

Odisha is all set to get a Legislative Council like several other states in the country. A resolution will be brought in the monsoon session of the Odisha Legislative Assembly beginning for the formation of Odisha Legislative Council. The proposed Council will have 49 members, which is one-third of the 147-member State Assembly. The members of the proposed council will get salary and allowance as given to the members of the Legislative Assembly.

Background

India's transition from unicameral to bicameral legislature started

under the Government of India Act, 1919, which established the council of state—now the Rajya Sabha—in 1921. The Montague - Chelmsford report, which envisaged formation of the Upper House at the Centre also proposed Upper Houses in provinces, not for legislative purposes but to pass legislation delayed or thwarted by the Lower House. India has a bicameral system i.e., two Houses of Parliament. At the state level, the equivalent of the Lok Sabha is the Vidhan Sabha or Legislative Assembly; that of the Rajya Sabha is the Vidhan Parishad or Legislative Council. A second House of legislature is considered important for two reasons: one, to act as a check on hasty actions by the popularly

elected House and, two, to ensure that individuals who might not be cut out for the rough-and-tumble of direct elections too are able to contribute to the legislative process. Opposition to the idea of Legislative Councils is centred on three broad arguments. One, they can be used to park leaders who have not been able to win an election. Two, they can be used to delay progressive legislation. Three, they would strain state finances. Opinion in the Constituent Assembly was divided on the question of having a Legislative Council. The idea was backed on the above grounds; it was also suggested that having a second chamber would allow for more debate and sharing of work between the Houses.



In fact, the framers of the Indian Constitution were themselves uncertain of the utility of second chambers. Hence they made a provision for their abolition as well as their creation. They introduced bicameralism in certain states only as an experimental measure. They were of the view that if it proved to be a fruitful experiment, the rest of the states would also opt for second chambers.

The problem of the second chamber has ever been the subject of great controversy. Since the introduction and passage of 1935 Act, the problem of second chamber is being hotly discussed, even in the units which formerly comprised British provinces and now constitute units of the India Union. There has not been unanimity of opinions regarding the desirability or otherwise of the second chamber in the Indian states.

States with Legislative Councils

The Constitution of India had the provision of establishing bicameral legislatures in more populous states of the country. According to provisions of the Constitution, having a legislative council by a state is optional. Initially states such as Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab etc. were slated to have two houses. However, some of the states felt that Legislative Council would be an unnecessary adjunct.

As of today, 7 out of 29 states have a Legislative Council: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Telangana.

Proposals to create Legislative Councils in Rajasthan and Assam are pending in Parliament. In 2010, MLAs in Assam unanimously passed a resolution for the creation of a Council. Rajasthan MLAs passed a similar resolution in 2012. The Standing Committee examining these Bills endorsed the creation of Upper Houses in both states. It also recommended that the Central government evolve a national policy for the creation of second chambers in state legislatures.

Formation

Our constitution does not force a bicameral legislature on states. The Constitution grants every state the right to create or abolish Legislative Council, which decides whether it will have a unicameral or bicameral legislature. The Legislative Council or the Vidhan Parishad is the Upper Chamber of the State Legislature. According to Article 169 of the Indian Constitution, the state legislative assembly has to pass a resolution demanding creation or abolition of the council. The Parliament can then make it a law by passing it like any ordinary bill. It doesn't require any amendment to the Constitution.

Article 169 states: Abolition or creation of Legislative Councils in States

1) Notwithstanding anything in Article 168, Parliament may by law provide for the abolition of the Legislative Council of a state having such a Council or for the creation of such a Council in a state having no such Council, if the Legislative Assembly of the state passes

a resolution to that effect by a majority of the total membership of the Assembly and by a majority of not less than two thirds of the members of the Assembly present and voting.

- 2) Any law referred to in clause (1) shall contain such provisions for the amendment of this Constitution as may be necessary to give effect to the provisions of the law and may also contain such supplemental, incidental and consequential provisions as Parliament may deem necessary.
- 3) No such law as aforesaid shall be deemed to be an amendment of this Constitution for the purposes of Article 368.

Money needed to set up a Legislative Council

Requirements would differ from state to state. Rajasthan told the Standing Committee that approximately Rs 100 crore would be required; Assam quoted a one-time expenditure of Rs 68.88 crore and a recurring annual expenditure of Rs 19.28 crore.

How are Members of the Council Elected?

Membership may vary, but the Legislative Council must not have more than a third of the total membership of the Assembly of that state and in no case fewer than 40 members. (The exception is J&K, where the Legislative Council has 36 members vide Section 50 of the constitution of the state.)

About 1/3rd of members are elected by members of the Assembly, another 1/3rd by electorates consisting of members of municipalities, district boards and other local authorities in the state, 1/12th by an electorate consisting of teachers and 1/12th by registered graduates. The remaining members are nominated by the Governor from among those who have distinguished themselves in literature, science, art, the cooperative movement and social service. Legislative Councils

are permanent Houses and like Rajya Sabha, one-third of their members retire every two years.

Rajya Sabha vs Vidhan Parishads

The constitution gives Councils limited legislative powers. Unlike Rajya Sabha which has substantial powers to shape non-financial legislation, Legislative Councils lack the constitutional mandate to do so. Legislative Assemblies have the power to override suggestions/amendments made to legislation by the Council. Also, while Rajya Sabha MPs can vote in the election of the President and Vice-President, members of Legislative Councils can't. MLCs also can't vote in the elections of Rajya Sabha members.

Arguments against Legislative Councils

The composition of the Legislative Council has entailed a very severe criticism. A blend of direct election, indirect election and nomination makes the Council a hotchpotch of representation. A chamber so heterogeneously constituted, neither serves the purpose of a revisory chamber nor acts as an effective brake against hasty legislation. It is apprehended by the critics that a Legislative Council may be utilized to accommodate discredited party-men who may not be returned to the Assemblies. The nominated quota placed in the hands of the Governor may be used for enabling these defeated leaders to seek nomination to the Council and then their elevation to the Chief Minister ship. H.V. Kamath said on the floor of Constituent Assembly, that "the provisions of such houses were pernicious and vicious". Some of arguments against Legislative Councils given below:

- ◆ It is emphasized even now that if a majority of the members in the Upper House belong to the same party which holds majority in the Lower House, the Upper House will become a mere ditto chamber. If on the other hand, two different

parties are holding sway in the two Houses, the Upper House will delay the bills for four months unnecessarily.

- ◆ It was emphasized that powers of the Legislative Councils are limited to the extent that they can hardly impose any effective check on the Assemblies. Whether a Bill is liked by the Council or not, it is apt to be passed maximum after four months' delay if the Assembly so decides. A check on hasty and ill-considered legislation emanating from the Assembly is possible in case the Council detain a Bill for a longer period.
- ◆ A few of the critics are opposed to the retention of the Legislative Council as it serves only as stronghold of vested interests, who are not expected to support progressive legislation. Instead they may block such legislation initiated by popularly elected Legislative Assembly.
- ◆ The abolition of the second chamber would give very substantial relief to the state exchequer. In the West Bengal also one of the main reasons for its abolition was stated as unnecessary burden on the state exchequer.
- ◆ The critics further point out that the very fact that some of the states, such as Punjab, Bihar and West Bengal decided to wind up bicameral legislatures and advocated strongly abolition of second chambers goes to prove that the second chambers have doubtful utility.

Arguments for Legislative Councils

The advantages of having a bicameral legislature are well - known. An Upper House provides a forum for academicians and intellectuals, who are arguably not suited for the rough and tumble of electoral politics. The objections to the second chamber are varied. Rather than fulfilling the lofty objective, yet they are not devoid

of certain advantages which are as follows:

- ◆ The advocates of second chambers in the states emphatically assert that the second chambers in the states would be necessary to protect the interests of the people against the hasty and ill-considered legislation initiated and passed by the Lower Houses. A single chamber, it is apprehended, is in danger of being rash and one-sided and swayed by emotions or passions.
- ◆ It is argued by the supporters of the second chamber that the imposition of check on autocracy of the lower chambers is indispensable. If democracy is to be saved from the whims and caprice of these illiterate electorates, creation of second chambers to checkmate the vagaries of the illiterate electorates whose choice of the representatives for the Lower Houses may not be up to the mark is quite essential.
- ◆ Moreover, elderly, experienced and sober individuals, cannot bear the ordeal of electioneering neither campaign nor are they keen to indulge in vicious party politics. But presence of such an element in the legislature of a state not only adds to its grace, but also exercises a sobering, ennobling and, purifying influence on the politics of the state.
- ◆ The supporters of the Councils point out that the latter cannot put insuperable barriers in the way of Assemblies, as they can delay the Bills only for a period of four months. Such an interposition of delay is essential to crystallize public opinion on all Bills before they become an Act.
- ◆ Since the popular chambers are generally flooded with work, due to the rapid growth in the functions of a modern welfare state, a unicameral legislature cannot cope with the work and devote fully to the bills brought

before it for enactment. Hence the bills of non-controversial nature can start their course in the Councils first. It lessens the burden of the lower House and enables it to fully concentrate on measures of greater importance.

- ♦ It is generally observed that many bills are passed in the Assembly without any or adequate discussions. So, the council formation will involve larger sections of people's representatives from various walks of life with vast experience — who can hold discussions before final adoption of the bills.
- ♦ This can be an opportunity for people, who are not in mainstream political activities, but can contribute immensely in decision making from different fraternities such as scientists, educationalists, lawyers, artists and journalists.

Does Odisha need a Legislative Council?

The Odisha government's decision to create a legislative council, slated to have 49 members and an annual budget of Rs. 35 crore, raises questions regarding the need for a bicameral legislature in states.

Odisha is not a developed state in spite of having plenty of natural resources, including a 480km coastline, a number of perennial rivers, plenty of coal, iron ore, bauxite and chrome deposits, which, if properly utilised, will accelerate industrialisation and agricultural development. As desired, economic and social development has not taken place in the state, acute poverty, unemployment and backwardness continue. Besides, the scheduled tribe and scheduled caste people account for 62 per cent of the state's population. Most of the poor, underprivileged and illiterate people belong to this category. Though they are well represented in the Assembly and in panchayati raj institutions, practically, they do not have much say in the decision-making process in the

government or in the legislature. They are not among the vocal people in the Assembly.

Therefore, if the sittings of the Assembly are less than what should have been, honourable members will get less opportunity for legislative business intended for the uplift of the underprivileged and backward sections of the society. Often, they are overshadowed and their voices are drowned by the vocal elements, who are active to put pressure on the government to utilise allotted funds to the fullest in their areas. Therefore, the curtailment of sitting days of the Assembly will further reduce the participation of the ST and SC representatives. If we go through the proceedings of the Assembly, it is very clear that the ST and SC representatives do not get much opportunity to raise their voice for the economic and social development of their constituents and their region.

Peoples' representatives, whether they sit in the legislative Assembly or council, will have the same dignity in legislative matters. By creating the council, the government will be forced to spend a good amount, which otherwise could have been utilised in development or welfare activities. Therefore, there is no justification for having a legislative council in a poor state such as Odisha. It will be better if the government enhances or at least restores the limit for minimum sitting days, rather than taking a hasty and costly step of having a legislative council.

The arguments cited in favour of Legislative Councils range from their track record of sincere work, relevant amendments brought, non-confrontational attitude vis-à-vis legislative assembly, decorum and restraint in proceedings and drawing attention of both government and public to matters of public interest. However, their merit must be gauged with respect to their objectives. On the question of haste, we should ask what stops legislative assemblies from adopting ways and means for deeper analysis and vetting of Bills. Gradual

reduction in time for which assemblies sit is incongruent with their plea for establishing a "revising chamber". History shows us that the arguments against an Upper House for states have remained the same for the last 100 years. An intense and detailed study of Legislative Councils and their role in enriching the process of legislation needs to be undertaken and analysed.

Conclusion

The state Legislative Councils were established to serve such a purpose. It was expected that the Upper House consisting of graduates, teachers, outstanding persons in the fields of art, literature, science and social service, would check-mate the radicalism of the lower House. They were supposed to serve as a "check upon democratic outbursts" and provide an element of sobriety and second thought.

However, the second chambers in our states have proved to be ornamental superfluities which a poor country like India can ill afford. The existence of a legislative council at times can be politically controversial. There are instances in different states where members of political parties, after failing to secure an Assembly seat in the election, have been nominated and reinstated in the legislative councils. This practice consequently negates the very purpose of the initiative to involve professionals from various walks of life. The original purpose to have it gets defeated by facilitating backdoor entry of unsuccessful politicians. Legislative Councils are subject to varied and inconclusive discussions around their creation, revival and abolishment. Given all this, Odisha's proposal may give the country at large an opportunity to evolve a national consensus on Legislative Councils.

General Studies Paper- II

Topic: Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.



3.REPOSITIONING OF NORTH EAST COUNCIL:ENHANCING EFFECTIVENESS

Why in News?

The 67th plenary meeting of North Eastern Council (NEC) was held in Shillong, Meghalaya. It was chaired by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh. Last month, the Union Cabinet had approved bringing the NEC directly under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Now, the Union Home Minister is the ex-officio chairman of the NEC while the Minister of DoNER (Development of North Eastern Region), who is a state minister with the independent charge, will be the vice chairman. Earlier, the DoNER Minister used to be the chairman of the NEC.

Background

The North Eastern Council (NEC) is the nodal agency for the economic and social development of the North Eastern Region which consists of the eight states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. The North Eastern Council was constituted in 1971 by an Act of Parliament. Over the last forty five years, NEC has been instrumental in setting in motion a new economic endeavor aimed at removing the basic handicaps that stood in the way of normal development of the region and has ushered in an era of new hope in this backward area, full of great potentialities. Subsequent to the Amendment of 2002, NEC has been mandated to function as a regional planning body for the North Eastern Area.

Through its regional plan, NEC has attempted to identify thrust areas as well as critical gaps for taking up as many development initiatives as possible. In the regional plan, a sector-wise outline of development plans and projects along with requirement of resources has been made for the coming three years with a view to

accelerating the pace of development in the region.

Given its mandate of a regional planning body, the NEC has set out to formulate a sector-wise outline of development plans and projects for the three years beginning April 2017 with a view to accelerating the pace of development which had slowed down during the past five to ten years due to highly inadequate budgetary provision in the Five Year Plans and Annual Plans of the North Eastern Council which resulted in its inability to fully meet the expectations of its constituent states. The NEC has Governors and the Chief Ministers of the North-Eastern states as its members besides three members nominated by the President of India.

Evolution of NEC

Initially, the NEC played the role of being an advisory body. In 2002, the 1971 Act was amended to make the body more effective. Following the amendment, the NEC became a regional planning body for the NER. Besides, a department of Development of North-Eastern Region (DoNER) was established under the Union Home Ministry. This became a full-fledged Ministry in 2004. The NEC has been working under the Ministry of DoNER and its activities include funding various development projects and running educational institutions. There have been suggestions to expand the activities of the NEC, including using it as a forum for discussion on matters of common interest to the region and make recommendations. There were also suggestions to enhance its capacity for conflict resolution so that it can discuss issues of mutual interest to two or more states in the region and advise the Central government.

Last month the Union Cabinet had approved bringing the NEC directly

under the Ministry of Home Affairs. This repositioning of NEC will help it to become a more effective body for the North Eastern region.

NEC Performance in Past

- Since its inception, NEC has focused on improving connectivity of the region which has been a major bottleneck for all developmental activities. A total of 10,500 kilometer of roads have been constructed with the NEC funding and handed over to the states for maintenance.
- Improvement of the infrastructure in 5 major airports of the regions namely, Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Imphal and Umroi have been taken up in collaboration with Airport Authority of India on 60:40 (60% by NEC and 40% by AAI) basis.
- The North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Project (NERCORMP), a sustainable livelihood project is the flagship programme of NEC, with support from International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Since 1999 NERCORMP has transformed the life of over 1,19,000 rural women.
- A "North Eastern Cultural and Information Center", New Delhi is poised to act as a cultural and information hub for the people of North-Eastern region at Delhi.
- The North-Eastern region 'Vision 2020 Document' was brought out by NEC in 2008. Subsequently, seventeen thematic groups incorporating sector experts were constituted by this Ministry to develop specific action plans to operationalize the 'Vision 2020 Document'. Presently, the Vision 2020 is undergoing mid-term academic evaluation.

The inclusion of the Union Home Minister as the NEC chairman will help the forum to facilitate better coordination between the Central government and the state governments in planning development in the region. The change will also embolden the forum to discuss issues pertaining to Centre-State relations more comprehensively. Empowering

the NEC to discuss inter-state matters have become crucial largely because of the existing complexities like the boundary disputes among states that often ignites tension among ethnic communities of the states.

Need for Reconstitution of the NEC

The government thinks, with the reconstitution of the NEC with the Union Home Minister as chairman, would provide an effective forum for discussing inter-state matters more comprehensively. Under the new arrangement, the NEC will now also perform the tasks undertaken by various zonal councils pertaining to inter-state issues like drug trafficking, smuggling of arms and ammunition and boundary disputes. The NEC has been instrumental in setting in motion a new economic endeavour aimed at removing roadblocks to development of the North-eastern region. This repositioning of NEC will help it to become a more effective body for the North Eastern region. The Council shall, from time to time, review the implementation of the projects/schemes included in the project; recommend effective measures for coordination among the state governments for these projects etc. The Council shall have such powers as may be delegated to it by the Central government. Empowering the NEC to discuss inter-state matters have become crucial largely because of the existing complexities like the boundary disputes among states that often ignites tension among ethnic communities of the states as the region is home to more than one hundred ethnic communities with many complexities. There is a broad-based notion about the lack of understanding of the region by the policymakers in the region which often make the people of the region to doubt the effectiveness of the policies. All

these complexities have been affecting development in the region.

The inclusion of the Union Home Minister as the NEC chairman will help the forum to facilitate better coordination between the Central government and the state governments in planning development in the region. The change will also emboldens the forum to discuss issues pertaining to centre-state relations more comprehensively. Empowering the NEC to discuss inter-state matters have become crucial largely because of the existing complexities like the boundary disputes among states that often ignites tension among ethnic communities of the states.

The repositioning of NEC has also seems to have been prompted by government's foreign policy. Since the region shares 90% of its boundary with our international neighbours, it is strategically important and it is only landlink to East Asia, a priority region for our foreign policy. The region has also been turned India's gateway to East Asia. Many of our connectivity projects in Southeast Asia will be passing through North East region and hence the development of the region is important for us to maintain our position as a regional power, which is now being contested by China. With China launching Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), India is under pressure to make sub regional initiatives like BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) and BBIN (Bhutan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal) successful as many of the members of BBIN and BIMSTEC are also members of BRI. For success of these initiatives development of North Eastern region is crucial.

Views on Repositioning of NEC

The proposal to reposition NEC into a conflict resolution, development planning and knowledge hub for the

Northeast and rolling out of new scheme for 2018-2020 is a welcome step.

Mizoram Chief Minister Lal Thanhawla has expressed disappointment with the Central government's decision on the new NEC scheme, bypassing the plenary Council which is considered to be the highest decision-making authority for the NEC.

Special Schemes for North-Eastern Region

The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) has made the following schemes for the development of North-Eastern region during the last three years:-

- **North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS):** It is a 100% central sector scheme to be implemented till March 2020. A sum of Rs.1600 crore has been allocated for funding physical infrastructure relating to connectivity, power, water supply enhancing tourism and social Infrastructure relating to education and health sectors in North-Eastern States.
- **Schemes of North-Eastern Council (NEC) and North East Road Sector Development Scheme (NERSDS)**
- **North East Venture Fund (NEVF)**
- **Science & Technology Interventions in the North East Region (STINER):** STINER aims to bring relevant technologies developed by the academic, scientific and research institutions to the artisans and farmers especially women. The Ministry has sanctioned funds to disseminate some identified technologies developed by IITs such as feed block machine; eri-Cocoon opener; hank to bobbin winding machine; chaff cutter; dryer; potter's wheel; puffed rice making machine and fish cage structure.

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma said the recent decision of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) and the NEC will have a dampening effect on the socio-economic development of the region and further added that in the spirit of federal structure, any

important decision on change of approach and guidelines must be taken at the plenary session of the NEC.

In 2017, Rs. 2500 crores of non lapsable Central pool of resources was issued to the NEC. As per experts this non lapsable fund is required because of the poor absorption capacity of these states and due to difficult terrain and security concerns. They further added that this region has a distinct advantage with over 7% area of countries land mass but comparatively sparse population making it easier to target them for integration with the rest of the country.

Constitutional Scheme for North East

Since North Eastern Council is a statutory body it is nowhere mentioned in the constitution but there are other constitutional provisions for the states of North East.

- ◆ Article 244 in part X of constitution has special provisions for areas designated as 'Tribal Areas' and 'Scheduled Areas'.
- ◆ An article 244(1) states that provisions of fifth schedule apply to administration and control of Scheduled Areas in every state other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
- ◆ Article 244(2) states that the provisions of sixth schedule shall apply to administration and control of tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
- ◆ Sixth schedule provides for constitution, powers and functions of district council and regional Council in these autonomous districts. The councils are vested with legislative powers on specific subject and allotted certain sources of taxation. These Autonomous District Councils are now in existence in the states of Assam

Constraints in Development of the North Eastern Region

NER of India includes Sikkim and the Seven Sister states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura and Nagaland. The region constitutes 3.07% of the population and 7.97% of India's total geographical area. These states together share 5,300 km of international borders with key regional and international players such as China, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan. The region is rich in natural resources like water, petroleum and natural gas. 52% of the NER is covered with forests and is endowed with exotic flora, fauna and a rich mineral resource base. However, physical isolation of the region post-1947 and a pause in infrastructure development after the India-Pakistan war of 1965 has hampered the region's economic growth.

- In terms of infrastructure, the NER has approximately 2,600 km of railway lines, but only two state capitals are connected by rail (Assam, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh). The road network is characterized by low density and poor quality of roads. The 11 airports in the region do not provide interstate connectivity and Kolkata serves as the only hub for the NER. The inland waterway transportation network, a traditional mode of cheap and fast transportation in the region has suffered immensely since independence.
- This lack of connectivity and infrastructure has also led to low trade activity in the region. 95% of India's exports to neighbouring states of Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar are from regions other than North East India. This is so despite the fact that the region is the natural gateway (with 98% international borderlines) for India to the East Asian, South East Asian and South Asian economies.
- The region has a huge potential for generation of hydropower, solar power and wind energy. The region also boasts of significant shale oil reserves. Despite this, the region lacks in energy self-sufficiency. The main factors contributing to this are low capacity utilisation of power generation units, weak connectivity with the Eastern grid and a limited carrying and distribution capacity. The per capita electricity consumption of the region was around 292 kilowatt hour (kWh) compared to the national average of 884 kWh as of 2011-12.

Tripura, Mizoram and Meghalaya, like Khasi hills autonomous district Council, Jaintia Hills autonomous district Council etc.

- ◆ Governor may notify that any law of Parliament shall not apply at all to an autonomous district/region, or shall apply with specified adaptation.
- ◆ For the purpose of promoting welfare of scheduled tribes are raising the level of administration of Scheduled Areas, Indian Constitution provides points under article 275(1).
- ◆ Part XXI of the Indian constitution deals with temporary, transitional and special provisions related to these states, listed in Articles 371, 371A to 371H and 371J.

Way Forward

The revamping of the NEC is a timely move. Development of the North-Eastern region has been a priority for

the present government. Given the ground realities, the NEC reconstitution should not be seen as the ultimate, but rather keep improving the system. This new arrangement is welcome because experts on the region have been suggesting that development in the region requires a different approach and also participation of all the stakeholders -the states as well as the Central government is crucial.

General Studies Paper- II

Topic: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.

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.



4. PRADHAN MANTRI AWAS YOJANA: HOUSING FOR ALL

Why in News?

The government of India has approved construction of nearly 1.12 lakh more affordable houses for urban poor in eight states under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), with Andhra Pradesh bagging the largest share of over 37,000 housing units, the total number of houses being funded under the PMAY (urban) is close to 55 lakh across the country so far. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs is planning to introduce the provision of a lock-in period of five years for sale of houses under the PMAY.

Introduction

The three basic human needs are food, clothing and shelter. Shelter is a prime necessity for human survival and we call it a house. It is a security and an individual's own world, where he/she spends quality time with their family, prosper and prepare himself/herself each day for the world outside and life's struggles. With growing population and urbanization government cannot ignore the weaker section of society. Government of India has taken a very significant step towards it by launching Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna, 'Housing for all scheme', especially planned for the people who can't afford a house under their financial circumstances. The PMAY Yojna is a housing solution for all the citizens of India.

Over the past two years, the Central government had taken various steps to ease the supply side as well as the demand side issues impacting the affordable housing sector in India. The PMAY has received a slew of measures to enable private participation and spur the supply side for affordable housing. With infrastructure status being accorded to the sector in last year's budget, developers were provided the

opportunity to gain access to lower cost credit for longer tenures, which should improve the cash-flows of their projects. In the 2018-19 Budget, the allocation towards PMAY has been raised from INR 15,000 crores to INR 23,000 crores. Additionally, a few months ago, GST for affordable and low-cost housing was rationalized from the previous 12% to 8%. These, in addition to various measures that were taken in 2016 are likely to provide significant impetus to the sector.

Housing for All

The government's agenda of constructing 10 million homes by 2019 for families living in 'Kucha' houses was realized in the form of PMAY scheme, which was implemented from June 2015. The major initiative of the Ministry of Rural Development to achieve the objective of 'Housing for All' by 2022 is the launch of Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G). The scheme provides financial assistance to households living in rural areas who are houseless or living in zero, one or two room kutchra houses as per Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC)-2011 data and verified by Gram Sabha. The government has also announced its ambitious plan of "Housing for All by 2022" in urban areas and it has broadened its credit Linked Subsidy (CLSS) to include middle income group (MIG) and also offered incentives across the value chain. The scheme originally meant to cover buyers in the economically weaker section (annual income not exceeding INR 3 lakhs) and lower income group (annual income not exceeding INR 6 lakhs) sections also included the mid-income group (MIG), with household income up to INR 18 lakhs per annum. The scheme known as credit linked subsidy scheme

(CLSS) for middle income group (CLSS for MIG), will comprise of two slabs covering anyone with a household income between INR 6 lakhs and INR 18 lakhs per annum to avail the benefits of subsidized loans.

'Housing for All' by 2022 is the commitment made by government of India with an objective that by the time nation completes 75 years of Independence, every houseless and households living in dilapidated houses have a pucca house. In order to achieve this objective, there is a need to create an enabling environment especially in rural areas so that the people living in rural areas can construct a pucca house with all basic amenities with ease. One of the basic requirements to achieve this objective is to ensure that the people in rural areas have access to cheap and adequate institutional finance required for construction of a house. India's urban population has grown five-fold in the last half century to approximately 430 million inhabitants in 2015 and the number is expected to rise to 600 million by 2030, accounting for 40% of India's population. Such rapid urbanization is proving to be a challenge as well as an opportunity for the economy, thereby making the government expedite its efforts towards providing adequate infrastructure, services and affordable housing.

Industry participants estimate that USD 2 trillion in investment is needed for the successful completion of "Housing for All by 2022." If executed well, this is a big opportunity in the making for the Indian economy with a multiplier effect and benefits that traverse sectors ranging from realtors, building material suppliers, brown/white goods manufacturers to housing finance companies (HFCs).

According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MHUPA), around 18 million people are living in slums and nearly 2 million is to enter homeless category in near future. Hence there is a demand for 20 million (2 crore) urban houses by 2022. To meet this demand, the PMAY will provide central assistance to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and other implementing agencies through states/UTs. All statutory towns as per Census-2011 and towns notified subsequently would be eligible for coverage under the mission.

Features of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana

- ◆ Under PMAY scheme, subsidy interest rate is provided at 6.5% on housing loan for the term of 15 years to all the beneficiaries.
- ◆ Differently abled and senior citizens will be given preference in allocation of ground floors.
- ◆ Sustainable and eco-friendly technologies would be used for construction.
- ◆ The scheme covers entire urban areas in the country which includes 4041 statutory towns with the first priority given to 500 Class I cities. This will be done in 3 phases.
- ◆ The credit linked subsidy aspect of the PM Awas Yojana gets implemented in India in all statutory towns from the initial stages itself.

Eligibility Criteria for PMAY Scheme

The government will use the Socio Economic and Caste Census of 2011 (SECC-2011) to identify and select the list of PMAY beneficiaries. The village panchayats along with tehsils will be considered for consultation of beneficiaries before making the list under the rural housing scheme. This is going to be done in order to ensure transparency of the project and also

make sure that only the deserving receive the aid in housing.

- ◆ Any household with total annual income between Rs. 6 lakh to Rs. 18 lakh can apply for the PM Awas Yojana. The applicant is allowed to include the income of the spouse while applying for this scheme.
- ◆ Indian citizens who are women may apply. No other demographic will be considered as long as they are women.
- ◆ The beneficiary can only buy a new house in order to enjoy PMAY benefits. People who already own a house are not eligible to apply for this scheme. No pucca should be owned by the beneficiary or member of the family, in any part of the country.
- ◆ People will be allowed to buy/construct new houses only. One cannot avail PMAY benefits on already built house.
- ◆ People who belong to the low income group i.e. LIG and economically weaker sections also known as EWG in the society, may also apply.
- ◆ Scheduled tribes and castes will also be eligible.
- ◆ Senior citizens and differently abled will be given special priorities for ground floor housing.

Objectives of PMAY Scheme

The population of the urban dwellers in India increased at an alarming rate and is expected to see a greater rate of growth in the following years. It is said that by 2050, urban dwelling population will rise to 814 million people. The calculation predicted is almost twice the numbers that already reside in urban areas. The major challenges also include providing people with housing options that are affordable and other major related concerns such as sanitation

along with sustainable development. The Ministry also has to ensure a sustainable and safe environment for the urban population.

The main objective of the PM Awas Yojana Scheme is housing that is affordable for all by the year 2022.

- ◆ It also intends to make it accessible to demographics that are specific such as economically challenged groups, women along people belonging to minorities such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- ◆ The government's other goal is directly in association with some of the most ignored demographics which include widows, lower income group members, transgender and henceforth provide them with sustainable and affordable housing scheme.
- ◆ Special preferences for ground floor properties will be given to differently abled and senior citizens if required.
- ◆ Registration is mandatory to avail the benefits of this scheme which includes the strict beneficiary names to be mothers or wives.

Coverage and Duration

All 4041 statutory towns as per Census-2011 with focus on 500 Class I cities would be covered in three phases as follows:

- ◆ Phase I (April 2015 - March 2017) to cover 100 cities selected from states/UTs as per their willingness.
- ◆ Phase II (April 2017 - March 2019) to cover additional 200 cities.
- ◆ Phase III (April 2019 - March 2022) to cover all other remaining cities.

Ministry, however, will have flexibility regarding inclusion of additional cities in earlier phases in case there is a resource backed demand from states/UTs.

Key Challenges

Shelter is the basic requirement for humans after food and clothing. After 70 years of Independence, India is still struggling with rising shelter problem without any concrete steps taken to tackle it. While successive governments in the past tried to address the issue of affordable housing and failed, the present government has set itself a steep target to achieve this goal by 2022.

The progress till now has been excruciatingly slow and its progress will depend on ramping up existing urban infrastructure, fast tracking approval processes and targeting the actual beneficiary. Various factors impeding PMAY from reaching its full potential and hindering the achievement of its targets are enlisted below:

Deregulation

A major impediment to real estate development in India remains the approval process. The government has rightfully laid great emphasis on improving India's ranking in the World Bank Global Ease of Doing Business Index and continuously monitors the same looking at improvements in ranking as a success. The same World Bank released an Ease of Obtaining Construction Permits Index. Here India ranks a shocking 185 out of 190 countries.

Scarcity of Land

Urban land mass is under severe constraint to meet the housing necessity of the country's population which is expanding rapidly. This is amongst the foremost reasons for slow progress of this initiative. Land is a precious commodity and its unavailability in metropolitan cities in India has affected development of affordable housing in areas where it is actually required.

Massive Capital Expenditure at Every Stage

A project of such magnitude requires huge investments and a large skill development program for timely completion. As of now large scale discrepancies are present in acquisition, design and planning, implementation of innovative technologies which have a direct impact on execution.

No Property Records

To avail interest subsidy on a home loan, proper title documents play a key role. However, land and property records are currently not digitized and remain in poor condition. This continues to be a major hindrance in the execution of the scheme laid out by PMAY. With most of the people dwelling in ancestral homes and the ownership in the name of their deceased parents or the slum dwellers with no property rights, such subsidies could not be availed.

Supply Side Challenges faced by Affordable Housing

- 1. Land and Approval Stage**
 - High cost of land.
 - Limited availability of suitable land parcels (within city limits).
 - Lengthy approval processes.
 - Disconnect between central and state policies
- 2. Development Stage**
 - Restrictive FAR and density norms.
 - Underdeveloped infrastructure (especially in the peripheral areas where these projects are located), thereby questioning project viability.
- 3. Execution Stage**
 - Limited avenues of credit/ low cost funding.
 - Low ability to absorb impact of fluctuating input costs, as margins are low.
 - Lack of right-skilled labor.
 - Limited use of advanced technology and prefabricated technology to speed up construction/cut costs.

Illegal Settlements

The underlying problem of the inability to achieve housing for all not only lies in lack of resources from the government but also participation of people. A large segment of the population that this scheme will eventually cater to prefer residing in slums located in the heart of cities to meet their day to day economic, commutation and security needs. This is the foremost reason why houses constructed by the government remain unoccupied.

Present Status

A mere 4.05 per cent of the over 20 lakh houses sanctioned for nine states under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Grameen (PMAY-G) in 2018 have been completed so far, according to the data of the Ministry of Rural Development.

Only 82,143 of the total 20,23,884 houses were completed in Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh were the worst performers. Despite a modest 10-house target, Haryana failed to construct even a single one. Uttar Pradesh also drew a blank when it came to the construction of 89,426 houses. Only 0.05 per cent (146) of the sanctioned 2,53,549 houses was completed in Chhattisgarh. Other states also did not log impressive performance. Madhya Pradesh and Odisha — the two best performers — managed 9.7 per cent and 9.08 per cent, respectively.

According to the Ministry of Urban Housing and Affairs, nearly three years into the PMAY for urban areas which promised "housing for all" by 2022, barely 8%, or 3 lakh of the 40.6 lakh houses targeted so far, have been constructed. While work is in progress

on 18 lakh or about 44% of the target. However, the data doesn't reveal the stage of construction for these houses.

Way Forward

Affordable housing has been a buzzword for more than a decade now, with successive governments looking to tap affordable housing as a medium to bridge the housing shortage gap in India —most of which is in the mid income and low-income categories. However, the segment hasn't really gained the required momentum to address this gap. A major reason has been the lack of private participation

in the segment. The PMAY has huge targets ahead of it that present huge opportunities as well. There is more than just housing at stake for the government given that the construction sector is a huge generator of employment. Jobs created under the PMAY would be much welcome in a situation where employment appears to be slowing down.

Housing finance companies and real estate builders have already seen a slowdown in the luxury housing segment. Affordable housing could provide a shot in the arm, at least for real estate developers with serious

intentions. Finally, for the middle to lower income group categories, the PMAY provides a significant opportunity for their dream to own a home. This dream could well be closer to reality.

General Studies Paper- I

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

General Studies Paper- II

Topic: Investment models.



5. RCEP AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON INDIA

Why in News?

There has been a growing clamour in the Indian industry as well as the government to exit RCEP. This is not the first time that government agencies or officials have opposed India joining the 16-member Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) grouping. After the meeting held on 30 and 31 August in Singapore, trade ministers of 16 nations instructed their negotiators to "exert utmost efforts" for early conclusion of the talks for the proposed mega trade deal. The broad agreement on the world's biggest trade deal may be reached at a summit of leaders from participating nations in November 2018. This will be six years after the negotiations began during the 21st Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in November 2012.

Background

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is an ASEAN-centered proposal for a regional free trade area. It includes the ten ASEAN member states and those

countries which have existing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with ASEAN — Australia, China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea and New Zealand. The negotiations are comprehensive, covering trade in goods and services; competition policy and investment; economic and technical cooperation; intellectual property and dispute settlement, among other issues.

The pact provides India an opportunity for closer integration into dynamic and thriving global and regional value chains, where its current presence is low. However, there are several considerations that India needs to keep in mind while undertaking the ongoing negotiations. India feels while most RCEP members want New Delhi to commit more to further liberalise its goods trade, they are reluctant to offer anything substantial in return in services trade, especially on unrestricted movement of skilled professionals that is of immense interest to India. As such, domestic industries — from steel to pharmaceuticals — have been criticising our various existing trade agreements with ASEAN, Japan and

South Korea on the grounds that India's trade deficit with these countries have only widened after these pacts came into force and there was little for domestic industry to benefit from.

Also, India had a record \$63-billion goods trade deficit with China in 2017-18. If, on top of this, a free trade agreement with China is effected through the RCEP (of which Beijing is a key member), cheap products will flood the market. With lower tariffs arising from RCEP, there is the risk of India's trade deficit with China being further exacerbated.

For its part, India has proposed to eliminate tariffs on 80% of products with a margin of 6%, depending on the level of development of the other country as part of the RCEP negotiations. This means India may have to scrap duties on 74% of goods from China in the long run. However, many RCEP members want India to commit to abolish duties on 92% of its goods, but are averse to allow Indian skilled professionals greater access to their markets.

India has already made it clear that it's opposed to an "early harvest". This means it wants agreements on all the three pillars of negotiations — goods, services and investment — be implemented only as a package, not one at a time. So even if a consensus is reached early on goods (which is what most nations want), India feels it shouldn't be enforced in isolation.

Final Negotiations of RCEP

India must not take the easiest way out on the trade deal and walk out of talks. Negotiations on RCEP, among 16 Asian and Pacific Ocean countries, have entered a decisive phase. India is among the countries that will have to take a call at this point. India's concerns with RCEP negotiations thus far are manifold, but some have been addressed.

- ◆ The first is the greater access Chinese goods will have to the Indian market, a problem given India's massive trade deficit. To circumvent this, given that India is the one country that doesn't have an FTA with China, the government has proposed a "differential market access" strategy for China, which others are inclined to accept. After the Wuhan summit, India and China have made progress on addressing the trade deficit, with China increasing access for Indian goods such as pharma and agricultural products.
- ◆ The second concern is about demands by other RCEP countries for lower customs duties on a number of products and greater access to the market than India has been willing to provide. On the other hand, the more developed RCEP countries such as Australia and Singapore have been unwilling to accommodate India's demands to liberalise their services regime and allow freer mobility of Indian workers.

Despite these concerns, the government must take into account the deeper strategic pitfalls of either slowing down India's RCEP engagement or walking out of the talks at this stage. Doing so would cut India out of the rules-making process for the RCEP and give China further space in the regional trade and security architecture. At a time when the U.S. has broken from the global concord on multilateral trade agreements, an Indian walkout would endanger the united message that RCEP countries, which represent 40% of the global GDP, would wish to send out. It would also be a sharp departure from India's "Act East" slogan and its extended outreach to ASEAN. India's strategy for RCEP in view of growing opposition to the trade deal from within and outside the government. India has held bilateral talks with China, Australia and New Zealand on RCEP tariff liberalization and is expected to hold more rounds of talks with these nations.

- ◆ China is India's biggest trading partner, accounting for almost 10% of overall trade. Sino-Indian bilateral trade increased from a mere \$1.8 billion in FY2000 to \$72 billion in FY2017. India's trade deficit with China, at \$52 billion, now accounts for almost half of its total trade deficit, rising from \$0.6 billion in 2000-01.
- ◆ India's exports to RCEP account for about 15% of its total exports and imports from RCEP comprise 35% of total imports. India's trade deficit with RCEP has risen from \$9 billion in FY05 to \$83 billion in FY17, of which China alone accounts for over 60% of the deficit.

China's Role in Intra-Regional Trade

Measured by value, intra-regional trade flows in Asia have risen in importance over the past two to three decades. On average, the share

of intra-regional trade in total Asian trade in goods has risen from under 50% in 1990 to around 60% in 2017, comparable to that of the European Union (EU). Meanwhile, Asia's share of world exports has risen from almost 23% in 1990 to more than 37% in 2017. Nonetheless, much of this increase was due to China's emergence as an export powerhouse and a key player in both intra-regional and extra-regional trade. Excluding China's exports as well as intra-regional export flows to China, Asia constituted only about one-fifth of total world exports throughout the 1990-2017 period. A similar pattern can be observed for imports.

Indeed, China has assumed an increasingly prominent role in the intra-regional trade landscape, especially after it joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. China's merchandise exports to the rest of Asia (ROA) rose from around 12% of total intra-regional exports in 1990 to around 15% in 2001. Thereafter, it has climbed steadily to close to 30% by 2017. At present, while China has clubbed with the ASEAN+1, ASEAN+3 and ASEAN+6, India is clubbed only under the ASEAN+6 framework. Compared with India, the Chinese have always enjoyed closer contact with the ASEAN through a versatile engagement policy that includes building up a variety of economic, political and cultural linkages. Officially, China wants to promote and has asked for 'ASEAN's leading role in regional cooperation' in East Asia under ASEAN+1 or ASEAN+3 framework. Beijing has developed and pushed for a range of 'practical cooperation' in the fields of infrastructure, connectivity, trade and economy, capital and information, transport and people-to-people exchanges.

Significance of RCEP for India

The ongoing trade dispute between the US and China is of particular concern for

emerging Asian economies which have prospered by being active participants in regional and global value chains (GVCs). To date, unlike China, India has not been able to fit prominently into the Asian GVCs. The initial expectation was that RCEP would be the catalyst for this to happen. However, there is a growing belief in policy circles in India that such trade agreements have been the cause of and may be part of the reason of the limited success of the much-touted “Make in India” scheme as well as the ongoing “job crisis”.

However, while India is certainly not wrong to push for greater services liberalization in the RCEP, the trade agreements per se ought not to be used as a scapegoat for India’s manufacturing and employment slump. Rather, what is to blame for India’s anaemic manufacturing performance and inability of India to plug effectively into regional global supply chains is the sustained supply-side distortions and rigidities as well as relatively high trade costs in India. Indian manufacturers consequently have found it hard to benefit from the trade liberalization efforts and instead have been faced with large-scale imports of cheaper goods. The fourth industrial revolution appears to be disrupting and shortening GVCs (unlike between 1980s and 2000s where the product life-cycle was being sub-divided into many tasks). Consequently, India should focus on leapfrogging and getting prepared for this Industry 4.0. One hopes that the proposed Make in India version 2.0 will be relatively more successful than the original version.

Assessment of RCEP

India has often failed to gain from such agreements. The rise of regional trade agreements (RTAs) globally coincided

with the end of the Uruguay round of WTO talks in the mid-1990s and their growth has often been explained as a result of slow progress in multilateral negotiations. RTAs here include both preferential trade agreements and free trade agreements (FTAs). The WTO defines RTAs as “reciprocal trade agreements between two or more partners”. While some policymakers and economists see RTAs as building-blocks to a multilateral trading system, RTAs also face criticism for being detrimental to the spirit of multilateral free trade as countries that are not part of a regional agreement find themselves at a disadvantage. This has often led countries to seek counter agreements to try and level the playing field.

While trade agreements might not lead to any increase in trade, they might still be pursued by countries prompted by fears of being locked out of preferential agreements. This is especially true in an era of rising protectionism and uncertainty.

There might be scope for India to increase its trade with the Asia-Pacific region, given that its level of integration with the region is relatively low. However, India has remained ambivalent about the RCEP, with officials expressing concern that it might actually harm India. India’s lack of enthusiasm seems to be driven by its past experience with RTAs. India’s existing agreements with South Korea, Japan and ASEAN are often deemed to have benefited the partner countries at India’s expense. The import-export ratio with these countries deteriorated in the years following the implementation of the trade agreements. Even as partner countries have benefited, Indian exports to these regions have remained lackluster.

Way Forward

Regional cooperation offers several benefits, for instance greater economic integration, frequent and easier people-to-people contact, sustainable peace and development at the regional level. A more holistic cost-benefit analysis is needed to know the potential impact of RCEP. India needs to be extra cautious and take into account geostrategic issues while moving ahead with the RCEP deal, as it would mean opening up the market to China.

NITI Aayog has argued that the India needs to rethink joining the RCEP as it will be disastrous to provide more market access to China, which is a key player in the grouping. Trade agreements are a means to promote bilateral trade, with both parties benefiting as a result of trade complementarities, with China, India’s trade seems to be skewed and China’s capacity overhang in most sectors may lead to a surge of imports into India with very limited access for Indian exports to the Chinese market.

In the ongoing dialogue, India must make a persuasive case since the bilateral trade deficit we have with China is of an exceptional kind. For RCEP members, giving India adequate time to enhance its trade capacity and competitiveness will mean a larger and better market for their products after the adjustment period is completed. With this provision, RCEP can fulfill the larger objective of being a potent instrument for growth and development of the Asian region.

General Studies Paper- II

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



6. VENEZUELA CRISIS: AN OVERVIEW

Why in News?

Venezuela, now in a fourth year of recession, is struggling with shortages of basic goods and public services are paralysed. As Chavez strived to transform the nation with what he called 21st century socialism, his populist policies began to take a more radical turn. He nationalised industries and bloated state bureaucracy at great national expense, all funded by high oil prices and unchecked borrowing. Venezuela became saddled with record-high levels of debt.

Venezuela's Crisis

The economic crisis in Venezuela arose between 2012 and 2013 and across the years it has shown that it is not only an economic but also an institutional, political and social crisis. The road to the crisis started during the presidency of Hugo Chavez and continued with the now President Nicolas Maduro, who keeps up the same policies of his predecessor. The crisis unfolded with the rising of different problems in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, such as the increase of unemployment, the financial crisis and the lack of essential food, hygiene and health products.

Since 2014, pressure on Mr. Maduro has been mounting as the economic crisis has left the country torn between die-hard "Chavistas" (leftist supporters of the former President) and an increasingly outraged majority no longer willing to forgive the socialists' excesses in return for government handouts.

As the economy worsened, the centre right-led opposition won control of the legislature in elections in December 2015. That set the stage for an intensifying political struggle as Mr. Maduro resisted lawmakers' efforts to legislate against him. Mr. Maduro

resisted opposition efforts to hold a referendum in time to remove him from power before the end of his term. Vatican-mediated negotiations also broke down with the sides accusing each other of bad faith.

The crisis escalated on March 30, 2017 when the Supreme Court tried to take over the powers of the National Assembly, the only lever of government Mr. Maduro and his allies do not control. The court partly backtracked after an international outcry, but the tension only increased when authorities slapped a political ban on opposition leader Henrique Capriles on April 7, 2017.

Economic Crisis

Hyperinflation is the biggest problem faced by Venezuela. The inflation rate there is expected to reach a stunning one million per cent this year, putting it on par with the crises of Zimbabwe in the 2000s and Germany in the 1920s, according to the International Monetary Fund. The government claims that the country is the victim of an "economic war" and that the major issues are due to opposition "plots" and American sanctions.

According to a report, Venezuela's imports are down 50% from a year ago. Venezuela's minimum wage is now about the equivalent of \$1 a month, making basics unaffordable for many. With a shortage of the import goods, the black market has got a free hand in the country. Prices have been doubling every 26 days on average.

Amid the growing crisis, the government issued new currency — with new clour notes and denomination — to keep up with the projected inflation. While earlier, Maduro had decided to remove three zeros from the bolivar currency, he later dropped

off five zeros. Venezuela also lauched a state-backed cryptocurrency called the petro. According to the government, the petro is backed by oil, gas, gold and diamonds and is meant to help overcome the US and the EU sanctions.

Mass Migration

Angered by the economic crisis in the country, many Venezuelans have started leaving the country. Of the 2.3 million Venezuelans living abroad, more than 1.6 million have fled the country since the crisis began in 2015, according to the UN. The pace of departures has accelerated in recent days, sparking a warning from the UN. The majority have crossed into neighbouring Colombia and then to Ecuador, Peru and Chile. Others have gone South to Brazil. The international community fears that the crisis will continue to get worse, living conditions will further fall and the mass emigration will intensify. All of these problems affect both the internal security of Venezuela and also the surrounding Latin American region. The mass influx of people from Venezuela has triggered a strong response from Ecuador and Peru.

The current crisis is often described as the worst in Venezuela's history and, with hundreds of thousands fleeing the country that is hard to dispute. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, has described the exodus as "one of Latin America's largest mass-population movements in history.

Increasing Crime Rate in Venezuela

As the country slips into poverty, many are turning towards crime to make money. There were almost 27,000 violent deaths in the country last year, with Venezuela having the second highest murder rate in the world after El Salvador.

Food and Medicine Shortage in Venezuela

A survey found that almost 90% of Venezuelans live in poverty and more than 60% surveyed said that they had woken up hungry because they did not have enough money to buy food. Apart from food, the country is also facing medicine shortage. The economic crisis has also hit the public health system, making medicine and equipment inaccessible to its people. The economic crisis is also hitting Venezuela's public health system the hardest. In the country's public hospitals, medicine and equipment are increasingly not available.

Timeline of important events

- **1998:** Hugo Chavez is elected president.
- **2013:** Chavez dies of cancer. Nicolás Maduro, his chosen successor, is narrowly elected President.
- **2014:** As oil prices keep falling and the economic crisis worsens, the government announces cuts in public spending.
- **2015:** An opposition coalition named "Democratic Unity Roundtable" wins two-thirds majority after parliamentary elections. This ends years of Chavist control of the National Assembly.
- **2016:** February: Maduro announced devaluation and petrol price rise to fight economic crisis.
- **2017:** Pro-Maduro Supreme Tribunal of Justice dissolves the National Assembly. Maduro announced that a Constitutional Assembly will be formed to replace the opposition-controlled National Assembly. This, coupled with the arrest of opposition leaders, increases the magnitude of the protests against Maduro asking for early presidential elections.
- **2018:** In face of the internal division in the opposition, Maduro decides to hold the presidential elections in May, earlier than previously established. Claiming that there will be electoral irregularities, the opposition decides to boycott the elections and asks the international community not to recognise them.

Major Parties Involved

The Government of Maduro

A main aim of the Chavist government in Venezuela is to maintain its position of power. In spite of the chaos in the country, Maduro still holds an approval rating of around 30%. The government has demonstrated that it is willing to use force to repress opposition protests. In spite of the economic problems, support from China and Russia coupled with this strong grip on the population help Maduro retain power.

The Venezuelan Opposition

The opposition movement has had more failures than successes during the Chavist rule. In 2008, opposition parties unified their forces in the MUD coalition, realising that they would not be able to stop Chavez separately. Opposition leaders like Leopoldo Lopez have been jailed and their protests repressed. Today, after divisions on issues like whether to participate in regional elections or not, the opposition is internally fractured. The main demand and soft opposition are to have free and fair elections, to end the political imprisonments and repression and to restore their ignored law and human rights.

Lima Group

This group of 17 American countries aims at finding a peaceful solution to the Venezuelan crisis. At the beginning of the last decade, Venezuela was the leader of the growing amount of leftist governments in Latin America; now, the trend has reversed and Venezuela is increasingly isolated in the region. The group criticizes the violations of political rights, human rights and democracy, supports the National Assembly and is in favour of excluding Venezuela from regional organisations. The members of MERCOSUR (Southern Common

Market) have decided to suspend Venezuela from their organisation. Every one in the group considers it potentially problematic for the region to have such an unstable country continue to worsen its situation.

What Does It Mean for the U.S. China and Russia?

First, the Venezuelan crisis is an important test of U.S. resolve in the region. Despite widespread recognition that the situation is deteriorating, the United States has taken little action. "Venezuela is the most serious crisis confronting the region; this could not come at a worse time for American geostrategic interests. While Washington and the Trump administration continue to kick the can down the road in regards to Latin America, China has begun to step in as a player in Latin America. Chile, Peru, Bolivia and Venezuela recently became members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), an organization led by China. These moves toward deeper integration between China and Latin America should sound alarm bells for the Trump administration.

Second, the crisis will be a test of China's "Go Out" policy. For years, the Chinese government has essentially kept the Maduro government afloat by buying Venezuelan oil. Indeed, China's "Go Out" policy has been a double edged sword for Beijing. On one hand, it has created unique opportunities to deepen bilateral relationships between China and Latin American countries. On the other hand, it has prompted risky loans that ended up hurting Chinese investors while propping up questionable regimes. Because the "Go Out" policy focuses on economic ties rather than Latin American countries' regime viability, the policy may expose China to unnecessary risks.

Third, the crisis will be a test of Latin America's new-found resolve to prosecute former national leaders for

crimes committed while in office. On July 17, U.S. President Donald Trump called Maduro out as “a bad leader who dreams of becoming a dictator,” while promising that the United States will “not stand by as Venezuela crumbles.” Although Washington has paid surprisingly little attention to the fast unraveling situation in Venezuela, Trump’s remarks offer some hope that outside pressure will start to build against Maduro’s disastrous tenure in power.

After distancing itself from the US, Venezuela was led by Chavez towards a closer alliance with Russia. The countries have strong military ties. Venezuela is the second largest importer of Russian weapons in the world. Ties are also ideological: Chavistas would like to see an end to US hegemony in the world and supporting Russia is, in Maduro’s words, “part of an effort to build a multipolar world”. For Russia, it is convenient to have a strong and dependent ally in the Americas region. Since the Venezuelan opposition has declared that links with Russia would be reduced if it got to power, Putin has a very big incentive to protect Maduro’s government politically, economically, militarily and diplomatically.

Impact on India

Any worsening of a debt crisis in Venezuelais unlikely to cause much imbalance in India’s trade or investment scenario, because of limited exposure. While India’s export to that country was never too high (even that has already plunged to just negligible levels over the past two years), import, too, has crashed. India’s exports to Venezuela crashed from \$258 million in 2014-15 to just \$62.22 million last fiscal, with pharmaceutical products accounting for less than a third of the supplies. Similarly, imports from Venezuela (almost entirely oil) plunged from \$13.94 billion in 2014-15 to just \$5.51

last fiscal. This indicates India still has some leverage against the Latin American nation to clear the dues.

Venezuela became an important source of oil for India over the past decade, when India increased its global share to become the world’s third-largest oil importer, after the U.S. and China. Diversifying its import sources became important in the wake of the Arab uprisings, because West Asia is India’s primary source of oil. When U.S. production of domestic shale oil increased, it cut its oil imports from Venezuela by 49%, providing an opportunity for India to step in. These market-driven factors are the primary reason for India’s increasing oil imports from Venezuela.

Unlike China, which loans billions to Venezuela and arranges currency swap deals to safeguard bilateral transactions, India’s relationship with Venezuela is cordial but lacks the vigour to arrive at similar deals. Even if such reforms are passed by Caracas, they are unlikely to affect India or the India-Venezuela bilateral much, since our engagement is limited mostly to oil. India is a major buyer; Venezuela is a major seller. For now, that supersedes everything else.

Way Ahead

When considering how to solve this issue from an international standpoint, it is important to understand that multiple problems exist at the same time: solutions are needed for the political, economic, and humanitarian & refugee crisis, which are interrelated yet have distinct aspects. At the same time, the international community should always prioritize peaceful solutions and try to directly interfere with local politics as little as possible. For Venezuela to start solving its problems, a return to a full democracy without restricted political rights is



necessary. To start rebuilding the country’s institutions, open and free elections should be held. Elections could be controlled by international supervisors to ensure their transparency and provide legitimacy to their results. In this way, a new political start for the country could take place.

It is important to find a way to get Venezuela to accept foreign aid. International humanitarian aid would be very important to alleviate the scarcity of food and medicine in the short term, so trying to get the country to accept it is very important. Regarding the refugee crisis of Venezuelan citizens in Brazil, Colombia and the Caribbean, the international community can also help. Organizations like the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees could intensify efforts to organise the refugee camps until the situation is stable enough for people to return or find a new home. The country needs to rebuild its institutions, political system and division of powers. Corruption and crime also demand structural changes. Economically, the country should diversify its economy so as to end its dependency on oil. Venezuela’s recovery could be supervised once the short-term crisis ends, to avoid having the country fall in the same mistakes of the past.

General Studies Paper- II

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



7. DRONE REGULATIONS I.0: FOSTERING DEVELOPMENT OF DRONES

Why in News?

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) issued the finalized guidelines for commercial use of drones, or remotely operated aircraft. The new policy is expected to open opportunities for several commercial sectors. Along with that, it can also create job opportunities. Unmanned and remotely piloted aircraft or drones finally received the policy nod to fly over Indian skies. The government formalised its first policy allowing drone flights. Prior to this, flying drones was a punishable offence under Aircraft Act and the Indian Penal Code, citing threat to security.

Introduction

India is known for its cost-effective technology and can become a global leader in drone technology innovations. Drones are a technology platform which has wide-ranging applications from photography to agriculture, from infrastructure asset maintenance to insurance. Drones range in size from very small and those that can carry multiple kilograms of payload.

Technological advancements are changing human lives in numerous ways – be it the way wars are fought or

businesses are conducted. Drones, also known as Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS), Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) or Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS), reflect this change most aptly. The military is no stranger to drones as forces have been using them for a variety of applications, such as surveillance and reconnaissance, in unknown or hostile territories, to track enemy movements, for border patrols, search and rescue missions and emergency services.

What are Drones?

The DGCA has defined remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) as an unmanned aircraft piloted from a remote pilot station. “The remotely piloted aircraft, its associated remote pilot station(s), command and control links and any other components forms a Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS),” the policy states. Also, as per the civil aviation requirements – issued under the provisions of Rule 15A and Rule 133A of the Aircraft Rules, 1937 – these RPAs will need a Unique Identification Number (UIN), Unmanned Aircraft Operator Permit (UAOP) and need to adhere to other operational requirements. The DGCA

has segregated drones into five different categories:

- i) **Nano:** Less than or equal to 250 grams.
- ii) **Micro:** From 250 grams to 2kg.
- iii) **Small:** From 2kg to 25kg.
- iv) **Medium:** From 25kg to 150kg.
- v) **Large:** Greater than 150kg.

All drones, other than in the nano category, shall apply to DGCA for import clearance and based on that Directorate General of Foreign Trade shall issue license for import of RPAs.

Drones in India: Evolution of Policy

Much like in other countries, drones have multiple applications in India in the civilian domain such as in the commercial sector for mapping and information gathering, in addition to the military domain where its uses include surveillance and intelligence collection. However, the use of drones has been fraught with problems and uncertainties in the absence of well-laid out standards, regulations and operating procedures. One of the first Indian notifications on the subject came in the form of a public notice issued by the office of the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), India’s civil aviation regulator, on 7th October 2014.

Two years later, the DGCA released a set of draft guidelines on 21st April 2016 on the use of UAVs for civilian or recreational purposes. After a year and a half of inaction on the previous guidelines, in October 2017, the DGCA released a new set of guidelines.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has been working for several years to establish a world leading drone ecosystem in India. To that end, it was necessary to develop global standard drone regulations that would



permit, will appropriate safeguards, the commercial application of various drone technologies. DGCA issued the finalized guidelines i.e. Drone Regulations 1.0 for commercial use of drones, or remotely operated aircraft and also setup committee under the chairmanship of the Shri Jayant Sinha will provide draft recommendations for Drone Regulations 2.0.

Drone Regulations 2.0

Going forward, the Drone Task Force under the chairmanship of the Minister of State Shri Jayant Sinha will provide draft recommendations for Drone Regulations 2.0.

These regulations will examine, inter alia, the following issues:

- Certification of safe and controlled operation of drone hardware and software.
- Air space management through automated operations linked into overall airspace management framework.
- Beyond visual-line-of-sight operations.
- Contribution to establishing global standards.
- Suggestions for modifications of existing Civil Aviation Requirements (CARs) and/or new CARs.

Drone Regulations 1.0

The Ministry of Civil Aviation announced the Drone Regulations 1.0 will enable the safe, commercial usage of drones starting December 1st, 2018. Drone Regulations 1.0 are intended to enable visual line-of-sight daytime-only and a maximum of 400 ft altitude operations. Air space has been partitioned into Red Zone (flying not permitted), Yellow Zone (controlled airspace) and Green Zone (automatic permission).

Key Features of Drone Regulations 1.0

- ◆ All Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) except nano and those owned by National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO), Aviation Research Centre (ARC) and Central Intelligence Agencies

are to be registered and issued with Unique Identification Number (UIN).

- ◆ Unmanned Aircraft Operator Permit (UAOP) shall be required for Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) operators except for nano RPAS operating below 50 ft., micro RPAS operating below 200 ft. and those owned by NTRO, ARC and Central Intelligence Agencies.
- ◆ The mandatory equipment required for operation of RPAS except nano category are:
 - ◆ Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) and Global Positioning System (GPS).
 - ◆ Return-To-Home (RTH).
 - ◆ Anti-collision light.
 - ◆ ID-Plate.
 - ◆ Flight controller with flight data logging capability.
 - ◆ Radio-Frequency Identification (RF ID) and SIM/ No-Permission No Take off (NPNT).
- ◆ As of now, RPAS to operate within visual line of sight (VLoS), during day time only and upto maximum 400 ft. altitude.
- ◆ For flying in controlled Airspace, filing of flight plan and obtaining Air Defence Clearance (ADC) /Flight Information Centre (FIC) number shall be necessary.
- ◆ Minimum manufacturing standards and training requirements of remote pilots of small and above categories of RPAS have been specified in the regulation.
- ◆ The regulation defines “No Drone Zones” around airports; near international border, Vijay Chowk in Delhi; State Secretariat Complex in State Capitals, strategic locations/ vital and military installations; etc.

Restricted Place for Drone

RPAs cannot be flown within 5km of the perimeters of the airports in

Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Hyderabad and within 3km from the perimeter of any other airport.

- ◆ It cannot fly within “permanent or temporary prohibited, restricted and danger areas” and within 25km from international border which includes the Line of Control (LoC), Line of Actual Control (LAC) and Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL).
- ◆ It cannot fly beyond 500 m into sea from the coast line and within 3 km from perimeter of military installations.
- ◆ It also cannot fly within a 5 km radius of the Vijay Chowk in Delhi, within 2 km from perimeter of strategic locations/ vital installations notified by Ministry of Home Affairs and within 3 km from radius of State Secretariat complexes.
- ◆ It also cannot be operated from a mobile platform such as a moving vehicle, ship or aircraft.
- ◆ Eco - sensitive zones around National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries are off-limits without prior permission.
- ◆ Violations will be acted on under relevant sections of the IPC and the Aircraft Act 1934.

There are exceptions for Unmanned Aircraft Operator Permit (UAOP).

- ◆ Nano RPA operating below 50 feet (15 m) in uncontrolled airspace / enclosed premises.
- ◆ Micro RPA operating below 200 feet (60 m) in uncontrolled airspace / enclosed premises – but will need to inform local police 24 hours prior.
- ◆ RPA owned and operated by NTRO, ARC and Central Intelligence Agencies but after intimating local police.

The DGCA has to issue the UAOP within seven working days provided all the documents are complete. This UAOP shall be valid for five years and not transferrable. The policy also stipulates that RPAs shall be flown only by someone over 18 years of age, having passed 10th exam in English and undergone ground/ practical training as approved by DGCA.

Global Governance of Drones

Given the growing demand for drones especially in the non-military sector, the need for policies and regulations has become more urgent. Thousands of drones and UAVs are already in use in many developed countries and yet governments and multilateral organisations have not developed a framework regulating this sector. The UAV landscape is changing much faster than the governments' ability to keep up with the changes. The net result is a policy void. Globally, rules and regulations around the use of drones are still in its infancy. Even though India is still a small player as compared to the US and China, New Delhi could take the initiative in framing rules of global governance partly because the evolution of drone technology could have serious security implications for India, but equally because it is better for India to lead the initiative and protect its interests.

So far, at the multilateral level, the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) is the lead platform for framing rules of the road for drone operations. Although it began its work on UAVs back in 2007, the first set of rules in the form of Circular 328 was issued only in 2017. Subsequently, it developed the Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) Manual. Circular 328 became the

first step towards regulating the sector. However, the more comprehensive set of standards and regulations is set to be promulgated in 2018. The ICAO must also look at best practices from other countries that could be added to the basket of norms and standards that might evolve in a gradual manner.

A handful of agencies around the world have begun contemplating on the regulatory aspects of drone operations. Recognising the enormous growth potential, the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) has been tasked by the European Commission to frame regulations for drone operations. The EASA published a comprehensive proposal in May 2017 covering the technical and operational aspects of operating drones. According to the proposal, all UAVs above 250 gm need to be registered. Even as EASA firms up the proposal into a law, it is the responsibility of individual member countries to set more operational restrictions such as air space limitations, in terms of, for instance, how many kilometres above the ground they can operate.

The Future of the UAV Industry in India

According to global market intelligence and advisory firm BIS Research, by 2021, the Indian UAV market will reach USD 885.7 million, while the global market size will touch USD 21.47 billion. India is one of the fastest-growing markets for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and one of the top UAV importers for military purposes worldwide.

The customer-focused innovation in UAV technology and the rise in demand for UAVs for surveillance, civil and commercial applications from global markets will drive this growth.

The technological advancement in UAVs and the demand for multi-functional UAVs have pushed manufacturers to invest heavily in the research and development of cost-effective and feature-rich UAVs.

Conclusion

There are various questions concerning ethics, regulation and implementation that exist in the domain of drones. These questions need to be carefully addressed, keeping in mind the extant legal and moral principles and adapting them to the rapid technological advances to create an effective governance regime for UAVs in India. Technology affects us in positive ways yet can also be disruptive; such is the case with Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA or more commonly known as drones). While drones are proving to be useful for military, commercial, civilian and even humanitarian activities, their unregulated use carries serious consequences that need to be addressed. It argues that ad-hoc measures taken by state and central agencies have been ineffective, whether in addressing issues of quality control, or response mechanisms in the event of an incident, questions of privacy and trespass, air traffic, terrorist threat management and legal liability.

General Studies Paper- III

Topic: Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

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SEVEN SUBJECTIVE QUESTIONS WITH MODEL ANSWERS

Decriminalization of Begging: A Step Towards Dignity

Q1. Many of the people who beg are those that have fallen out of the family structure (elderly, mentally challenged, disabled or abandoned). How can we stop them from begging as they can't have food without begging?

Hints:

- ◆ A person can be pushed into begging due to several factors and crisis circumstances. It can be the outcome of extreme poverty, loss of livelihood, prolonged illness especially mental health issues or disability, social/familial rejection or exclusion, violence, displacement and much more. These situations lead to drying up of financial resources and chances of person getting abandoned grow manifold. Families find it difficult to support a person and eventually abandon. Breaking down of family system with changed values is yet another reason for large number of persons reaching the state of destitution.
- ◆ Begging has grown at a significant rate in India. It is estimated that half a million people in India are beggars. The government, varied organizations, activist's claim that many measures have been taken to abolish begging and it has been successful to a certain extent. But as the citizens of this country, it is our moral responsibility to stop this menace and the best way is to stop giving alms. Meanwhile, let the government continue with its poverty alleviation schemes and make India a better place to live in.
- ◆ Basic needs of man have traditionally been accepted to be three — food, clothing and shelter. The right to life is guaranteed in any civilized society. That would take within its sweep the right to food, the right to clothing, the right to decent environment and a reasonable accommodation to live in.
- ◆ It remains a hard reality that the state has not been able to ensure even the bare essentials of the right to life to all its citizens. The only reason we are not getting

the desired result is because we are fighting with the disease rather than trying to find the cause of it. The root cause is poverty, which has many structural reasons: no access to education, social protection, discrimination based on caste and ethnicity, landlessness, physical and mental challenges and isolation.

- ◆ Priority should be given to eradication of extreme poverty. Small shelters have to be made and they need to be imparted skills that would help them land jobs. They should be made to earn their livelihood by working and not begging. The government and charitable organisations should look after people who are aged and physically challenged. The government should rehabilitate the aged, the ill and physically challenged among the beggars. Non-governmental organisations involved with charity works should step in.
- ◆ The Government should provide necessary vocational training to rehabilitate them. The expenses incurred should be borne by the government. People should discourage beggars. Begging flourishes because people tend to be generous. Awareness programmes need to be conducted for the poor to help them realise how shameful it is to beg.

Odisha's Proposal for Legislative Council

Q2. Evaluation of the role of any constitutional limb has necessarily to be done in the light of the function that it was intended to perform as also of whether the composition of that limb was such as to enable it to do so. This is equally true of the institution of second chambers in India, technically called the Upper Houses. Discuss.

Hints:

- ◆ In India the establishment of bicameral legislatures started under the Government of India Act, 1919, when the Central Legislature was converted from unicameral to bicameral, which established the council of state—now the Rajya Sabha in 1921.

- ◆ The historical evolution of the second chambers in India, the one at the Centre was never conceived by the British to be a representative of the constituent units even under a federal constitution. The composition of the Legislative Council also has entailed a very severe criticism. A blend of direct election, indirect election and nomination makes the Council a hotchpotch of representation. A chamber so heterogeneously constituted, neither serves the purpose of a revisory chamber nor acts as an effective brake against hasty legislation. The advocates of second chambers in the states emphatically assert that the second chambers in the states would be necessary to protect the interests of the people against the hasty and ill-considered legislation initiated and passed by the lower Houses.
- ◆ In the provinces or the states the second chambers were first conceived to be revising and obstructive bodies and were later retained either as representatives of classes or communities or later as purely revising and advisory chambers with a composition that could only remotely make them fit to play this role. In fact, the framers of the Indian Constitution were themselves uncertain of the utility of second chambers. Hence they made a provision for their abolition as well as their creation.
- ◆ They introduced bicameralism in certain states only as an experimental measure. They were of the view that if it proved to be a fruitful experiment, the rest of the states would also opt for second chambers. If there was any real benefit in having a Legislative Council, all states in the country should and arguably would, have a second chamber. The fact that there are only seven such Councils suggests the lack of any real advantage, apart from the absence of a broad political consensus on the issue. The process of creating an Upper House is lengthy. The problem of the second chamber has ever been the subject of great controversy.
- ◆ The state Legislative Councils were established to serve such a purpose. However, the second chambers in states have proved to be ornamental superfluities which a poor country like India can ill afford. The existence of a legislative council at times can be politically controversial. There are instances in different states where members of political parties, after failing to secure an Assembly seat in the election, have been nominated and reinstated in the legislative councils. This practice consequently negates the very purpose of the initiative to involve professionals from various walks of life.

Repositioning of North East Council: Enhancing Effectiveness

Q3. "The repositioning of North East Council will help it to become a more effective body for the North Eastern Region." Critically analyse.

Hints:

- ◆ The Union Cabinet had approved bringing the North East Council (NEC) directly under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Now, the Union Home Minister is the ex-officio chairman of the NEC while the Minister of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), who is a state minister with the independent charge, will be the vice chairman. Earlier, the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Minister used to be the chairman of the NEC.
- ◆ The North Eastern Council (NEC) is the nodal agency for the economic and social development of the North Eastern Region which consists of the eight states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.
- ◆ Over the last forty five years, NEC has been instrumental in setting in motion a new economic endeavor aimed at removing the basic handicaps that stood in the way of normal development of the region and has ushered in an era of new hope in this backward area, full of great potentialities.
- ◆ The inclusion of the Union Home Minister as the NEC chairman will help the forum to facilitate better coordination between the Central government and the state governments in planning development in the region. The change will also embolden the forum to discuss issues pertaining to Centre-State relations more comprehensively. Empowering the NEC to discuss inter-state matters have become crucial largely because of the existing complexities like the boundary disputes among states that often ignites tension among ethnic communities of the states.
- ◆ The repositioning of NEC has also seems to have been prompted by government's foreign policy. Since the region shares 90% of its boundary with our International neighbours, it is strategically important and it is only land link to East Asia, a priority region for our foreign policy. The region has also been turned India's gateway to East Asia. Many of our connectivity projects in Southeast Asia will be passing through North East region and hence the development of the region is important for us to maintain our position as a regional power, which is now being contested by China. With China launching Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), India is under pressure to make sub regional initiatives

like BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) and BBIN (Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal) successful as many of the members of BBIN and BIMSTEC are also members of BRI. For success of these initiatives development of North Eastern region is crucial.

- ◆ The revamping of the NEC is a timely move. Development of the North-Eastern region has been a priority for the present government. Given the ground realities, the NEC reconstitution should not be seen as the ultimate, but rather keep improving the system. This new arrangement is welcome because experts on the region have been suggesting that development in the region requires a different approach and also participation of all the stakeholders -the states as well as the Central government is crucial.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana: Housing for All

Q4. "The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana is a housing solution for all the citizens of India". Examines the scheme's deficiencies and suggests options that should be explored.

Hints:

- ◆ The government of India has approved construction of nearly 1.12 lakh more affordable houses for urban poor in eight states under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), with Andhra Pradesh bagging the largest share of over 37,000 housing units, the total number of houses being funded under the PMAY (urban) is close to 55 lakh across the country so far. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs is planning to introduce the provision of a lock-in period of five years for sale of houses under the PMAY.
- ◆ With growing population and urbanization government cannot ignore the weaker section of society. Government has taken a very significant step towards it by launching Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna, 'Housing for all scheme', especially planned for the people who can't afford a house under their financial circumstances. The PMAY is a housing solution for all the citizens of India.
- ◆ The scheme originally meant to cover buyers in the economically weaker section (annual income not exceeding INR3 lakhs) and lower income group (annual income not exceeding INR 6 lakhs) sections also included the mid-income group (MIG), with household income up to INR 18 lakhs per annum. The scheme known as credit linked subsidy scheme (CLSS) for middle income group (CLSS for MIG), will comprise of

two slabs covering anyone with a household income between INR 6 lakhs and INR 18 lakhs per annum to avail the benefits of subsidized loans.

- ◆ The progress till now has been excruciatingly slow and its progress will depend on ramping up existing urban infrastructure, fast tracking approval processes and targeting the actual beneficiary. Various factors impeding PMAY from reaching its full potential and hindering the achievement of its targets are enlisted below:
 - ◆ Deregulation.
 - ◆ Scarcity of land.
 - ◆ Massive capital expenditure at every stage.
 - ◆ No property records.
 - ◆ Illegal settlements.
- ◆ The PMAY has huge targets ahead of it that present huge opportunities as well. There is more than just housing at stake for the government given that the construction sector is a huge generator of employment. Jobs created under the PMAY would be much welcome in a situation where employment appears to be slowing down.

RCEP and its Implications on India

Q5. What do you understand by RCEP? India's concerns with RCEP negotiations thus far are manifold, but India must not take the easiest way out on the trade deal and walk out of talks. Discuss.

Hints:

- ◆ After the meeting held on 30 and 31 August in Singapore, trade ministers of 16 nations instructed their negotiators to "exert utmost efforts" for early conclusion of the talks for the proposed mega trade deal. The broad agreement on the world's biggest trade deal may be reached at a summit of leaders from participating nations in November 2018.
- ◆ The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is an (Association of South East Asian Nations) ASEAN-centered proposal for a regional free trade area. It includes the 10 ASEAN member states and those countries which have existing free trade agreements (FTAs) with ASEAN — Australia, China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea and New Zealand. The negotiations are comprehensive, covering trade in goods and services; competition policy and investment; economic and technical cooperation; intellectual property and dispute settlement, among other issues.
- ◆ The pact provides India an opportunity for closer integration into dynamic and thriving global and regional value chains, where its current presence is low.

However, there are several considerations that India needs to keep in mind while undertaking the ongoing negotiations. India feels while most RCEP members want New Delhi to commit more to further liberalise its goods trade, they are reluctant to offer anything substantial in return in services trade, especially on unrestricted movement of skilled professionals that is of immense interest to India.

- ◆ India must not take the easiest way out on the trade deal and walk out of talks. Negotiations on RCEP, among 16 Asian and Pacific Ocean countries, have entered a decisive phase. India is among the countries that will have to take a call at this point. India's concerns with RCEP negotiations thus far are manifold, but some have been addressed.
 - ◆ The first is the greater access Chinese goods will have to the Indian market, a problem given India's massive trade deficit. To circumvent this, given that India is the one country that doesn't have FTA with China, the government has proposed a "differential market access" strategy for China, which others are inclined to accept. After the Wuhan summit, India and China have made progress on addressing the trade deficit, with China increasing access for Indian goods such as pharma and agricultural products.
 - ◆ The second concern is about demands by other RCEP countries for lower customs duties on a number of products and greater access to the market than India has been willing to provide. On the other hand, the more developed RCEP countries such as Australia and Singapore have been unwilling to accommodate India's demands to liberalise their services regime and allow freer mobility of Indian workers.
- ◆ India has often failed to gain from such agreements. While some policymakers and economists see RTAs as building-blocks to a multilateral trading system, RTAs also face criticism for being detrimental to the spirit of multilateral free trade as countries that are not part of a regional agreement find themselves at a disadvantage. This has often led countries to seek counter agreements to try and level the playing field.
- ◆ Regional cooperation offers several benefits, for instance greater economic integration, frequent and easier people-to-people contact, sustainable peace and development at the regional level. A more holistic cost-benefit analysis is needed to know the potential impact of RCEP. India needs to be extra cautious and take into account geostrategic issues while moving ahead with the RCEP deal, as it would mean opening up the market to China.

Venezuela Crisis: An Overview

Q6. What is the Venezuela's economic and political crisis? Discuss the impact of Venezuela crisis on India's trade or investment scenario.

Hints:

- ◆ Venezuela, now in a fourth year of recession, is struggling with shortages of basic goods and public services are paralysed. The economic crisis in Venezuela arose between 2012 and 2013 and across the years it has shown that it is not only an economic but also an institutional, political and social crisis. The road to the crisis started during the Presidency of Hugo Chavez, and continued with the now President Nicolas Maduro, who keeps up the same policies of his predecessor.
- ◆ As Chavez strived to transform the nation with what he called 21st century socialism, his populist policies began to take a more radical turn. He nationalised industries and bloated state bureaucracy at great national expense, all funded by high oil prices and unchecked borrowing. Venezuela became saddled with record-high levels of debt.
- ◆ The crisis unfolded with the rising of different problems in the Venezuela, such as the increase of unemployment, the financial crisis and the lack of essential food, hygiene and health products.
- ◆ Hyperinflation is the biggest problem faced by Venezuela. The inflation rate there is expected to reach a stunning one million per cent this year, putting it on par with the crises of Zimbabwe in the 2000s and Germany in the 1920s, according to the International Monetary Fund.
- ◆ Amid the growing crisis, the government issued new currency — with new clour notes and denomination — to keep up with the projected inflation. While earlier, Maduro had decided to remove three zeros from the bolivar currency, he later dropped off five zeros. Venezuela also lauched a state-backed cryptocurrency called the petro. According to the government, the petro is backed by oil, gas, gold and diamonds and is meant to help overcome the US and EU sanctions.
- ◆ Angered by the economic crisis in the country, many Venezuelans have started leaving the country. Of the 2.3 million Venezuelans living abroad, more than 1.6 million have fled the country since the crisis began in 2015, according to the United Nations (UN).
- ◆ The economic crisis has also hit the public health system, making medicine and equipment inaccessible to its people. The economic crisis is also hitting Venezuela's public health system the hardest. In the country's public hospitals, medicine and equipment are increasingly not available.

- ◆ Any worsening of a debt crisis in Venezuela is unlikely to cause much imbalance in India's trade or investment scenario, because of limited exposure. While India's export to that country was never too high (even that has already plunged to just negligible levels over the past two years), import, too, has crashed. India's exports to Venezuela crashed from \$258 million in 2014-15 to just \$62.22 million last fiscal, with pharmaceutical products accounting for less than a third of the supplies. Similarly, imports from Venezuela (almost entirely oil) plunged from \$13.94 billion in 2014-15 to just \$5.51 last fiscal. This indicates India still has some leverage against the Latin American nation to clear the dues.
- ◆ When considering how to solve this issue from an international standpoint, it is important to understand that multiple problems exist at the same time: solutions are needed for the political, economic and humanitarian and refugee crisis, which are interrelated yet have distinct aspects. For Venezuela to start solving its problems, a return to a full democracy without restricted political rights is necessary. The country needs to rebuild its institutions, political system and division of powers. Corruption and crime also demand structural changes. Economically, the country should diversify its economy so as to end its dependency on oil.
- ◆ All Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) except nano and those owned by National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO), Aviation Research Centre (ARC) and Central Intelligence Agencies are to be registered and issued with Unique Identification Number (UIN).
- ◆ Unmanned Aircraft Operator Permit (UAOP) shall be required for Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) operators except for nano RPAS operating below 50 ft., micro RPAS operating below 200 ft. and those owned by NTRO, ARC and Central Intelligence Agencies.
- ◆ As of now, RPAS to operate within visual line of sight (VLoS), during day time only and upto maximum 400 ft. altitude.
- ◆ For flying in controlled Airspace, filing of flight plan and obtaining Air Defence Clearance (ADC) /Flight Information Centre (FIC) number shall be necessary.
- ◆ Technological advancements are changing human lives in numerous ways – be it the way wars are fought or businesses are conducted. Drones, also known as Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS), Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) or Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS), reflect this change most aptly. The military is no stranger to drones as forces have been using them for a variety of applications, such as surveillance and reconnaissance, in unknown or hostile territories, to track enemy movements, for border patrols, search and rescue missions and emergency services.
- ◆ India is known for its cost-effective technology and can become a global leader in drone technology innovations. Drones are a technology platform which has wide-ranging applications from photography to agriculture, from infrastructure asset maintenance to insurance. According to global market intelligence and advisory firm BIS Research, by 2021, the Indian UAV market will reach USD 885.7 million, while the global market size will touch USD 21.47 billion. India is one of the fastest-growing markets for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and one of the top UAV importers for military purposes worldwide.
- ◆ There are various questions concerning ethics, regulation and implementation that exist in the domain of drones. These questions need to be carefully addressed, keeping in mind the extant legal and moral principles and adapting them to the rapid technological advances to create an effective governance regime for UAVs in India.

Drone Regulations 1.0: Fostering Development of Drones

Q7. Discuss the regulatory mechanisms that are needed to ensure safe and secure drone operations in India, with emphasis on civil/commercial operations.

Hints:

- ◆ The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) issued the finalized guidelines i.e. Drone Regulations 1.0 for commercial use of drones, or remotely operated aircraft and also setup committee under the chairmanship of the Shri Jayant Sinha will provide draft recommendations for Drone Regulations 2.0.
- ◆ Drone Regulations 1.0 will enable the safe, commercial usage of drones starting December 1, 2018. Drone Regulations 1.0 are intended to enable visual line-of-sight daytime-only and a maximum of 400 ft altitude operations. Air space has been partitioned into Red Zone (flying not permitted), Yellow Zone (controlled airspace), and Green Zone (automatic permission).



SEVEN IMPORTANT NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL NEWS

NATIONAL

1. Indus Waters Treaty

India and Pakistan have agreed to undertake the Indus Waters Treaty mandated tours by their Commissioners in the Indus basin on both sides to resolve issues on

the various hydroelectric projects, including the Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai in Jammu and Kashmir.

India and Pakistan concluded the 115th meeting of the India-Pakistan Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) in Lahore from August 29-30. The Indian delegation was led by P.K. Saxena, the Indian Commissioner for Indus Waters. As per the provisions of the Indus Waters Treaty, 1960, technical discussions were held on implementation of various hydroelectric projects including Pakal Dul (1000 MW) and Lower Kalnai (48 MW) in Jammu and Kashmir.

About

The 1960 Indus Waters Treaty brokered by the World Bank and signed by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Pakistan's President Ayub Khan, administers how the waters of the Indus and its tributaries that flow in both the countries will be utilised.

Under the provisions of the Treaty, waters of the Eastern rivers — Sutlej, Beas and Ravi — had been allocated to India and the Western rivers — the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab — to Pakistan, except for certain non-consumptive uses for India.



2. Innovation Cell and ARIIA

Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has launched the Innovation Cell and Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA).

About Innovation cell

Innovation cell is MHRD's initiative and has been established at All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) premises with a purpose to systematically foster the culture of innovation in all higher education institutions (HEIs) across the country. The primary mandate of innovation cell is to encourage, inspire and nurture young students by exposing them to

new ideas and processes resulting in innovative activities in their formative years fostered through network of innovation clubs in higher educational institutions.

About Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA)

To ensure that innovation is primary fulcrum of all HEIs, MHRD has launched 'Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA)' to systematically rank education institutions and universities primarily on innovation related indicators. ARIIA considers all major indicators which are

commonly used globally to rank most innovative education institutions/universities in the world.

ARIIA ranking will certainly inspire Indian institutions to reorient their mind-set and build ecosystems to encourage high quality research, innovation and entrepreneurship. More than quantity, ARIIA will focus on quality of innovations and will try to measure the real impact created by these innovations nationally and internationally. Moreover, ARIIA will set tone and direction for institutions for future development for making them globally competitive and in forefront of innovation.

3. National REDD+ Strategy India

Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change has released 'National REDD+ Strategy', one of the key tools to fulfil the country's commitment of increasing forest covers in a time-bound manner under the Paris Agreement on climate change.

The National REDD+ policy aims to provide a roadmap for building comprehensive strategies for implementing REDD+ projects and programmes effectively in the country in the context of international development in this sector. The policy

alongwith the strategies will lead to REDD+ readiness in the country and enable India to gain from international REDD+ mechanism for its pro conservation policies and efforts in future at the same time create financial incentives to local communities which are in the forefront of conservation of forests.

In simple terms, REDD+ means "Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation", conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests and

enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries. REDD+ aims to achieve climate change mitigation by incentivizing forest conservation. The strategy seeks to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and also developing a roadmap for enhancement of forest carbon stocks and achieving sustainable management of forests through REDD+ actions. The National REDD+ Strategy will soon be communicated to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). ■

4. Marriage Certificate must for Official Work in Meghalaya

The state government in matrilineal Meghalaya has made it mandatory for married people to produce marriage certificates for all official purposes. The government has also decided to deny government jobs and benefits to men who have abandoned their families and are not providing for maintenance of their children. Some of these men live with other women.

- ◆ This step has been taken in view of increasing cases of broken

marriages and women being forced to fend for themselves and their children. The state has a large number of single mothers. Following abandonment, most men usually do not offer any financial support to their families. Some go to live with other women.

- ◆ The certificates will make it easier for abandoned women to fight for the maintenance of their children. Also, a man, who has abandoned

his family and is not taking care of the maintenance of his children, will not get government jobs and other government benefits.

Meghalaya is a matrilineal state and the only benefit that women here get is lineage. Still, in matters of property inherited from ancestors, women are just the custodians. ■

5. Project to Study Climate Change in Kerala

The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) is considering a Rs. 79-crore proposal to study the impact of climate change on Kerala. The project has been proposed by the National Institute of Science Communication and Information

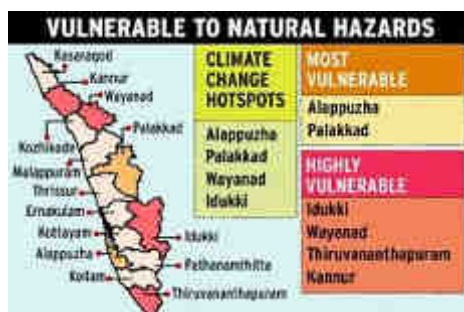
Resources (NISCAIR) under the Council of Scientific Industrial Research (CSIR).

- ◆ The ambitious project, spread over a period of three years, will assess the impact of climate change on agriculture (including plantation crops and spices); fisheries (marine and inland); industries; health; transport — vehicular and inland water transports; tourism; biodiversity; forestry; and landslips.
- ◆ It will analyse the trends in climatic elements, their spatial pattern and its relationship with extreme

events such as El Nino, cyclones etc.

- ◆ Researchers associated with the project will assess the monsoonal variations and its impact, besides looking at the climate change scenario on the islets of Kerala.

It assumes significance in the wake of devastating floods that ravaged many parts of the state as the research initiative will specifically assess the dynamics of riverine discharge and saline water incursion under the climate change scenario. ■



6. Reserve Bank of India's Annual Report

The Reserve Bank of India has revealed in its annual report that Rs 15.28 lakh crore, or 99 per cent of the Rs 15.44-lakh-crore scrapped currency notes, had come back to the central bank between the government's demonetisation decision and June 30,

2017. Besides, the value of bank notes in circulation has increased by 37.7% over the year, reaching Rs 18,037 lakh crore by the end of March 2018.

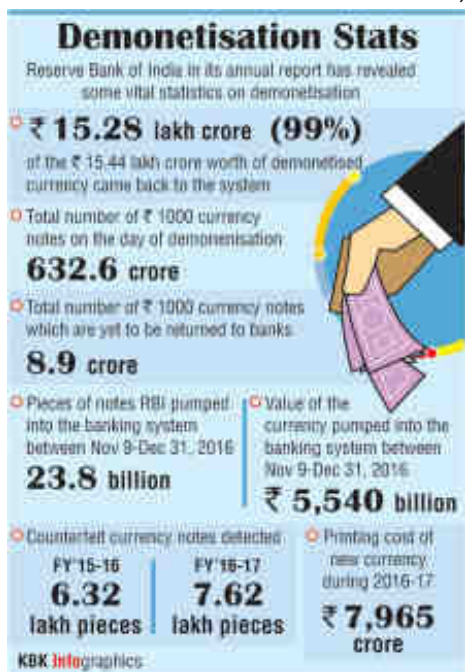
This makes a couple of things crystal clear. First, the hope that a large chunk of unaccounted money would not return to the system — arguably, the principal reason for the exercise — was almost wholly belied. As a result, the plan to transfer the arising surplus from the RBI to the Centre, which was not formally declared but strongly rumoured, was a non-starter.

Second, demonetisation was supposed to be the tonic that cured the financial system of a range of maladies, the government argued. Yet, over the last two years, at least three of its major claims have collapsed. It was supposed to flush out black money and end corruption. The government predicted that Rs. 3 lakh crore in currency would not return to

the banks. This has proved to be false, as most of the cash has returned.

Third, demonetisation was to help detect fake currency, which apparently funded terror and distorted the economy. The government claimed that at any point of time, there was Rs. 400 crore in fake currency notes floating in the economy. Nine months after demonetisation, it was claimed that Rs. 11.23 crore in fake currency had been detected. Now, the Reserve Bank reports a huge jump in fake Rs. 2,000 notes, which were introduced after demonetisation.

Fourth, demonetisation was to pave the way to a cashless economy and the gleaming new world of digital India. Two years later, the amount of cash with the public has reached a record high, the bank has claimed.



7. BIS Standards for the Services Sector

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has kicked off the process to set new standards to measure quality of services offered to consumers across different sectors, including telecom, aviation, e-commerce and healthcare.

Service sector is one of the key sectors of the Indian economy with a huge potential to grow into one of the largest markets of the world. Standards can play a major facilitative role in this regard. It is important that the standardisation needs and priorities of the sector are determined.

The initial focus will be the 12 champion services sectors identified by the government. These include IT, tourism & hospitality, transport & logistics, accounting & finance services,

legal services, communication services and construction.

Background

The process was initiated after concerns over lack of standardisation, particularly with regards to after-sales service, in their feedback to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs. In a poll, online community network LocalCircles found that in the absence of defined customer service standards in the country, a majority of consumers were not happy with after-sales services. As per the poll, 43% feel that mobile handset and computer manufacturers are the worst in after-sales services, followed by white goods firms (38%) and automobile companies (11%).

About 93% of respondents said brands should at least acknowledge complaints from users within 72 hours.

About BIS

BIS is the national standard body of India established under the BIS Act, 1986 for the harmonious development of the activities of standardization, marking and quality certification of goods and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. It is working under the aegis of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution. It also works as World Trade Organisation-Technical Barriers to Trade (WTO-TBT) enquiry point for India.

INTERNATIONAL

1. SAARC Agri Cooperative Business Forum

The first South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Agri Cooperative Business Forum was held in Kathmandu, Nepal. The theme of the Forum was the 'Organizing and Strengthening Family Farmers' Cooperatives to attain the Sustainable-Development-Goals-1 and 2 in South Asia'. It was co-organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Asian Farmers' Association with the support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

- ◆ The forum aims to share and learn from experiences of various organizations (from government and international development partners) in organizing and strengthening family farmers' agricultural cooperatives towards promoting sustainable incomes, livelihoods and rural development.



- ◆ The South Asia is home to around a quarter of the global population and majority of whom live in the rural areas and depend on natural resources like land, freshwater, coastal fisheries and forests and much of the agricultural production in the region is undertaken by small landholders.

SAARC stands for South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. It is a geopolitical cooperation maintained for mutual benefits between eight South Asian nations: India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Maldives.

2. Fourth Asian Electoral Stakeholders Forum

The fourth Asian electoral stakeholders forum (AESF-IV) was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka to discuss the state of elections and democracy in the region. The two-day forum was held for the first time in South Asia with support from the Election Commission of Sri Lanka and the Asian network for free elections (ANFREL). The theme of

the event was 'Advancing Election Transparency and Integrity: Promoting and Defending Democracy Together'.

The key objectives of AESF-IV are:

- ◆ To provide a venue for Election Management Bodies (EMBs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other stakeholders to share and learn about the present electoral challenges as well as best practices in the region.
- ◆ To develop and endorse the "Colombo Strategy to Promote and Defend Electoral Democracy in Asia".
- ◆ To institutionalize capacity building efforts in making elections more

meaningful and credible through cooperation among stakeholders.

- ◆ To promote inclusiveness in elections by paying special attention to sectoral cooperation.

About AESF

The Asian Electoral Stakeholder Forum (AESF) is a continuing engagement between election management bodies (EMBs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) in Asia. There have already been three successful gatherings since it was first launched in 2012: AESF-1 in Bangkok, Thailand (2012), AESF-2 in Dili, Timor-Leste (2015) and AESF-3 in Bali, Indonesia (2016).



3. Feminist Foreign Policy Manual of Sweden

Sweden has released a handbook of its "feminist foreign policy" for rights groups and foreign governments, showcasing lessons from the Scandinavian nation's flagship approach to promoting women's rights globally.

- ◆ Sweden began its feminist foreign policy in response to the discrimination and systematic subordination that still mark the

daily lives of countless women and girls around the world.

- ◆ It added that while gender equality was "an object in itself", it was "essential" in achieving more general government objectives, like peace, security and sustainable development.
- ◆ Its goals include the promotion of economic emancipation, fighting sexual violence and improving

women's political participation.

Projects cited in the manual include an action plan for five war-torn and post-conflict nations — Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and the Palestinian Territories — building in targets for women's rights and empowerment for the first time.

4. China May Scrap Limit on Number of Children

China appears poised to scrap the limit on the number of children couples can have. A draft civil code would end decades of controversial family planning policies. The wide-ranging code would get rid of a policy that has been enforced through fines but was also notorious for cases of forced abortions and sterilisation in the world's most populous country.

- ◆ The code omits any reference to "family planning" — the current policy which limits couples to

having no more than two children.

- ◆ The draft code would go to a vote at the rubber-stamp legislature, the National People's Congress, in 2020.
- ◆ The Communist Party began enforcing a one-child policy in 1979 to slow population growth.
- ◆ The limit was raised to two children in 2016 as the nation scrambled to rejuvenate its greying population of some 1.4 billion.
- ◆ Childbirths have not increased as

much as forecast since the two-child policy came into force.

- ◆ Other proposed changes include a one-month cooling off period before a divorce, during which either party can withdraw their application.
- ◆ Concerns are mounting that an ageing and shrinking workforce could slow down its economy, while gender imbalances could lead to social problems.

5. Indian Ocean Conference-2018

The third edition of Indian Ocean Conference-2018 was held on August 27th at Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam. The theme of the conference was 'Building Regional Architectures', particularly with regards to trade and commerce, security and governance.



This year, the Indian Ocean Conference has emphasised on better cooperation, strategic collaboration and governance architectures. It served a platform to the countries to come closer and exchange better views on the economic and strategic importance of the region and neighbourhood.

- ◆ The Indian Ocean, which borders Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Australia, is home to major sea lanes and choke points that are crucial to global trade.
- ◆ Nearly 40 per cent of the world's offshore petroleum is produced in

the Indian Ocean, which also has rich mineral deposits and fisheries.

About Indian Ocean Conference

Earlier, the conference was held in Singapore and Sri Lanka in 2016 and 2017 respectively. Organised by Indian Foundation along with the partners from Singapore, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. This is an initiative to bring the state leaders, diplomats and bureaucrats from across the region under one roof to strengthen the understanding among each other.

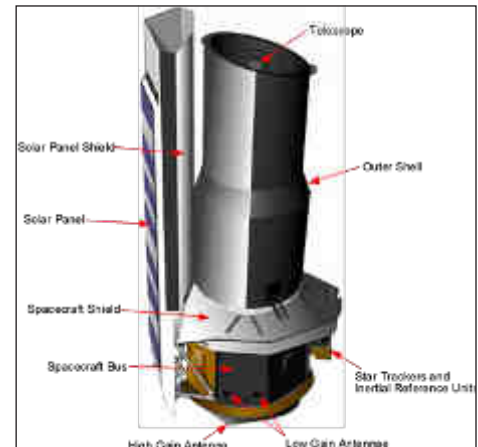
6. Spitzer Telescope

NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope – which was initially scheduled for 2.5-year primary mission – has completed 15 years of space exploration. Launched into a solar orbit in 2003, Spitzer has illuminated some of the oldest galaxies in the universe, revealed a new ring around Saturn and peered through shrouds of dust to study newborn stars and black holes. It assisted in the discovery of planets beyond our solar system, including the detection of seven Earth-size planets orbiting the star TRAPPIST-1, among other accomplishments. Spitzer has logged over 106,000 hours of observation time in the past 15 years.

The NASA Great Observatories programme comprises four large powerful astronomical telescopes – the Hubble Space Telescope, the

Compton Gamma Ray Observatory (not operational anymore), the Chandra X-ray Observatory and the Spitzer Space Telescope. These four telescopes have played an important role in shaping our current understanding of outer space, that great unknown, famously called the “final frontier” for humanity.

- ◆ The goal of the Great Observatories is to observe the universe in distinct wavelengths of light.
- ◆ Spitzer focuses on the infrared band, which normally represents heat radiation from objects.
- ◆ Spitzer's highly sensitive instruments allow scientists to peer into cosmic regions that are hidden from optical telescopes, including dusty stellar nurseries,



the centers of galaxies and newly forming planetary systems.

- ◆ Spitzer's infrared eyes also allows astronomers see cooler objects in space, like failed stars (brown dwarfs), extrasolar planets, giant molecular clouds and organic molecules that may hold the secret to life on other planets. ■

7. ICESat-2 Satellite

The new NASA's satellite, named 'Ice, Cloud and land Elevation Satellite-2 (ICESat-2)', will be launched on 15th September, 2018. The satellite will capture data from the Earth's poles about the seasonal and annual changes in land-ice elevation. It will do this at a mind-boggling rate of 3.6 million readings minute or 60,000 readings a second.

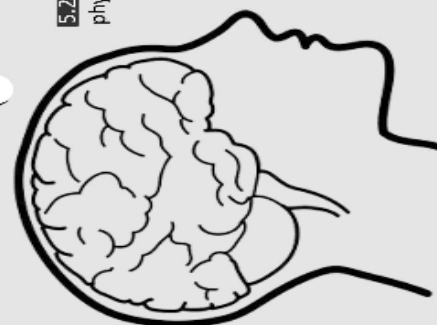
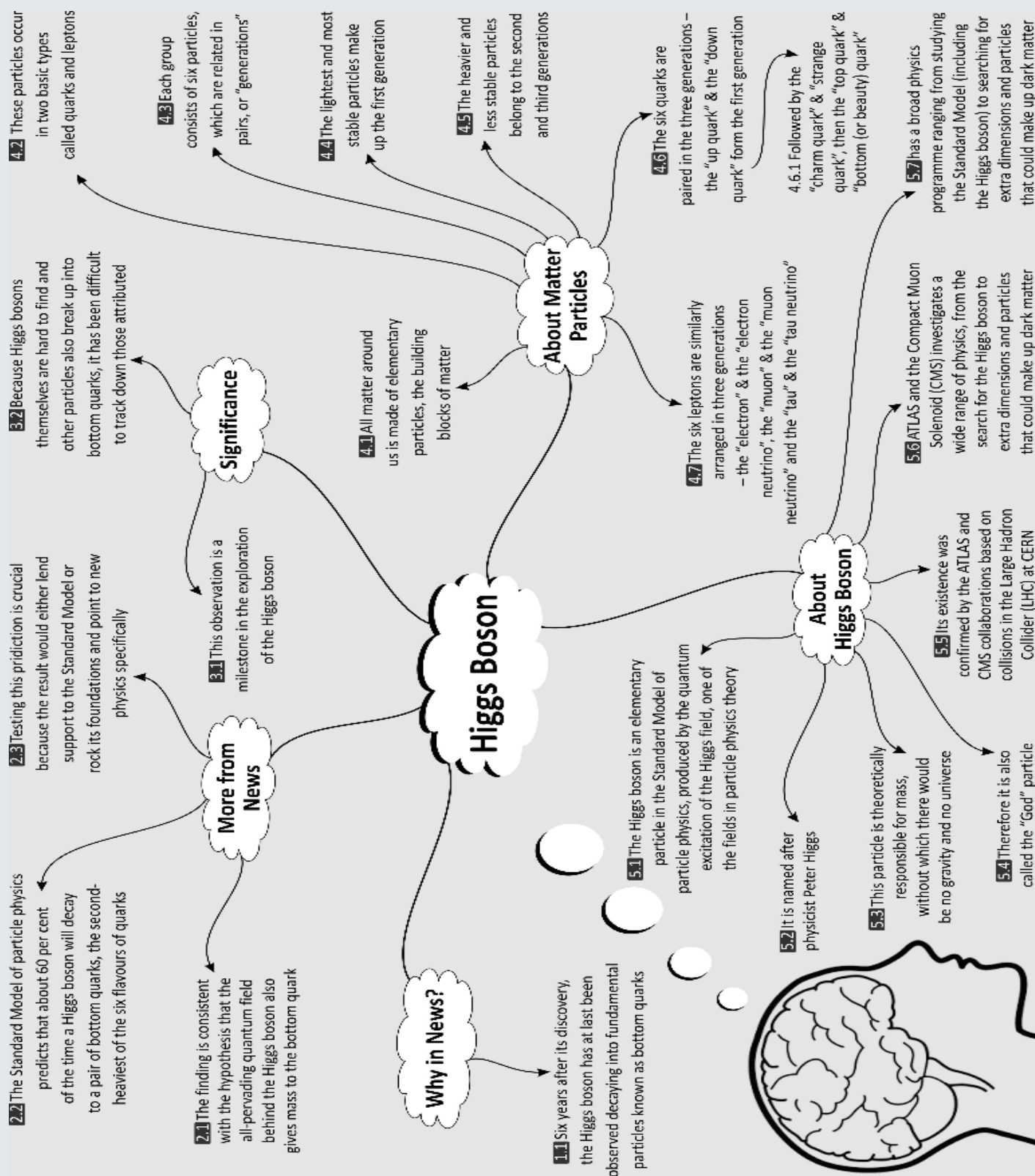
ICESat-2 will orbit the Earth flying over both Poles and measure the polar ice height along its path – for both seasonal and annual variations – four times each year. The researchers hope that the data collected will reduce the uncertainty in sea level forecasting, as well as support data for climate change studies.

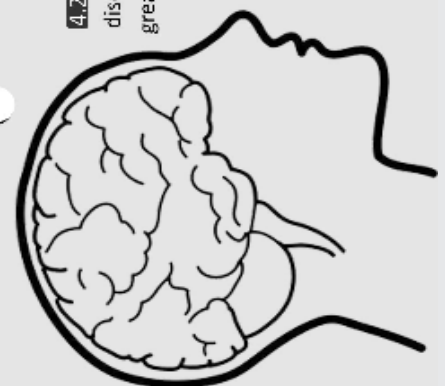
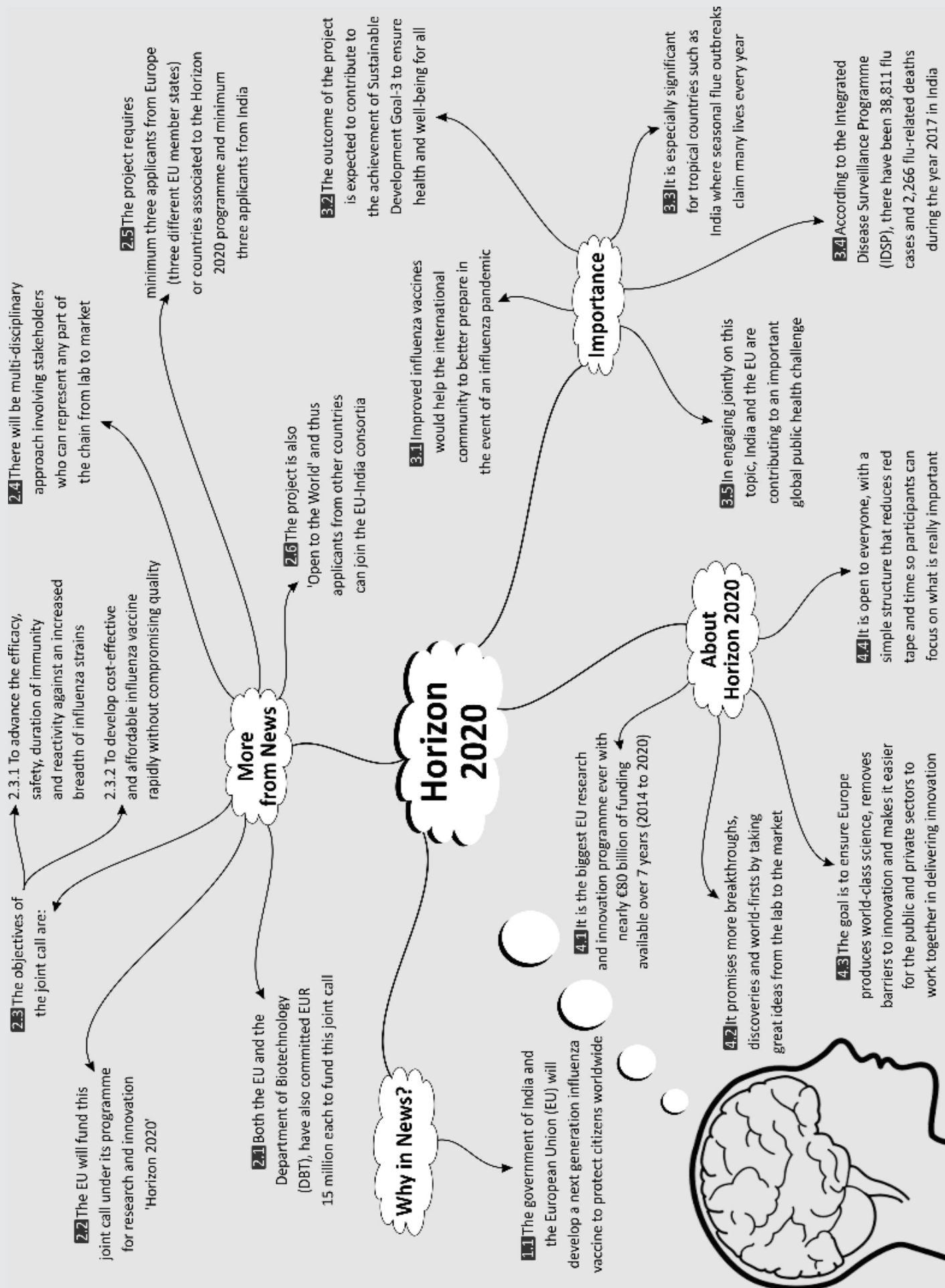
- ◆ It will fire as many as 10,000 such photons every second in green laser light, collecting elevation data from the photons' roundtrip to an accuracy of one-billionth of a second.
- ◆ When not observing the Poles, the satellite is also tasked with measuring ocean and land surfaces – even forests, using comparisons of the tops of trees vs the ground – and provide scientists with useful estimates of forest densities and how much carbon is stored in them.
- ◆ The ICESat-2 project is an extension and upgrade to the space agency's 15-year record of polar ice heights – taking over from the Operation

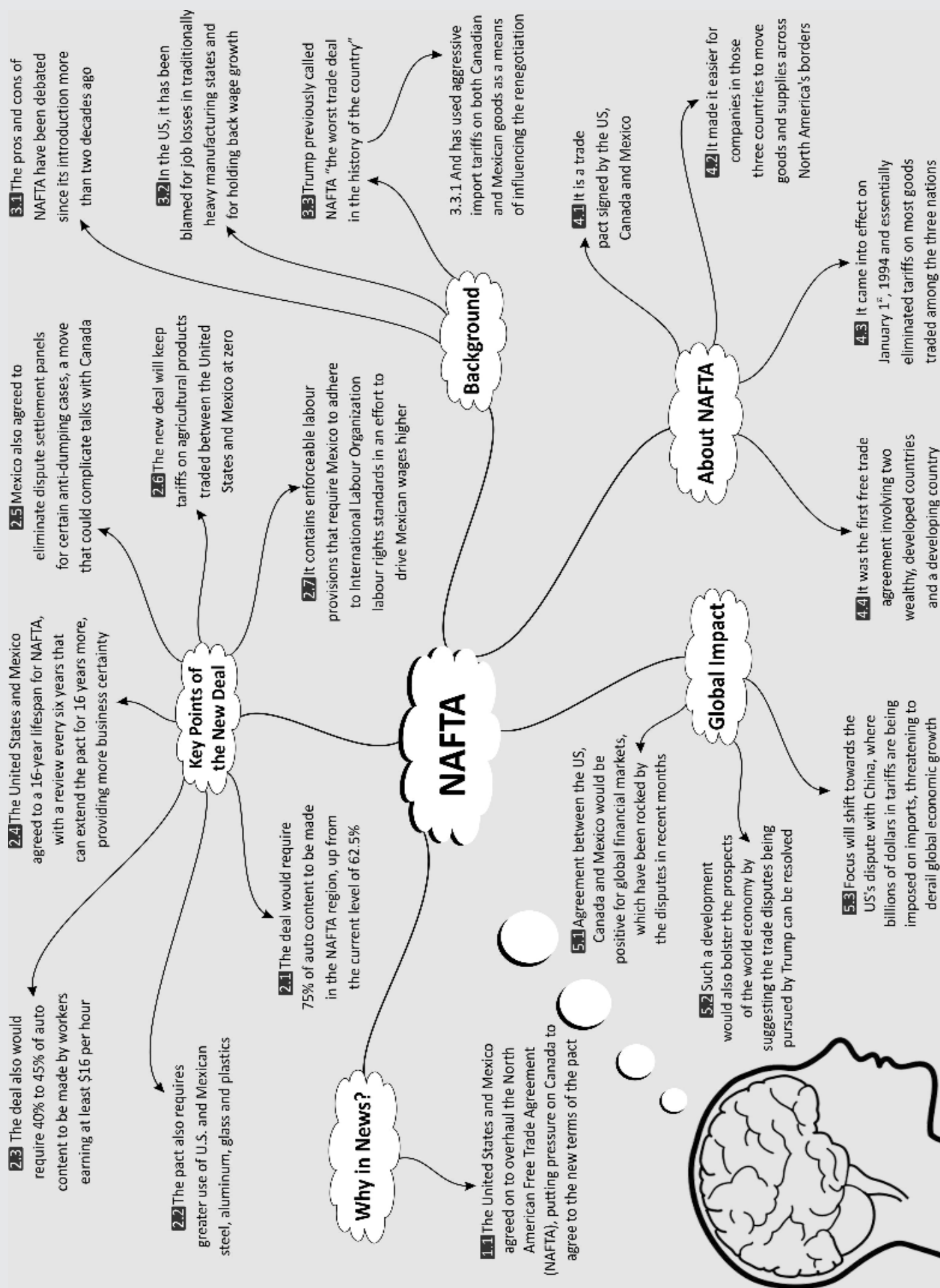
Ice Bridge that began in 2009, replacing the first ICESat mission that was started in 2003.

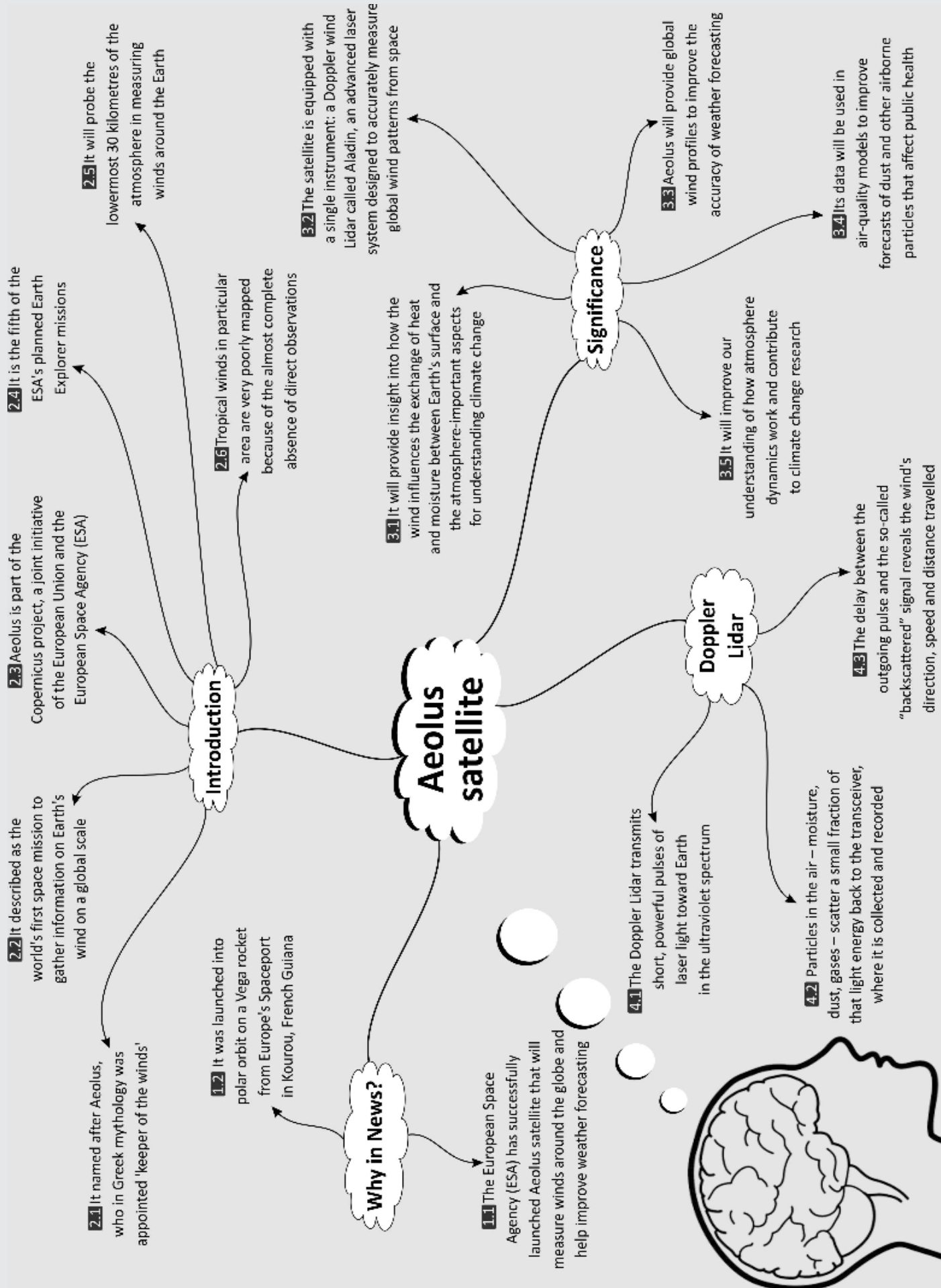
- ◆ The new and improved ICESat-2 has a much higher degree of accuracy, rendered by its Advanced Topographic Laser Altimeter System (ATLAS) to measure ice height using the time it takes for a photon to reflect off the bottom of the ice-bed and return to the satellite's detectors.
- ◆ Other societal needs that the satellite is capable of meeting, according to NASA, include measurements of snow and heights during floods and droughts, understanding wildfire behaviour, navigation and the condition of sea ice. ■

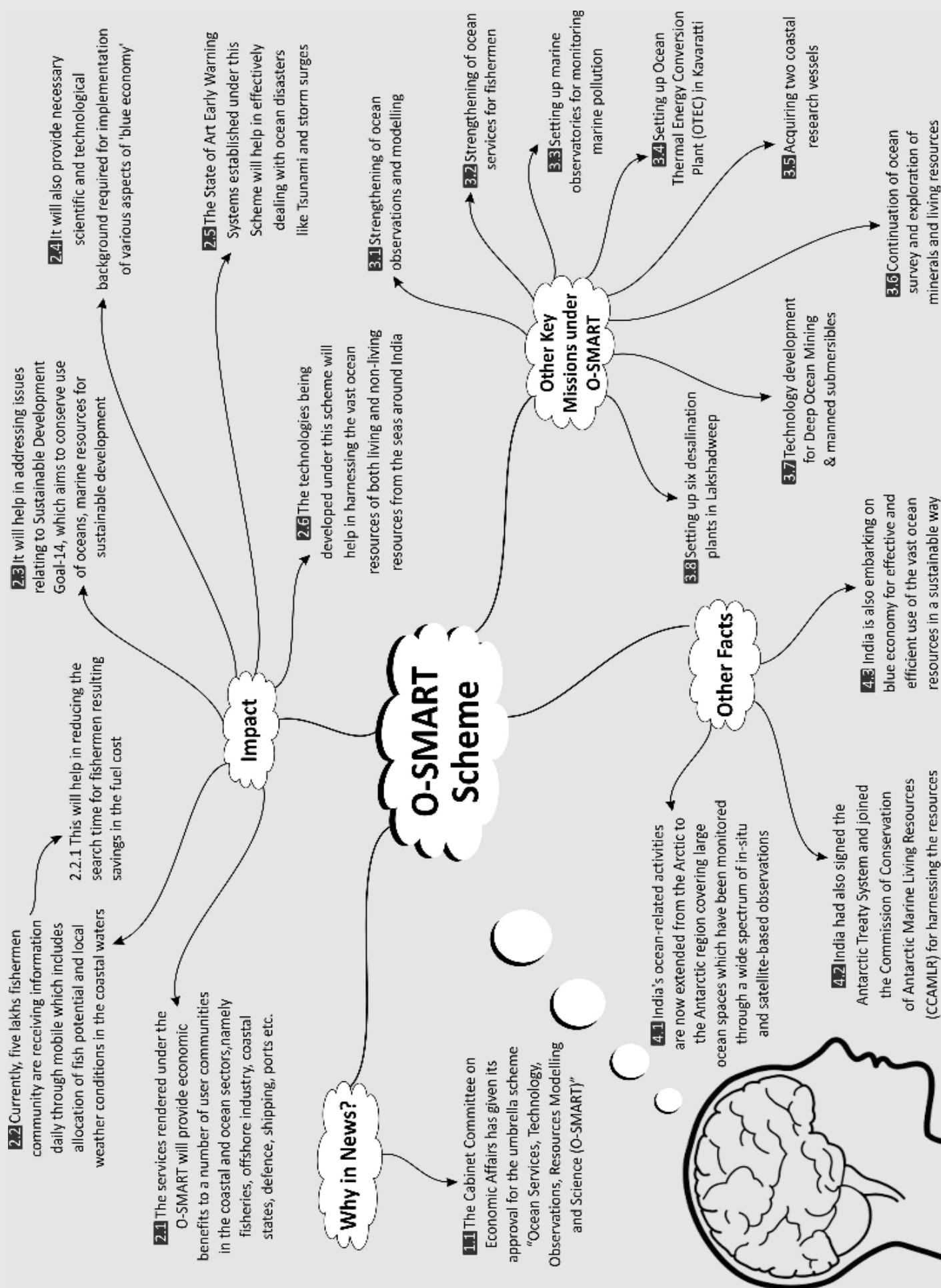
SEVEN BRAIN BOOSTERS

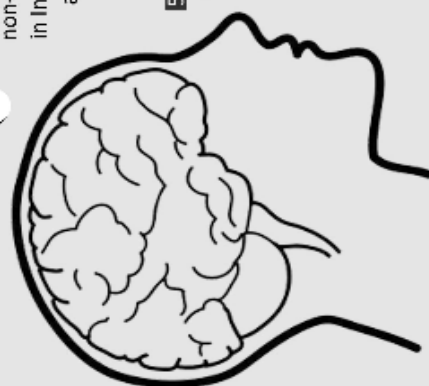
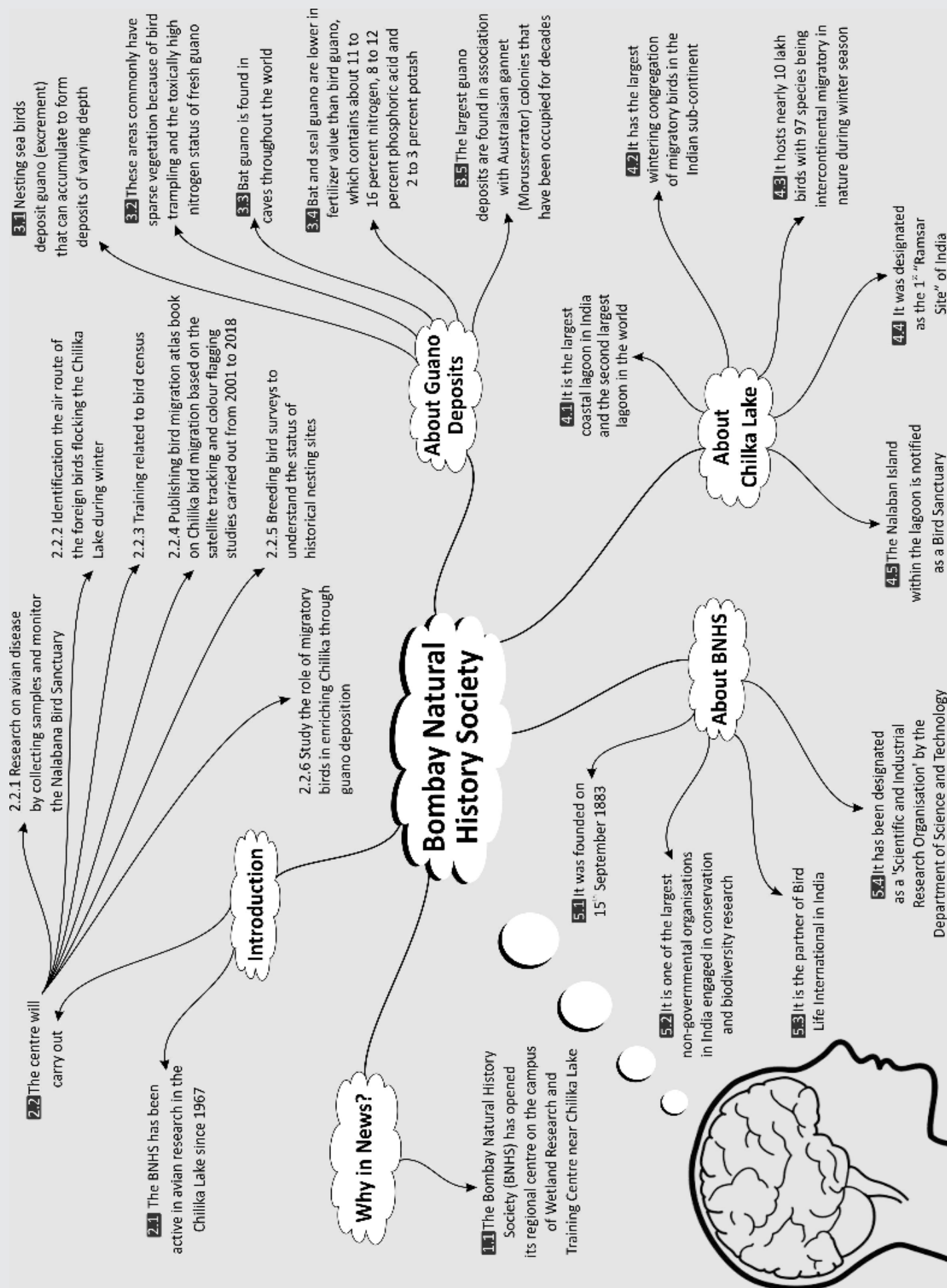


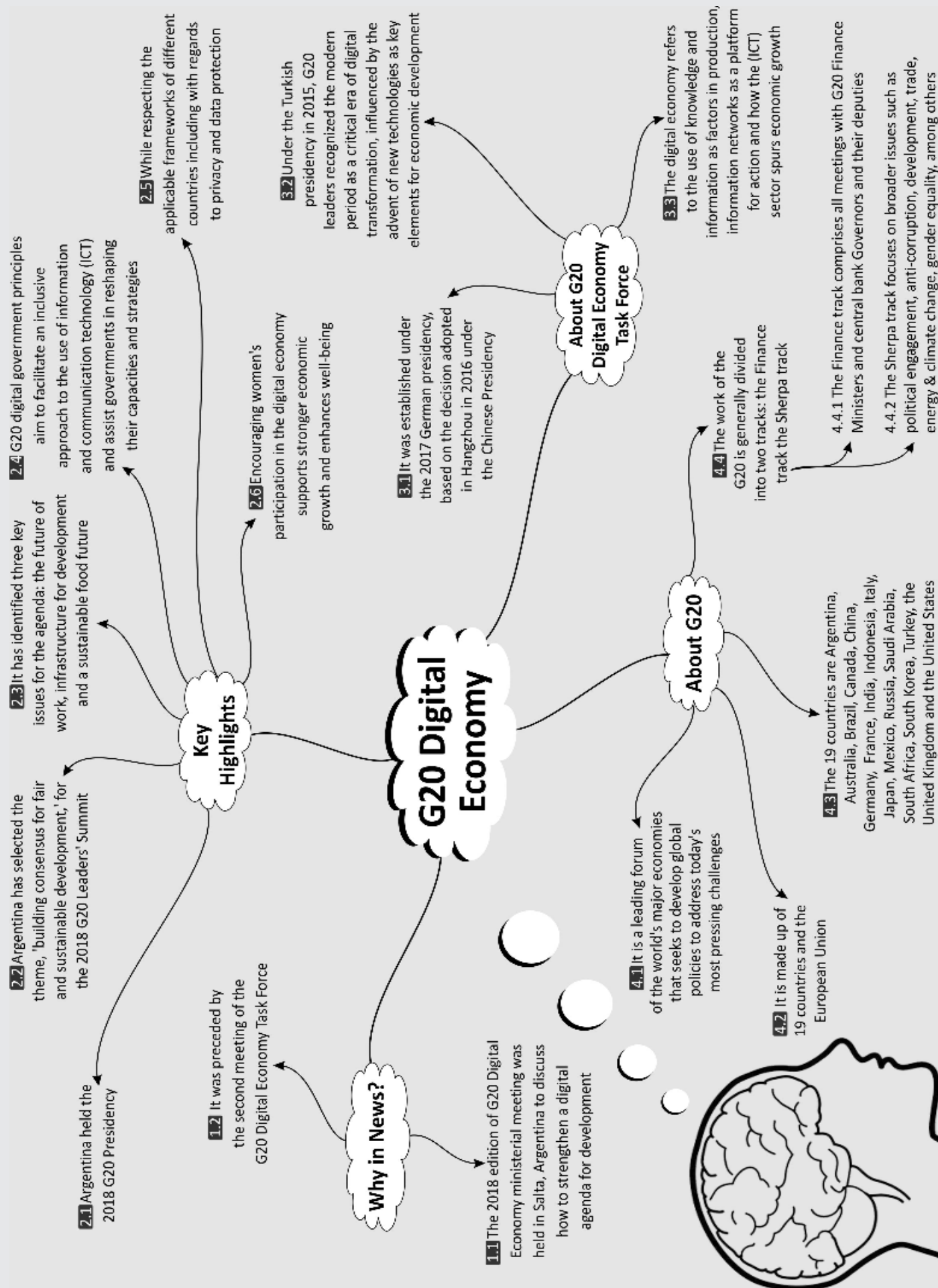












SEVEN MCQ's WITH EXPLANATORY ANSWERS

(Based on Brain Boosters)

Higgs Boson

Q1. With reference to the 'Higgs Boson', consider the following statements:

1. Six years after its discovery, the Higgs boson has at last been observed decaying into fundamental particles known as bottom quarks.
2. Higgs Boson is theoretically responsible for mass, without which there would be no gravity and no universe.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c)

Explanation: Both statements are correct. Six years after tracking down the Higgs boson, the subatomic particle that confers mass on matter, physicists said they have "at long last" witnessed it decaying into tiny bits called "bottom quarks". The predicted decay was observed at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) famous for the discovery of the Higgs particle in 2012.

Higgs Boson is theoretically responsible for mass, without which there would be no gravity and no universe. Therefore it is also called the "God" particle.

Horizon 2020

Q2. 'Horizon 2020' is sometimes mentioned in the news. Consider the following statements in this regard:

1. Under this programme, the government of India and World Health Organisation will develop a next generation influenza vaccine.
2. The outcome of the project is expected to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal-3 to ensure health and well-being for all.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statement 1 is not correct. The government of India and the European Union (EU) will

develop a next generation influenza vaccine to protect citizens worldwide. Both the EU and the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), government of India, have also committed EUR 15 million each to fund this joint call for the program named "Horizon 2020".

Statement 2 is correct. The outcome of the project is expected to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal-3 to ensure health and well-being for all and boost the Indian National Health Mission.

NAFTA

Q3. Consider the following statements in respect of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA):

1. It is a trade pact signed by the US, Canada and Mexico.
2. In the US, it has been appreciated for job creation in traditionally heavy manufacturing states such as Michigan.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a) Statement 1 is correct. It is an agreement signed by Canada, Mexico and the United States, creating a trilateral trade bloc in North America.

Statement 2 is not correct. The pros and cons of NAFTA have been hotly debated since its introduction. The deal has been blamed for job losses in traditionally heavy manufacturing states such as Michigan and for holding back wage growth for the roles that have remained.

Aeolus Satellite

Q4. With reference to the 'Aeolus Satellite', consider the following statements:

1. It is described as the world's first space mission to gather information on Earth's wind on a global scale.
2. Aeolus is part of the NASA's Copernicus project.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (a)

Explanation: Statement 1 is correct. The European Space Agency (ESA) has successfully launched the Earth explorer Aeolus satellite into polar orbit. It will use advanced laser technology to track global winds and improve weather forecasting. It described as the world's first space mission to gather information on Earth's wind on a global scale.

Statement 2 is not correct. Aeolus is part of the Copernicus project, a joint initiative of the European Union and the European Space Agency (ESA) to track environmental damage and aid disaster relief operations. The satellite is equipped with a single instrument: a Doppler wind Lidar — an advanced laser system designed to accurately measure global wind patterns from space.

O-SMART Scheme

Q5. Consider the following statements in respect of Ocean Services, Technology, Observations, Resources Modelling and Science (O-SMART):

1. The services under O-SMART will provide economic benefits to a number of user communities in the coastal areas.
2. It will also facilitate installation of Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion Plant (OTEC) in Kavaratti.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c)

Explanation: Both statements are correct. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved the umbrella scheme which comprised of ocean services, technology, observations, resources modeling and science under the O-SMART nomenclature. The services under O-SMART will provide economic benefits to a number of user communities in the coastal areas, namely fisheries as this will help in reducing the search time for fishermen resulting savings in the fuel cost.

Other key missions under O-SMART include, strengthening of ocean observations and modelling, setting up marine observatories for monitoring marine pollution, setting up Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion Plant (OTEC) in Kavaratti, technology development for Deep Ocean Mining and the setting up six desalination plants in Lakshadweep.

Bombay Natural History Society

Q6. With reference to the Bombay Natural History Society, consider the following statements:

1. It will start operating its regional centre on the campus of Wetland Research and Training Centre near Loktak Lake in Manipur.
2. It has been designated as a 'Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation' by the Department of Science and Technology.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b)

Explanation: Statement 1 is not correct. The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), one of India's premier avian research institutes, will start operating its regional centre on the campus of Wetland Research and Training Centre near Chilika Lake, Odisha.

Statement 2 is correct. It was founded on 15th September 1883. It has been designated as a Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (SIRO) by Department of Science & Technology and is the partner of BirdLife International in India.

G20 Digital Economy

Q7. Consider the following statements in respect of 'G20 Digital Economy':

1. The 2018 edition of G20 Digital Economy ministerial meeting was held in Salta, Argentina.
2. The Digital Economy Task Force (DETF) was established under the 2017 German presidency.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c)

Explanation: Both statements are correct. In the framework of the Argentinian presidency of G20, the 2018 edition of Digital Economy ministerial meeting is being held in Salta, Argentina.

The Digital Economy Task Force (DETF) was established under the 2017 German presidency, based on the decision adopted in Hangzhou in 2016 under the Chinese Presidency. In Antalya, under the Turkish presidency in 2015, G20 leaders recognized the modern period as a critical era of digital transformation, influenced by the advent of new technologies as key elements for economic development.



SEVEN IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIMS

1. Which company has launched Project Navlekha to help Indian news publishers to take their content online?

–Google

2. Which airline has conducted India's first-ever test flight powered by biojet fuel?

–Spicejet

3. Which Indian team won their fifth consecutive gold medal at the 18th Asian Games?

–Women's 4x400 relay

4. Who is the first Indian to win an Asiad gold in the women's heptathlon event?

–Swapna Barman

5. Which state government has sought revival of 'Cheetah Reintroduction Project'?

–Madhya Pradesh

6. The Lakhwar multi-purpose project is associated with which river?

–Yamuna

7. Which country hosted the fifth BIMSTEC Summit-2018?

–Sri Lanka

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SEVEN IMPORTANT AWARDS-2018

1. Pritzker Prize- 2018

- ◆ **Related Field:** Art of architecture
- ◆ **Related Organisation:** Hyatt Foundation
- ◆ **Award Contains:** A cash prize of \$100,000 (US) and a bronze medallion
- ◆ **Winners**
 - **2018:** Balkrishna Doshi
 - **2017:** Ramon Vilalta, Rafael Aranda and Carme Pigem
- ◆ **Facts**
 - It was established in 1979 by Pritzker family and sponsored by the Hyatt Foundation.
 - It is awarded each year to a living architect/s for significant achievement.
 - It is often referred to as “architecture’s Nobel” and “the profession’s highest honor.”

2. Kalidas Samman- 2018

- ◆ **Related Field:** Outstanding achievement in classical music, classical dance, theatre and plastic arts
- ◆ **Related Organisation:** Government of Madhya Pradesh
- ◆ **Winners**
 - **2018:** Anjolie Ela Menon
 - **2017:** Ram Gopal Bajaj
- ◆ **Facts**
 - It is presented annually by the government of Madhya Pradesh in India.
 - The award is named after renowned classical Sanskrit writer of ancient India, Kalidsa.
 - It was first awarded in 1980.

3. World Food Prize- 2018

- ◆ **Related Field:** For individuals whose breakthrough achievements alleviate hunger and promote global food security
- ◆ **Related Organisation:** Sponsor by General Foods Corporation
- ◆ **Award Contains:** A cash prize of \$250,000
- ◆ **Winners**
 - **2018:** Lawrence Haddad and Dr. David Nabarro
 - **2017:** Akinwumi Ayodeji Adesina
- ◆ **Facts**
 - Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, envisioned a prize that would honor those who have made significant and measurable contributions to improving the world's food supply.
 - His vision was realized when the World Food Prize was created in 1986 with sponsorship by General Foods Corporation.
 - It is an annual award.
 - Since its formation, 7 Indians have won it.
 - Dr Sanjaya Rajaram (2014), Dr Modadugu Vijay Gupta (2005), Dr Surinder K. Vasal (2000), Dr B. R. Barwale (1998), Dr Gurdev Khush (1996), Dr Verghese Kurien (1989) and Prof. M. S. Swaminathan (1987).

4. Dada SahebPhalke Awards 2018

- ◆ **Related Field:** Outstanding contribution to the growth and development of Indian cinema
- ◆ **Related Organisation:** Directorate of Film Festivals
- ◆ **Award Contains:** A Swarna Kamal (Golden Lotus) medallion, a shawl and a cash prize of Rs. 1,000,000

◆ **Winners**

- ◆ **2017:** Vinod Khanna
- ◆ **2016:** Kasinathuni Viswanath

◆ **Facts**

- It is India's highest award in cinema.
- First presented in 1969, the award was introduced by the government of India to commemorate Dadasaheb Phalke's contribution to Indian cinema.

5. Abel Prize-2018

- ◆ **Related Field:** Outstanding contributions to the field of mathematics
- ◆ **Related Organisation:** The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters
- ◆ **Award Contains:** A cash award of 6 Million Norwegian Kroner (NOK)
- ◆ **Winners**
 - **2018:** Robert P. Langlands (for his visionary program connecting representation theory to number theory)
 - **2017:** Yves Meyer (for his pivotal role in the development of the mathematical theory of wavelets)
- ◆ **Facts**
 - It was established by the Norwegian government in 2002 on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Niels Henrik Abel's birth.
 - In addition to honouring outstanding mathematicians, it shall contribute towards raising the status of mathematics in society and stimulating the interest of children and young people in mathematics.
 - Among the projects that get support is the Norwegian Mathematical Olympiad and the Abel Symposium.

6. Man Booker International Prize- 2018

- ◆ **Related Field:** Literature
- ◆ **Related Organisation:** Man Group, London
- ◆ **Award Contains:** The winner receives £50,000 as well as the £2,500 awarded to each of the shortlisted authors

◆ **Winners**

- **2018:** 'Flights' by Olga Tokarczuk, translated by Jennifer Croft
- **2017:** 'A Horse Walks into a Bar' by David Grossman, translated by Jessica Cohen

◆ **Facts**

- It was established in 2005, biannually rewarding an author for a body of work originally written in any language as long as it was widely available in English.
- From 2016, the prize became a translation prize, awarded annually for a single work of fiction, translated into English and published in the UK.
- Underlining the importance of translation, the £50,000 prize is divided equally between the author and the translator.

7. Jnanpith Award

- ◆ **Related Field:** Outstanding contribution towards literature
- ◆ **Related Organisation:** Bharatiya Jnanpith
- ◆ **Award Contains:** A cash prize of 11 lakh rupees, a citation plaque and a bronze replica of Saraswati
- ◆ **Winners**
 - Krishna Sobti for the year 2017
 - Shankha Ghosh for the year 2016
- ◆ **Facts**
 - It is India's highest literary honour.
 - Its name has been taken from Sanskrit words Jnana and Pitha which means knowledge-seat.
 - It was instituted in 1961 by Bharatiya Jnanpith trust founded by the Sahu Shanti Prasad Jain family that owns the Times of India newspaper group.
 - It is bestowed upon any Indian citizen who writes in any 22 official languages of India mentioned in VIII Schedule of Constitution.

SEVEN PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAIN EXAM

Answer each of the following questions in 200 words:

- Q1. "Social media may now have accepted part of the burden of responsibility that traditional media bears. It exists, however, in an entirely different form and context." Discuss.
- Q2. Even though there is growing cooperation and convergence, '2+2 dialogue' is still a relatively new relationship. Doubts and unfulfilled expectations abound on both sides. Discuss its potential for enhanced security and defence cooperation.
- Q3. India might be able to save on oil import costs by going for a greater petrol-ethanol mix, but that could strain the country's water resources and affect food availability. Discuss the other viable options for this scenario.
- Q4. To reclaim our place as the leader in the realm of education and ideas, we must stop blindly aping the West. We must deepen our understanding of our intellectual heritage. Discuss it in the context of the revitalisation of the education system.
- Q5. With the likelihood of extreme weather patterns increasing because of global warming, operational management of dams deserves equal importance. Discuss it in the context of India's preparedness for flood disasters.
- Q6. What do you understand by 'biosimilars'? Discuss the importance of 'biosimilars' for Indian pharma industry?
- Q7. Fuel prices jump as rupee hits another low, driven by rise in global crude prices and political uncertainty. Discuss how these factors impact the national economy and India's options for addressing the situation.

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AN INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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