

**CURRENT EVENTS  
AND  
ANALYSIS  
(June 2020)  
PART - 2**

**Editor**

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## **JUNE 2020 CURRENT AFFAIRS – PART 2**

<u><b>Index</b></u>	<u><b>Page No:</b></u>
<u><b>FOREIGN RELATIONS:</b></u>	
<u><b>China-India:</b></u>	
Border Clashes Between Indian and Chinese Troops	4
Curbing Chinese Imports	5
China’s Investments in Indian Start ups at US \$ 4.6 billion by 2019	6
<u><b>India-UN:</b></u>	
India Elected as Non-Permanent Member of United Nations Security Council	6
<u><b>Indo-USA:</b></u>	
US Launches Investigation into Digital Services Tax Levied by India and Some Other Countries	8
<u><b>Indo-Pakistan:</b></u>	
India Pakistan Bilateral Relations Deteriorate	9
<u><b>Indo-Bhutan:</b></u>	
India and Bhutan Sign Pact for the Construction of Kholongchhu Hydroelectric Project	10
<u><b>Indo-Australia:</b></u>	
India Australia Virtual Bilateral Summit	10
<u><b>NATIONAL POLITY:</b></u>	
<u><b>PMCARES Fund:</b></u>	
PMCARES Fund Not a Public Authority under Right to Information (RTI) Act: PMO	11
<u><b>Human Rights:</b></u>	
Custodial Deaths in Tamil Nadu Rise Calls for Police Accountability	13
<u><b>Civil Services:</b></u>	
Punjab Government Sets up Civil Service Board	14
<u><b>Grievance Redressal:</b></u>	
Punjab Government Approves Comprehensive Public Grievance Redressal Policy	16
<u><b>SAGY:</b></u>	
Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) Implementation Poor Due to Lack of Interest, and Funds	17
<u><b>Panchayat Raj &amp; Rural Development:</b></u>	
Merger of Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Ministries Proposed	17
<u><b>SOCIAL SECTOR:</b></u>	
<u><b>Higher Education:</b></u>	
Ranking of Higher Educational Institutions Released	18
Online Degree Course in Data Science and Programming Launched	19

**School Education:**

\$ 500 Million World Bank Assistance to Improve Learning Outcomes in Six States 20

**Healthcare:**

Depression: Reasons and Solution 20

**SOCIAL ISSUES:**

**Women:**

Task Force Set up to Examine Woman's Age of Marriage, Motherhood and Related Issues 22

**SC's and ST's:**

Government Moots Monetary Allowance to Poorest SC and ST Households 22

**Culture & Heritage:**

6<sup>th</sup> International Yoga Day Observed 23

**STATES:**

**Telangana:**

Telangana IT Exports at 1.28 Lakh Crore in 2019-20 24

**INTERNATIONAL POLITY:**

**USA:**

US Suspends H1B and other Non-Immigration Visas to Preserve Jobs for American Workers 24

**China:**

China Reiterates Objections to THAD Missiles Deployment in South Korea 26

China Provides Tariff Exemption for 97 Per cent of Exports from Bangladesh Exports 27

China Joins UN Arms Trade Treaty 28

**G-7 Summit:**

US Postpones G-7 Summit, Wants India and Other Countries to Join 29

**SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

**HEALTH:**

**Covid-19:**

World Grapples with COVID-19 29

**Vaccine Trials:**

Covaxin Approved for Clinical Human Trials 34

**Testing:**

Rapid Antigen Tests Approved by IMCR 36

ICMR Expands the Ambit of COVID-19 Testing to Include All Symptomatic Persons 37

**Treatment:**

Government Approves Favipiravir for Restricted Emergency Use 38

Government Approves Use of Dexamethasone for COVID-19 38

**Mortality:**

Role of Cytokine Storms in COVID-19 Mortality 39

**SPACE:**

Reforms Announced in the Space Sector to Boost Private Sector Participation 39

**World Space Technology:**

China Successfully Launched Last Satellite of Navigation Satellite System, BeiDou 40

**DEFENCE:**

Mareech, Advanced Anti-Torpedo Defence System, Inducted into Indian Navy 41

**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:**

India Joins Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) 41

**ENVIRONMENT:**

**Ganga Rejuvenation:**

World Bank Approves Additional US \$ 400 Million to Rejuvenate River Ganga 41

**Conservation Reserve:**

Tillari Forest Area Declared as a Conservation Reserve Area 42

**Waste Management:**

India's First Online Waste Exchange Platform Launched in Andhra Pradesh 42

**EPI:**

India Ranked 168 in Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 43

**Questions for Practice:**

Mains Practice Questions: 43

Prelims Practice Questions: 44

**MISCELLANEOUS**

National Persons 46

International Awards 46

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## **FOREIGN RELATIONS:**

### **China-India:**

#### **Border Clashes Between Indian and Chinese Troops**

On May 5, 2020 in eastern Ladakh, and

On May 9, 2020, in Muguthang valley in North Sikkim

clashes broke out between the troops of India and China.

In these clashes, a few Indian and Chinese soldiers were injured.

On June 15, and 16, 2020 mid night, in the clash with the Chinese troops in Galwan Valley in Ladakh, twenty Indian warriors along with Colonel Santosh Babu were killed. Chinese soldiers also died whose number was not disclosed.

The cause for Galwan clash was the Chinese troops have not removed the tent which they agreed to remove. Hence, Indian troops led by Colonel Santosh Babu went there to ask them to shift the tent which led to Galwan clash.

These clashes are because of border disputes between India and China which in turn are due to lack of mutually acceptable demarcated border. There is only Line of Actual Control (LAC) which separates territories under the control of China, and India.



In 1962 war Chinese troops occupied Aksai Chin area of Ladakh which we still consider belongs to India. After this occupation, LAC came into existence. Hence, LAC is not a mutually acceptable border.

In 1962 war, China also occupied North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), later named as Arunachal Pradesh by India.

As China achieved its objective of occupying Aksai Chin area, China unilaterally declared ceasefire on November 20, 1962, and withdrew from NEFA.

In 2013, China occupied 640 Sq Km in Eastern Ladakh by unilaterally shifting L A C in Eastern Ladakh.

Because of the secret shifting of Line of Actual Control by China, India laid roads nearer to the Line of Actual Control to move troops to the border when required, and to keep watch on unilateral shifting of LAC by China. At Galwan, India laid a road leading to an airfield in October, 2019, despite Chinese objections.

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As India laid these roads, the Chinese Government blamed India for the clashes stating that Indian forces have “illegally constructed defence facilities across the border into Chinese territory in the Galwan valley”.

Pan Gong Lake (Lake is called Tso in Tibetan language) is another dispute as India claims four mountain ridges (called finger points as they slightly resemble fingers from a distance). China also claims fourth mountain ridge along with 5, 6, 7, and 8 as two thirds of the lake is in China, and one third of the lake is in India. In this Pan Gong Lake area, Indian and Chinese troops clashed in May, 2020 causing injuries to a few Indian troops who were evacuated by helicopter for treatment.

### Curbing Chinese Imports

- The border clashes between India and China resulted in killing of 20 Indian troops led to demands for curbing imports from China.

#### **India China Trade:**

- Bilateral Trade between India and China was US \$ 92.6 billion in 2019.
- Exports to China : 17.9 Billion
- Imports from China : 74.7 Billion
- **Trade Deficit : 56.8 Billion**

#### **Indian Exports to China**

- Mainly primary goods and raw materials like cotton, iron ore, fish, petroleum products, iron and steel, chemicals, gems and jewellery, etc.

#### **Indian Imports from China**

- **Mainly intermediate and finished goods** like electrical machinery, telecom equipment, mobile phones, electronic components, fertilisers, pharmaceutical ingredients, automobile components, etc.

#### **Why India Imports from China?**

- Imports from China are cheaper by 30 to 70 per cent when compared with other countries.
- **Cost of manufacturing is cheaper in China** due to **economies of scale, state subsidies, and grants, and low labour costs due to liberal labour laws.**
- Mass production of goods brings down production costs.
- Companies get grants, cheap loans, and land at low prices.

#### **Is Curbing Imports from China Possible?**

- **Curbing Chinese imports is not possible** due to the huge dependency across various sectors at present.
- **Imports are mainly due to** non availability of the products domestically or due to higher prices even if they are available.
- **Alternative imports** from other countries are either costly by 30 to 70 per cent.
- But, **import dependence can be reduced in the long term** by encouraging domestic production of imported products at competitive prices in the long term.

#### **Recent Measure Taken by India to Reduce Import Dependence:**

- Even prior to the border clashes, the Government initiated two major schemes to reduce dependence on imports of **pharmaceutical ingredients, and electronics and semiconductor components.**

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### **Electronic Components and Semiconductors Industry:**

- Scheme for Promotion of manufacturing of Electronic Components and Semiconductors (SPECS).
- Under this scheme, the Government provides an incentive of 25% on capital expenditure on plant, machinery, equipment, associated utilities and technology, including for Research & Development to the industrial units making investment for manufacturing of electronic components, semiconductors, specialised sub-assemblies and capital goods for these items, in the specified categories.
- Production Incentive Scheme (PIS) for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing has been launched under which the Government will provide an incentive of 4 to 6 per cent of income on incremental sales of goods produced in India for a period of 5 years.

### **Pharmaceutical Industry:**

- Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme has been launched for promotion of domestic manufacturing of critical Drug Intermediates. Incentive up to 20 per cent over incremental sales would be given for 6 years.
- 3 mega Bulk Drug parks have also been approved under which the Government would provide common facilities like effluent treatment plant, solvent recovery plant, distillation plant, etc. Common facilities reduce the cost of manufacturing as each industry need not set up these facilities.

### **China's Investments in Indian Start ups at US \$ 4.6 billion by 2019**

- Chinese investments in Indian Start ups increased by 12 times in the last four years from
- US \$ 381 Million to
- US \$ 4.2 Billion.
- Majority of the unicorns in India (17 out of 24) are currently backed by both corporates and investment firms from China, predominantly Alibaba and Tencent.
- Unicorns are the start-ups that have a valuation of USD 1 billion or above.
- So far, Alibaba and its affiliate Ant Financial along with others invested over USD 2.6 billion in four Indian unicorns : Paytm, Snapdeal, BigBasket and Zomato.
- Tencent alongside others invested more than USD 2.4 billion in five unicorns : Ola, Swiggy, Hike, Dream11 and BYJU's.
- Other notable Chinese investors active in the Indian start-up ecosystem include Meituan-Dianping, Didi Chuxing, Fosun, Shunwei Capital, Hillhouse Capital Group, China Lodging Group, and China-Eurasia Economic Cooperation Fund.

### **India-UN:**

### **India Elected as Non-Permanent Member of United Nations Security Council**

- In June 2020, India was elected as a **non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** for a **two year term** i.e. 2021-22.
- This is the 8<sup>th</sup> time that India got elected as non-permanent member of the United Nations. The most recent was in 2011-12.
- India got the support of 184 out of the 192 countries which participated in the voting.

### **What is non-permanent membership of UNSC?**

- The UN Security Council has 15 members of which 5 are permanent members and 10 are non-permanent members.

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### **5 Permanent Members:**

- United States of America (USA), United Kingdom, France, Russia and China.

### **Non-Permanent Members:**

- 10 non-permanent members are elected from the member countries of the United Nations for a two year term.
- Each year the General Assembly, which consists of all the members of the United Nations, elects 5 non permanent members (out of total 10) for a two year term. This means, every year, 5 out of 10 non permanent members retire and new members are elected.

### **Distribution of Non Permanent Seats:**

- The 10 non-permanent seats are distributed on a regional basis as follows:
  - a) five for African and Asian States;
  - b) one for Eastern European States;
  - c) two for the Latin American and Caribbean States; and
  - d) two for Western European and other States.

### **Functions of United Nations Security Council (UNSC):**

- **Maintaining international peace and security** is the **primary responsibility** of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
- When a complaint concerning a threat to peace is brought before it, the Council's first action is usually to recommend that the parties try to reach agreement by peaceful means. The Council may:
  - a) set forth principles for such an agreement;
  - b) undertake investigation and mediation, in some cases;
  - c) dispatch a mission;
  - d) appoint special envoys; or
  - e) request the Secretary-General to use his good offices to achieve a pacific settlement of the dispute.
- When a dispute leads to hostilities, the Council's primary concern is to bring them to an end as soon as possible. In that case, the Council may:
  - a) issue ceasefire directives that can help prevent an escalation of the conflict;
  - b) dispatch military observers or a peacekeeping force to help reduce tensions, separate opposing forces and establish a calm in which peaceful settlements may be sought.
- Beyond this, the Council may opt for enforcement measures, including:
  - a) **economic sanctions, arms embargoes, financial penalties and restrictions, and travel bans;**
  - b) **severance of diplomatic relations;**
  - c) **blockade;** or
  - d) **even collective military action.**

Focus of above actions should be on **those responsible for the policies or practices** condemned by the international community, while minimizing the impact of the measures taken on other parts of the population and economy.

### **Additional Information:**

#### **About United Nations:**

- The United Nations was founded in 1945 after the end of the Second World War.

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- It currently has 193 member states.
  - New States are admitted to membership in the UN by a decision of the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council. (In international relations countries are also referred as States).

### **Functions**

According to the Charter, the United Nations has four purposes:

1. to maintain international peace and security;
2. to develop friendly relations among nations;
3. to cooperate in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights;
4. and to be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations.

All members of the United Nations agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council.

### **Organs of United Nations:**

The United Nations has 6 main organs. These are

1. General Assembly,
2. Security Council,
3. Economic and Social Council,
4. Trusteeship Council,
5. International Court of Justice, and
6. UN Secretariat.

All were established in 1945 when the UN was founded.

### **Indo-USA:**

## **US Launches Investigation into Digital Services Tax Levied by India and Some Other Countries**

- On June 2, 2020, United States launched investigations into digital service tax levied India and some other countries under Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974.
- India imposed a new tax of 2% from April 1, 2020 on online sale of goods and services by e-commerce companies which do not have permanent establishment in India if their aggregate revenues are more than 2 crore per annum.
- The new tax affects the revenues of
  - Online sellers of goods like Amazon, Alibaba.com, e-Bay, etc;
  - online streaming/ content service providers such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Audible, etc;
  - online travel aggregators such as Trivago, TripAdvisor, Agoda, Bookings.com, etc

### **What is Section 301 of US Trade Act of 1974?**

- Under Section 301 of US Trade Act of 1974, the Office of US Trade Representative can initiate investigation to determine whether acts, policies, and practices of a foreign country are **unreasonable or discriminatory and burden or restrict U.S. commerce.**
- **US can take retaliatory actions and impose trade sanctions** if the actions of countries under investigation are found to be unreasonable and burden US commerce with these countries.

### **Countries under Investigation:**

- Austria, Brazil, the Czech Republic, the European Union, India, Indonesia, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

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### **Digital Service Tax is called Equalisation in India.**

- Digital Service Tax is called Equalisation in India.
- It was first introduced in 2016 on digital advertising.
- Companies like Google, Facebook, Yahoo were levied equalisation levy of 6 per cent on the fee advertisers pay to these companies.
- It was called equalisation levy to create a level playing field. Companies located in India pay service tax while companies like Google, Facebook collect money from their overseas offices and did not pay any tax as they do not have permanent establishments in India.
- On April 1, 2020, Equalisation revenue of 2 per cent was levied on revenues of e-commerce companies which do not have permanent establishment in India.

### **Indo-Pakistan:**

#### **India Pakistan Bilateral Relations Deteriorate**

- Bilateral relations between India and Pakistan deteriorated further with both India and Pakistan deciding to halve diplomatic missions in each others' capital in June 2020.
- The Indian diplomatic mission strength in Pakistan would be reduced to 55.
- The last time this kind of reduction of diplomats was carried out was in 2001, after the attack on Indian Parliament by Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorists.

#### **Recent Downslide in India Pakistan Relations:**

- **India and Pakistan have had no talks since 2015**, when PM Modi visited Lahore, and the External Affairs Ministers met a few months later.
- In September 2016, Pakistan based terror group **Lashkar-e-Taiba attacked army base in Uri**, Jammu and Kashmir that killed 20 Indian soldiers. This began deteriorating bilateral relations.
- In retaliation, **Indian army carried out surgical strikes** to wipe out militant launch pads across Line of Control in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.
- The terrorists attack on CRPF convoy in February 2019 which killed 40 security personnel further strained the bilateral relations.
- India, subsequently, carries airstrikes on Jaish-e-Mohammed's (JeM) biggest camp at Balakot in Pakistan
- In August 2019, India amended Article 370 of the Indian Constitution which gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir State. The State was reorganised into two Union Territories (Union Territory of Ladakh and Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir).
- After the amendment of Article 370, India and Pakistan **snapped all trading ties**.
- Diplomatic activities have been reduced.
- In May 2020, two officials of the High Commission of Pakistan in New Delhi were apprehended by the Delhi Police Special Cell for allegedly indulging in espionage activities and asked them to leave the country.
- Pakistan, in retaliation, arrested two Indian nationals employed with Indian High Commission in Pakistan allegedly for carrying fake currency.
- **All sporting and cultural exchanges** have been stopped and visas are rarely granted. Rare exception was made for the Kartarpur corridor inaugurated in 2019.
- **Ceasefire violations** continue to claim lives of soldiers and civilians on both sides along Line of Control (LOC).

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**Indo-Bhutan:**

**India and Bhutan Sign Pact for the Construction of Kholongchhu Hydroelectric Project**

- On June 29, 2020, India and Bhutan signed a pact for the construction of the **600 MW Kholongchhu joint venture hydroelectric project in Bhutan.**
- The project is a joint venture between Bhutan's Druk Green Power Corporation (DGPC) and India's Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited (SJVNL).
- This is the first joint venture hydro electric project between India and Bhutan. All earlier projects were executed as Government-to-Government agreement.
- The 600 MW run-of-the-river project is located on the lower course of the Kholongchhu River in Trashiyangtse district in eastern Bhutan.
- The project would be completed in five years i.e. by 2025.

**India-Bhutan Hydel Power Cooperation:**

- India and Bhutan have a strong cooperation in hydro power sector.
- So far, four hydropower projects have been built in Bhutan by India in the last 30 years totalling a capacity of 2,100 MW.
- While India gets access to reliable and clean electricity from hydro power projects in Bhutan, Bhutan also benefits from revenues through electricity export.
- About three fourths of power generated in Bhutan is exported to India while the rest is used for domestic consumption.
- The Kholongchhu project is one of four additional projects agreed to in 2008, as a part of India's commitment to help Bhutan create a total **10,000 MW of installed capacity.**
- Once the project is commissioned, the JV partners will run it for 30 years, called the concession period. After which the full ownership will transfer to the Bhutan government.

**Indo-Australia:**

**India Australia Virtual Bilateral Summit**

- India and Australia agreed to elevate bilateral partnership to '**Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**' at the virtual summit attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on June 4, 2020.

**Significance of India-Australia Partnership:**

**Trade:**

- In 2018-19, the trade between the two countries was around **US\$ 21 billion.**

**Investment:**

- **Australia's cumulative investment** in India is about **US\$ 10.74 billion.**
- **India's total investment in Australia** is **US\$ 10.45 billion.**
- Australian Super Pension Fund has invested **US\$ 1 billion in India's National Investment and Infrastructure Fund.**

**Global Partnership:**

- Australia has supported India's global initiatives such as
- International Solar Alliance (ISA),
- Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), and

- 
- Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative (IPOI).

#### **UNSC Membership:**

- Australia supports India's Membership of an expanded United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

#### **Outcome of Virtual Summit:**

- **Talks on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA):**
- Both the countries decided to "recommence" suspended talks over the India-Australia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), suspended since 2015.
- The talks were suspended due to discussions on 16-nation ASEAN-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) free trade agreement that Australia is a part of. But, India decided to opt out of RCEP due to concerns over cheap manufacturing imports from China and dairy imports from New Zealand which would hurt India's domestic industry and dairy sector.

#### **Open and Inclusive Indo-Pacific Region:**

- Both the countries agreed to boost cooperation in the maritime domain for an Open and Inclusive Indo-Pacific Region.
- Australia expressed support for India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) which will promote better coordination and cooperation among the countries in the region on maritime related issues.
- They also agreed to build on existing commitments to **combat marine litter and single-use plastic waste, and target illegal fishing.**

#### **MoU on Water Resource Management:**

- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the field of Water Resources Management as water security is a critical challenge for both countries, and

#### **MoU on Cooperation in Mining:**

- MOU on cooperation in the field of mining and processing of critical and strategic minerals was also signed.

### **NATIONAL POLITY**

#### **PMCARES Fund:**

### **PMCARES Fund Not A Public Authority under Right to Information (RTI) Act: PMO**

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) refused to disclose details on the creation and operation of the PM CARES Fund under Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005 stating that the fund is **"not a public authority"** under the ambit of the RTI Act, 2005.

Various RTI applications filed in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) sought

- a copy of trust deed of PM CARES Fund,
- document or letter through which the fund was constituted, and
- copy of the entire file including note sheets, letters, communications office memos or orders wherein the decision to constitute the fund was taken.

But the Prime Minister's Office to disclose details sought by RTI applicants stating that PMCARES Fund is not a public authority.

#### **What is a Public Authority?**

As per the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, a public authority means **any authority, body or institution of self-government** established or constituted

- a) under the constitution;

- 
- b) by any other law made by parliament; and
  - c) by any other law made by the state legislature,
  - d) by notification issued or order made by the appropriate government.
  - e) a body owned, controlled or substantially financed by the Government; and
  - f) Non-governmental organisation substantially financed directly or indirectly by funds provided by the government”.

#### **Why were the details of PMCARES Funds Sought?**

- In less than two months after its inception, the PMCARES fund received approximately Rs 10,000 crores.

The bulk of the contribution came from corporate, the public sector undertakings and central ministries and departments. The central public sector enterprises under the ministries of power and new and renewable energy had contributed Rs 925 crore while public sector oil companies including ONGC, IOC, Bharat Petroleum had contributed over Rs 1,000 crore.

Various ministries and government departments had issued circulars to its employees to contribute one day's salary to the Fund.

- The RTI applicants contend that the amount has been so collected upon strength of prestige lent by the office of the Prime Minister.
- The name, the composition of the trust, control, usage of emblem, government domain name everything signifies that it is a public authority.

The **composition of the trust is enough to show that Government exercises substantive control** over the trust, making it a public authority. PM is the ex-officio chairman of the Trust, while three cabinet ministers are ex-officio trustees.

- Hence, **citizens should know the decision making process of the trust and safeguards available**, so that the fund is not misused.
- For a trust which is created and run by Prime Minister and three cabinet ministers in their ex-officio capacities, **denying the status** of 'public authority' is **a big blow to transparency**.

#### **Details of PM CARES Fund Trust:**

- Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES Fund) is a **public charitable trust** formed on March 27, 2020.
- It is headed by **Prime Minister** and consists of three other Members: **Defence Minister, Home Minister and Finance Minister**.
- The fund consists entirely of **voluntary contributions from individuals/organizations**.
- It does **not get any budgetary support**.
- Donations to PM CARES Fund would qualify for **100% exemption under the Income Tax Act, 1961**.
- Donations to PM CARES Fund will also qualify to be counted as **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) expenditure** under the Companies Act, 2013
- PM CARES Fund has also got exemption under the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA)** and a separate account for receiving foreign donations has been opened. This enables PM CARES Fund to accept donations and contributions from **individuals and organizations based in foreign countries**.
- As PMCARES Fund is set up as a trust, it is at present **not covered under the Right to Information Act (RTI)**.

- 
- PMCARES fund is also **not audited by Comptroller General of India (CAG)**.

### **How is the Money under PMCARES Fund Used?**

The money collected under PMCREC Fund is utilised to

- provide relief or assistance **during a public health emergency** or any other kind of emergency (calamity, distress, etc. **either man-made or natural**),
- **create or upgrade of healthcare or pharmaceutical facilities**, and other necessary infrastructure for emergencies,
- **fund relevant research**,
- render **financial assistance, provide grants or such other uses to the affected population** as may be deemed necessary by the Board of Trustees, and
- undertake any other activity which is not inconsistent with the above objects.

### **Human Rights:**

#### **Custodial Deaths in Tamil Nadu Rise Calls for Police Accountability**

- A father-son duo (Jayaraj and Bennix) allegedly died due to police torture in Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu.
- This incident has sparked anger across India.
- Particularly, protests began in Tamil Nadu demanding justice for the Jayaraj and Benicks and registration of murder cases against sub inspectors who allegedly tortured the father and the son after they took them into custody for violating lockdown violations.
- 60 year old Jayaraj and his son Benicks (31) were taken to the police station and assaulted for violating lockdown restrictions on shop timings and keeping their mobile shop open beyond the permitted hours in the evening. All shops were ordered to be closed by 8 pm everyday due to lockdown.

#### **Case Handed over to Central Bureau of Investigation:**

- The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) took over the investigation into custodial deaths of Jayaraj and his son Benicks at the request of Tamil Nadu Government.
- Tamil Nadu Government also suspended the police officials, Sub Inspectors Balakrishnan and Raghuganesan, involved in the incident.
- The State Government also announced compensation of Rs. 10 lakhs each and a Government job for a family member.

#### **Reasons for Custodial Deaths:**

- Custodial torture and deaths are **not only inhuman but a huge blot in a democracy**. They **undermine rule of law** and **erode the faith of people in the system**.
- But, these are on the rise due to lack of accountability for the actions of police. **Policemen responsible for custodial deaths rarely get punished**. Hence, they feel emboldened to continue using torture.
- Between 2001 and 2018, **1,727 persons died in police custody**. This includes both persons on police/ judicial remand and those just arrested and not produced before court.
- However, **only 26 policemen were convicted** in this period for such deaths.
- Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra recorded zero convictions despite recording more than 100 custodial deaths in the period.
- Apart from custodial deaths, **more than 2,000 human rights violation cases** were recorded against the police between 2000 and 2018. Only 344 policemen were convicted in those cases.

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### **Supreme Court Verdict on Police Reforms:**

- The Supreme Court delivered a historic order in 2006 on police reforms.
- It stated, among other things, that every State should have a **Police Complaints Authority** at the State and district level where **any citizen can lodge a complaint against policemen for any act of serious misconduct** such as deaths, grievous hurt or rape in police custody.
- Police Complaints Authority at the district level, headed by retired district judge, should look into complaints against police officers of and up to the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police while Police Complaints Authority at the State level, headed by retired High Court/Supreme Court Judge, should look into complaints against officers of the rank of Superintendent of Police and above.
- However, only a few States such as Kerala, Jharkhand, Haryana, Punjab and Maharashtra have implemented the order. Others have not taken the matter seriously.

### **Civil Services:**

#### **Punjab Government Sets up Civil Service Board**

- In June 2020, the Punjab State Government set up Civil Service Board to decide transfers and postings of civil servants.
- The 3-member Civil Service Board will be headed by Chief Secretary. Personnel Secretary and Home Secretary or Revenue Secretary (whoever is senior) will be the other two members.

#### **Functions of the Board:**

- The Board will ensure a fixed term of at least two years to IAS officers in a posting.
- A demand to cut short the tenure will be examined by the Board.
- If any officer is to be transferred before completing his minimum tenure, the board will record the reasons for the transfer, will seek views from the concerned officer and then give a judgement on whether the tenure of the officer is to be ended mid-way.
- The final decision will be taken by the Chief Minister.

#### **Advantages of the Board:**

1. Fixed tenure removes political interference in the working of IAS officers and thereby ensures independence in the working of IAS officers.
2. IAS officers can work independently without any fear or favour for ruling party political pressures.
3. Fixed tenure also ensures efficiency in the working of IAS officers. It takes 3 to 4 months for an IAS officer to get overall understanding of the issues in his posting. Due to frequent transfers, they cannot function efficiently.

#### **Opposition to the Board:**

Political parties, including the ruling party politicians, are against giving powers to the Civil Service Board in postings and transfers.

#### **Reasons:**

1. The officers will become less answerable and accountable to people and political representatives elected by the people.
2. It demoralises elected representatives as IAS officers as the setting up of Board will encourage IAS officers to disobey the elected state representatives
3. The Board makes bureaucracy powerful which is not accountable to public.

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**Additional Information:**

**2013 Supreme Court Judgement on Fixed Tenure for Civil Servants:**

A public interest litigation (PIL) was filed by 83 retired bureaucrats led by the former Union Cabinet Secretary TSR Subramaniam drawing the attention of Supreme Court towards multiple malaises afflicting Indian civil service.

(Former Chief Election Commissioners T.S. Krishnamurthy and N. Gopalaswami; former Indian Ambassador to the U.S. Abid Hussain; former CBI Director Joginder Singh; former Manipur Governor Ved Prakash Marwah were part of 87 retired bureaucrats who filed PIL).

**Concerns in the PIL:**

The PIL brought to the notice of the Supreme Court that the **extant system of transfers, postings, promotions, disciplinary action and other personnel matters** pertaining to the members of various civil services (IAS, IPS, IFS, etc) in India is ad hoc and opaque.

The PIL stated that

1. Transfers are often used **as instruments of reward and punishment.**
2. Officials are **frequently transferred on the whims and caprices as well as the personal needs of local politicians and other vested interests.**
3. Officers, especially those in the All India Services, serving in state governments, have **no stability or security of tenure**

The PIL advocated that

1. the civil servants at all levels be given a minimum three-year fixed tenure in each post to encourage operational freedom within the precincts of rules and laws.
2. any premature transfer should be specifically authorised by a 'Civil Service Board/Commission' in special situations to be specified in writing.

**Supreme Court's Verdict:**

The Supreme Court, in its landmark judgement on 31st October 2013, issued the following directives to the Central and state governments.

1. All civil servants must be given a '**minimum assured tenure**' at a particular posting before they are transferred, so they can work effectively.

Deterioration in bureaucratic functioning is due to political interference.

A 'minimum assured tenure' in postings would

- a) effectively deter politicians from using transfers as a threatening weapon against the bureaucrats, and
  - b) promote **professionalism, efficiency and good governance.**
2. A **Civil Services Board (CSB)**, comprising senior bureaucrats, should be **formed at the Centre, in each state and Union Territory** to advise the government on matters such as postings, transfers and disciplinary action.
  3. Civil servants **should not act on verbal orders given by political executives and all actions must be taken** by them on the basis of written communication.
  4. **Parliament must enact a Civil Services Act** under Article 309 of the Constitution setting up a Civil Service Board (CSB), which can guide and advise the political executive transfer and postings, disciplinary action, etc. Till the Parliament passes such legislation, Civil Services Boards shall be set as per the present judgement.

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### **Notification of the Department of Personnel:**

- A Notification was issued by the Union Department of Personnel and Training (DOPT) on January 30th, 2014 in compliance with the judgement of the Supreme Court. As per this Notification,
- Cadre officers of All India Services (AIS) will now generally hold their posts for, at least, two years unless promoted, retired or sent on deputation outside the state or on training beyond two months.
- In case the state government wants an officer to be transferred before he completes two years in a particular post, it will have to send a report to the Civil Services Board with a 'detailed justification' why it wants to do so.
- The Civil Services Board will consider the report along with any other inputs it may have from reliable sources.
- The Board will obtain the comments or views of the officer proposed to be transferred.
- It may recommend the transfer if there are valid reasons for transfer by recording its reasons.
- However, the Competent Authority (Chief Minister at the State level) may reject the CSB recommendation but will, in that case, have to record reasons for rejection.
- In pursuance to the DOPT Notification, many state governments have already constituted their CSBs, while some are still to follow suit.

### **Grievance Redressal:**

## **Punjab Government Approves Comprehensive Public Grievance Redressal Policy**

On June 22, 2020, the Punjab State Government approved a comprehensive public grievance redressal policy by bringing the grievance mechanisms of all departments under one umbrella of 'digital Punjab'.

### **Need for Comprehensive Redressal Policy:**

- Currently there is no single interface for citizens to register their grievances with the government.
- Various departments are implementing their own individual systems for receiving and redressal of grievances from the citizens.
- But, there is no standardised workflow for redressal and no proper timelines for resolution. Hence, accountability for delivery could not be ensured.
- All the above necessitated the formulation of a comprehensive policy for redressal of grievances of citizens by using information technology.

### **Features of Comprehensive Grievance Redressal Policy:**

- Clear and standardised work-flow for grievance redressal would be established.
- Time-lines would be assigned to each officer in the work-flow for resolution of grievance.
- Citizens can submit their feedback on the resolution.
- If they are not satisfied, they can escalate grievances to higher authorities.
- Data collected through grievances will be analysed for evidence-based decision making.

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## SAGY:

### Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana Implementation Poor Due to Lack of Interest, and Funds

- Six years after it was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana aimed at developing 'model villages' by Members of Parliament has been found to be ineffective in achieving its objective.
- A performance audit undertaken by the Study Group set up by Ministry of Rural Development stated that
- the scheme had made any significant impact, and
- in the current format, the scheme is not achieving the desired purpose.

#### **Reasons:**

- The scheme has no separate budget, and
- There is lack of interest among Members of Parliament due to lack of separate budget.
- Since the launch of the scheme on October 11, 2014, only 1,855 gram panchayats have been selected across five phases, with only seven in Phase 5.
- The Study Group recommended that the ministry may **review the scheme for enhancing its impact.**
- In many of SAGY villages, MPs did not give any significant money from Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS).
- In isolated cases, where MPs have been pro-active, some infrastructure development has taken place, but the scheme has not made any perceptible impact. As such, **these villages cannot be called Model ('Adarsh') villages**, the report of the study group stated.

#### **About Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana:**

- It was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his 2014 Independence Day speech.
- Under Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana, each Member of Parliament should adopt and develop three model villages between 2014 to 2019.
- Thereafter, five such Model villages (one per year) have to be adopted and developed by 2024.
- The Scheme has no separate funding.
- MPs should develop the adopted villages through convergence of funds under various centrally sponsored schemes and state schemes.
- Adopted should have all amenities like housing, sanitation, drinking water, roads, education and healthcare facilities, etc. 100 per cent enrolment in financial inclusion and social security schemes to the deserving should also be ensured.

#### Panchayat Raj & Rural Development:

### Merger of Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Ministries Proposed

A High level panel set up by Rural Development Ministry and headed by Rajiv Kapoor, former IAS officer, to review rural development schemes suggested the merger of Ministry of Panchayat Raj and Ministry of Rural Development at both Union and State level **for better coordination and outcomes.**

The Panel noted that

- Panchayat Raj institutions (PRIs) have the lead role in implementing the rural development schemes while the rural development ministry designs these schemes and releases funds which is not conducive for effective implementation.
- unifying these departments will lead to better coordination and improved outcomes.

- a task force may be set up to devise an efficient mechanism to achieve this objective (merger).

#### **Other Recommendations:**

1. Emphasising the need **for greater focus on the quality aspects** of the scheme, the commission has suggested a **quality index may be prepared for all schemes** and regularly monitored along with the quantitative achievements.
2. The commission has suggested government undertake a study for reviewing the wage rate under the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Schemes**.

**Wages rates in states are less than the corresponding minimum wages of the state.**

On the other hand, the **average number of days of employment provided under MGNREGS is about 50 days per household** which is less than the entitlement of 100 days in a year as per the MNREGA Act.

3. Besides, the commission has suggested the government **urgently review the socio economic caste census-based list of beneficiaries** to minimise the scope for errors as the **existing list is very old and has serious errors of exclusion and inclusion**.

### **SOCIAL SECTOR:**

#### **Higher Education:**

#### **Ranking of Higher Educational Institutions Released**

- “India Rankings 2020”, which ranked Institutions of Higher Education in various categories, was released in June 2020.
- The Union Ministry of Human Resources Development (HRD) initiated the ranking of higher educational institutions in 2015 by creating the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF).
- The rankings are being given annually since 2016.
- Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras, was ranked India’s best educational institution in the overall category.
- Overall, 3,771 institutes participated in the ranking framework.

#### **What is the Criteria for Ranking?**

Institutions were evaluated on five broad parameters for ranking.

1. Teaching, Learning and Resources,
2. Research and Professional Practice,
3. Graduation Outcomes,
4. Outreach and Inclusivity, and (gender, geographical, and socio-economic diversity), and
5. Perception (by academic peers and employers).

#### **Types of Ranking:**

Rankings were provided in 10 categories

Category	1 <sup>st</sup> Rank
Overall category	Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
University Category	Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru
Engineering	Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
Management	Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad

Architecture	Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur
Medical	All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi
Dental	Maulana Azad Institute of Dental Sciences, Delhi
Pharmacy	Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi
Law	National Law School of India University, Bengaluru
Colleges	Miranda House, Delhi

### **What is the Utility of Ranking?**

- The ranking acts as **guide to the students for selection of best institutes** in various domains.
- The ranking also instils **competitive spirit among institutions.**
- Institutes get to know in which parameters they are lagging and work on them to improve and secure higher rank.

### **Online Degree Course in Data Science and Programming Launched**

- In June 2020, the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) launched online degree course 'B.Sc. Degree in Programming and Data Science'.
- The course is offered by Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras), which is ranked No.1 in India Rankings 2020, an annual ranking of higher educational institutions in India given by Union HRD Ministry.

### **Why was the Course Launched?**

- Data Science is one of the fastest growing sectors and there is huge demand for skilled professionals.
- It is predicted to create 11.5 million jobs by 2026.

### **What is Data Science?**

- Data science deals with **analysing of huge volumes of data** and **predicting patterns** which would be useful for business opportunities.
- A lot of data is being generated through social media sites (Face book, Twitter, Instagram, etc.), business transactions, online transactions, etc.

### **Eligibility:**

- **Students** who have completed Class XII in any stream.
- **Graduates** and **working professionals** can also take up this programme.
- Students who are currently enrolled in a different on-campus program anywhere in India can pursue this degree program without needing to switch careers or courses.
- Even employers who want to upskill their employees can consider this option without quitting the job.

### **Benefits of the Programme:**

- The program **brightens up job prospects** for students and working professionals in a lucrative field of Data Science.

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- The programme also **removes barriers of age, discipline and geography** in education as it enables them to access quality education and get a degree from a reputed institution like IIT Madras.
  - To ensure that the online learning platform is closest to a classroom learning experience, the program will have videos from the faculty, weekly assignments and in-person invigilated exams.

### School Education:

## **\$ 500 Million World Bank Assistance to Improve Learning Outcomes in Six States**

- In June 2020, the World Bank Board approved a \$500 million project to improve learning outcomes and governance of government schools in six states in India: Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Rajasthan.
- The project called 'Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States Program (STARS)' will benefit around 25 crore students (between the age of 6 and 17) in 15 lakh schools and over 1 crore teachers.
- The World Bank has been partnering with India since 1994 for strengthening the school education system.
- Prior to STARS, the Bank had provided a total assistance of more than \$3 billion for education.

### **Progress in Education in India:**

- The World Bank noted that India has made significant strides in improving access to education across the country.
- Between 2004-05 and 2018-19, the number of children going to school increased from 21.9 crore to 24.8 crore.
- However, the learning outcomes of students across all age groups continues to remain below par.
- STARS will support India's renewed focus on addressing the 'learning outcome' challenge and help students better prepare for the jobs of the future.

### **Emphasis on Secondary Education:**

- India has successfully achieved gender parity in enrolment in primary education. However, for many children, secondary education is the stage when they leave school and enter the workforce. Under STARS, each state is expected to not only stabilize this downward trend but also improve the completion rate for secondary education.

### Healthcare:

## **Depression: Reasons and Solution**

- Sushant Singh Rajput , 34 year old Hindi film actor who had a successful career in Bollywood, died by suicide on June 14, 2020.
- He was reportedly suffering from depression and was receiving treatment for the same for the past six months
- His suicide revived debate on issues surrounding mental health in India.

### **What is Depression?**

- Depression is a mental health disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest in day today activities and life.

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- It affects how one feels, thinks and behaves and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems.
  - An individual undergoing depression will have trouble in doing day-to-day activities and may experience feelings that life is not worth living.

### **What are the symptoms of Depression?**

The following are some of the common symptoms of depression.

- Sleep disturbances, sleeping too much or too little,
- tiredness and lack of energy, so even small tasks take extra effort,
- loss of interest in normal day to day activities,
- reduced appetite and weight loss or increased cravings for food and weight gain,
- avoiding social interactions,
- anxiety, agitation and restlessness.
- feelings of sadness, tearfulness, emptiness or hopelessness
- angry outbursts, irritability or frustration, even over small matters
- feelings of worthlessness or guilt, fixating on past failures or self-blame,
- hopelessness about the future, and
- frequent thoughts of suicide,

### **What are the reasons for Depression?**

Depression could be due to various reasons like

- Breakdown in relationships,
- Breakdown of marriage,
- Failure in career, business,
- academics, etc.

### **How Depression Leads to Suicides?**

- People undergoing depression do not have a proper understanding of the problem.
- Most of them isolate themselves and do not share the problem with their own family members.
- There is also stigma attached to mental health problems in the society. People with mental problems are often tagged as 'lunatics' by the society.
- Hence, people undergoing depression do not accept that they have a problem and also do not seek medical help. When thoughts of suicide overpower them, people under depression commit suicide as they feel it is solution to their problem.

### **What are the Solutions to Overcome Depression?**

- Deaths by suicide due to depression are preventable loss of life. Many young people in their productive life give up lives due to lack of proper understanding of the problem.
- Depression is mental ailment just like physical ailment. It is curable through medication. There is need to remove stigma around the issue and accept it as problem which can be cured.
- Sharing the problem with family members and friends, and
- Seeking medical help and taking medication would help a great deal in overcoming depression

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## SOCIAL ISSUES:

### Women:

#### Task Force Set up to Examine Woman's Age of Marriage, Motherhood and Related Issues

- On June 4, 2020, the Union Government set up a 10-member Task Force, under Jaya Jaitly, to examine the age appropriate age for marriage of women, motherhood and related issues.

#### **Why the Task Force Has Been Set up?**

- The setting up of Task Force was announced in Union Budget 2020-21.
- At present, the legal age for a marriage in India is 18 for girls and 21 for boys. Women's age of marriage was increased from 15 years to 18 years in 1978, by amending erstwhile Sharda Act of 1929.
- As India progresses further, **opportunities open up for women to pursue higher education and careers.**
- For long, there has been a suggestion that legal age of a woman to marry should be fixed after 20 as it provides them **more incentives to complete their graduation.**
- There is also a **need to reduce Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR).**
- The health ministry has always advocated spacing of three years between age of marriage and pregnancy as multiple cases that **mothers bearing a child at an early age ended up** in complications, both for the mother and the child.
- There is **also criticism that the differential minimum age for marriage** for girls (18) and boys (21) **has no scientific backing** and only **perpetrates patriarchal mindset in society.** This differential age bar is being criticised as discriminatory against women and **against gender equality.** More than 125 countries in the world have a uniform minimum age for marriage.

#### **Work of the Task Force:**

- The taskforce will **examine the correlation of age of marriage and motherhood** with health, medical wellbeing and nutritional status of mother and child, during pregnancy, birth and thereafter, key parameters like infant mortality rate (IMR), maternal mortality rate (MMR), total fertility rate (TFR), sex ratio at birth (SRB), and child sex ratio (CSR).

It will also suggest

- measures for **promoting higher education among women,**
- suitable legislation or amendments in existing laws to support its recommendations, and
- a detailed roll-out plan with timelines to implement its recommendations.

### SC's and ST's:

#### Government Moots Monetary Allowance to Poorest SC and ST Households

- The Union government is considering providing monetary assistance to poorest Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes households on the pattern of PM-Kisan.
- Under the PM-Kisan scheme, the Union Government provides an income support of 6,000/- per year in three equal instalments to all 14.5 crore farmers, irrespective of the size of their landholding, in the country.

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### **Details:**

- At present, the Government implementing Developmental Action Plan for Scheduled Castes (DAPSC) and Scheduled Tribe Component (STC) to promote the socio economic interests of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- Under the above two schemes, 41 central government ministries are required to earmark 2-20% of their total budget outlay for SC and ST specific activities.
- In 2019-20, 41 Ministries had allocated Rs 81,340.74 crore for SC welfare schemes and Rs 51,283.53 crore for STs.
- However, government analysis has shown that over the years the ministries have been struggling to spend the earmarked funds and usually do “notional allocation.”
- Notional allocation means allocation on generic schemes rather than targeted programmes as envisaged under the programmes. For instance, the earmarked funds would be allocated for mid-day meals in schools, or in construction of national highways, reasoning that the beneficiaries are mainly people belonging to SCs and STs living in these areas.
- Hence, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Ministry of Social Justice, the nodal Ministries for welfare of STs and SCs, have proposed revamping of the schemes as follows.

#### **1. Monetary Assistance to Poorest SC and ST Households:**

The nodal Ministries proposed identifying the most deprived SC and ST households as per the Socio-Economic Caste Census of 2011 and **giving a monthly or quarterly allowance on the pattern of PM-Kisan.**

#### **2. Focussed Attention on 8 Key Sectors:**

They also proposed **identifying eight key sectors** – education, skill development, income generating activities, agriculture, health, nutrition, infrastructure and housing – **for focussed attention.**

### **Culture & Heritage:**

#### **6<sup>th</sup> International Yoga Day Observed**

- The 6<sup>th</sup> International Yoga Day was observed around the world on June 21, 2020 under the theme ‘Yoga at Home, Yoga with Family.’
- Every year, June 21<sup>st</sup> is observed as International Yoga Day to promote and popularise Yoga across the World.
- In December 2014, the United Nations General Assembly agreed to celebrate June 21<sup>st</sup> of every year as International Yoga Day.
- Hence, from 2015, June 21<sup>st</sup> is observed as International Yoga Day.
- June 21 was selected as it is the day of Summer Solstice due to which it is the longest day of the year with the sun rising early and setting late for the northern hemisphere.
- The summer solstice is also considered as an important day in Indian mythology as it marks an event that could be considered the start of Yogic science.

#### **About Yoga:**

- It is an ancient practice which originated in India and is 5000 years old.
- The word ‘Yoga’ is derived from the Sankrit word ‘yuj’ which means ‘to unite or integrate’
- It consists of set of practices and techniques which contribute to physical and mental wellbeing of people.

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- These practices and techniques harmonise the body with the mind and breath through the means of various breathing exercises, yoga poses (asanas) and meditation.

#### **WHO Recognition:**

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) in its Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-2030, declared routine practice of Yoga as an invaluable tool to promote good health.

#### **India's Efforts to Promote Yoga:**

- Ministry of AYUSH is the nodal agency for promoting Yoga.
- The Ministry has set up Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga in New Delhi. This is a focal Institute for Planning, Training, Promotion and Coordination of Yoga Education, Training, Therapy and Research.

#### **Common Yoga Protocol (CYP):**

- Common Yoga Protocol (CYP) has been developed by a group of leading Yoga gurus and experts, keeping people of different age-groups and of varied walks of life in mind.
- CYP includes some of the common practices to improve physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health.
- Common Yoga Protocol (CYP) is performed every year on the International Day of Yoga across the world.

#### **STATES:**

##### **Telangana:**

#### **Telangana IT Exports at 1.28 Lakh Crore in 2019-20**

- Information technology (IT) and IT-enabled services exports from Telangana State stood at of Rs 1,28,807 crore in 2019-20 financial year as against Rs 1,09,219 crore in 2018-19.
- IT and IT enabled exports from Telangana registered a growth of **17.93 per cent in 2019-20**.
- The IT exports from Telangana constitute **11.58 per cent in the overall IT exports from India**.
- **Total Employment: increased to 5.82 lakh in 2019-20 from 5.43 lakh in 2018-19**
- 39,000 jobs were added in 2019-20

#### **Overall Exports from India:**

- The overall exports from India in 2019-20: **Rs 11, 12,496 crore**.  
Growth Rate: **8.9 Per cent**

#### **INTERNATIONAL POLITY:**

##### **USA:**

#### **US Suspends H1B and other Non-Immigration Visas to Preserve Jobs for American Workers**

- On June 23, 2020, United States President Donald Trump issued a proclamation banning H1 B and other visas (H4, L1, J1 and H2B) till the end of December 2020.
- H1B is popular non immigration work visa issued by United States to **skilled professionals** in IT, finance, accounting, architecture, engineering, mathematics, science, medicine, etc.
- Indian IT professionals are the major beneficiaries of H1B Visas.
- Every year United States issues **85,000 H1B Visa**. Out of these, 65,000 are given to professionals from outside USA while 20,000 are given to professionals with advanced degree from US universities.

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### **Suspension of H4 and L1 Visas:**

- Along with H1B, H4 and L1 visas have also been banned.

### **H4 Visas:**

- These are given to dependents of H1 visa holders. H-1B visa holders can bring their spouse and children under 21 years of age to the US under the H-4 Visa category as dependents.

### **L1 Visas:**

- The L-1B visa is also a non-immigrant visa which allows companies operating both in the US and abroad to transfer certain classes of employee from its foreign operations to their US operations for up to five years.

### **H2B and J1 Visas:**

- H2B visas are given for low skilled non agricultural jobs.
- J1 visas are given to doctors, researchers on exchange programmes.

### **Reasons for the Ban:**

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has slowed down the US economy.
- As a result, **unemployment** is rising in the US.
- Unemployment rate in the United States nearly quadrupled between February and May of 2020. As a result, **millions of Americans remain out of work.**
- The entry of additional workers through the H-1B, H-2B, J, and L non-immigrant visa programmes, therefore, poses a significant threat to employment opportunities for Americans affected by the economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.
- By banning Visas, U.S. President Donald Trump wants to preserve jobs for American citizens as the US economy has been hit by
- The ban would free up **5, 25,000 jobs for American citizens.** Unemployed Americans would get these job opportunities.
- Majority of Americans, in opinion polls, also supported pausing immigration in to the country.
- An opinion poll by Pew Research Center found that 81 percent of Americans see continuing immigration into USA as a threat as they confront the challenges posed by the coronavirus,

### **Impact of Ban:**

- Indian IT professionals and IT companies would be hit by the ban.
- The ban would impact a large number of Indian IT professionals and several American and Indian companies who were issued H-1B visas by the U.S. government for the fiscal year 2021 beginning October 1.
- The US financial year is from October 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30, 2020.
- They would now have to wait at least till the end of the current year before approaching the U.S. diplomatic missions to get stamping.
- It would also impact a large number of Indian IT professionals who are seeking renewal of their H-1B visas.

### **Criticism on Ban:**

- The ban has been criticised as Industry bodies in USA and India.
- NASSCOM, India's IT industry body, the ban is **misguided and harmful to the U.S. economy.** **Without highly skilled immigrants,** the economic pain would worsen, and industry would slowdown further.

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- It also said the ban order could also lead to the offshoring of jobs that cannot be filled locally due to restrictions.
  - Some technology leaders in the U.S. also expressed dismay on the ban.

#### **Visa Holders Net Job Creators: Elon Musk:**

- Tesla Founder and former Trump adviser Elon Musk said the **skillsets brought by visa holders are net job creators**. As these are high paying jobs, they create more indirect jobs in the economy through consumption.

#### **Immigration Key to America's Success: Google CEO:**

- Google CEO Sundar Pichai, who immigrated to the U.S. from India, also **underscored the importance of immigration in Google's journey**.
- He stated **that immigration has contributed immensely to America's economic success**, making it a global leader in tech, and also Google the company it is today. Sergey Brin, one of the founders of Google company, is an immigrant from Russia.

#### **A severe and sweeping attempt to restrict legal immigration : US Chamber of Commerce:**

- The **US Chamber of Commerce** also called the US President to reconsider his order stating that the ban is **a severe and sweeping attempt to restrict legal immigration**. Putting up a 'not welcome' sign **for engineers, executives, IT experts, doctors, nurses and other workers** won't help USA, it will hold it back, Thomas Donohue, CEO of US Chamber of Commerce said.

#### **H1B Programme Not only Addressees Skilled Labour But also Creates New Ones:**

- Indian-American Congressman from Illinois, **Raja Krishnamoorthi** stated that H-1B programme in **particular plays a crucial role in addressing of health care professionals** in USA while also providing other key sectors of our economy with talent from around the world **to not only fill jobs, but create new ones**.

#### **China:**

### **China Reiterates Objections to THAAD Missiles Deployment in South Korea**

China reiterated its long-standing objections to the presence of the US **Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD)** missile defence system in South Korea.

Its opposition came following replacement old THAAD interceptor missiles with new ones at the US base in South Korea.

China has been objecting to the defence system since it was first deployed in South Korea three years ago.

#### **What is THAAD Missile?**

It is a ground-based interceptor missile which is mounted on a vehicle and is transportable.

THAAD is equipped with space-based and ground-based surveillance stations, which transfer data about the incoming missile. In response, the THAAD launches interceptor missile which destroys the incoming missile.

It is manufactured by the US Company Lockheed Martin.

#### **Reasons for China's Opposition:**

It may be used for spying on China. South Korea is China's maritime neighbour.

China has also been negotiating with South Korea to find a resolution to the THAAD issue. The new deployment will be an irritant in negotiations.

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## Why THAAD Missile Defence System Has Been Deployed in South Korea?

THAAD missile defence system has been deployed by the US to protect South Korea against potential attacks by North Korea.

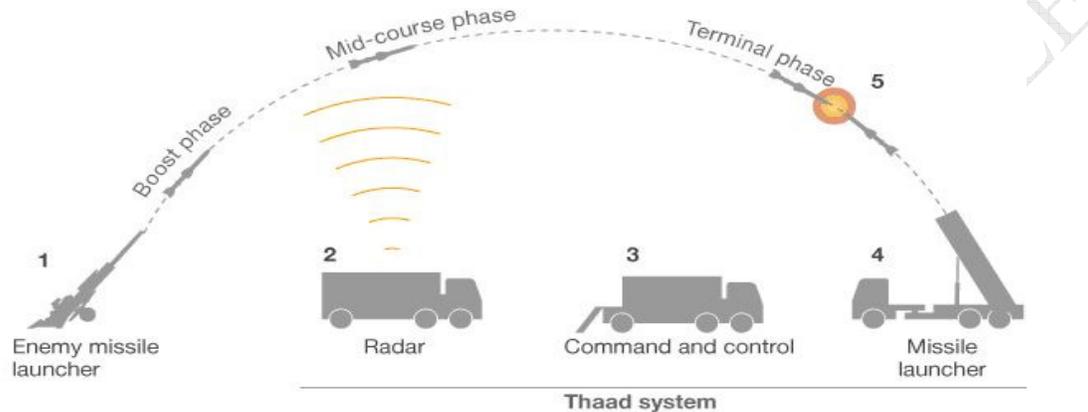
North Korea is, time and again, testing ballistic missiles.

### What is a Ballistic Missile?

Missiles are self-guided munitions that travel through the air or outer space to their targets.

A ballistic missile travels in arc like trajectory.

### How the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense System (Thaad) works



## China Provides Tariff Exemption for 97 Per cent of Exports from Bangladesh Exports

- In June 2020, China announced tariff exemption for 97 per cent of exports from Bangladesh.
- Currently, Bangladesh receives tariff-exemption for 3095 items under the **Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA)**. A tariff is a tax or duty imposed by one nation on the imported goods or services of another nation.
- As a result of the latest announcement, a **total of 8256 goods from Bangladesh** will be **exempted** of Chinese tariffs.
- China's tariff exemption is expected to help Bangladesh cushion the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **China to Provide Duty Free Market Access to 97 Per cent of Exports from Least Developed Countries:**

- Recently, Chinese President Xi announced that China will grant duty-free market access to 97 percent of the tariff lines for Least Developed Countries (LDC) within a year.
- This beneficial market access scheme will be applied only for imports from LDCs that have diplomatic relations with China.
- Bangladesh also got duty exemption for 97 per cent exports as least developed country.

### Additional Information:

#### **Least Developed Countries:**

- "Least Developed Countries" (LDCs) designation is given by United Nations.
- At present, 47 countries have been designated as Least Developed Countries.

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### **Criteria:**

The following three criteria are used by the CDP to determine LDC status:

1. Per capita income,
2. Human assets (indicators of nutrition, health, school enrolment and literacy)
3. Economic vulnerability (indicators of natural and trade-related shocks, physical and economic exposure to shocks, and smallness and remoteness).

### **Concessions associated with LDC status:**

1. Development financing, notably grants and loans from donors and financial institutions.
  2. Multilateral trading system, such as preferential market access and special treatments.
  3. Technical assistance, notably, toward trade mainstreaming.
- The list of LDCs is reviewed every three years by the United Nations Economic and Social Council, in the light of recommendations by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP).
  - Five countries have so far graduated from LDC status: Botswana in 1994, Cape Verde in 2007, Maldives in 2011, Samoa in January 2014, and Equatorial Guinea in June 2017.

### **Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA):**

- The Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA) is a **preferential trading arrangement** designed to liberalise and expand intra-regional trade in goods progressively among member countries. It was signed in 1975.
- **Member Countries:** India, Bangladesh, China, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, and Laos.
- Recently, Mongolia has concluded bilateral negotiations on tariff concessions and is to become the seventh member.
- Least Developed Countries are given tariff concessions under the Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA).

### **China Joins UN Arms Trade Treaty**

- In June 2020, National People's Congress, the top legislative body of China, voted to join Arms Trade Treaty.
- The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) **regulates the international trade in conventional arms** - from small arms to battle tanks, combat aircraft and warships.
- Arms Trade Treaty **requires member countries** to
  1. keep records of international transfers of weapons, and
  2. prohibit cross-border shipments that could be used in human **rights violations or attacks on civilians.**

China deposited instrument of accession to the treaty on July 7, 2020.

China became 107<sup>th</sup> party to the treaty.

### **Details of Arms Trade Treaty:**

- It was approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 2013.
- It came into force on December 24, 2014.
- At present, the Treaty has a total of 107 States Parties and 130 Signatory States.

The term "signatory" refers to political support to the treaty from a country. Party to the treaty means the state completes the internal legislative process and gives explicit consent to be bound by the treaty.

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### G-7 Summit:

## US Postpones G-7 Summit, Wants India and Other Countries To Join

- The United States of America (USA) which was to host the G-7 Summit in June 2020 postponed it to September or October 2020.
- United States President Donald Trump stated that
- G-7 is an outdated group, and
- suggested expansion of the G-7 Group into G-10 or G-11 by including India, Australia, South Korea, and Russia.

### **About G-7 Group:**

G-7 refers to a group of advanced economies.

Six leading industrial countries (United States, United Kingdom, France, West Germany, Japan and Italy) met in 1975 for **the first time to discuss the global economy after the first oil shock.**

In 1976, Canada joined the group and the group became G-7.

It became G-8 after Russia joined in 1998.

Following the Russian annexation of Crimea, the G7 nations decided in March 2014 to meet without Russia until further notice.

### SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

#### HEALTH:

#### Covid-19:

## World Grapples With COVID-19

The entire world has been in the grip of the killer coronavirus for many months that has unsettled the most populous and the most prosperous countries. Prime Minister of Britain, Boris Johnson, had tested positive and spent some days in hospital and returned home from the verge of death. Even Donald Trump, the US president who refused to wear a mask for months, has started wearing it since 12th July 2020 after more than one lakh Americans died because of the infection.

### **What is Coronavirus Disease (COVID 19) ?**

Coronavirus Disease is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus in 2019

Viruses are microscopic parasites that lack the capacity to thrive and reproduce outside a host body.

According to AFP news agency, this dangerous virus has killed more than 5,60,000 persons till 12th July 2020 since its outbreak in China in December 2019. More than 1.25 crore (12.5 million) cases have been reported positive in 196 countries triggering massive economic damage. The biggest loss of human lives has occurred in the US, Brazil and India, in that order, as in mid July,2020.

The disease called COVID-19 had been identified first in Wuhan city in China. The virus had spread to the rest of the world from March, 2020. President of the USA, Mr.Donald Trump, had accused China of exporting the killer virus. China refuted the charge with all the public relations power at its command. Whatever be the allegations, China had managed the crisis better than most of the countries. Whether the virus was produced in a Chinese laboratory or was the result of visits by the people to the seafood and live animal market in Wuhan is yet to be established.

Annihilation of the virus and reviving the economies are the two challenges before the mankind.

In New Zealand, extensive contact tracing and isolating has helped to break transmission chain of the coronavirus. Prime Minister of New Zealand announced on June 7,2020 ,” We have eliminated the transmission of Corona Virus in New Zealand for now .”

Countries like India have been taking measures to track, test, and treat.

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## **Details:**

COVID-19 is defined as illness caused by novel coronavirus, now called Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2, formerly called 2019-nCoV). It was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan city, Hubei Province in China.

SARS-CoV-2 is a virus that scientists have not seen or known before. Like other viruses, it is believed to have started in animals and spread to humans. Animal-to-human spread was suspected after the initial outbreak in Wuhan. By January, 2020, clusters of cases of a mysterious pneumonia were reported in Wuhan and in the following weeks person-to-person spread of the virus was reported around the world.

On 30th January 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared COVID-19 outbreak a global health emergency.

On 11th March 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic, its first such designation since declaring HINI influenza pandemic in 2009.

Illness caused by SARS-CoV-2 was termed COVID-19 by the WHO, the acronym derived from CO derived from CORONA , VI from Virus and D from Disease , and 19 from 2019. The name was chosen to avoid stigmatising or associating it with animals

### **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

Cough, fever or chills, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing, muscle or body aches, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhoea, headache, fatigue, nausea or vomiting, congestion or running nose are the symptoms of COVID-19.

Although for most people COVID-19 causes only mild illness, it can make some people acutely ill. It can be sometimes fatal too.

Older people who completed 65 years of age, and those with pre-existing medical conditions such as high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes, appear to be more vulnerable.

### **How does it spread in humans?**

Scientists and health officials have been working to trace the origin of the new coronavirus. According to early hypothesis, it was linked to seafood market in Wuhan. Some people who visited the market developed viral pneumonia caused by the new coronavirus. A study that came out on 25 January 2020 states that the individual who became ill on 1 st December 2019 and was the first reported case, had no link to the seafood market. It is yet to be established the origin and nature of the disease.

The New England Journal of Medicine in mid March said the virus that causes COVID-19 may be stable for several hours in aerosols (in this case, droplets from an infected person dispersed in air or gas) and for several hours to days on surfaces.

Scientists found that SARS-CoV-2 was detectable in aerosols for up to three hours, on copper up to four hours, cardboard up to 24 hours and plastic and stainless steel up to two or three days.

The new coronavirus is spread through droplets released into the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The droplets released into the air generally do not travel more than a few feet, and they fall on the floor in a few seconds. This is why physical distancing is effective in preventing the spread.

However, some scientists have recently stated that the coronavirus travels in air.

### **What is contact tracing?**

In Delhi one person who was delivering food to a number of customers was found to be infected. All the persons who ate the food he supplied had been traced and tested and some of them were found positive. Tracing the people who ate the food delivered by the person is contact tracing. A driver, who returned to Vijayawada from Calcutta via Odisha, celebrated his homecoming with friends and played cards with them. The driver developed COVID-19 symptoms on the second day of his return. The

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police traced out all the people who played cards and got them tested. This is called contact tracing. This method is used by health officials to prevent the spread of the infectious disease.

In general, contact tracing involves identifying people who have an infectious disease and their contacts (people who may have been exposed) and working with them to stop disease transmission. After testing, the doctors decide who is free of infection and who has tested positive and what is to be done with them, either to send them to hospital or advise them to follow home quarantine. Communities across the globe have been working on contact tracing to locate and support people who had a potential high-risk exposure to someone infected with COVID-19.

#### **Contract tracing for COVID-19 involves**

Talking to people already infected with COVID-19 to identify everyone with whom they had close contact during the time they may have been infectious,

Notifying the contacts of their potential exposure,

Referring the contacts for testing,

Monitoring contacts for signs and symptoms of COVID-19, and

Connecting contacts with health services they might need during the self-quarantine period.

#### **Are children infected?**

Based on available data, children do not appear to be at higher risk for COVID-19 than adults. While some children and infants have been sick with COVID-19, adults make up most of the known cases so far. However, a few children have developed multi system Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS-C). In general, children have less risk.

#### **How to prevent infection?**

Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Dry them thoroughly with an air dryer or clean towel. If soap is not available, use hand sanitiser with at least 60 per cent alcohol. One shall wash his hands when he gets back home or gets into work.

1. Cover mouth and nose with mask or tissues or sleeves while coughing and sneezing.
2. One has to stay home when sick.
3. Avoid touching nose, eyes, and mouth. Dispose of the used tissue paper in the trash.
4. Use a household wipe or spray to disinfect doorknobs, light switches, desks, key boards, sinks, toilets, cell phones, and other objects and surfaces that are frequently touched.
5. Prepare a plan of action in case someone in the house is sick with COVID-19.
6. One has to plan to separate and isolate the family member who has been infected.
7. One can plan visits outdoors with friends and family.

In case one is going to an office or a market, when it cannot be avoided, a mask covering the mouth and the nose is a must. Hand sanitiser with 60 per cent alcohol has to be carried by everyone. One has to avoid people who are not wearing masks.

#### **Is there any treatment?**

There is currently no specific treatment for COVID-19.

Antibiotics do not help as they do not work against viruses.

Treatment objective would be to relieve symptoms while the body fights the illness.

The affected person shall be in isolation, away from other people, until he or she has recovered completely.

The drugs specially manufactured to fight COVID, Remdesivir and Tocilizumab, are yet to give desired results, according to doctors.

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Vaccine developed by BHARAT BIOTECH in India for prevention of COVID is under trials.

Vaccine developed by Oxford University along with drug company AstraZeneca has shown good results

The Indian government has been grappling with the challenge of enforcing hygiene among all sections of people. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on 11th July, 2020 stressed the need to observe personal hygiene and physical distance in public places. He said the awareness about the pandemic should be disseminated widely and a continuous emphasis on preventing the spread of the infection should be laid. He also directed that real-time national level monitoring and guidance should be provided to all affected States and places with high positivity rate. Vaccine for prevention of COVID is under trials. India's first coronavirus case was reported in Kerala on 30th January 2020. Kerala, with its reasonably good health infrastructure, had proved to be the best among the Indian States as far as fighting the COVID-19 is concerned.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science, Technology, Environment and Climate has met on July 11 under the chairmanship of former minister, Jairam Ramesh. The committee was told that in Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, New Zealand, Italy, Spain, South Korea and even in Dharavi (densely populated area in Mumbai city), a strong focus was laid on community engagement and the basics of testing, tracing, isolation and treating all those that are sick, and achieved remarkable results.

### **Lockdown in India**

Following Chinese experience in Wuhan, Indian PM Narendra Modi had on 24 March 2020 (after observing 'Janata Curfew - people's curfew - on March 22) ordered, with four hours notice, a 40-day nationwide lockdown for the country's 1.37 billion population – initially for a three-week period, which was extended further for 19 days on April 14. Restrictions on farming, banks and public works began to be lifted from April 20, 2020. Neighbouring shops were allowed to open from April 25.

On July 10, 2020, India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jai Shankar, claimed that India made the right choices in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic and is as realistically well placed as any country could be under prevailing circumstances. "Recognising our capabilities and our limitations, we opted to rely very substantially on social distancing. So, we went for a very early lockdown, we went for a very early travel restrictions and the result of that, three months down the road, yes, the actual caseload today is larger, it is not large in proportion to the population," said Jai Shankar. However, this argument does not hold water as China which has slightly more population than India has far less caseload although it was the country of COVID-19 origin.

### **Are we testing enough?**

No one in government – politicians, bureaucrats or doctors – gives direct answers to this question. Independent observers say unequivocally that we are not testing enough. Sujata Rao, former secretary of health, government of India, has said in an interview to Times of India (July 13, 2020) that not enough testing is being done in Telangana State). At present, India is testing 8,191 per million compared to 1,22,651 in Spain, 1,69,945 in United Kingdom and 96,836 in Italy. Soumya Swaminathan, chief scientist of the World Health Organisation (WHO), says India needs to expand its testing till the positive rate – just not national but in critical hotspots – falls below 5 per cent. In other words, we need to test much more.

### **PM announces Relief Package**

India has a very weak health infrastructure. India spends on health only 1.28 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is 2.94 trillion US dollars. India is amongst the lowest spending on health in the world with delivery of public healthcare managed at State level, supported by the Central government.

The prime minister had announced, on May 12, an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan 'a stimulus package of Rs. 20 lakh crore or nearly 10 per cent of the GDP to deal with the economic fallout of COVID-19. He made the announcement as part of his third address to the nation in the wake of pandemic. The main thrust was on helping the Micro Small Medium Entrepreneurs (MSMEs). About 45 lakh

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MSMEs are expected to gain from this proposal. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had subsequently announced the tranches of the package for different sectors.

**Are we in community transmission?**

With 8,29,916 cases (as on July 12) growing at 27,000 per day, it is hard to believe we are not in community transmission. Raman Gangakhedkar, former head of Epidemiology at Indian Council of Medical Research, said in specific areas, like Delhi, Mumbai or Chennai, we cannot trace the source of escalating infection. It is community transmission although he preferred to call it local transmission.

**How significant is the mortality rate in India?**

It is decidedly better than the UK's 659, Italy's 578 and Spain's 607 (all these countries have better health infrastructure than India). The Union government said India is doing better than many countries. However, we do not have the perfect idea of the total number of COVID tests. We have advantage over European country. 90 per cent of Indians today are aged less than 60 years and hence less prone to be positive. In Italy, only 70 per cent are below 60.

**The travails of migrant labour:**

For decades, tens of thousands of workers have moved from State to State and for shores abroad looking for opportunities and livelihoods. The scope of this pandemic has ensured that no section of people is left unaffected. "We see them everywhere. Yet, we never imagined immigrant workers as a group big enough to be taken seriously," said Irudaya Rajan, faculty at the Centre for Development Studies in Thiruvananthapuram. In fact, only migrant workers, as a group, were directly affected by COVID-19 because they make money only by moving from place to place. The migrant workers were seen everywhere: hotels, small industries, construction sites, metro stations, tourism and factories. Many persons walked for hundreds of kilometres from North to South, West to East and North to South and East to reach their small homes when they lost their jobs and their employers refused to take care of them. Many people died while walking without food for hundreds of miles. The governments at the centre and in the States have become very unpopular because of lack of vision on their part in envisaging the plight of the immigrant workers before declaring the lockdown.

**Impact on economy:**

Prior to the lockdown, India's economic growth rate had slowed to 5% in the Financial Year 2019-20, down from an average of 7% over the last five years. It is now likely to fall to its lowest level since 1991. Shutting down had resulted in India's unemployment rate to rise to 26 per cent in March 2020. It represented the highest rate since 2016. India's economy is heavily labour-dependent – with the construction industry being among the biggest employers, approximately 90 per cent, of India's four crore migrant workers.

Indian business sentiment turned negative for the first time in more than a decade, reflecting pessimism on activity and profits following the coronavirus outbreak. The business activity net balance fell sharply to -30 per cent in June, from +26 per cent in February, 2020, according to IHS (Integrated Household Survey) Markit India's Business Outlook survey results released on July 13. This was the lowest reading on record and the first time that a negative outlook has been signalled since the series began in late 2009.

**Religious angle:**

Fears over the virus also exacerbated religious tensions in India with Muslims facing increased hostility in some parts of the country, most notably, following a conference convened in the second half of March 2020 by the multinational Muslim missionary organisation called Tablighi Jamaat. It resulted in the largest single outbreak – over a thousand of the coronavirus cases in Delhi, and over 4000 cases across India. For some weeks there were reports that Muslims as a community being blamed for the tablighi convention and the consequent spread of the virus. Later, the campaign has subsided.

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For the first time, all the places of worship of people of all faiths were closed for nearly three months. Lord Venkateswara's temple in Tirumala was closed for almost two months in a rarest of rare situation. It happened, perhaps, for the first time after it was built.

### **Lessons from China:**

There are some important lessons to learn from China's experience in dealing with the COVID-19. When the world's second largest economy, China, has been returning to its rhythm after winning the war against coronavirus outbreak, most of the countries across the world are witnessing national lockdown or state of emergency with a view to slowing down the outbreak of the virulent disease.

As the number of coronavirus infections and the death toll have been steadily rising in every part of the country, Indian government had gone about declaring lockdown and then a package of stimulus to revive economy. But India has not seen such a inscrutable crisis after independence. Such an extraordinary situation would demand an extraordinary effort by the government to rescue the people. India has taken only one item from the Chinese experience with coronavirus and declared lockdown before many countries.

In addition to the lockdown, the Chinese government had given an utmost emphasis on ramping up coronavirus testing, contact tracing, developing public health infrastructure and hospitals on war footing. The fight against the COVID-19 was fashioned by the unprecedented, comprehensive, thorough and rigorous measures by the Chinese government under the strong leadership of President Xi Jinping.

China's timely measures to prevent the fast spreading virus in Wuhan, the country's COVID-19 epicentre were successful because of the monitoring mechanism put in place by the government. COVID special hospitals were built in Wuhan within 10 days of the outbreak. Sport stadiums and convention centres were improvised as temporary hospitals.

Chinese administration had locked down Wuhan on 23 January 2020. During the 76-day lockdown all the necessary items from food to medicine had been sent to all the doors. Ambulance was sent if anybody was ill in a building or community halls. People from all walks of life have been assured with sufficient funds and resources by Chinese government.

Compared to this humongous effort, India's measures appear inadequate. Since the Chinese could prevent the spread beyond Wuhan, the doctors and health officials from other provinces were brought to Wuhan in large numbers to serve the patients. The doctors from China went to 13 other countries to fight coronavirus.

Meanwhile, the world has been struggling to wriggle out of the infectious web created by the coronavirus. India has been in the forefront in manufacturing drugs. Two-thirds of the drugs that the world uses are produced in India. The moment a vaccine is invented, Indian drug industry would take up bulk production. Experiments have been going on in various countries, including India, to find a vaccine that can answer the coronavirus. Success in developing vaccines will go a long way in checking Coronavirus.

### **Vaccine Trials:**

#### **Covaxin Approved for Clinical Human Trials**

- Covaxin, developed by Bharat Biotech India (BBIL), is the first indigenously developed vaccine candidate approved for human trials to fight against the novel coronavirus.
- In June 2020, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) allowed Bharat Biotech India (BBIL) to conduct phase 1 and phase 2 human clinical trials for 'Covaxin'. A vaccine which is under clinical trials is called vaccine candidate.
- Clinical Human Trials started in July 2020.
- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has selected 12 institutes to conduct these trials, including AIIMS in Delhi and Patna.

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- The first human trials of Covaxin have begun at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Patna. AIIMS-Patna chose 10 volunteers to start the human trial of Covaxin.

#### **Vaccine Developed through Inactivated Virus:**

- Covaxin vaccine candidate has been developed through an inactivated virus.
- The live virus is inactivated by killing it through heat or chemicals in specialised labs.
- National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune, isolated a strain of the novel coronavirus from an asymptomatic Covid-19 patient and transferred it to Bharat Biotech in May 2020. Bharat Biotech developed an "inactivated" vaccine at its high-containment facility at Genome Valley in Hyderabad.
- An inactivated virus has no possibility of infecting a person or multiplying in number, as it is already dead.
- However, when presented to the immune system, the dead virus has the ability to activate the antibodies that can fight against this virus in future.
- Thus, a vaccine activates immune system "memory". Memory allows body to react quickly and efficiently to future exposures to that virus.

#### **Stages of Vaccine Development:**

- Approval of a vaccine usually undergoes four stages. Pre-clinical testing, Phase I and II and lastly Phase III.
- In pre-clinical stages, the vaccine is tested on animals for **safety** and **efficacy (immune response)**. Covaxin vaccine was first tested on mice and guinea pigs.
- Safety and efficacy are two important aspects of vaccine development. They are intended to check
  - a) whether the vaccine candidate produces side effects like allergies or diseases,
  - b) the dosage needed,
  - c) whether adequate antibodies are produced by the immune system to fight the targeted disease, etc.
- Phase I Trials will be conducted in **small groups of individuals**, where the dosage of the vaccine will be determined. Emphasis will be to study the **effectiveness** (whether adequate antibodies are released by the immune system) and **side effects** of the vaccine in accordance with the number of dosage.
- Phase II Trials will comprise of a **larger group of people** where they will **be organized and categorized** according to certain **characteristics** such as **age** and **sex**. This phase tests how effective the vaccine is on the population group being studied.
- Phase III is a large scale clinical human trial involving thousands of people to **confirm the safety and efficacy observed in Phase II**, on a large number of participants.
- If the vaccine candidate proves its safety and efficacy in Phase III, it gets regulatory approval for marketing the vaccine to wider population i.e. public use.
- Even after the regulatory approval for manufacturing after Phase III, the vaccine continues to be monitored for both quality and safety and to check any long term unintended rare adverse side effects.

#### **About Bharat Biotech India (BBIL):**

- It is a Hyderabad-based biotechnology firm.
- It has a good track record in developing vaccines.
- It has produced vaccines for Polio, Rabies, Rotavirus, Japanese Encephalitis, Chikungunya and Zika.

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**Testing:**

**Rapid Antigen Tests Approved by ICMR**

- On June 2020, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) approved Rapid Antigen Tests for COVID-19.

**What is Rapid Antigen Test?**

- Rapid Antigen Test detects the presence of a foreign substance in a person's oral or nasal swab.
- Antigen is a foreign substance (bacteria, virus, etc) which enters into a human body. This triggers immune to produce anti-bodies against foreign substance.

**Why Rapid Antigen Have Been Approved?**

- Lockdown restrictions are being gradually relaxed and economic activities are reviving across the country.
- But, relaxation of lockdown restrictions is leading to massive increase in COVID infections.
- Hence, there is a need for scaling up testing facilities across the country.
- **RT-PCR (Reverse Transcription-Polymerase Chain Reaction) tests** are the gold standard for COVID infections testing. They detect the presence of COVID virus accurately.
- But, increasing the testing rates at a massive scale is not possible through RT-PCR tests due to following reasons.
- **Specialised Labs:** RT-PCR tests are done only in highly specialised labs with high safety protocols as they deal with live virus.
- **Time Consuming:** RT-PCR tests are also time consuming. Each test takes up to 2.5 to 4.5 hours. So testing cannot be scaled up massively.

**Rapid Antibodies Tests:**

- To increase the testing rates, ICMR also approved Rapid Antibodies Tests.
- These detect the presence of antibodies which are released in the human body of infected person to fight the infection. Results are available in less than an hour
- But Rapid Antibodies tests also have some limitations.
- The test can be conducted only after 7 to 10 days after a person has been infected.
- These tests have also shown large errors while testing showing false positive or false negative results.
- A false positive result can occur when the antibodies are due to another or very similar virus in the human body. Similarly, there may be cases where exposure to COVID-19 is not followed by the production of antibodies in an individual, showing up as 'false negative'.

**Advantages of Rapid Antigen Tests:**

- These tests detect the viral antigen (COVID-19 genetic material) present in a person's oral or nasal swab.
- Test result can be known after 15 minutes. Maximum time taken for result is 30 minutes.
- These tests can be conducted on the spot. No need for specialised labs.
- The cost of testing is relatively cheap at Rs.450 compared to more than Rs.2000 for RT-PCR tests.

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### How is the result known in Rapid Antigen Tests?

- If the target antigen (COVID-19 genetic material) is present in sufficient concentrations in the sample, it will bind to specific antibodies fixed to a paper strip enclosed in a plastic casing and generate a visually detectable signal, typically within 30 minutes.
- Thus, the test does not require any specific equipment. The result can be known by naked eye.

### Accuracy of Rapid Antigen Tests:

- Rapid Antigen Tests kits showed high sensitivity. A highly sensitive test means that there are a few false negative test results.

Sensitivity and specificity are important parameters in knowing the effectiveness of diagnostic tests.

Sensitivity measures how often a test correctly generates a positive result for people who have the condition that's being tested for (also known as the “true positive” rate).

**Specificity** measures a test’s ability to correctly generate a negative result for people who do not have the condition that’s being tested for (also known as the “true negative” rate).

- The ICMR stated Rapid Antigen Tests could effectively detect COVID-19 positive patients, but those who come negative while having COVID symptoms must go for an RT-PCR test for re-confirmation.
- Hence, it stated that Rapid Antigen Test is not a confirmatory test like RT-PCR test. But, these tests help in identifying ‘truly positive’ COVID infections.
- This means that those who test positive through rapid antigen detection tests are considered “truly positive” for Covid-19 but those who test negative must go for an RT-PCR test for re-confirmation.
- The Rapid Antigen Tests help in **quick testing, tracing and isolation and treatment of COVID infected persons.**

### Additional Information:

- The Rapid Antigen Test kit has been developed by SD Biosensor, a South Korean company.
- The company has a manufacturing plant in Manesar, Gurgaon, Haryana.

### ICMR Expands the Ambit of COVID-19 Testing to Include All Symptomatic Persons

- On June 23, 2020, the Indian Council of Medical Research issued a revised testing strategy to include “all symptomatic individuals in every part of the country”.
- The earlier strategy advised testing symptomatic individuals, but **restricted** it to those in hospitals, containment zones and hotspots, contacts of a confirmed Covid-19 case, healthcare and frontline workers (police, press, municipal staff, air travel staff, etc), and those with the history of international travel.

### Why Testing Has Been Expanded?

- COVID-19 infections are increasing at an alarming rate.
- **Testing, tracking, and treating** is the **only way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 infection** and save lives.
- Hence, it is imperative that **testing should be made widely available to all symptomatic individuals** in every part of the country.
- Moreover, there are new types of testing kits available like antibody tests, antigen tests, apart from RT-PCR tests which enable widespread testing.

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- ICMR advised all concerned State Governments, Public and Private Institutions to take required steps to scale up testing for COVID-19 by deploying combination of various tests.
  - While the previous testing strategy listed healthcare settings, the new advisory specifies that **all government medical colleges and hospitals as well as accredited private hospitals and labs should deploy the testing kits.**
  - ICMR also urged **private hospitals, offices, and public sector units to conduct antibody testing** as a **surveillance measure**. This will help in allaying the fear and anxiety of health care workers, office employees etc.

**Treatment:**

### **Government Approves Favipiravir for Restricted Emergency Use**

- Favipiravir is an anti-viral drug approved for restricted emergency use for the treatment of mild to moderate Covid-19 patients in India and several other countries. The drug was invented by a Japanese company, Toyama Chemicals Company, originally for treatment of influenza, a viral infection that attacks the respiratory system.
- The drug is expected to **reduce viral load on the infected patient.**
- On June 23, 2020, the Drug Controller General of India (DGI) granted permission to Glenmark Pharmaceuticals to manufacture and sell generic versions of Favipiravir 200 mg tablets.
- Fabiflu, manufactured by Glenmark, will be India's first oral antiviral drug for treatment of mild & moderate COVID-19 patients.
- Nearly 80% of all COVID-19 positive cases in India are under mild to moderate category.

**Concerns:**

- The drug is **very expensive**. Each tablet of 200 mg costs Rs. 103 and a strip containing 34 tablets has been priced at Rs. 3500.
- The drug is **still under trial in most countries** (US, Europe, Japan, etc.) and its **efficacy was yet to be proven.**
- But, Drug Controller General of India (DGI) granted accelerated approval for the drug taking into account Covid-19's **severity, rarity, and lack of alternative treatment.**
- The Drug Controller General of India (DGI) asked the company to **conduct post marketing surveillance on the first 1,000 patients to assess safety and efficacy of the drug.**

### **Government Approves Use of Dexamethasone for COVID-19**

- On June 27, 2020, the Union Health Ministry approved use of Dexamethasone for managing moderate to severe cases of COVID-19.
- Dexamethasone is a corticosteroid drug used in a wide range of conditions for its anti-inflammatory and immunosuppressant effects.
- The drug has been tested in hospitalized patients with COVID-19 in the RECOVERY clinical trial in United Kingdom and was found to have benefits for critically ill patients.
- The drug has been shown to reduce mortality by about one third for patients on ventilators, and by about one fifth for patients being maintained on oxygen therapy.
- The drug is also a part of the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) and is widely available.
- The drug is also inexpensive. It costs around Rs 5-6 per injection.
- The medicine is even less costly in tablet form whose cost is Rs 10-28 for a strip of 20 tablets.

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**Mortality:**

**Role of Cytokine Storms in COVID-19 Mortality**

- One of the great mysteries of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) disease is that it causes only mild to moderate symptoms in most people but turns out to be fatal for others causing multiple organ failure and death.
- The emerging evidence is that most of the COVID-19 fatalities are due to overreaction of their immune systems against the infection where the body starts to attack its own cells and tissues, rather than the virus itself.
- Cytokines are produced in response to any infection. But, in some COVID-19 infected persons, this response is abnormal. This abnormal immune response to the infection is called '**cytokine storm**'.
- High cytokines flow suppresses oxygen utilisation in the body and cause hypoxia- the state of insufficient oxygen as it kills cells, which leads to multiple organ failure like kidney failure, heart failure and even impacts the functioning of the brain.
- Hence, medical treatment is focussed on drugs that modulate the immune system of the body and thereby inhibits the cytokine storm so that mortality can be reduced.
- Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education & Research, Chandigarh, recently commenced a clinical trial with Sepsivac, an immunomodulator, on coronavirus patients.  
Sepsivac is an existing drug used to treat Sepsis which occurs when chemicals released in the bloodstream to fight an infection trigger inflammation throughout the body.

**SPACE:**

**Reforms Announced in the Space Sector to Boost Private Sector Participation**

- **To tap the potential of private sector and encourage greater private participation in space sector**, the Union Government approves setting up two institutions.
  1. Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe)
  2. New Space India Limited (NSIL).

For all these years, all the space related activities have been in the domain of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), a Government of India Organisation.

**Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe):**

- Space infrastructure will be opened to use by private sector for launching of satellites.
- Private satellite companies can use ISRO's infrastructure by paying rent, assemble and test their satellites there, and export them, too. ISRO would decide the fee for utilising its facilities.
- The IN-SPACe, which would be a new entity of Department of Space, will be regulator and promoter of space industry.
- It will provide a level playing field for private companies to use Indian space infrastructure.
- It will also **hand-hold, promote and guide the private industries** in space activities through encouraging policies and a friendly regulatory environment.

**New Space India Limited (NSIL):**

- NSIL has been setup to carry forward the industry production of space systems.
- It will enable private industries to

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- scale up high technology manufacturing base for space programmes through technology transfer,
  - cater to the domestic and emerging global satellite launch service market,
  - More than 500 Indian industries are contributing to ISRO programmes and more than half of the project budget outlay flowed to these industries.
  - ISRO would transfer the following to the industry
    - small satellite technology,
    - manufacture of small satellite launch vehicles,
    - production of Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), and
    - other technology developed by ISRO centres.

#### **Impact of Above Decisions:**

1. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) could focus **more time and energies on research and development activities, new advanced technologies, exploration missions and human spaceflight programme.**

2. **Boost to Commercial Space Activities:**

Commercial space activities will start growing in India.

Facilities related to satellites and launch vehicles are very expensive and private companies and startups cannot afford to invest in them. The new access to public funded facilities will be a relief to them like in US. In the U.S., private companies use and lease launch pads and facilities at NASA's Cape Canaveral launch complex.

Many of the ISRO's subcontractors who want to build satellites for overseas companies faced unclear regulatory hitches. Now they can partner an overseas technology company and get into the global market for small and mid-sized spacecraft.

3. **Savings for Government:** Private sector involvement would also **reduce the investments that are to be made by the Government.**
4. **Employment:** The participation of private sector would also **boost employment opportunities in the country.**

#### **World Space Technology:**

### **China Successfully Launched Last Satellite of Navigation Satellite System, BeiDou**

- On June 23, 2020, China successfully launched the last satellite (55<sup>th</sup>) of its Navigation Satellite System, BeiDou.
- BeiDou is a global navigation network with constellation of 55 satellites.
- BeiDou means "Big Dipper" in Chinese.
- The last satellite was launched from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in southwest China's Sichuan Province.
- The launch will mark the completion of the country's domestically developed BeiDou network, **one of the four global navigation networks** alongside the **US' Global Positioning System (GPS), Russia's GLONASS and the European Union's Galileo.**
- India too is building its **navigation satellite system** called the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), with an operational name of NAVIC.

#### **Uses of BeiDou:**

- It will provide global users who are members of its network to access high-accuracy navigation, positioning and timing as well as communication services.

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- Some of the countries like Pakistan are using the BDS.
  - China is also promoting its use in the countries signed-up for its multi-billion Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

#### **DEFENCE:**

### **Mareech, Advanced Anti-Torpedo Defence System, Inducted into Indian Navy**

- In June 26, 2020, the Indian Navy inducted an advanced anti-torpedo defence system called 'Maareech.
- 'Maareech' has been designed and developed indigenously by the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) and it is capable of detecting, locating and neutralizing incoming torpedo.
- A torpedo is a self propelled under water missile which explodes upon contact with submarines or surface vessels.

#### **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:**

### **India Joins Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI)**

- In June 2020, India joined Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) as a founding member.

#### **About Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI):**

- It is a multi-stakeholder initiative launched by leading economies including USA, UK, EU, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Singapore.
- GPAI will
- work towards evolving **better understanding of the challenges and opportunities around Artificial Intelligence (AI)** using the experience and diversity of participating countries, and
- also **support cutting-edge research and applied activities on Artificial Intelligence (AI)-related priorities.**
- GPAI will be supported by a Secretariat, to be hosted by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris, as well as by **two Centers of Expertise** - one each in **Montreal and Paris.**

#### **What is Artificial Intelligence?**

- Artificial intelligence (AI) is a branch of computer science concerned with building intelligent machines capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence. For example, speech recognition, problem-solving, learning and planning, etc.

#### **ENVIRONMENT:**

#### **Ganga Rejuvenation:**

### **World Bank Approves Additional US \$ 400 Million to Rejuvenate River Ganga**

- In June 2020, the World Bank announced additional funding of UD \$ 400 million (Around Rs.3000 crores) to rejuvenate River Ganga.
- The World Bank has been supporting programmes for controlling the pollution in the Ganga River since 2011. It has already funded US \$ 600 million for these activities up to 2021.
- The US \$ 400 million funding would be used in the 2021-26 period.

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- The first World Bank project helped build critical sewage infrastructure in **20 pollution hotspots along the river.**
  - The present assistance of **US \$ 400 million** will help scale this up **to the tributaries.**
  - It will also help government strengthen the institutions needed to manage a river basin as large and complex as the Ganga Basin.
  - To ensure that sewage infrastructure assets function effectively and are well maintained, the Project will build on the innovative Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) of public private partnership introduced.
  - Under this model, the government pays a private operator 40 percent of the capital cost to build a sewage treatment plant during the construction period. The remaining 60 percent is paid as performance-linked payments over 15 years to ensure that the operator runs and maintains the plant efficiently.

#### **Conservation Reserve:**

### **Tillari Forest Area Declared as a Conservation Reserve Area**

- In June 2020, the Maharashtra government declared the Tillari forest area in the Dodamarg and Sawantwadi range in coastal Sindhudurg district as a conservation reserve area.

#### **What is a Conservation Reserve Area?**

- Conservation reserve denotes protected areas which typically act as buffer zones or connectors and migration corridors between established national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and reserved and protected forests.
- Such areas are designated as conservation areas if they are uninhabited and completely owned by the Government of India but used for subsistence by communities.

#### **Why was Tillari Declared a Conservation Area?**

- The region is known for tigers, elephants, leopards, bison, sambar deer, barking deer and chaushinga.
- Tillari conservation reserve is located near the border of Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka, connecting Mhadei sanctuary in Goa and Bhimgad in Karnataka.
- The area covering nine villages in the forest range is known to serve as a corridor and even as a **habitat for the population of tigers and elephants moving between the three states of Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra.**
- The total area of Tillari Conservation Area will be 29.53 square km.
- It will be the 13th such reserve in the western ghats.
- Maharashtra has 62 conservation reserves, of which 13 are in the western ghats.

#### **Waste Management:**

### **India's First Online Waste Exchange Platform Launched in Andhra Pradesh**

- On June 5, 2020, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy launched **India's first online waste exchange platform** for safe disposal of all industrial waste generated in the state.
- The Andhra Pradesh Environment Management Corporation (APEMC), which will handle the platform.
- The APEMC will streamline collection of the waste from industries, sort and streamline the waste as hazardous or non-hazardous or e-waste according to category, and scientifically dispose it off at various waste disposal centres.

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### **Need for Online Waste Exchange:**

- Andhra Pradesh has a large number of industries which generate significant quantities of liquid waste, hazardous and non-hazardous solid waste.
- As of now, the waste management system is not adequately organised to handle the total quantity being generated.
- Large amounts of liquid and solid waste were finding its way into water bodies, rivers, canals, and the sea.
- Hence, there is a requirement for an appropriate system intervention to streamline and scientifically dispose off the waste generated in the state.
- Through the online platform, industries which do not have their own waste disposal systems can approach the APEMC, which will arrange for collection and safe disposal of the waste.
- APEMC will handle the waste from its generation till the end of its lifecycle.

### **EPI:**

### **India Ranked 168 in Environmental Performance Index (EPI)**

- India has ranked 168th out of 180 countries in the 2020 Environmental Performance Index (EPI), release by the researchers at Yale and Columbia universities in June 2020.
- Denmark (1), Luxemburg (2), and Switzerland (3) got the top three ranks.
- Countries which are ranked top (starting from Rank 1) generally exhibit long-standing commitments and carefully constructed programs to protect public health, conserve natural resources, and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- For India, the report suggested that there is a **need for national sustainability efforts on a number of fronts, including air and water pollution, biodiversity protection, and the transition to a clean energy future.**
- 32 indicators in 11 issues have been used for ranking in the Environmental Performance Index (EPI).
- The 11 issues are: Air quality, Drinking water and Sanitation, Heavy metals, Waste Management, Bio-diversity, Eco system services, Fisheries, Climate Change, Pollution emissions, Agriculture and water resources.
- Data was sourced from intergovernmental organisation, non-governmental organisations and academic research centres.

### **Questions for Practice:**

### **Mains Practice Questions**

1. In the interest of transparency and accountability, the PMCARES Fund needs to be declared as a Public Authority and brought under the ambit of Right to Information (RTI) Act. Comment.
2. Fixed tenure for civil servants will insulate them from political interference while promoting professionalism, efficiency and good governance. Discuss. (GS Paper 2)
3. Public Grievance Redressal is a major concern in India. To what extent, Information Technology is useful in improving Public Grievance Redressal in our country?
4. Custodial deaths are not only inhuman but also a blot on democracy. Explain the reasons for rising custodial deaths and suggest measures to ensure accountability of Police for their misconduct.
5. Developmental Action Plan for Scheduled Castes (DAPSC) and Scheduled Tribe Component (STC) are not effective in promoting the socio economic interests of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Suggest solutions to improve the effectiveness of Government interventions for the socio economic progress of SCs and STs.

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6. Mental health problems like depression are curable. Yet, many people undergoing depression neither accept the problem nor seek medical help, which is leading to suicides. Discuss the reasons and suggest solution.
  7. What initiatives have been taken by the Indian Government to encourage private sector participation in space sector? What are its benefits?

**Prelims Practice Questions**

1. Consider the following statements regarding PMCARES Fund.
  1. It is a non lapsable fund under the consolidated fund of India.
  2. The fund can receive contributions only from individuals and organisations in India.
  3. Organisations can donate money to PMCARES Fund under Corporate Social Responsibility.Which of the above statements is/or correct?  
Choose the correct answer using codes given below.
  - a) 1, 2 and 3
  - b) 2 and 3
  - c) 2 Only
  - d) 3 Only
2. Which of the statements regarding PMCARES Fund is *correct*?
  - a) The money under PMCARES Fund should be utilised only for the COVID-19 pandemic related activities.
  - b) PMCARES Fund can receive foreign contributions.
  - c) The Fund also gets allocation from regular budget of Union Government.
  - d) PMCARES Fund is audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India.
3. Consider the following statements regarding Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana.
  1. It is a centrally sponsored scheme with a separate budget under Ministry of Rural Development.
  2. The Scheme aims at developing model villages in the country.
  3. The scheme is implemented on a standalone basis without any convergence with other central schemes or state schemes.Choose the correct answer using codes given below.
  - a) 1 and 3
  - b) 2 and 3
  - c) 2 Only
  - d) 1 Only
4. Which of the following Countries/Organisations launched investigation in to Digital Service Tax/Equalisation Levy levied by India?
  - a) European Union
  - b) USA
  - c) World Trade Organisation
  - d) International Monetary Fund

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5. Which of the following organs of the United Nations is **primarily responsible** for maintaining international peace and security?
- General Assembly
  - Security Council
  - UN Secretariat
  - International Court of Justice
6. Consider the following statements regarding **non permanent members** of the United Nations Security Council?
- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has a total of 10 non permanent members.
  - Non Permanent members are elected for a three year term.
  - India got elected as non permanent member in 2020-22.
- Which of the above statements is/or correct?
- Choose the correct answer using codes given below.
- 1 Only
  - 2 Only
  - 1 and 3
  - 2 and 3
7. With which of the following countries, India has signed an agreement to execute Kholongchhu hydropower project as a joint venture?
- Nepal
  - Myanmar
  - Bhutan
  - China
8. The Arms Trade Treaty regulates international trade in
- Conventional arms
  - Nuclear weapons
  - Chemical and Biological Weapons
  - Ballistic Missile Defence Systems
9. Which of the following is/are approved as confirmatory tests for COVID-19 by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)?
- Rapid Antibodies Test
  - RT-PCR (Reverse Transcription-Polymerase Chain Reaction) tests
  - Rapid Antigen Tests
- Choose the correct answer using the codes given below.
- 1 Only
  - 2 Only
  - 2 and 3
  - 1, 2, and 3
10. Consider the following statements regarding COVID-19 Tests.
- Rapid antibody tests are used to test infection in COVID patients.

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- 2) RT-PCR (Reverse Transcription-Polymerase Chain Reaction) tests are the accurate tests to detect COVID-19 infection.
  - 3) Rapid antigen tests identify the presence of antibodies in the blood of COVID-19 infected persons.

Choose the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

11. Which of the following State launched India's first online waste exchange platform for management of industrial waste?

- a) Andhra Pradesh
- b) Telangana
- c) Tamil Nadu
- d) Maharashtra

### MISCELLANEOUS

#### NATIONAL PERSONS

**Basu Chatterjee (93)**, renowned Hindi and Bengali filmmaker from the 80s and 90s best known for directing films like Choti Si Baat, Rajnigandha, Baaton Baaton Mein, etc., passed away on June 4, 2020 due to age related ailments.

**Wajid Ali Khan (43)**, Music Director who composed for films along with his brother Sajid, passed away on June 1, 2020 due to kidney related ailment.

Sajid-Wajid scored music for many successful films including Dabangg franchise, Chori Chori, Hello Brother, Wanted and Mujhse Shaadi Karogi, etc.

Sajid-Wajid's father was respected tabla-player Ustad Sharafat Ali Khan.

**A. Vaidyanathan (88)**, former Member of the Planning Commission, died in Coimbatore on June 10, 2020. He was also Professor at the Madras Institute of Development Studies and the Centre for Development Studies. Mr. Vaidyanathan had chaired the Government of India Task Force on Revival of Cooperative Credit Institutions in 2004 and was a member of the K.N. Raj Committee on Taxation of Agricultural Income (1969-70).

**Vasant Raiji (100)**, India's oldest First Class cricketer, passed away on June 13, 2020 in Mumbai. He represented Bombay and Baroda. A right-handed batsman, Raiji played nine First Class games in the 1940s.

**Rajinder Goel (77)**, one of the finest left-arm spinners in the domestic cricket, passed away on June 21, 2020 in New Delhi. His domestic career spanned 25 years. He took 750 wickets in domestic cricket tournaments.

#### INTERNATIONAL AWARDS

##### World Food Prize 2020:

Renowned Indian-American soil scientist **Rattan Lal** was awarded '2020 World Food Prize'. Rattan Lal is an alumnus of the Punjab Agriculture University and is currently working at Ohio State University, USA.

This award is considered to be the Nobel Prize in Agriculture.

##### **About the World Food Prize:**

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- It is an **International award founded in the year 1986** by the World Food Prize Foundation set up by **Nobel Peace Prize winner Norman Borlaug** with the help of philanthropist John Ruan.
  - The Awards honours the achievements of Individuals for their contributions in increasing the quality, quantity and availability of food in the world.
  - The award is given annually and carries a **cash prize of US \$ 2, 50,000.**
  - Besides recognising individual accomplishments, the Prize is also seen as a means of **establishing role models who would inspire others.**
  - Laureates have been recognized from countries around the world, including Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Cape Verde, China, Cuba, Denmark, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Israel, Mexico, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, Uganda, United Kingdom, the United Nations and the United States.
  - The Prize is presented each October on or around UN World Food Day (October 16) in a ceremony held in Des Moines, capital of Iowa State, USA.

R.C.REDDY IAS STUDY CIRCLE