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An Institute for Civil Services

CURRENT AFFAIRS

ANALYST

— *WEEKLY* —

Week - 4

APRIL, 2019

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However, this doesn't mean that Mains articles don't cover facts and PT articles can't have analysis. You are suggested to read all of them for all stages of examination.

CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYST
WEEK-4 (APRIL, 2019)

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SECTION: A
(MAINS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

TECHNOLOGY CAN CREATE MORE JOBS THAN IT DESTROYS

CONTEXT

- The advancement of robotics and artificial intelligence will make 75 million jobs obsolete by the year 2022, according to a report by World Economic Forum. The same report goes on to predict the creation of 133 million new jobs over the same period.

- There's a lot of uncertainty right now about the future of work, and how emerging technologies will change the nature and availability of jobs in the coming years. It's tempting and wholly reasonable to believe, as so many do, that technological advances, particularly in the areas of robotics and AI, will result in massive unemployment.

- At the same, technological progress could also create new opportunities and completely new forms of employment.

◉ BACKGROUND:

- ◉ This is similar to our apprehensions in the past about computers taking over workers upon mass adoption.

- ◉ Further backwards it traces its relevance in Industrial Revolution which brought transition to new manufacturing processes in Europe and US starting from 1760 to 1820.

- ◉ Today, we see computers and laptops as indispensable goods in every domain. In fact, they have performed miracles — from assisting in controlling missiles to tracing water beneath dry soil.

◉ ANALYSIS:

- **What is the role technology playing in our everyday life?**
  - ➤ One of the primary uses of the technologies is doing things we do not want to: Dangerous jobs, boring jobs, physically demanding jobs and jobs where high levels of repetitive accuracy are needed.
  - ➤ Much of it has been going on for years as factories will always seek the cheapest workforce, be that human or machine. Increased automation is likely to lead to the capacity for more production while employing fewer people hence giving more profits to the entrepreneur.
  - ➤ Many of us already have the privilege of the use of similar technologies to do some of these tasks already. We are certainly grateful for the washing machine, mixer grinder in our houses, automobiles-all made up of some technology to most recent AI doing an excellent job of flying aeroplanes.
  - ➤ The Google Assistant can now fairly remind our schedules, browse nearest coffee shops and plan for our health check-up on a single command.
  - ➤ The Aristotle, a programmable device of Mattel, can read bedtime stories to the kids and teach foreign words to the toddlers.
  - ➤ The Steve, a security robot, can walk around a place and detect potential fires.
  - ➤ The nanny-robots can monitor a chicken's health.
  - ➤ The list keeps growing by the day. By 2025, robotics is predicted to be a $67 billion sector.

- **People's perception about impact of technology on employment**
  - ➤ The 'robots will take our job and everything is ruined' mentality seems pervasive. The headlines are pitched to grab our attention while pulling at your fears.
  - ➤ Machines do displace workers. They have always done that. From the cotton gin, machine tools, and punch cards to combine harvesters, industrial robots, and business software. And it is this "displacement effect" that leads to scary forecasts about AI and robots leading to mass technological unemployment and underemployment.
  - ➤ However, increasing anxiety over job security is understandable as we are seeing artificial intelligence, robots and automation, taking over in areas we previously thought were safe.

- **How technology has been creating new jobs rather than destroying it?**
  - ➤ Individuals, communities and businesses who had been disrupted and displaced sought out have created new opportunities, some of which were on the back of the very technologies that had brought about this enormous change in their lives.

➤ The introduction of ATMs was followed by more jobs for tellers because it reduced the costs of banking, and banks opened more branches.

➤ The productivity effect could be broader: Agricultural mechanization lowered food prices and created more demand for non-agricultural goods and the workers producing them. Hence it gave more employment and wages to them.

➤ As tasks in textiles, metals, agriculture and other industries were being automated in the 19th and 20th centuries, a new range of tasks in factory work, engineering, repair, back-office, management and finance generated demand for displaced workers.

➤ The machines in factories and industries have created enormous employment for the job of operator. People trained in handling machines are getting opportunities to work and earn.

● **How will these coming up technologies create jobs in future?**

➤ Similarly, these new upcoming technologies- Artificial intelligence, robotisation and automation would open avenues for new jobs rather than generating job losses.

➤ Over time, the opportunities for work as we know it today, for purely human workers in any given role, will decrease. But the set of opportunities for work as we will come to know it tomorrow – through human collaboration with AIRA technologies will increase.

➤ Moving towards these technologies would open avenues for new jobs, especially in information and communication technologies and data sciences.

➤ It will create technical jobs like- Data Scientist, Data Miner, Software analysts, Algorithm specialists, Application Developer, Web Developer, Machine learning engineer. To harness potential, we require building institutional capabilities that train the young workforce for these sectors.

➤ There exists huge demand for skill building, not just in these emerging technologies but in the existing industries as well. Today, even in manufacturing, just 10 per cent have received some form of training. There exists a huge scope for skilled employment.

➤ Many of us are using today the personal computers in our houses and offices and super computers in research labs:

➤ They help us in almost all of our work ranging widely from- playing video games to booking a train ticket to attending video conferences.

➤ There use is not limited but getting expanded day by day with their usage in more specific scientific projects- mapping of earth, prediction of weather, imaging a black hole using mathematical model.

➤ One of our largest jobs in future will be exploring new ways to deploy these AIRA technologies as tools for our benefit.

● **Way Forward:**

➤ This situation of technologies taking our current jobs should not alarm us. We have been in analogous situations before also. Throughout history, we have constantly been in a period of technological development; it's just the speed of that technological development that changes. There are slow periods and fast periods, but technological development and innovation are always happening, they never stop.

➤ The degree of difficulty of our 21st century transition will depend on how quickly and appropriately we can educate and train our workforce, though the economists concede there is little concrete information about what types of skills new technologies will complement, underscoring the importance of further empirical work in this area.

➤ Cities have always been durable hubs of economic progress and job creation because of the concentrated networks of specialized talent they create. Now for knowledge workers working with these new jobs, technology has weakened this geographical stranglehold. With the right infrastructure, a digital marketer, visual designer, or Android developer can be as prolific working from a hinterland as they are in the offices of a technology company in a metropolitan city.

➤ While it is true that these technologies encompass some of the most powerful and fastest developing technology we have ever seen, we must keep in mind – timescale of adoption, speed of development, and the extent they are used and impacts they can have.

➤ When sufficient institutional capabilities are built to train the workforce for future jobs and impart skills to the existing force, the threat to job loss will be a lesser menace.

📰 Practice Question

⊙ **The new technologies of Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and Automation are seen as a threat to the employment opportunities by replacing man with machine. Discuss with historical context how these new technologies can be used to create more jobs instead of destroying it.**

URGENCY OF ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

CONTEXT

- The World Health Organization (WHO) highlighted the importance and urgency of achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) choosing "UHC — for everyone everywhere" as theme for the World Health Day, 2019.

⊙ ABOUT:

- India's latest and most comprehensive health report card was released recently which reflects overall change in the disease pattern in the country.

- In 1990, 61% of the total disease burden in India was attributed to communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases.

- This figure has dropped to 33% in 2016. At the same time, the contribution of non-communicable diseases (heart disease, cancers, respiratory diseases, neurological disorders) has risen to 55% from 30% in 1990.

- Many Indian states are bigger than most countries in the world. It is necessary to plan health interventions based on the specific disease burden situation of each state.

- The disease burden due to unsafe water and sanitation has also reduced significantly in India, but this burden is still 40 times higher per person in India than in China.

- The contribution of air pollution to disease burden has remained high in India between 1990 and 2016, with levels of exposure among the highest in the world.

- The burden of household air pollution has decreased during this period due to decreasing use of solid fuels for cooking, and that of outdoor air pollution has increased due to a variety of pollutants from power production, industry, vehicles, construction, and waste burning.

- This knowledge has the potential of making fundamental and long-term contributions to improving health in every state.

⊙ BACKGROUND:

- The status of health and its essentiality calls upon to focus on universal health coverage.

- Universal health coverage (UHC) is about ensuring that people have access to the health care they need without suffering financial hardship.

- UHC is also an essential part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 3 includes a target to "achieve universal health coverage (UHC), including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health care services, and access to safe, effective, quality, and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

- SDG 1, with the goal to end poverty in all its forms everywhere, is also in peril without UHC, as hundreds of millions of people are impoverished by health expenses every year.

- **Universal health coverage and health financing**
  - ➤ UHC means that all people and communities can use the promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services they need, of sufficient quality to be effective, while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user to financial hardship.

- **This definition of UHC embodies three related objectives:**
  - ➤ Equity in access to health services - everyone who needs services should get them, not only those who can pay for them.
  - ➤ The quality of health services should be good enough to improve the health of those receiving services.
  - ➤ People should be protected against financial-risk, ensuring that the cost of using services does not put people at risk of financial harm.
  - ➤ UHC is firmly based on the WHO constitution of 1948 declaring health a fundamental human right and on the 'Health for All' agenda set by the Alma Ata declaration in 1978.
  - ➤ UHC cuts across all of the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and brings hope of better health and protection for the world's poorest.

⊙ ANALYSIS:

- **Universal Health Coverage: Challenges**
  - ➤ The total expenditure on health care in India, including public and private expenditure is broadly comparable to other developing countries at similar levels of per capita income.
  - ➤ The total expenditure on health care (both public and private together) is 3.7 per cent of the GDP.
  - ➤ According to the World Health Statistics 2013, public expenditure on health very low constitutes 28.2 per cent of total health expenditure.

➤ According to the Government of India's 12th Five Year Plan, public health expenditure in India was only 1.04 per cent of GDP in 2011–12 as compared to the global average of 5.4 per cent.

● **Current Operating norms:**

➤ The Union Government's Ministry of Finance disburses funds to the Ministry of Health and the States.

➤ The public sector also funds a number of insurance schemes.

➤ Currently, Union-funded insurance schemes cover an estimated population of 181 million through the Employee State Insurance Scheme (ESIS) – (60 million); Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) – (3 million) and Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) – (118 million).

● **Structural ambiguity on UHC:**

➤ What services are to be universally provided to begin with?

➤ What level of financial protection is considered acceptable?

➤ Should UHC commence by offering the same set of services to the entire population and progressively expand the service package to all as more resources accrue?

➤ Should UHC first prioritize certain services to the poor and vulnerable sections, to ensure both access and affordability, while leaving the rest of the population for coverage at a later stage?

➤ There is an option to provide a basic package of services to all, with full financial protection, along with an additional set of publicly funded services to the poor and vulnerable sections.

● **The Operational foresight:**

➤ To meet the standard set by the WHO and the SDGs, UHC has to include all persons in a population, even if the service package is modest to begin with.

➤ In terms of financial protection, the Out Of Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) on health should not exceed 15-20 per cent.

➤ This requires a high level of public financing.

➤ Even countries which follow an insurance model have a high level of public funding to support several health services.

➤ Mandated contributory insurance model will not work in India which has over 90 per cent of the workforce in the informal sector.

● **How does India measure up presently and can it achieve the 2030 target?**

➤ OOPE is still around 63 per cent, despite several government health insurance and benefit schemes.

➤ Impoverishment due to unaffordable healthcare expenditure affects 7 per cent of our population.

➤ Healthcare induced financial distress is a leading cause of suicide among farmers.

➤ Access to health services varies widely among states and between rural and urban populations.

➤ Qualified healthcare providers are in short supply nationally and those available are maldistributed, with marked density differences across regions.

● **To achieve 2030 target, what needs to be done?**

➤ Raise public spending on health to at least 2.5 per cent by 2022 and 3 per cent by 2024.

➤ Primary health care has to be recognized as the foundational basis of an efficient and equitable healthcare system

➤ It has the highest number of beneficiaries (the whole population), provides a wide range of services and can prevent a large spillover into hospitals for advanced care through effective prevention and timely care.

➤ Government funded programmes should ensure that financial barriers should not stop access to needed advanced care.

➤ UHC has to be cashless at the point of care and health benefits under the programme have to be available for access anywhere in the country.

➤ The health work force has to be expanded to make available multi-layered, multi-skilled teams which can deliver the needed services.

➤ Basic and specialist doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, pharmacists and an array of allied health professionals need to be developed in large numbers and deployed across the country.

➤ Strengthening of primary care infrastructure and district hospitals has to be a government priority.

➤ Free provision of essential drugs and diagnostics at public healthcare facilities will have an immediate impact on OOPE.

📰 Practice Question

⊙ **According to WHO, Universal Health Coverage (UHC) "means that all individuals and communities receive the health services they need without suffering financial hardship". Given low support from the State, evaluate the effectiveness of health related policy and support infrastructure in realization of UHC in India.**

PROGRESS OF BBIN PROJECT

CONTEXT

- **Bhutan government is to again place bill for ratification of BBIN initiative at its upper senate after the failed previous attempt.**
- **Bangladesh, India and Nepal have implemented the agreement but Bhutan is yet to accord its ratification of the agreement.**

⊙ ABOUT:

- **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicle Project**
  - ➤ One of the major policy initiatives among national governments in Asia in recent years is directed towards developing sub-regional, regional and trans-regional corridors with the aim to further connect and integrate their economies. One such initiative is proposed Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicle Project.
  - ➤ Signed in 2015, it seeks to facilitate seamless trade and travel by improving rail and road connectivity in the region.
  - ➤ It is the first sub-regional pact in South Asia with MVA as an umbrella agreement prepared along the European Union pattern. The South Asia Growth Quadrangle (SAGQ) is a precursor to the BBIN initiative
  - ➤ It is currently pursued as a diplomatic priority from Indian side in an effort to showcase that Pakistan's intransigence has been the main roadblock to regional integration in South Asia.
  - ➤ The Asian Development Bank has been providing technical, advisory, and financial support to the BBIN MVA initiative as part of its assistance to the south Asia sub-regional economic cooperation (SASEC) programme, a projects-based economic cooperation initiative that brings together the BBIN countries, Maldives, Sri Lanka and more recently, Myanmar.
  - ➤ Over five years, 30 road projects were to be implemented at a cost of $8 billion – to fill in, and upgrade, connectivity gaps.
  - ➤ Several trial runs of the BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement are underway. One of the recent one being Bangladesh-Nepal bus service through India.

Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM)

- It is an economic corridor project which will link Kolkata with Kunming, the capital of China's Yunnan province, passing through Myanmar and Bangladesh, with Mandalay and Dhaka among the focal points.
- One of the strategic factors driving the corridor is reduction of reliance on the Straits of Malacca, militarily dominated by the U.S.
- In recent years, the initiative has made some forward movements, breaking a long impasse, but as it makes progress there are new dilemmas and challenges on how to take it forward.
- One such problem area is the proposed route enters a small portion of Arunachal Pradesh over which India and China have a territorial dispute. A part of this stretch is also insurgency-prone, and therefore unsafe.

⊙ BACKGROUND

- ◉ **Formation:** The BBIN project was conceived when SAARC at its 18th Summit in Kathmandu failed to sign a SAARC Motor Vehicles Agreement in November 2014—chiefly because of Pakistan. As an alternative, after the summit India re-packaged the agreement as BBIN forum together with other three countries of South Asia. It has kept the doors open for those outside to join when they felt comfortable to do so.
- ◉ BBIN still is not projected as a breakaway group but a cohesive group, given the growing trade, economic and infrastructure connectivity that exist between these countries.

⊙ ANALYSIS

Need for the initiative from point of view of

- **Region-**
  - ➤ South Asia, with its 1.8 billion population, is only capable of conducting around 5% intraregional trade as connectivity remains a constant barrier.

- ➤ In addition to enhancing trade, connectivity can significantly improve people-to-people interaction leading to better understanding, greater tolerance and closer diplomatic relations in the region.

- ➤ It is likely to yield maximum dividends for the two Himalayan land-locked counties of Nepal and Bhutan.

- ➤ In strategical calculation, BBIN will promote regional and sub-regional cooperation which is essential to counter the compelling strategic challenge posed by China's muscular geo-economic and geo-political interventions in Asia, particularly in India's neighbourhood.

- **India-**

  - ➤ Its operationalisation will showcase a regional success story of India's 'neighbourhood first' and 'Act East' policy.

  - ➤ It also has a deeper strategic dimension, as it provides options for shorter trade routes between the eastern and the north-eastern parts of India. While granting transit to India has been controversial in Bangladesh in the bilateral context, Dhaka and New Delhi have managed to develop it under the cover of the BBIN framework.

- **Bhutan's apprehensions with the initiative**

  - ➤ Bhutan, for decades, has pursued a policy of calibrated opening up to the world. But the pace of integration with the outside world has accelerated in the 21st century.

  - ➤ Over the last 15 years, vehicle ownership in Bhutan has increased by 233%. At 91, it has the highest per capita vehicle ownership among SAARC countries. The road network has expanded exponentially – from just 1,500 kilometres to about 12,000 kilometres in 40 years.

  - ➤ Upon ratification, due to the "principle of reciprocity" in the agreement, Bhutan will not be in a position to restrict vehicular movement from other countries. Currently, trucks from India are allowed to carry goods until Phuentsholing within a range of five kilometres. The goods are then lifted by local trucks and transported to the rest of the country.

  - ➤ With traffic congestion becoming common occurrence in Bhutan, it fears that unrestricted vehicular movement through the country will bring forward concerns related to growth out-pacing infrastructure, and causing serious damage to Bhutan's green cover.

  - ➤ Transporters and truck and taxi operators in Bhutan have been vociferous opponents of the BBIN MVA, worried about the impact on their

business if there was an influx of motor vehicles from other countries.

Challenges

- **Within BBIN agreement**

  - ➤ The MVA is a basic agreement with 16 articles, focusing only on the transport of cargo and passengers. However, such provisions are already present under the bilateral agreement with renewable permits. Further, the MVA also does not address regulatory bottlenecks.

  - ➤ India already has bilateral trade and transit treaties with all the three countries. Many of these bilateral treaties are yet to be implemented successfully. It is still not clear whether BBIN-MVA supersedes these bilateral agreements or reinforces them.

- **With implementation**

  - ➤ Infrastructure: Sub-region is marred by dilapidated infrastructure. Many border crossing points do not have integrated check posts. Poor road conditions, the introduction of double-locking system on Nepalese trucks passing through Indian territory, technical issues related to customs and tariffs, etc., are likely to pose major challenges in this regard. If the border infrastructure does not improve, the corridor won't work as evident from cases from South Africa and Mozambique which had identified several trade corridors, but they remain non-functional.

  - ➤ Convincing Bhutan: In the past, the BBIN motor vehicles agreement (MVA) had a contentious passage through the national assembly. Now, the spotlight has moved to the national council. The council, comprising of 25 'independent' members with no party affiliations, has never been a mere rubber stamp.

  - ➤ Security threats: Seamless transit increases chances of militants sneaking into India through rest of the nations. There is also concerns of undocumented migrations and related transnational crimes.

- **Way forward**

  - ➤ As John F. Kennedy said, "Geography has made us neighbours. History has made us friends. Economics has made us partners, and necessity has made us allies." While working on the BBIN initiative, these words are relevant.

  - ➤ In the past, when Bhutan failed to ratify the agreement due to opposition from its parliament, instead of halting progress, the country asked other stakeholders to move ahead and expressed hope of joining the initiative if and once it gets clearance from the

parliament. Bhutan's positive go-ahead not only demonstrated that it is possible to implement pragmatic plans even when all members are not able to participate at the same time.

➤ BBIN agreement is gaining momentum again. On one hand, India-Bangladesh-Nepal will soon complete the internal approval processes for signing of the passenger protocol, with more trial runs for cargo vehicles planned in the future, and on the other hand, there is increased political will in Bhutan to get parliamentary approval on BBIN. To sustain the momentum, Bhutan needs to be pursued using all diplomatic capital of member states. There are evidences from Luxembourg and Switzerland, the smaller countries in Europe that have gained greatly from regional economic integration. The same is true in East and South-East Asia.

➤ This persuasion further needs to be supplemented through building and upgrading roads, railways and waterways infrastructure energy Grids, communications and air links to ensure smooth cross border flow of goods, services, capital, technology and people.

➤ Looking at the bigger picture, currently, both China and India are pursuing regional initiatives on their own aimed to benefit all involved states. But these initiatives are competing rather than complimentary. If the BRI, BIMSTEC and BBIN were developed through coordination and consultation, led by the two Asian giants, the projects under the schemes could have been implemented more efficiently and faster. This would not only would be a win-win for the two giants but also enormously benefit smaller countries.

📑 Practice Question

⊙ **Elaborate the concept of 'sub-regionalism'. Discuss opportunities and challenges related to BBIN which aims to promote sub-regionalism in Asia.**

IMMINENT INTERNAL SECURITY THREATS

CONTEXT

- Recently, Dantewada MLA Bheema Mandavi along with five people were killed after Naxals targeted the convoy at Shyamgiri. The IED blast has occurred in Shyamgiri under Kuakonda Police Station.

◉ **ABOUT:**

- Sometimes in the past, the Indian Prime Minister had stated Naxalism as the biggest internal security threat to India.Activities surrounding naxalism only strengthens this belief that this phenomena is more alive that statistically frozen - as claimed by government data.

- Social and economic factors are important, but even more important are religion and identity when a rational evaluation is taken over internal security challenges faced by a country.

◉ **BACKGROUND:**

- The rise of contentious politics based on sectarian, regional, ethnic, linguistic or other divisive criteria, is primarily responsible for the many communal and secessionist movements flourishing in India.

- The presence of hostile neighbors enables the internal conflicts to get external support, which includes money, arms and sanctuaries.

- The vested interests exploit these conditions to pursue their own agenda.

- While for most of the internal security contexts, above pointers hold sway, but for Naxal movement, theoretically the neglect of grass root development demand and state's failure prevention of their exploitation is the prime reason.

◉ **ANALYSIS**

- **India's Internal Security Challenges:**
  - ➤ In a well-established political system and a developed economy, conflicts between the various group identities are kept under check as in due course they get assimilated into the national identity.
  - ➤ The dependence on the government by a large section of our people for their very survival sharpens these conflicts among them.
  - ➤ The democratic institutions and the state structures are still not strong enough to fully harmonize these conflicts in a peaceful manner.
  - ➤ Violence erupts when conflicting interests cannot be consensually reconciled.

- ➤ The hostile external forces, taking advantage of this situation through subversive propaganda, further accentuate these conflicts.

- ➤ They give material and ideological support to aggravate this sense of grievance to such an extent that a small minority are willing to become tools in their hands to subvert the stability and security of the country.

- **A deeper insight to the problem**
  - ➤ Ever since independence, India has been facing all types of violent conflicts based on religion, caste, language, ethnicity and regional loyalties.
  - ➤ Preoccupied with the problem of survival, the governments in some of the most affected states are not looking at the problem from a long-term perspective.
  - ➤ If the above myopic tendencies are corrected then the issues surrounding a major chunk of internal security can be tackled.
  - ➤ But, instead of effectively dealing with them in the initial stages when the problem is manageable, they have allowed these anti-national forces to take roots and spread their tentacles far and wide.
  - ➤ When a state government is unable to effectively deal with them, instead of strengthening the state police machinery, it rushes to the Centre to hand over its responsibility at the first sign of any serious trouble.
  - ➤ Finding themselves at the mercy of these subversive forces, the people tend to change sides and start supporting them instead of supporting the security forces.
  - ➤ Polarization on caste and religious lines can further reduce the credibility of the police in the minds of the people.

- **The role of police-politician-criminal nexus**
  - ➤ Their activities create an environment of lawlessness, where influential and rich people violate the law with impunity.
  - ➤ The police is not the only component of the criminal justice system that has suffered because of this nexus.

➤ Not all crimes are being registered and those registered are not being properly investigated; and even out of those charge-sheeted, very few are ending in conviction.

- **Left Extremism**
  ➤ The root cause for the rise in Left extremism is the inability of the states to address the many genuine grievances of the people.
  ➤ The gap between the unrealistic expectations, fuelled by populist rhetoric, and their actual fulfillment has increased and not decreased over the years.
  ➤ An educational system which produces unemployable young boys and girls has not helped. Pressure on land has made the task of survival on agriculture more difficult.
  ➤ But it is not ideology and revolutionary zeal that is driving them. For many, joining these groups is the only way to survive.
  ➤ What they cannot get through legitimate means they obtain through arms and explosives. Their tactics are no different from the insurgents and terrorists.
  ➤ Corrupt politicians, policemen and civil servants have made their own adjustments with these groups. A live-and-let live attitude is mutually beneficial to all of them.

- **What can be the components of multi-pronged reformatory steps?**
  ➤ Effective steps to reduce ethnic and social inequalities, disparities in educational and employment opportunities.
  ➤ Creating an effective machinery for the redressal of public grievance, are absolutely essential to improve the environment in which extremist violence flourishes.
  ➤ Steps to reduce economic deprivation and improve the delivery of essential services can erode the base of public support on which the extremist movements survive.
  ➤ A thriving economy, which gives hope and opportunity to the people, is more likely to defeat all types of extremist movements than any other strategy.
  ➤ The need for a well co-ordinate security apparatus can hardly be overemphasized.

➤ This Trusteeship was mandated to place limit on Jewish immigration and create a division of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab provinces but not states.

➤ A composite force on the lines of the National Security Guards (NSG) should be organized in all the states, even in those states where the internal security situation is not so serious.

➤ But in the states where the situation has gone beyond their control, the Centre, as laid down in the Constitution, is duty-bound to intervene, notwithstanding the fact that law and order is under the State List.

➤ The Union government is charged with the responsibility of protecting the states from internal disturbances under Article 353 of the Constitution, even though law and order comes under List-II, the State List.

- **Closing comments**
  ➤ The many internal security challenges can be met effectively only with full cooperation between the central and the state governments.
  ➤ All serious internal security problems: communal and sectarian violence, organized crime, drug-trafficking, labour and students' unrest, political violence and even economic crimes, if not checked effectively can develop an external dimension.
  ➤ The internal security problems should not be treated as merely law and order problems.
  ➤ They have to be dealt with comprehensively in all their dimensions and at all levels — political, economic and social.
  ➤ The security requirements have to be met, but that does not mean giving the security agencies a free hand.
  ➤ Striking the right balance is the key to success in meeting these challenges effectively.
  ➤ In the absence of this coordinated measure, the hostile foreign forces can and will take advantage of the internal situation to destabilize the country in pursuit of their own agenda.

Practice Question

⊙ **In public perception a government that is unable to discharge all its responsibilities is more likely to respond when the demand is loud, organized and backed by acts of violence. Within this context, evaluate background for the rise in internal security challenges and how far has the state acted in right consonance in dealing with it.**

LATERAL ENTRY

CONTEXT

- The Union Public Service Commission has appointed nine non-governmental professionals at joint-secretary level posts in central government departments through lateral entry.

- These appointments have been made to departments of financial services, economic affairs, agriculture, cooperation and farmers welfare, civil aviation, commerce, environment, forest and climate change, new and renewable energy, road transport and highways, and shipping.

- The lateral appointees will have a term of three-years from the date of joining, which could be extended to five years depending upon their performance.

⊙ BACKGROUND:

- In June last year, the personnel ministry had invited applications for the joint-secretary level posts through the lateral entry mode.

- Posts of joint-secretaries are usually manned by officers of Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service, Indian Forest Service and Indian Revenue Service among others who are selected through a three-phased rigorous selection process undertaken by the UPSC.

- The selected professionals will be provided compensations in accordance with the joint-secretary level, which is in the pay scale of Rs 144,200-Rs 218,200 per month.

- In addition, they shall be eligible for all allowances and facilities as applicable to the equivalent level in the Government of India.

⊙ ANALYSIS:

- **What is lateral entry?**
  - It is the appointment of private sector professionals and academicians in the government organisation bypassing the traditional route.
  - Traditionally to get into the posts of Deputy Secretary, Director and Joint Secretary in Government organisations, the candidate has to belong to Indian Civil Services which is filled by personals from - Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service and Indian Revenue Service.
  - Two-third of the vacancies in these services are filled by candidates who clear the three gruelling stages of UPSC Civil Services Exam–Preliminary, Main Exam, and Interview.
  - One-third of the vacancies in these services are filled by promotion of eligible candidates working in different State Services.
  - Lateral entry into posts of government organisation means bypassing these two options.

- **What is the need?**
  - The Political and Economic Consultancy Report rated Indian bureaucracy as the slowest among its 12 Asian counterparts.

  - The World Bank ranks India at 130 in the Ease of Doing Business Index.
  - India ranks 76 in the Corruption Perception Index brought by Transparency International. It also mentions that India has the highest incidence of bribery in the Asia-Pacific.
  - Such indices and reports are a manifestation of the retrograde bureaucracy of India and its unprogressive performance, urging immediate rejuvenation.

- **What are the causes of this inefficiency?**
  - The lack of specialisation across the top tier of Indian bureaucracy is a concern that has remained unaddressed until now.
  - The assurance of a secure career path in these services has been held to be this administrative system's biggest lacuna.
  - The quasi-monopolistic hold of the career civil services on senior management position breeds complacency, inhibits innovative thinking and prevents the inflow of new ideas from outside government.
  - These weaknesses have been compounded by a heavy reliance on seniority, an inadequate annual reporting system, and frequent transfers.
  - It has discouraged initiative by reducing competition in the higher echelons of government.
  - There is a huge shortfall in a number of recruits- 20% shortage of IAS officers in 24 state cadres of India. The Baswan Committee has pointed out this huge deficit of officers. The government had in March 2017, informed that there is a shortage of over 1,400 IAS and 900 IPS officers in the country. While the total strength should be 6,396 IAS officers, however, there are only 4926 officers in the country.
  - There is an unwillingness among officers of the state to undertake Centre deputation. They find the field work in the districts of states more interesting than the paper work of the offices during Central deputation.

- **What are the existing recommendations?**
  - The first Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) had pointed out the need for specialization as far back as in 1965.

- ➤ The Surinder Nath Committee and the Hota Committee followed suit in 2003 and 2004, respectively.

- ➤ In 2005, the second ARC recommended an institutionalized, transparent process for lateral entry at both the Central and state levels.

- ➤ Government think tank Niti Aayog had in a report highlighted that it was essential that specialists be inducted into the system through lateral entry on fixed-term contract.

- **How will lateral entry fulfil it?**

  - ➤ It will bring in fresh talent into the bureaucracy.

  - ➤ Career promotions in the IAS move along seamlessly with few impediments along the way. Attempts to introduce 'meritocracy' hasn't quite worked out. Bringing in experts from the professional sphere is expected to shake the IAS out of their comfort zone.

  - ➤ When civil servants are made to compete with outside talent, the lethargic attitude will diminish and induce competition within the system.

  - ➤ The IAS was designed for a time when the State was all-powerful. That reality somewhat changed with liberalisation in 1991, where the state was compelled to cede more space to markets. Therefore, it becomes more critical for the government to ascertain the impact its policy decisions have on various stakeholders such as the private sector, non-profits, and general public, i.e. those who have experienced government from the outside.

  - ➤ Lateral entry has been adopted by Australia, Belgium, New Zealand, the UK, the Netherlands and the US.

- **What are the drawbacks of lateral entry?**

  - ➤ One of the distinguishing aspects that the current crop of IAS officers can hold up is their experience in the field, serving some of the poorest districts in our hinterlands. Those entering from privileged backgrounds and the private sector may have never seen a village school.

  - ➤ The exposure and sensitivity to the country's complex socio-political milieu and to the needs of the common man, which widespread field experience provides to these Services, may not be available in the private sector since the private sector does not have the same width and depth of exposure to this type of field experience.

  - ➤ Lateral entrants from the private sector and academia and bureaucrats all are having different work culture. They may not work well with each due to differences in their working methodologies.

- ➤ The IAS establishment is likely to baulk at lateral entrants who haven't made it through probably the hardest open competitive exam in the world. This lateral recruitment will be an unfair treatment to them.

- ➤ An issue of conflict of interest when it comes to entrants from the private sector.

- ➤ The potential loss of internal talent. The best talent can be attracted only if there is reasonable assurance of reaching top level managerial positions.

- **Way Forward:**

  - ➤ This isn't the first time that the government brought in professionals from the private sector or academia into the top tier of government. Take a look at the Finance Ministry, Reserve Bank of India and even the current NITI Aayog, which have hired the likes of Raghuram Rajan, Arvind Subramanian and Arvind Panagriya to name a few.

  - ➤ The lateral entrants should, therefore, have mandatory 'district immersion', serving at least five of their first ten years in field postings. The hard grind of such field postings will make lateral entry self-selecting, drawing in only those with commitment and aptitude.

  - ➤ Transparency- the details of selection process should be made available to public by the Centre with its online publication. This is so because without accountability, reform is merely an uncertain change.

  - ➤ The criteria set by government-coming from a good university and having 15 years of experience isn't sufficient. If the rest is up to the selection committee's discretion, then backroom dealings are possible.

  - ➤ Any such reform must be complemented with other measures. For example, the worst performing civil servants must be eased out of service after 15 years based of course on criteria that are both transparent and accountable. This will open up space for lateral entrants as well, leaving the IAS a little less top heavy.

  - ➤ The remedy lies not through lateral induction but through more rigorous performance appraisal and improved personnel management.

  - ➤ The recruitment in the lateral entry can be done for specific mission-mode projects. Eg, Nandan Nilekani for the Aadhaar Project.

  - ➤ Any new system will take time to evolve. So one can only hope that those at the top see this through till it becomes efficient and transparent and ensure a way to keep the public informed about it objectively.

📄 Practice Question

- ⊙ **The government has recently appointed nine non-governmental professionals at joint-secretary level posts in central government departments through lateral entry. Discuss how will this step overcome existing inefficiencies and what are its future prospects?**

BAN ON USING PUBLIC PROPERTY –DENT ON DEMOCRACY

CONTEXT

- The state government had notified Sunday and Wednesday for movement of security forces' convoys along the national highway between Baramulla and Jammu, saying that no civilian vehicle will be allowed to move on these two days from 4 am to 5 pm.

◉ ABOUT:

- The biweekly closure of the 270-km Baramulla-Srinagar-Udhampur national highway for troop movement, threw life out of gear both in Kashmir and Jammu regions. Aforementioned order was taken to facilitate movement of security forces for the Lok Sabha election duty. It will remain effective till May 31.

- Commuters on the 161-km stretch in Kashmir, which interconnects different districts and serves as a lifeline for the landlocked Valley, had a harrowing time as civilian vehicles remained off road.

- Emergency vehicles and tourists were exempted and the government deputed magistrates to ensure that those in need did not get stuck.

◉ ANALYSIS

- A number of politicians and lawyers filed a petition against the J&K government's decision to restrict civilian traffic on the highway.

- Hearing Petitions Against Kashmir Highway Lockdown, The Jammu and Kashmir High Court observed that the Ban Can't Be 'Absolute'.

- **Is the order infringing upon rights?**
  - ➤ Government explained that the total time for which traffic will not be allowed on the highway during a week was 26 hours out of total 168 hours – 15% of the total time.
  - ➤ However, the order is snatching precious time of a laborer to earn, a student to study and an employee to work. Who will compensate this irreparable loss?
  - ➤ In its observations, the division bench of Jammu and Kashmir High Court directed the state authorities to safeguard the rights of common people, observing that a commoner travelling for livelihood or for a medical emergency, or for study or some other genuine reason, has to be given free passage.
  - ➤ Facing criticism for closing down the national highway connecting Jammu with Srinagar, the Union Home Ministry took refuge in statistics to claim the ban was for only 15 per cent of total weekly hours.

- ➤ Freedom of movement is guaranteed by the Constitution, so it is inexplicable why the Supreme Court has not yet taken note of these restrictions imposed on a section of the country's citizens, in blatant violation of this fundamental right under Article 19.

- **Why is the ban necessary?**
  - ➤ Although, the decision of biweekly closure was taken in the backdrop of the Pulwama terror attack but is clearly unnecessary, as visible in how it unfolded on the ground.
  - ➤ During the 13-hour closure from 4 am to 5 pm, under 50 security vehicles passed through the 270 km while the movement of tens of thousands of civilians was affected, but on Monday, fully fledged security convoys apparently had no problem sharing the road with civilian vehicles.

- **Was there a similar arrangement that existed before?**
  - ➤ Yes, the regulations for movement of civilian traffic were already in place during convoy movement.
  - ➤ The current regulations have been imposed "just" for a total 15 days keeping in view the convoy efficiency and security of the personnel.

- **What stand has the army taken?**
  - ➤ The Army has stated that it is not going to follow the order of the state government as it will continue to run its convoys as per the need.

- **Why the ban is creating polarity?**
  - ➤ The highway passes through five of the 10 districts of the Valley, and highways to at least two more districts branch out from it. The highway, directly and indirectly, impacts a population of over 69 lakh.
  - ➤ While the highway would be closed on these two days, civilian traffic already faces restrictions through the week. Whenever security forces' vehicles are using the highway, civilian traffic is often halted for various lengths of time.

➤ This is the first time, however, that the government has ordered daylong closures every week.

➤ In three decades of militancy, even during the early 1990s when militants often targeted convoys with IEDs and car bombs, the highway had been kept open for movement of civilian traffic.

● **What impact will the ban have?**

➤ A virtual lockdown of the Valley for two days every week.

➤ Closing the highway during daytime would mean that most government and private offices, banks, schools and colleges would remain shut on Wednesdays.

➤ This would seriously impair livelihood opportunities of millions.

➤ Industrial units are suffering badly due to transit delay of the goods resulting in huge financial losses.

➤ In case of perishable items and milk products, 100 per cent losses were reported in some consignments.

➤ Another gruesome factor could the rise in inflation.

➤ The mismanagement of traffic movement on the highway is resulting in considerable delay in the receipt of raw material from Kashmir and dispatch of finished products from Jammu to Kashmir, Doda, Kishtwar and other parts of the state.

➤ Hoarding and black-marketing of essential commodities could throw life of people in disarray.

➤ These factors will further alienate Kashmir from the mainland/mainstream.

➤ A blanket ban is also against Right to life (Article 21).

➤ Moreover, a highway is a public property and the government of the day is merely an administrator.

➤ Before implementing the ban, ideally the administration should have consulted the civil society and factored in potential challenges.

➤ In the absence of this move, the ban appears to be a unilateral move. These actions are merely supported by the people in a democracy.

● **Was there another tactical way out?**

➤ The home department of Jammu and Kashmir could have decided to move security convoys at night.

➤ This could have had less impact on civilian traffic movement.

➤ Essential troop and supplies movement could have taken "air - route" instead of stretching the occupancy of the critical road highway network.

➤ For the future, multi-modal connectivity hold the key in correcting/ preventing such unilateral moves

➤ For example, Srinagar railway project, alternate road connectivity and efficient air route can bring in better mitigation mechanisms.

● **Why is the situation difficult in the Valley?**

➤ At least seven important hospitals including three government hospitals — District Hospital Baramulla, Trauma Hospital Pattan and SKIMS Medical College Hospital at Bemina, Srinagar — are located on the national highway.

➤ Two colleges, six higher secondary schools, and scores of government and private schools (including the Valley's top ten private ones) are on the highway.

➤ Almost all colleges, higher secondary institutions and schools in five districts of the Valley are accessible only through this highway.

➤ There are hundreds of villages and towns spread on both sides of the highway from Udhampur to Baramulla.

➤ The ban would effectively cut them off from other places on two days every week.

● **Why existing railway route wasn't explored**

➤ An eight-coach train runs between Banihal in Jammu and Baramulla in Kashmir.

➤ The five-hour journey on the highway can be made in two-and-a-half hours by train.

➤ However, putting g security personnel and equipment on a train would have special requirements and call for extra security measures.

📖 Practice Question

⊙ **The nearly 270-km highway, the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with rest of the country, has been closed for civilian traffic twice a week from 4 am to 5 pm to facilitate smooth movement of security convoys. Critically evaluate legality of the order and explore opportunities if there is any to prevent such drastic measures.**

SECTION: B
(PRELIMS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

RONGALI BIHU FESTIVAL

⊙ **CONTEXT:**
- **Recently, Rongali Bihu, also known as Bohag Bihu, is celebrated, which is the Assamese New Year wherein farmers thank the lord for the successful harvest and welcome the spring season.**

⊙ **ABOUT:**
- The "Bihu" is derived from the Sanskrit word bishu, which means 'to ask for prosperity from the Gods during the harvest season', it is one of the most important festivals in Assam. A time of zest, joy, and feasting, it is celebrated for seven days, wherein each day holds a special significance.

- The first pinnacle phase is called Raati Bihu wherein women gather beneath an ancient tree or an open field, surrounded by burning torches. The participation of men is mostly ceremonial wherein they play Pepa (buffalo hornpipe) or Bholuka Baanhor Toka (a musical instrument made of split bamboo). This is followed by Bali Husori, where Bihu dances are organised by the young.

- The main celebration starts on the day of Goru (cow) Bihu, where livestock is washed with a combination of symbolic herbs like black gram and turmeric paste, whipped litsea salicifolia, and pieces of bottle gourd and brinjal. After the bath, they are decorated with new harnesses and garlands.

- The second day is known as Manuh (human) Bihu where people take a bath with black gram and turmeric paste, wear new clothes, seek blessings from the elders and exchange gifts. A Gamusa (an indispensable and symbolic piece of cloth) is presented to each other as a token of friendship, love, and warmth with each other. A traditional Bihu dance is performed by both men and women, which is the high point of the festival.

- The third day is called Gosai (God's) Bihu. People worship idols after cleaning their homes.

- The rest of the celebrations take place on Kutum Bihu, Senehi Bihu, Chera Bihu and Mela Bihu. Sweet dishes that include pitha (rice cake), laru/ladoo (made of rice and coconut or black sesame seeds), and savoury dishes like khaar and xaak make for an essential part of the festivity.

- Notably, there are three Bihu festivals in year namely – Rongali Bihu or Bohag Bihu, Bhugali (Magh Bihu) and Kangali (Kati Bihu) marking the distinctive phase in the farming calendar.

Bihu	Month	Reason
Kaati Bihu	October	Much duller than other two festival, praying for good Harvest. Granaries are empty
Maagh Bihu	January	Harvest festival. Granaries are full
Bohaag/Rongali Bihu	April	Assamese New Year & Spring festival

Other Harvest Festival in different parts of the country:
- Baisakhi in Punjab,
- Poila Baisakh in Bengal,
- Puthandu in Tamil Nadu
- Vishu in Kerala.

SUB-SONIC CRUISE MISSILE 'NIRBHAY'

◉ **CONTEXT:**

- **Recently, the Indian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) conducted the sixth flight test of the nuclear-capable Nirbhay (the fearless) cruise missile, from the Integrated Test Range on Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha.**

◉ **ABOUT:**

- Nirbhay is the India's first indigenously designed and developed long-range state-of-the-art cruise missile, which can be deployed from multiple platforms.

- The sophisticated missile took off in a programmed manner and all critical operations like launch phase, booster deployment, engine start, wing deployment and other parameters were demonstrated through autonomous way point navigation.

- After the initial blast-off with a solid-propellant booster rocket engine to gain speed and altitude, Nirbhay is designed to deploy its smallish wings and tail fins in the second-stage and fly like an unmanned aircraft.

Features:

- The missile is highly maneuverable with "loitering capabilities" to first identify and then hit the intended target with precision at 0.7 Mach at altitude as low as 100 metre and covers the designated target range in just 42 minutes and 23 seconds.

- The Nirbhay can be armed with a 200-300-kilogram warhead.

Nirbhay at a Glance

- **Originated from:** India
- **Possessed by:** India
- **Class:** Subsonic Cruise Missile
- **Length:** 6.0 m
- **Diameter:** 0.5 m
- **Launch weight:** 1,500-1,6000 kg
- **Payload:** 450 kg
- **Warhead:** HE, submunitions, 12 kT nuclear potentially
- **Propulsion:** Turbojet
- **Range:** 800-1,000 km

Previous tests:

- The last successful test launch of the Nirbhay missile took place in November 2017. A previous test launch in December 2016 ended in failure with the missile destroyed in mid-air after it deviated from its course.

- Nirbhay missiles used in past tests were all powered by Russian-made NPO Saturn 36MT mini turbofan engines.

◉ **SIGNIFICANCE:**

- It is launched to prove the repeatability of boost phase and thus, cruise phase was used to way point navigation at very low altitudes.

- The Nirbhay is touted to be India's answer to the US Tomahawk missiles and an effective counter to Pakistan's Babur land-attack cruise missile (LACM).

- DRDO is working on an extended-range air-launched variant of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, designated BrahMos-ER, with an estimated strike range of around 800 kilometers.

DIGITAL PAYMENT SYSTEM

⊙ **CONTEXT:**
- **Payments made on the UPI platform saw a remarkable growth of over 400% in the April to March period, from a little more than 27,000 crore in April 2018 to 1.35 lakh crore in March 2019.**

⊙ **ABOUT:**

What is digital payment system?

◎ Digital payment system is a way of payment which is made through digital modes- completely online. No hard cash is involved in digital payments.

◎ In this system, payer and payee both use digital modes to send and receive money.

◎ It is also called electronic payment.

◎ Example- Internet Banking, Debit Cards, Credit Cards, e-Wallets.

How is it better than previous system?

◎ The conventional system of settling the transaction involves cash payments. We have to first withdraw cash from your account. Then we use this cash to pay to second party. This second party goes to the bank to deposit the cash which he got from us. This process is time-consuming for us and also for the second party.

◎ But in digital payments, the money transfers from our account to the second party's account immediately. This process is automatic and neither we nor the second party is required to visit the bank.

◎ Digital payments help us get rid of long queues of ATMs and banks, thus saving our precious time.

◎ Payments can be made from any place at any time.

◎ Spendings are automatically recorded in our passbook or inside E-Wallet app. This helps to maintain our record, track our spendings and budget planning.

Different digital payment modes in India:

- **Cards:**
  ◎ Banking cards offer consumers more security, convenience, and control than any other payment method.

  ◎ There are wide variety of cards available – including credit, debit and prepaid.

- **Internet Banking**
  ◎ It is an electronic payment system that enables customers of a bank or other financial institution to conduct a range of financial transactions through the financial institution's website.

  ◎ Different types of online financial transactions are: National Electronic Fund Transfer (NEFT), Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS), and Immediate Payment Service (IMPS).

- **Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD):**
  ◎ This service allows mobile banking transactions using basic feature mobile phone (dialling *99#), there is no need to have mobile internet data facility for using USSD based mobile banking.

  ◎ Key services offered under *99# service include, interbank account to account fund transfer, balance enquiry, mini statement besides host of other services.

- **Mobile Banking**
  - Mobile banking is a service provided by a bank that allows its customers to conduct different types of financial transactions remotely using a mobile device.
  - It uses software, usually called an app, provided by the banks or financial institution for the purpose. Each Bank provides its own mobile banking App.

- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)**
  - It is a system that powers multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application (of any participating bank), merging several banking features, seamless fund routing & merchant payments into one hood.
  - Each Bank provides its own UPI App.

- **Mobile Wallets**
  - It is a way to carry cash in digital format. Instead of using physical plastic card to make purchases, we can pay with our smartphone, tablet, or smart watch.
  - An individual's account is required to be linked to the digital wallet to load money in it.

- **Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AEPS)**
  - AEPS is a bank led model which allows online interoperable financial transaction at PoS (Point of Sale / Micro ATM) through the Business Correspondent or Bank Mitra of any bank using the Aadhaar authentication.

INDEX OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION (IIP)

⊙ **CONTEXT:**

- **Industrial growth slowed in February to 0.1% from 1.44% in January, driven by an across-the-board slowdown, especially in key sectors like manufacturing, mining, capital goods, and infrastructure.**

⊙ **ABOUT:**

What is IIP?

- IIP is an index which shows the growth rates in different industry groups of the economy in a stipulated period of time.
- It is computed and published by the Central Statistical Office (CSO) on monthly basis.
- It measures the growth rate of industry groups classified under:
  - Broad sectors: Mining, Manufacturing and Electricity
  - Use-based sectors: Basic Goods, Capital Goods and Intermediate Goods.
- Currently, the base year has been shifted to 2011-12 from 2004-05.

Other findings of the report:

- The mining and quarrying sector saw growth slowing to 2% in February from 3.92% in January.
- The manufacturing sector saw a contraction of 0.31% from 1.05% in the same period.
- Growth in the infrastructure sector slowed to 2.38% from 6.8%.
- The electricity sector was the sector that saw an acceleration in growth, coming in at 1.18% in February compared with a growth of 0.94% in January.
- The consumer non-durables sector also saw growth quickening, to 4.3% from 3.33% over the same period.
- This declination of index caused slowing down of the economy, which was reflected in the quarterly GDP data.

What are the steps taken by government to improve the index?

- On the monetary side, steps have been taken through two successive rate cuts by the Reserve Bank of India each time by 25 basis points.

- On the fiscal side, however, the prospects were limited because both direct and indirect tax revenue collections have shown a shortfall compared to the revised estimates. So, in order to meet the 3.4% fiscal deficit target, it appears the government has gone in for curtailing expenditure in general, and capital expenditure in specific.

Central Statistical Office (CSO)

- It is an office under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

- It coordinates the statistical activities in the country and evolves statistical standards.

- It has the following 5 divisions:

  ➤ **National Accounts Division (NAD**): This Division is responsible for the preparation of national accounts, which includes Gross Domestic Product, Government and Private Final Consumption Expenditure, Fixed Capital Formation and other macro-economic aggregates.

  ➤ **Social Statistics Division (SSD):** This Division is entrusted with Statistical monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals, Environmental Economic Accounting and Grant-in-aid for research.

  ➤ **Economic Statistics Division (ESD):** This Division conducts Economic Censuses, compiles All India Index of Industrial Production(IIP), Energy Statistics and Infrastructure Statistics.

  ➤ **Training Division:** This Division is primarily responsible for the training manpower in theoretical and applied statistics to tackle the emerging challenges of data collection, collation, analysis and dissemination required for evidence based policy making as also for planning, monitoring and evaluation.

  ➤ **Coordination and Publications Division (CAP):** The Division looks after co-ordination work within CSO as well as with the line Ministries and State Governments in statistical matters, organizes Conference of Central and State Statistical Organizations and 'Statistics Day' every year.

ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY STOPS CLEARANCE TO MINING OF BEACH SAND MINERALS

⊙ **CONTEXT:**

- **The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) agreed to a request by the Ministry of Mines (MoM), seeking that clearances to private companies for mining beach sand minerals be stopped.**

⊙ **ABOUT:**

- There is a market for heavy minerals such as ilmenite, rutile, leucoxene, garnet, monazite, zircon and sillimanite, found in beach sand.

- They are processed to derive rare earth elements and titanium used in a variety of industries, including paints and cosmetics.

- Monazite is the primary ore for thorium, a nuclear fuel. Its presence brings beach sand mining under the Atomic Minerals Concession Rules.

- As monazite is found in various concentrations in all the beaches, this amendment essentially meant a ban on mining by private companies. The MoM's notification followed an August 2018 ban on export of sand minerals.

Key Facts:-

- A state government can permit private companies to mine only if atomic mineral in an ore is below a certain threshold, according to Atomic Minerals Concession Rules, 2016.
- The MoM, through a notification, prohibited private companies from mining beach sand minerals by changing the threshold limit for monazite from 0.75 per cent to zero.
- At 13 per cent of the world reserves, India has the third-largest stash of beach sand minerals and meets 6-7 per cent of global demand.
- According to the Working Group of Planning Commission for the 12th Plan, mining of beach sand minerals in India was expected to reach about 0.18 million tonnes per year by 2017, accounting for a tenth of global production.

CENTRE MUST MATCH SUBSCRIBER SHARE IN APY: PFRDA

⊙ **CONTEXT:**
- **India has set up an Indo-Pacific division in the foreign office. The division will integrate the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Asean region and the Quad to the Indo-Pacific table.**

⊙ **ABOUT:**
- It is set up by Ministry of External Affairs.
- The main objective of the Indo-pacific division is intended to give a coherent architecture to the Indo-Pacific policy articulated by PM at the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2018.
- The Indo-Pacific diplomacy of India has repeatedly placed ASEAN at the centre of its policy.
- Even the US has recently renamed its Pacific Command to the Indo-Pacific Command as it seeks to give teeth to its Indo-Pacific policy.

Key Facts:

- India is planning to put greater energy to the IORA because the heart of its Indo-Pacific policy is rooted in the Indian Ocean.
- This integrates the blue economy part of the Indian policy with the security part.
- Countries falling in the direct hinterland of the vast Indian and Pacific oceanic expanse are termed 'Indo-Pacific countries'.
- It is a multipolar region, contributing more than half of the world's GDP and population.
- The motivation for a larger bloc always comes from the sheer size, resources it owns, and, the scope and size of the economies of scale that it can generate. This is, in fact, a region in which several Asian powers are once again rising, especially in geo- economic terms.

⊙ **SIGNIFICANCE:**
- MEA's territorial divisions are crucial for policy making, so the creation of an Indo-Pacific division is a big step by the government. The protection and preservation of marine resources, as well as a sustainable and responsible fishery–framework, are all critical towards building a regional consensus on maritime security and cooperation in Indo-Pacific.

Shangri-LaDialogue:

- **The Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD)** is a "Track One" inter-governmental security forum held annually by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). It is attended by defense ministers, permanent heads of ministries and military chiefs of **28 Asia-Pacific states.** The forum gets its name from the **Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore.** It has been held since 2002.

BILL H R 2123

⊙ **CONTEXT:**
- **Recently, US lawmakers introduced Bill H R 2123 by Congressman Joe Wilson, a senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.**

⊙ **ABOUT:**
- According to the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), HR 2123 is meant to prioritize the defense sales to India. The strategic partnership forum stated that the bill would strengthen national security. Additionally, it would help ensure full alignment between the Department of Defense and the Department of State.
- The original co-sponsor of the legislation is Congressman Ami Bera. He is the longest serving Indian-American in the US Congress.

Features of the Bill:

- The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal 2017 included special language recognising the unique US-India defence relationship that designated India as a "Major Defence Partner" of the United States.
- To fulfil the spirit and intent of the NDAA 2017, the US-India Enhanced Cooperation Act, which would amend the Arms Export Control Act to put India on par with NATO allies and Israel, South Korea, New Zealand, Australia and Japan.
- The language seeks unique consideration for trade and technology sharing with India and increased attention and support to advance this relationship in the areas of defence trade and technology sharing.
- The legislation bolsters national security and helps ensure full alignment between the Department of Defence and the Department of State.

⊙ **SIGNIFICANCE:**
- If enacted, the legislation would ensure that the US State Department treat India as a **NATO ally** for the purposes of the Arms Export Control Act.
- This adjustment to US law will further allow the **US-India partnership** to flourish in line with the US's security commitment to the Indo-Pacific region.
- It would send a powerful signal that defence sales to India should be prioritised according to US-India Strategic Partnership Forum, which had worked on this important legislation.

100th ANNIVERSARY OF JALLIANWALA BAGH MASSACRE

⊙ **CONTEXT:**
- **Recently, the cold-blooded massacre at Amritsar's Jallianwala Bagh on April 13, 1919 (Baisakhi day) completed its 100 years. It marked a defining moment in the history of modern India and made the British presence morally untenable.**

⊙ **ABOUT:**   **Jallianwala Bagh Massacre**

- It is now a part of the world's archives of state led crime. Troops under the command of Brigadier general (temporary rank) **Reginald Dyer** entered the garden, blocking the main entrance after them, took up position on a raised bank and on Dyer's orders fired on the crowd for some 10 minutes, discharging 1,650 bullets at the peaceful protestors. They stopped only when the ammunition supply was almost exhausted. This event embodied a nation's death-defying dignity in pain and hurt.
- It was an occasion to shed a silent tear for each of the innocent Indians who lost their lives on that **Baisakhi day** and a mournful moment of reflection on colonial cruelty and irrational anger.

Causes of the event:

- The massacre was the result of the Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act of 1919, famously known as the Rowlatt Act.

- **Rowlatt Act** curbed, in the name of war-time discipline, every conceivable civil liberty. This act enabled stricter control of the press, arrests without warrant, indefinite detention without trial. It empowered the police to search a place and arrest any person they disapproved of without warrant.

- The civilians assembled for a peaceful protest to condemn the arrest and deportation of two national leaders, **Satya Pal** and **Saifuddin Kitchlew**.

Aftermath of the massacre:

- Following the massacre, the **Hunter Commission** was appointed to investigate into the matter. The Commission in 1920 held Dyer guilty for his actions.

- The Bengali poet and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore renounced the knighthood that he had received in 1915.

- **Gandhi** was initially hesitant to act, but he soon began organizing his first large-scale and sustained nonviolent protest (satyagraha) campaign, the non-cooperation movement (1920–22), which thrust him to prominence in the Indian nationalist struggle.

Britain expressed deep regret for the incident

- A hundred years on, the massacre continues to inspire revulsion, even in the UK.

- British Prime Minister Theresa May called the massacre a 'shameful scar' on British Indian history.

- Ms. May also quoted Queen Elizabeth's remarks, calling the incident a "distressing example" of Britain's past history with India.

- However, the words of PM May fell short in issuing a formal apology.

PROJECT SAMARTHAN- FOR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE AMONG THE PRISONERS

◉ **CONTEXT:**

- **Around 7,000 inmates provided counselling by mental health experts at Tihar Jail under project Samarthan.**

◉ **ABOUT:**

Mental health issues among the prisoners

- According to the data is issued by the Delhi Tihar Prison, every year about 7-8 prisoners commits suicide.

- Rise of mental and behavioural disorders amongst the prisoners leads them to commit suicide, murder and aggressive outbursts with fellow inmates.

- In last few years, prevalence of disorders have markedly increased in prisons due to many reasons like overcrowding, isolation from social network, insecurity about future, delayed judicial proceeding and poor mental health services in prison.

Project Samarthan

- It was started in April 2018 by the Delhi Prison Administration in association with the collaboration with NGO Mental Health Foundation and was mentored by the professor Nand Kumar, Department of Psychiatry, All India Institute Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

- The objective of the project is to provide psychological first aid session or counselling session to reduce the suicide rates in the prison.

Steps taken under this project

- Approximately 50 trained counsellors with Physiological background were deployed on voluntary basis to assist and sensitise the Tihar inmates about the mental issues.

- A total of 7,000 inmates of Tihar Jail have been provided counselling by professional by the experts who have been found with such disorders.

- The Tihar Jail is the second jail after the Pennsylvania Correction Services who are using this technique.

How efficient the steps have been

- As per the data shared by the Tihar Prison Administration, it shows that the suicide rate has gone down by upto 50 per cent.

- It has been observed that there is a significant reduction in various forms of violence in Delhi Prisons.

- Through this process, the jail authority has witnessed a decrease in the cases of disobedience of the instruction of the jail staff. Daily yoga classes and meditation are also provided to the prisoners of Tihar.

ADOPTION OF LATEST TECHNOLOGY-3G, 4G, 5G

⦿ **CONTEXT:**

- **Banks have been given directions to upgrade their Point of Sale (PoS) devices to run on 3G and 4G in the backdrop of the impending phase-out of 2G technology to which they are mated now.**

⦿ **ABOUT:**

Why should latest technologies be adopted?

- It will bring the high-speed era, opening the door to the IoT (internet of things). This is an era when technology will revolutionize various aspects of our life and lifestyle.

- This would pave the way to create tech-based smart cities, smart homes, smart factories, smart schools, colleges and universities, and smart health care.

- In the sports arena, athletes and players will be able to analyze their own behaviour for further optimization.

- In our factories, self-propelled equipment will be used for delivering goods and parcels.

- The IoT will allow vehicles to connect to hospitals in case of accidents or will help provide warnings to drivers. IoT will also create smart clothes which alert users if they sit with the wrong posture.

- Once the health care providers start taking advantage of this connectivity, they would be able to monitor the patients in real time and that would significantly lower expenses.

What are the latest technologies-3G, 4G, 5G?

- **3G:**
  - The introduction of 3G networks in 1998 ushered in faster data-transmission speeds.
  - It helped us in using our cell phone in more data-demanding ways such as for video calling and mobile internet access.
  - The maximum speed of 3G is estimated to be around 2 Mbps.

- **4G:**
  - The fourth generation of networking was released in 2008.
  - It supports mobile web access like 3G does and also gaming services, HD mobile TV, video conferencing, 3D TV, and other features that demand high speeds.
  - The max speed of a 4G network is 1 Gbps.

- **5G:**
  - 5G is a not-yet-implemented wireless technology that's intended to improve on 4G.
  - 5G promises significantly faster data rates, higher connection density, much lower latency, and energy savings, among other improvements.
  - The anticipated theoretical speed of 5G connections is up to 20 Gbps.

5G Use Cases Lab:

- 5G Use Cases Lab for the Banking and Financial Sector were inaugurated at the Institute for Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT).
- The objectives of 5G Lab are- developing and demonstrating 5G use cases for banking and financial services, setting up a 5G R&D experience platform, and provide state-of-the-art experimental test bed solutions for mobile, wireless technologies, IoT and security services for BFSI.

What was 2G technology?

- It was the second-generation cellular technology.
- 2G replaced analog 1G technology, which originated in the 1980s supporting only voice calls.
- Its digital signal used less power than analog signals, so mobile batteries lasted longer.
- It introduced SMS — the short and incredibly popular text message — along with multimedia messages (MMS) and picture messages. 2G's digital encryption added privacy to data and voice calls. Only the intended recipient of a call or text could receive or read it.
- Download and upload speed in 2G technology was 236 Kbps.

SIDE EFFECTS OF COMMON ANTIBIOTICS

⊙ **CONTEXT:**
- Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has asked the manufacturers to inform the general public about known side effects and symptoms after the intake of seven popular antibiotics.
- Manufacturers were also asked to mention the information about the adverse reactions of these medicines in leaflets inserted into drug packets or on promotional literature.

⊙ **ABOUT:**
Followings are the aforementioned seven antibiotics:

Antibiotics	Known side effects
Cefotaxime	Swelling under the skin due to the accumulation of fluids
Ofloxacin	Rashes and blisters on skin and mucous membranes
Cefixime	Pain, diarrhoea, nausea and headache
Tranexamic acid	Diarrhoea , Nausea and seizures
Quetiapine	Involuntary leakage of urine
Sulfasalazine	Decreased appetite, nausea and headache
Sodium Valproate	Drowsiness and unsteadiness

What are antibiotics?

- Antibiotics are medicines that help stop infections caused by bacteria. It is done by killing the bacteria or by keeping them from copying themselves or reproducing.

- The word antibiotic means "against life." Any drug that kills germs in our body is technically an antibiotic. Medically, that is meant to kill bacteria.

- Before scientists first discovered antibiotics in the 1920s, many people died from minor bacterial infections, like strep throat. But after antibiotics became available in the 1940s, life expectancy increased, surgeries got safer, and people could survive what used to be deadly infections.

- Some antibiotics work on many different kinds of bacteria. They are called **"broad-spectrum."** Others target specific bacteria only. They are known as "**narrow-spectrum".**

- There are infections caused by viruses- common cold, flu, most coughs, some bronchitis infections, most sore throats, and the stomach flu. Antibiotics won't work to treat them.

Why information of side effects is important?

- The idea is to ensure that doctors and users are aware of the adverse reactions.

- The patient need not to be panic on seeing the symptoms. The symptoms mean s/he is allergic to the antibiotic.

- For women taking birth control pills, antibiotics may keep them from working, so they should speak to doctor about alternative birth control methods.

Causes for side effects:

- Our stomach is full of bacteria - both good and bad. Antibiotics often affect our digestive system while they're treating an infection. This collateral damage to our body is called side effect of antibiotic.

- Common side effects include- vomiting, nausea, diarrhoea, bloating or indigestion, abdominal pain, and loss of appetite.

- The symptoms of the side effects are: Hives – a raised, itchy skin rash, coughing, wheezing, tight throat or trouble breathing.

Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation

- It is the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) for discharging functions assigned under the Central Government under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

- It works under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

- Its headquarters is located New Delhi.

- It has six zonal offices, four sub zonal offices, thirteen Port offices and seven laboratories spread across the country.

- Objectives- approval of New Drugs, conduct of Clinical Trials, laying down the standards for Drugs, control over the quality of imported Drugs in the country and coordinating the activities of State Drug Control Organizations.

NEW EARLY HUMAN SPECIES

⊙ **CONTEXT:**

- **Recently, a new species of ancient human (more correctly hominin) is found from Philippines known as Homo luzonensis, after the Philippines' main island of Luzon, where it was recovered during excavations of Callao Cave in 2007, 2011 and 2015.**

- **Scientists found these remains aged between 67,000 years to 50,000 years old (Late Plesitocene Period).**

◉ **ABOUT**

Features of Homo luzonensis:

- Its anatomy is argued to be a peculiar mix of features normally found in living humans, *Home erectus*, the Hobbit *Home floresiensis* and *Australopithecus*.

- The finger and toe bones are curved, suggesting climbing was still an important activity for this species. This also seems to have been the case for some australopithecines.

- Unlike Homo sapiens, whose premolar teeth generally have a single root, Homo luzonensis' premolars had two or three roots, similar to more primitive species such as Homo erectus, which lived in Africa and Asia between about 1.89 million and 143,000 years ago.

Excavations:

- This new human species is represented by a handful of heavily worn adult teeth from one or two individuals, one foot and two toe bones, two finger bones, and the fragment of the shaft of a juvenile thigh bone.

- Analysis of this foot bone suggested that it belonged to the genus Homo, but to which species was unclear.

- Recently, researchers found twelve additional hominin elements that represent at least three individuals that were found in the same stratigraphic layer of Callao Cave as the previously discovered metatarsal.

- It's quite possible that Homo luzonensis was smaller than Homo sapiens, and perhaps even smaller than Homo floresiensis.

◉ **SIGNIFICANCE:**

- These newly discovered specimens display combination of primitive and derived morphological features which are different from combination of features found in other species in genus Homo and warrants their attribution to a new species.

- It challenges fairly straightforward idea of human evolution. The traditional narrative suggests that Homo sapiens evolved from ancient species of Homo erectus in Africa and dispersed from there around 50,000 years ago.

- With new finding, it becomes clear that Homo sapiens were definitely coexisting with other human species in other parts of the globe.

NIRF RANKINGS

◉ **CONTEXT:**

- **Recently, the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) declared the India Rankings 2019.**

◉ **ABOUT:**

- This framework outlines a methodology to rank institutions across the country. The methodology draws from the overall recommendations and broad understanding arrived at by a Core Committee set up by MHRD.

- The NIRF rankings tend to compare various colleges across various streams like engineering, pharmacy, law, management, architecture, and more.

- Although the NIRF rankings use a range of parameters that include important and specific metrics like the number of IPR and patents, or the metric for the number of PhD students graduated from an institute, they also tend to depend on very vague and over-simplified factors like **teacher-student ratio** and **peer perception**.

- The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) was approved by the MHRD and it was launched on 29th September, 2015. First NIRF Ranking was issued in April, 2016.

> **The NIRF rankings was released for a total of 9 categories -**
>
> - Overall, Universities, Engineering, Colleges, Management, Pharmacy, Medical, Architecture and Law.
> - The NIRF rankings are based on the following parameters -
> - Teaching, Learning and Resources, Research and Professional Practices, Graduation Outcomes, Outreach and Inclusivity and Perception.

Results:

- One of the least surprising statistics displayed in 2019's NIRF rankings was the declaration of Miranda House as the foremost college in the 'colleges' category. For three straight years, since 2017, Miranda House has been able to retain the foremost position in the rankings. **Although this does portray a sense of competence of the college, it also describes the existence of a monopoly over better facilities.**

- In the engineering category, the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, has continued to bag the first rank for a stretch of four years now.

NIRF Rankings-2019

- **Top 5 Engineering Institutions in India-2019**
    - Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
    - Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi
    - Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay
    - Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur
    - Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur

- **Top 5 Universities in India-2019**
    - Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru
    - Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
    - Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi
    - University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad
    - Calcutta University, Kolkata

- **Top 10 Colleges in India**
    - Miranda House, Delhi
    - Hindu College, Delhi
    - Presidency College, Chennai
    - St. Stephen's College, Delhi
    - Lady Shri Ram College for Women, New Delhi

⊙ **SIGNIFICANCE:**

- There is no denying the fact that these rankings hold strong significance as, both, the only **reliable guide for students** to choose between their college options and as an official source of information for statistical analysis for further studies and research initiatives.

- **Universities need grants**. To get grants, they must prove their reputation and to prove the reputation they need money. The universities thus are motivated to create better policies to become better.

- Earlier, students had to rely on the Shanghai Rankings or the QS World Rankings which did not take into account Indian conditions. This ranking takes out the disadvantage to Indian Institutes as it takes into account parameters which are suited for Indian situations.

NOTRE-DAME CATHEDRAL

⊙ **CONTEXT:**
• **A massive fire consumed Notre-Dame Cathedral, gutting the roof of the Paris' landmark and stunning France and the world, but fire-fighters managed to save the shell of the stone structure and its two main bell towers from collapse.**

⊙ **ABOUT:**

What is Notre-Dame Cathedral?

• It is a French Gothic cathedral whose construction began at the end of the 12th century—generally ascribed the date 1163—and lasted more than two centuries to 1345. The iconic cathedral has been deeply enmeshed in Paris's history since construction.

• It sits on the Ile de la Cite, an island in the River Seine and marks the very centre of Paris.

• It is a UNESCO World Heritage site that attracts millions of tourists every year.

Why is it a Paris landmark?

• It was in Notre-Dame that Napoleon Bonaparte crowned himself emperor of France.

• Its massive tenor bell announced the liberation of the city from Nazi control on August 24, 1944, ending the dark years under German rule in World War II.

• Twenty-six years later it hosted the funeral of Charles de Gaulle, a rare honour for the leader who steered France's resistance during the war.

• For French Catholics it has particular resonance, as the resting place of the crown of thorns believed to have been placed on Jesus' head before his crucifixion.

What are its cultural specialties?

• **Holy Crown of Thorns**: It contained some of the most sacred relics of the Christian faith, including the Holy Crown of Thorns (Cathedral's most precious item), believed to have been worn by Jesus at his crucifixion. It also contained other relics from the crucifixion of Jesus-a piece of the cross on which he was nailed and one of the nails.

• **The Great Organ**: Of the cathedral's three organs, the most impressive is the Great Organ with five key-boards, 109 stops and closes to 8000 pipes. It was built in 15th century and progressively added over the centuries to become one of the largest in France.

• **37 figures of Virgin Mary:** A mid-14th century statue of the Virgin with child, placed in the sanctuary is the most famous of the 37 images of the Virgin Mary contained in the Cathedral.

• In 1831, Hugo brought the cathedral alive with 'Notre-Dame de Paris', giving it a personality on par with the novel's heroes, the hunchback Quasimodo and the gypsy beauty Esmeralda.

• A spire originally installed toward the year 1250 was taken down five centuries later. At the end of the 19th century the architect Eugene Viollet-le-Duc, a tireless defender of France's medieval monuments, rebuilt the spire.

INDO-PACIFIC DIVISION

⊙ **CONTEXT:**
• **India has set up an Indo-Pacific division in the foreign office. The division will integrate the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Asean region and the Quad to the Indo-Pacific table.**

⊙ **ABOUT:**
• It is set up by Ministry of External Affairs.

• The main objective of the Indo-pacific division is intended to give a coherent architecture to the Indo-Pacific policy articulated by PM at the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2018.

- The Indo-Pacific diplomacy of India has repeatedly placed ASEAN at the centre of its policy.
- Even the US has recently renamed its Pacific Command to the Indo-Pacific Command as it seeks to give teeth to its Indo-Pacific policy.

Key Facts:

- India is planning to put greater energy to the IORA because the heart of its Indo-Pacific policy is rooted in the Indian Ocean.
- This integrates the blue economy part of the Indian policy with the security part.
- Countries falling in the direct hinterland of the vast Indian and Pacific oceanic expanse are termed 'Indo-Pacific countries'.
- It is a multipolar region, contributing more than half of the world's GDP and population.
- The motivation for a larger bloc always comes from the sheer size, resources it owns, and, the scope and size of the economies of scale that it can generate. This is, in fact, a region in which several Asian powers are once again rising, especially in geo- economic terms.

⊙ **SIGNIFICANCE:**
- MEA's territorial divisions are crucial for policy making, so the creation of an Indo-Pacific division is a big step by the government. The protection and preservation of marine resources, as well as a sustainable and responsible fishery–framework, are all critical towards building a regional consensus on maritime security and cooperation in Indo-Pacific.

Shangri-LaDialogue:

- **The Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD)** is a "Track One" inter-governmental security forum held annually by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). It is attended by defense ministers, permanent heads of ministries and military chiefs of **28 Asia-Pacific states.** The forum gets its name from the **Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore.** It has been held since 2002.

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