CURRENT AFFAIRS WEEKLY

mains

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— Disclaimer —

The current affairs articles are segregated from prelims and mains perspective, such separation is maintained in terms of structure of articles. Mains articles have more focus on analysis and prelims articles have more focus on facts.

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-2 (OCTOBER, 2019)

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SECTION: A
(MAINS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

CONTEXT

- **Government is mulling of introducing 'one nation, one ration card'**

⊙ **BACKGROUND**

- PDS is public rationing system of India.

- India's Public Distribution System (PDS) is the largest distribution network of its kind in the world.

- PDS was introduced around World War II as a war-time rationing measure. In 1960s due to food insecurity, the government set up the Agriculture Prices Commission and the Food Corporation of India to improve domestic procurement and storage of food grains for PDS.

- By the 1970s, PDS had evolved into a universal scheme for the distribution of subsidised food.

- In 1997, the government launched the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), with a focus on the poor. TPDS aims to provide subsidised food and fuel to the poor through a network of ration shops.

- Food grains such as rice and wheat that are provided under TPDS are procured from farmers, allocated to states and delivered to the ration shop where the beneficiary buys his entitlement. The centre and states share the responsibilities of identifying the poor, procuring grains and delivering food grains to beneficiaries.

- National Food Security Act, 2013 relies largely on the existing TPDS to deliver food grains as legal entitlements to poor households. This marks a shift by making the right to food a justiciable right.

⊙ **ANALYSIS**

Issues

- **Identification of Beneficiaries:**
  - ➤ Large inclusion and exclusion errors in beneficiaries.
  - ➤ Existence of ghost cards in several states. Ghost cards are cards made in the name of non-existent people. The existence of ghost cards indicates that grains are diverted from deserving households into the open market.

- **Trends in Procurement vis-à-vis Production:**
  - ➤ Nearly 61 million tonnes of food grains are procured under NFA, 2013.

- ➤ Procurement of this quantity of food grains might be easier in years when production is high. However, in years of drought and domestic shortfall, India will have to resort to large scale imports of rice and wheat, exerting significant upward pressure on prices. This raises questions regarding the government's ability to procure grains without affecting open market prices and adversely impacting the food subsidy bill.

- **Rising Food Subsidy:**
  - ➤ The subsidy bill for 2019-20 is estimated at 1.84 lakh crores.

- **Lack of Storage Capacity:**
  - ➤ FCI's storage capacity (both owned and hired) has not increased commensurate to the growth in procurement.
  - ➤ In its report, the CAG found that from 2008-09 onwards, due to the increase in procurement of food grains, there was a severe strain on storage capacity available in the country for the central pool stock.
  - ➤ With the increasing food grains stocks, FCI's storage gap increased from 5.9 million tonnes in 2007-08 to 33.2 million tonnes in 2011-12.
  - ➤ The grains are being stored in unscientific storage, leading to rotting of food grains.

- **Leakage of food grains:** TPDS suffers from large leakages of food grains during transportation to and from ration shops into the open market.

- **Poor quality of commodities** supplied

Steps Taken by Government

- **Aadhaar Seeding in PDS:** To weed out duplicate/in-eligible/bogus ration cards and to enable rightful targeting 83.41% i.e. about 19.41 crore ration cards (as on 29th May, 2018) have been Aadhaar seeded.

- **Automation of Fair Price Shops:** In 2014 Department of Food & Public Distribution prescribed the guidelines and specifications for use of PoS at FPS. At present 3,16,600 FPSs (as on 29th May, 2018) out of 5,27,930 have PoS.

- **Digital/Cashless/Less-cash Payments in PDS:** To promote the use of less-cash/digital payment mechanisms, the Department has issued detailed guidelines for use of AePS, UPI, USSD, Debit/ Rupay Cards and e-Wallets in 2016. At present in 10 States/UTs a total of 51,479 FPSs are enabled for digital payments.

- **Digitization of Ration Card:** 100% digitization of Ration Card data has been done. All States have transparency portal, 30 States have online allocation of food grains and 21 States/UTs have computerised supply chain management system.

- **'Integrated Management of PDS'** (IM-PDS): The scheme has been approved with an outlay of Rs. 127.3 crore to be implemented during FY 2018-19 and FY 2019-20 for establishing Public Distribution System Network (PDSN) to establish central data repository and central monitoring system of PDS operations and to also enable implementation of national level portability.

- **Construction of Godowns and Silos:** A total storage capacity of 22.23 lakh MT has been added during last four years under the PEG Scheme. A road map for creation of 100 Lakh MT storage capacity in the form of Steel Silos by FCI and other agencies including State Governments on PPP mode for wheat and rice has been approved. Construction has been planned in a phased manner. 6.25 Lakh MT Steel Silos have been completed and contracts for 23.5 Lakh MT capacity have been awarded.

- **Simplified Registration Rules, 2017**: To simplify the process of registration of warehouses and for their better and effective regulation and supervision, new rules namely, the Warehousing (Development and Regulation) Registration of Warehouses Rules, 2017 have been notified.

- **INGRAM (Integrated Grievance Redressal Mechanism) Portal**: It was launched under National Consumer Helpline in 2016 for providing a common IT platform for various stake holders involved in the Consumer Grievance Redressal Mechanism and for disseminating information to consumers.

How to Improve the PDS?

Reforms have been proposed to make the TPDS more effective. Major reforms include using information technology and leveraging Aadhaar to improve identification of beneficiaries.

- **Role of Aadhaar**
    - One of the key problems in the implementation of TPDS is the inclusion and exclusion errors in the identification of beneficiaries. Using Aadhaar with TPDS would help eliminate duplicate and ghost (fake) beneficiaries, and

make identification of beneficiaries more accurate

- **Alternative to TPDS**
    - **Universal PDS:** When PDS was first introduced, it was a universal entitlement scheme. In 1997, it was changed into the Targeted PDS. Unlike most states in the country, Tamil Nadu retained the Universal PDS, providing subsidised food grains to the entire population.

Case study: Universal PDS in Tamil Nadu

- **Non-classification of Beneficiaries:** Subsidized PDS commodities are distributed to all residents without classifying them into different categories. According to the Justice Wadhwa Committee Report, non-classification helps the state avoid errors of exclusion of eligible and vulnerable families. However, TN identifies AAY beneficiaries.

- **Commodities provided under universal PDS** - Rice is distributed at the price of Re 1/ kg to everyone, lower than the central issue price. Families are not given 35 kg as mandated by the central government; rice cardholders get anywhere between 12-20 kg rice depending on the number of individuals in their family.

- **Groups involved in the distribution of food grains** - No private trader is engaged in the PDS activity. Ration shops are mainly run by the cooperative societies and the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation, the FCI counterpart in the state.

- **Cash Transfers:**
    - The National Food Security Act, 2013 includes cash transfers and food coupons as possible alternative mechanisms to the PDS.26 Beneficiaries would be given either cash or coupons by the state government, which they can exchange for food grains.

    - Some potential advantages of these programmes include: (i) reduced administrative costs, (ii) expanded choices for beneficiaries, and (iii) competitive pricing among grocery stores.

    - However, cash transfers may expose recipients to price fluctuation, if they are not frequently adjusted for inflation. Such programmes also do not address the issue of inclusion of ineligible beneficiaries and the exclusion of eligible ones. Additionally, since cash transfers include the transfer of money directly to the beneficiary, poor access to banks and post offices in some areas may reduce their effectiveness.27 In January 2013, the Ministry of Consumer

Affairs, Food and Public Distribution introduced a pilot scheme in six Union Territories for the direct transfer of cash subsidy under TPDS

- **Technology-based reforms of TPDS implemented by states**:

  ➤ The Supreme Court appointed wadhwa Committee found that certain states had implemented computerisation and other technology-based reforms to TPDS which helped plug leakages of food grains during TPDS.

  ➤ The Committee found that the current manual recording of eligibility of beneficiaries and transactions was prone to human errors and tampering.

  ➤ There was pilferage through the distribution network and no central monitoring system to ensure end-to-end delivery.

  ➤ The Committee observed that end-to-end computerisation could curb large-scale diversion and help track the delivery of food grains from state depots to beneficiaries.

- **MSP Implications for agricultural production and food prices:** These include the effects of MSP on production of non-cereal crops and implications for water resources. In order to avoid crop and regional diversity in India MSP-like policies should be provided for other non-cereals and perishables to increase their productions.

- **One Nation One Ration Card**

  ➤ **It means** allowing citizens to pick up foodgrains from any ration shop in the country.

  ➤ The Economic Survey 2017 estimated that over nine million Indians change their state every year.

⦿ CONCLUSION

However, we must approach this bold vision with utmost caution because PDS is a crucial lifeline for many of the 800 million Indians it reaches. The reform like 'One nation One Ration Card' should be handled with more care. First the inter-sate portability should be provided.

📑 Practice Question

- **What are the major problems that plague Public Distribution System (PDS)? Suggest some measures to make PDS effective and efficient citing the recommendation of various committees.**

Public Distribution System

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Learning Aid

issues

Poor quality
↓
commodities supplied are generally of rather poor quality

Rising Food Subsidy
↓
The subsidy bill for 2019-20 is estimated at 1.84 lakh crores

Lack of Storage Capacity
↓
FCI's storage capacity has not increased commensurate to the growth in procurement

Identification of Beneficiaries
↓
Large inclusion and exclusion errors in beneficiaries and existence of ghost cards in several states

Leakage of food grains
↓
Targeted PDS suffers from large leakages of food grains during transportation to and from ration shops into the open market

A total storage capacity of 22.23 lakh MT has been added during last four years under the PEG Scheme and a road map for creation of 100 Lakh MT storage capacity in the form of Steel Silos is on way

To weed out duplicate/in-eligible/bogus ration cards and to enable rightful targeting

Construction of Godowns and Silos

100% digitization of Ration Card data has been done

Aadhaar Seeding in PDS

Steps taken so far

Digitization of Ration Card

Many other progressive steps have also been taken like

Digital/Cashless/Less-cash Payments in PDS

Automation of Fair Price Shops

'Integrated Management of PDS' (IM-PDS) scheme

What more is and can be done?

The National Food Security Act, 2013 includes cash transfers and food coupons as possible alternative mechanisms to the PDS

SC appointed Wadhwa Committee observed that use of technology can help tremendously in streamlining the PDS

advantages

expanded choices for beneficiaries

reduced administrative costs

competitive pricing among grocery stores

One Nation , One Ration Card

Ration card-Aadhaar linkage must to access the portability scheme

Under the 'One nation, one ration card' system, beneficiaries can buy subsidised foodgrains from a ration shop in any part of the country

The scheme will be rolled out across the country on: July 1, 2020

States providing portability of PDS entitlements:

▪ Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharasthra, Rajasthan, Telangana and Tripura

▪ A person will only be eligible for the subsidies supported by the Centre, which include rice sold at ₹3/kg and wheat at ₹2/kg

A migrant will be allowed to buy a maximum of 50% of the family quota. This is to ensure that the individual, after shifting to another place, does not buy the entire family quota in one go

▪ Even if a beneficiary moves to a State where grains are given for free, he/she will not be able to access those benefits

It found that certain states had implemented computerisation and other technology-based reforms to TPDS which helped plug leakages of food grains during TPDS

The Committee also observed that end-to-end computerisation could curb large-scale diversion and help track the delivery of food grains from state depots to beneficiaries

THE RISING THREAT OF CORAL BLEACHING

CONTEXT

- A recent study conducted on coral reefs in the Indian and Pacific Oceans has found that heat was not the only driver of coral bleaching but it is also influenced by location and several other factors.

⊚ BACKGROUND

- The stunning colours in corals come from **marine algae called zooxanthellae**, which live inside their tissues. This algae provides the corals with an easy food supply thanks to photosynthesis, which gives the corals energy, allowing them to grow and reproduce.

- When corals get stressed, from things such as heat or pollution, they react by expelling this algae, leaving a ghostly, transparent skeleton behind. This is known as '**coral bleaching'.** Some corals can feed themselves, but without the zooxanthellae most corals starve.

⊚ ANALYSIS

Significance of coral reefs

- **A Coastal Protection -** By their massive formation between the surface and the first few tens of meters deep, coral reefs are a very effective for absorbing elements coming from the ocean. They absorb wave's energy and contribute to environmental protection through the reduction of coastal erosion in case of storms, hurricanes etc.

- **Habitat -** Estimates suggest that these living limestone scientists over one million plant and animal species are involved and they host receive more than 25% of all species of marine life. It is one of the **most important biodiversity hotspot on earth.**

- **Food Resource -** Reef animals are an important source of protein, contributing about a quarter of the fish catch average in these countries. "Well managed" reef can provide between 5 and 15 tons of fish, crustaceans, molluscs and other invertebrates per square kilometre.

- **Economic Importance -** Millions of people around the world depend on coral reefs for food, protection and employment.

- **Tourism Wealth -** The reefs are often essential element in the economy of tropical regions they inhabit. They attract divers in effect, freedivers, recreational fishermen and lovers of white sand beaches. Local economies benefit from billions of dollars from visitors to reefs with their companies exploiting reef ecosystems. Through tourist services, billions of dollars are collected.

- **Medical Future -** Reef organisms are used in the treatment of diseases such as certain cancers including leukaemia, HIV, cardiovascular diseases, ulcers. In addition, long coral skeleton, because of its very close similarity to our bones nature, served as material for bone grafts. Coral reefs also contribute to the advancement of research.

Factors responsible for Coral Bleaching

- Increased water temperature (most commonly due to global warming), or reduced water temperatures,

- Oxygen starvation caused by an increase in zooplankton levels, Increased solar irradiance (photosynthetic active radiation and ultraviolet light)

- Increased sedimentation (due to silt runoff)

- Bacterial infections, Herbicides

- Changes in salinity and Extreme low tide and exposure

- Pollutants such as oxybenzone, butylparaben, octyl methoxycinnamate, or enzacamene: four common sunscreen ingredients that are nonbiodegradable and can wash off of skin

- Ocean acidification due to elevated levels of CO_2 caused by air pollution

- Being exposed to Oil or other chemical spills

- It may result from increases in seawater temperature, particularly when associated with elevated levels of solar irradiance (e.g., ultraviolet radiation)

- Earlier studies had established that bleaching occurred when corals underwent stress from water temperatures rising significantly above normal. It was believed that reefs closer to the warmer equator had bleached more in the past, and were expected to degrade further.

New research findings

- Researchers have found that coral bleaching events across the world are influenced not only by rising water temperatures but also by a wide range of other factors like the longitudinal location at sea where the reefs are present

- It has suggested that that bleached corals are highly variable in terms of warm water temperatures and location, with some going through bleaching levels of up to 60 percent, and others surviving with no impact.

- The bleaching depended heavily on the location **of reefs along the longitudinal gradient** from **East Africa to Fiji.**

- **Different stress-tolerances** - The researchers also found that since different coral reefs were composed of different species of coral and were exposed to varying levels of heat and stress, they had developed different tolerances to these factors, leading them to react differently to bleaching events.

Consequences

- Coral can survive short-term disturbances, but if the conditions that lead to the expulsion of the zooxanthellae persist, the coral's chances of survival diminish.

- If the coral polyps die of starvation after bleaching, they will decay and the hard coral species will then leave behind their calcium carbonate skeletons, which will be taken over by algae, effectively blocking coral re-growth and eventually, the coral skeletons will erode, causing the reef structure to collapse.

⊙ **WAY FORWARD**

- There is much that we can do locally to protect coral reefs, by making sure there is a healthy fish community and that the water surrounding the reefs is clean.

- Well-protected reefs today typically have much healthier coral populations, and are more resilient (better able to recover from natural disasters such as typhoons and hurricanes).

- Fish play important roles on coral reefs, particularly the fish that eat seaweeds and keep them from smothering corals, which grow more slowly than the seaweeds. Fish also eat the predators of corals, such as crown of thorns starfish.

- Marine protected areas (MPAs) are an important tool for keeping reefs healthy. Large MPAs protect the Great Barrier Reef and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, for example, and in June 2012, Australia created the largest marine reserve network in the world. Smaller ones, managed by local communities, have been very successful in developing countries.

- In the long run, however, the future of coral reefs will depend on reducing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which is increasing rapidly due to burning of fossil fuels. Carbon dioxide is both warming the ocean, resulting in coral bleaching, and changing the chemistry of the ocean, causing ocean acidification. Both making it harder for corals to build their skeletons.

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SINO-INDIAN COOPERATION IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

CONTEXT

- **As the world's centre-of-gravity shifts from the West to the East, the Indo-Pacific has emerged as a region of immense interest for major global players. While there may not be consensus on the geographical scope of the Indo-Pacific, there are a number of areas for multi-lateral cooperation and growth.**

◉ BACKGROUND:

- The Indo-Pacific region is a geopolitical area that spans two regions of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.

- Stretching from the west coast of the United States to the west coast of India, the Indo-Pacific is a 24 nations' regional framework comprising the tropical waters of the Indian Ocean, the western and central Pacific Ocean, and the seas connecting the two in the general area of Indonesia.

- Since 2011, the term "Indo-Pacific" is being used increasingly in the global strategic/ geopolitical discourse. As a framework, the Indo-Pacific seeks to create a connected multipolar region that must be governed by commonly agreed international norms, rules and practices.

- The term "Indo-Pacific" refers to the maritime space stretching from the Indian Ocean, across the littorals of East Asia to the western Pacific Ocean.

◉ ANALYSIS

Differing interpretations of Indo-Pacific region

- **India and Japan** – India and Japan interprets the Indo-Pacific to extend from the western coast of continental America to the eastern coast of continental Africa. They underscore the **centrality of ASEAN** in the Indo-Pacific.

- **The United States** – According to US Department of Defence's Indo-Pacific Strategy Report, Indo-Pacific is defined as "spanning a vast stretch of the globe from the west coast of the United States to the western shores of India,…", i.e., it does not include the shores of Africa or the Gulf countries as part of the Indo-Pacific.

- **ASEAN** - Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) refer to the Indo-Pacific as the "wider Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions"

China's Concerns

China sees the American pivot to the Indo-Pacific as a military move against it. It views the American interest in the region as being aimed at containing her in the South China Sea region. Mutual mistrust has led to unease in the region.

One way of enhancing **intra-regional trust is deepening cooperation on common concerns**.

Avenues for India-China Cooperation

- **Illicit Trafficking**

  Issues

  ➤ The trafficking of humans, timber, wildlife, and drugs is rampant in this region.

  ➤ The infamous Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle lie in this region.

  ➤ Wildlife and forest crime is one of the biggest transnational organised crimes in the East Asia and Pacific region.

  Indo-China cooperation

  ➤ India and China should take the lead in creating regional/sub-regional mechanism to address these issues.

  ➤ Sub-regional financial intelligence mechanisms need to be created to identify and disable the trafficking networks.

  ➤ India and China should focus on capacity-building in those countries which have the will but not necessarily the resources to combat this menace.

  ➤ A strong, unified, whole-of-region/whole-of-sub-region response focusing on border management, legal framework, and practical applicability of laws is required.

- **Natural Disasters/Environmental Issues**

  Issues

  ➤ The Indo-Pacific is part of the Pacific Ring of Fire and thus it is prone to earthquakes, volcanoes, and other natural calamities.

  ➤ The islands and low-lying areas are especially vulnerable to the effects of global warming.

  ➤ According to a 2015 United Nations report, the five countries hit by the highest number of disasters were US, China, India, the Philippines, and Indonesia – all in the Indo-Pacific

Indo-China cooperation

➤ Need is to broaden and deepen the cooperation in disaster mapping, monitoring, response, climate change, disaster management, etc.

➤ China and India are leading the increase in greening on land and these two countries should initiate a whole-of-region greening plan so that the entire Indo-Pacific becomes a greener region.

➤ Other green initiatives, such as a plastic-free Indo-Pacific, should also be given a fillip by investing in biodegradable plastic.

⊙ **Health Issues**

Issues

➤ Many of the major infectious diseases such as Japanese encephalitis, influenza, tuberculosis, etc. are endemic to the Indo-Pacific.

➤ Newly emerging viruses such as Hendra and Nipah are also endemic to the Indo-Pacific.

Indo-China cooperation

➤ A whole-of-region approach with emphasis on increased collaboration between the scientific, medical, and pharmacological communities will help the cause.

➤ India should take up the cause of popularising Ayurveda in the Indo-Pacific as microbes are not known to develop resistance against Ayurvedic medicines.

⊙ **Terrorism**

Issues

➤ Many countries in the Indo-Pacific, including China and India, have been victims of terrorism.

➤ China had stated in a paper that terrorist attacks had caused "heavy casualties and property damage.

➤ There are reports that South East Asia has become the new breeding ground for Islamic State terrorists.

Indo-China cooperation

➤ The countries in the Indo-Pacific should put up a joint front against terrorism.

➤ It should involve demonstrable action against terrorists and no shielding of terrorists in any way at any forum.

⊙ **CONCLUSION**

India envisions the Indo-Pacific as an arc of prosperity. The first and foremost requirement for prosperity is stability. Problems of piracy, weapons proliferation, governance issues in certain countries, refugee problems, terrorism, etc. are destabilising factors. China and India, along with other countries in the Indo-Pacific need to work towards addressing these issues and ensuring that there is transparency, accountability, freedom of navigation/over-flight, access to commons, stability, and adherence to international laws in the region.

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MAHATMA GANDHI'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO GLOBAL POLITICAL PROTESTS AND HIS RELEVANCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

CONTEXT

● **The year 2019 marks the 150th birth anniversary of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Fondly remembered as the Father of the Nation, he is known to have inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world.**

⊚ BACKGROUND

- Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi has been called the "father of India" and a "great soul".

- His nonviolent approach to political change helped India gain independence after nearly a century of British colonial rule.

- Mahatma Gandhi, a frail man with a will of iron provided a blueprint for future social movements around the world.

- Mahatma Gandhi remains one of the most revered figures in modern history.

⊚ ANALYSIS

Gandhi's contribution to Indian Independence Movement

- Gandhi brought Satyagraha to India in 1915, and was soon elected to the Indian National Congress political party.

- **Rowlatt Act -** He began to push for independence from the United Kingdom, and organized resistance to a 1919 law that gave British authorities complete freedom to imprison suspected revolutionaries without trial. Britain responded brutally to the resistance, harmed and killed numerous unarmed protesters in the Amritsar Massacre.

- Gandhi then pushed even harder for home rule, encouraging boycotts of British goods and organizing mass protests.

- **Salt Satyagraha/Civil Disobedience Moment** - In 1930, he began a massive satyagraha campaign against a British law that forced Indians to purchase British salt instead of producing it locally. Gandhi organized a 241-mile-long protest march to the west coast of Gujarat, where he and his acolytes harvested salt on the shores of the Arabian Sea. In response, Britain imprisoned over 60,000 peaceful protesters and inadvertently generated even more support for home rule.

- Imprisoned for a year because of the Salt March, he became more influential than ever. He protested discrimination against the "untouchables," India's lowest caste, and negotiated unsuccessfully for Indian home rule.

- Undeterred, he began the **Quit India movement**, a campaign to get Britain to voluntarily withdraw from India during World War II. Britain refused and arrested him yet again.

- Huge demonstrations occurred due to his arrests but the balance finally tipped toward Indian independence. Gandhi was released from prison in 1944, and Britain at last began to make plans to withdraw from the Indian subcontinent.

Gandhi and his International Influence

- Gandhi influenced a number of important leaders and political movements across the world. **Leaders of civil rights movements** in the United States, including Martin Luther King Jr., James Lawson, and James Bevel, drew from the writings of Gandhi in the development of their own theories about nonviolence.

- Former President of South Africa Nelson Mandela, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Steve Biko, and Aung San Suu Kyi all are believed to have been influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. In fact, in his early years, Mandela was a follower of Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent resistance.

- European author Romain Rolland too discussed Gandhi in his 1924 book Mahatma Gandhi and Brazillian feminist Maria Lacerda de Moura too wrote about Gandhi in her work on pacifism.

- The influence of Gandhi was also seen in European physicist Albert Einstein, who called Gandhi a role model for future generations. Einstein even would go on to credit Gandhi with having created a new and humane means for the liberation war of a country that was oppressed.

- Former US President Barack Obama too spoke about the Gandhian influence in 2009 when on reply to a question "Who was the one person, dead or alive, that you would choose to dine with?" he referred to Mahatma Gandhi.

- Gandhi's best influence as a world leader can be seen in the fact that the International Day of Non-Violence is observed on 2 October, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi.

Relevance of Gandhi today

⊙ **Truth, the core value of Gandhian philosophy** – Gandhiji believed that **truth empowers an individual** whereas **lies weaken a person from within**. This principle of **truthfulness to self and to the world is essential for people** in the current context to excel in future life.

⊙ **Mahatma's teachings of non-violence and compassion –** Amidst rising violence, extremism, inequity, poverty, and disparity, there is continuous relevance of Gandhi, and **the ideas of non-violence, kindness, compassion and the world as one community are essen**tials in the current context for a peaceful and prosperous world.

⊙ **Gandhiji's secularist approach -** The secular ideologies of Gandhiji are not only there in Indian constitution but also **there in Indian society as a core value system**. That is why so many people of **diverse religions coexist in India. Tolerance** in the society helps in neutralizing the ethnocentric bias in the globe that is taking place day by day on the basis of religion, caste, ethnicity and region etc.

⊙ **Gandhian idea of decentralization of power –** It has been implemented in democracies through empowered local self-governments at grass root level. Indian government, for instance, have implemented local self-government by adopting Panchayati Raj and Municipality system in rural and urban areas respectively.

⊙ **Gandhian philosophy of Socialism -** It aspires for a classless society with no poverty, no hunger, no unemployment and education and health for all. These Gandhian ideologies have become the lighthouse for Indian policy makers over the years.

➤ Starting from poverty alleviation to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and universal health care (Ayushman Bharat) to skill India programs everywhere the core inspiration comes from Gandhism.

➤ National food security act of India to Obamacare policy of the United States of America Gandhian concept of socialism holds the key as a guiding principle.

⊙ **Gandhiji's emphasis upon cleanliness or Swacchta -** He used to say- 'Swacchta Hin Seva'.

➤ The Swacchta Bharat Abhiyaan, the biggest cleanliness drive of India, is to fulfill the dream of Bapu by making India clean.

➤ This cleanliness drive is more than physical cleanliness as Gandhiji used to emphasize upon the internal cleanliness of the individual.

➤ Thus, along with clean roads, toilets for a clean India we require a corruption free society with greater level of transparency and accountability too.

⊙ **Gandhian idea of self-sustenance and sustainable development** – This philosophy is behind all the climate deals, environmental conservation treaties and sustainable development goals of the UN as the world whirls under the burden of global warming, climate change and resource crunch.

⊙ **Ethical and Behavioural part of Gandhianism -** It has much significance today because society is witnessing the degradation of values.

➤ Gandhian virtues of self-control are much needed in **a materialistic world driven by the desire to achieve and acquire more**. Societal values have degraded to such an extent that people don't hesitate to kill someone for the gratification of their own needs.

➤ **Respect for women** is one of the major ideas of Gandhian philosophy and the world is witnessing the increased level of violence, subjugation women face nowadays in society. Gandhian dream of a safe country necessities safety for women and that will come from the virtue of self-control.

➤ Other moral qualities of Gandhiji like **punctuality, duty boundness and honesty etc.** have to be the essence of administration for good governance and perfect service delivery to the last person standing in the queue as proposed by the **antodaya philosophy of Gandhiji.**

⊙ **Perspectives and popularity -** Gandhi was a prolific writer tackling subjects as wide-ranging as **secularism, satyagraha, trusteeship, capital, labour, politics, money, fitness, industrialization, clothing, food and fasting**.

➤ Experts from India and the world provide perspectives on different aspects of the Mahatma's life, message, ideas and politics.

➤ Even data from Google and Wikipedia reveals that in India and the world, Gandhi remains relevant and more popular than even current political leaders.

⊙ CONLCUSION

⊙ The name of Mahatma Gandhi transcends the bounds of race, religion and nation- states, and has emerged as the prophetic voice of the 21st century. He is remembered for his passionate adherence to the practice of non-violence and his supreme humanism. Gandhiji's political contributions offered us Independence but his ideologies enlighten India as well as the world even today after so many years.

📑 Practice Question

⊙ **Mahatma Gandhi is an Indian Ambassador in the world even after his death. In the light of this statement analyze the relevance of Gandhian Philosophy in the present world.**

ALL ABOUT MODEL TENANCY ACT 2019

CONTEXT

- **After several years in the making, a draft of the Model Tenancy Act, 2019, was released by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs**

⊙ BACKGROUND

- The existing rent control laws are restricting the growth of the rental housing segment and discourage the landowners from renting out their vacant premises.

- Policy states that transparency must be brought into the housing sector by fixing the accountabilities of landlords and tenants to promote rental housing at a time when the government is chasing its Housing-For-All-By-2022 target.

- The policy is not binding on states/UTs since land is a state subject under the Indian Constitution. The policy also does not have any retrospective effect. It means existing rental contracts remain outside the purview of the policy.

⊙ ANALYSIS

Key features of the act

- The new draft Model Tenancy Act, 2019 aims to cap security deposits at two months' rent for housing and one month's rent for other properties. However, this cap may hurt landlords in cities where much larger security deposits have been the norm. A two-month security deposit will also not be enough to compensate the landlord if significant damage has been done to the property.

- The Act seeks to penalize recalcitrant tenants for refusing to move out of their rental properties after the agreed-upon rental period expires. The landlord will be able to claim double of the monthly rent for two months and four times of the monthly rent after that as compensation.

- The Act stipulates that a landlord cannot refuse to provide essential utilities and access to common facilities. This has been a fairly common grouse of tenants in the past.

- The landlord will also not be able to increase the rent without giving at least three months' notice to the tenant, and cannot increase rent in the middle of a rental term.

- Once this Model Act comes into force, no person will be able to let or take on rent any premises except by an agreement in writing.

- Within 2 months of executing the rental agreement, it will be mandatory for both landlords and tenants to intimate to the Rent Authority about this tenancy agreement. The Rent Authority, within 7 days, will issue a unique identification number to both the parties.

- After the commencement of this Model Act, a tenant without the prior consent in writing of the landowner won't be able to sublet whole or part of the premises held by him, or transfer or assign his rights in the tenancy agreement or any part thereof.

- The terms of agreement executed between a landlord and his tenant will be binding upon their successors in the event of the death of the landowner or tenant. In such a case, their successors will have the same rights and obligations, as agreed in the tenancy agreement, for the remaining period of tenancy.

Changes Proposed in the Model Tenancy Act, 2019 and their impacts

- **Rent authority:** Currently, rent agreements are registered at the sub-registrar's office. In order to bring transparency, fix accountability and promote fairness in the rental housing segment, the policy proposes setting up of a rent authority.

  The impact: So far, there is no official data source to analyse data related to rental real estate. This informality is the key reason why this housing segment, despite its huge potential, remains largely untapped. When landlords and tenants have a common platform to refer to understand the market dynamics, the rental housing segment would slowly march towards transparency and a formal setup. Landlords won't be able to set rent arbitrarily; tenants will have a clearer understanding of what they need to pay for what.

- **Rent courts/rent tribunals:** The policy envisages setting up of rent courts/rent tribunals to hear disputes. So far, landlords/tenants have to move civil courts in case of contention. So in case of an issue, the parties concerned must first approach the rent authority. In case they are not satisfied by the verdict, they could move rent court/rent tribunal within 30 days after the order is passed. These courts are liable to pass an order within 60 days of appeal.

The impact: India's lower courts are overburdened which leads to contending parties finding no relief for years. A segment-specific court would mean grievance redressal mechanism would work efficiently. This would generate in landlords the confidence to let out their units, which they otherwise shy away from, fearing squatting and other such unfavourable consequences.

- **Cap on security deposit:** Landlords, says the policy, cannot ask for more than two months' rent as security deposit. In case the terms of the rent agreement states that the tenant is liable to bear the expenses of maintaining the property, the landlord can deduct money from this deposit in case the tenant fails to make the payment when he vacates the premises.

  The impact: In cities such as Mumbai and Bengaluru, landlords demand the tenant's deposit at least a year's rent as a security deposit. This makes renting almost impossible for a large section of the working population. A cap on security deposits would make a correction in these markets, where housing is expensive and renting is not cheap either. Tenants in other big cities would benefit equally from the more.

- **Cap on rent revision:** If a rent agreement is created for a specific period, landlords will not be able to increase the rent in between. However, tenants must be careful while the terms and conditions of the agreement are set. If a provision expressly states that the landlord can hike the rent as he deems fit, they would be within their right to do so. Also, the landlord will have to give a written notice three months in advance before revising rent.

  The impact: Arbitrary rent hiked by landlords is quite common in Indian rental real estate. A provision that limits landlords' right in this regard would benefit the tenants immensely.

- **Cap on entering premises:** The policy states that the landlord will have to give a 24-hour written notice this could be done through electronic mediums, too; this means the landlord can send a message before entering the premises. They would also need a valid reason to explain the short intrusion. Also, they can't visit the premises before 7 in the morning and after 8 at night.

  The impact: Landlords consider themselves the master of their dwelling even if they are generating income by letting it out. They often march in and out as they please, bothering tenants a great deal. This is a key reason why people are driven to change rented homes time and again. This issue certainly begged addressing.

- **Penalty on overstay:** In case a tenant continues to live in the rented accommodation after the tenure of the rent period has expired, they will have to pay the landlord twice the monthly rent for two months and four times the monthly rent in the months thereafter. Landlord can also move court if the tenant refuses to vacate the premises for two months after the rent tenure is over.

  The impact: Squatting by tenants is the key reason why landlords are wary of letting their unoccupied property. Since the policy sets monetary penalty for squatting, landlords will have greater confidence. This way, supply of rental housing will see a phenomenal growth. This would consequently lead to price correction.

- **Maintenance responsibility:** The Act says landlords and tenants are equally responsible for maintaining the premises unless the rent agreement sets specific conditions over the matter. In case the unit is not fit for habitation because no regular maintenance has been carried out, the tenant would be within his right to leave it after serving a 15-day notice period.

  The impact: Since maintenance has been a grey area, a lot many disputes arose between the two parties over this issue. This term would afford them better clarity, leaving little scope for manipulation by either party.

📑 Practice Question

- Critically analyze the impacts of draft model Tenancy Act, 2019.

According to census 2011, 1.1 Crore houses are lying vacant

if filled, this could heavily complement the target of 'Housing for all' by 2022

There are also many issues related to tenancy faced by both the tenants and the landlords

The Model Act tries to address these issues and provides a balance between the rights and benefits of both owners and tenants

GSSCORE
Learning Aid

Once formalised, the Model Act can be used by state governments to enact a law related to 'tenancy' for their respective jurisdictions as 'land' is a state subject

This also poses a challenge as the states may not follow basic guidelines and dilute the model provisions…

Model Tenancy Act, 2019
CONTEXT
After several years in the making, a draft of the Model Tenancy Act, 2019, was released by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs

POSITIVE MOVES

■ **Two months'** rent as security deposit for residential properties

■ **Property owner** has to give three months' notice before increasing rent

■ **Tenant has** to agree/give notice to owner. Otherwise, he shall be deemed to have accepted the rent increase

■ **After termination** of tenancy contract, a tenant will be charged double the rent in the first two months, and four times thereafter, if he does not vacate

■ **Rent Authority,** Rent Court and Rent Tribunal to be to set up to settle cases within 60 days

In metros cities, many landlords demand at least a year's rent as a security deposit
↓
This makes renting almost impossible for a large section of the working population
↓
A cap on security deposits would make a correction in these markets, where housing is expensive and renting is not cheap either

In order to bring transparency, the policy proposes setting up of a **rent authority** where all future tenancies will have to be registered
↓
When landlords and tenants have a common platform to refer to understand the market dynamics, the rental housing segment would slowly march towards transparency and a formal setup

Arbitrary rent hiked by landlords is quite common in Indian rental real estate
↓
A provision that limits landlords' right in this regard would benefit the tenants immensely

Squatting by tenants is the key reason why landlords are wary of letting their unoccupied property
↓
Since the policy sets monetary penalty for squatting, landlords will have greater confidence.
↓
This way, supply of rental housing will see a phenomenal growth. This would consequently lead to price correction
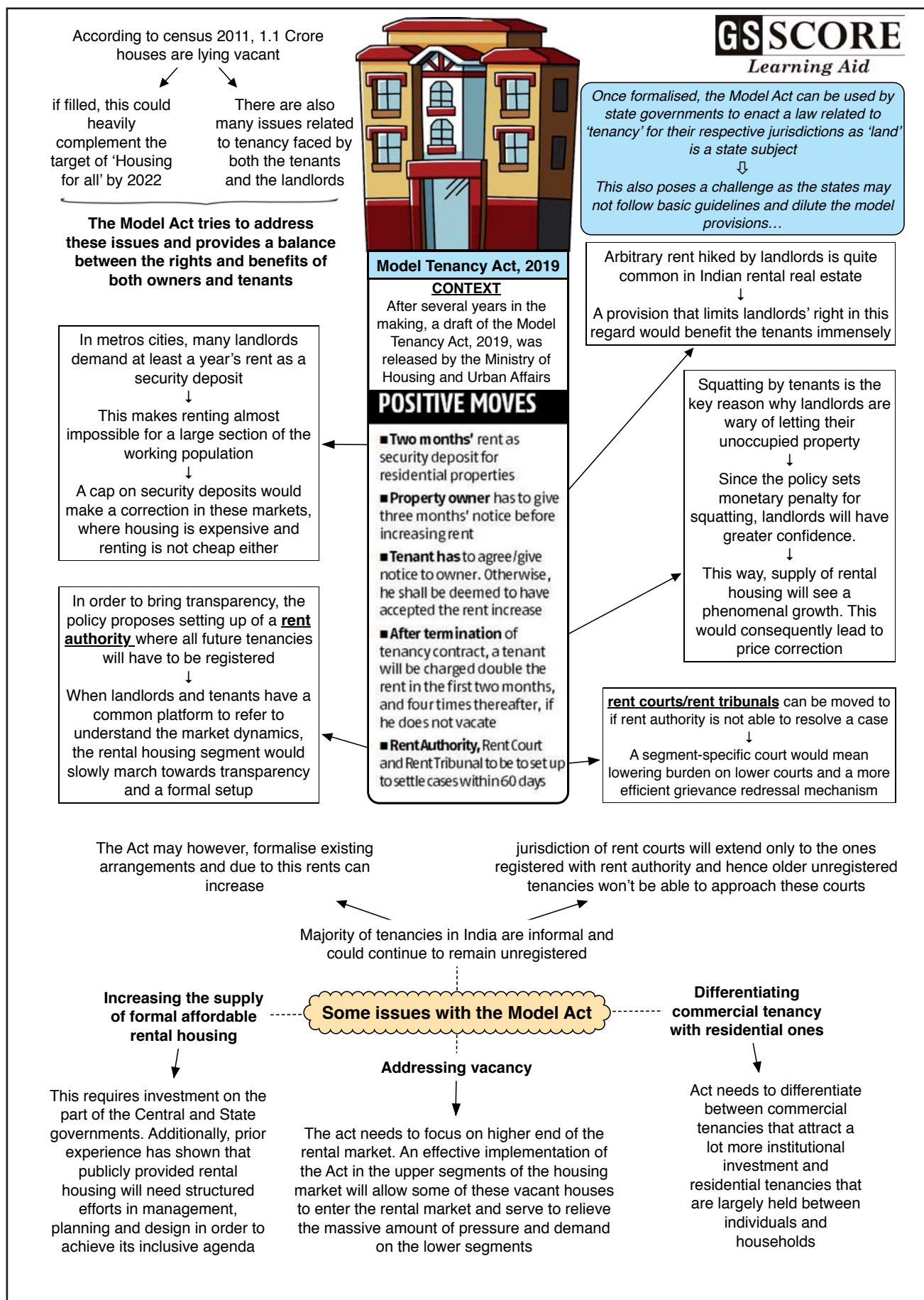
rent courts/rent tribunals can be moved to if rent authority is not able to resolve a case
↓
A segment-specific court would mean lowering burden on lower courts and a more efficient grievance redressal mechanism

The Act may however, formalise existing arrangements and due to this rents can increase

jurisdiction of rent courts will extend only to the ones registered with rent authority and hence older unregistered tenancies won't be able to approach these courts

Majority of tenancies in India are informal and could continue to remain unregistered

Increasing the supply of formal affordable rental housing

Some issues with the Model Act

Differentiating commercial tenancy with residential ones

Addressing vacancy

This requires investment on the part of the Central and State governments. Additionally, prior experience has shown that publicly provided rental housing will need structured efforts in management, planning and design in order to achieve its inclusive agenda

The act needs to focus on higher end of the rental market. An effective implementation of the Act in the upper segments of the housing market will allow some of these vacant houses to enter the rental market and serve to relieve the massive amount of pressure and demand on the lower segments

Act needs to differentiate between commercial tenancies that attract a lot more institutional investment and residential tenancies that are largely held between individuals and households

NAGA PEACE ACCORD: DILEMMA FOR THE REST OF INDIA'S NORTHEAST

CONTEXT

- The NSCN (IM), the largest Naga group, is unwilling to sign an accord with the Centre without a separate Naga flag and constitution.

⊙ BACKGROUND:

Who are Naga's?

'Naga' is a generic term which refers to a group of over 30 tribes inhabiting not only the boundaries along and within Nagaland, but also some hilly regions of the adjoining states of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh, and some parts of the bordering nation, Myanmar.

History of Naga resurgence:

- **Inner Line Permit**: The British were not keen to extend their empire into the Naga Hills due to the hostile attitude of the hill tribes, who always took the British as an occupation force out to control the freedom of the Nagas and interfere with their distinct cultural identity. In the given situation, the British found it convenient to protect them with the Inner Line Permits.

- Thereafter, the spread of Christianity and establishment of modern political, administrative, and educational institutions led to an educated, elite class amongst the Nagas.

- In 1918, Nagas, with the help of the British officials, formed the Naga Club.

- In 1935, the then Government of India Act designated the Naga Hill districts as "excluded areas" wherein the Nagas could continue to maintain their traditions, culture and lifestyle with little interference from the federal or provincial governments. This ultimately led to the formation of the Naga National Council in 1946.

- A nine-Point Agreement was signed in June 1947 between the Naga leaders and Akbar Hydari, then Governor of Assam, wherein it was agreed that, ten years after the signing of the agreement, the Nagas would be free to decide their own future.

- The Nagas even boycotted the first general elections of independent India in 1952 on expected lines.

- In 1956, the Naga militants, under the leadership of Phizo, created a secret government known as the Naga Federal Government (NFG) with around 1,500 armed guerrilla fighters.

- This started the so-called 'freedom struggle for Greater Nagaland better known as 'Nagalim'.

- The Indian government, in a reactive approach, first, sent in the Army to control insurrections and, subsequently, Nagaland was given the status of an Indian state in 1962, with the existing boundaries of the state.

Due to this kind of resurgence the Naga insurgency is referred as the mother of all insurgencies in the north-eastern states.
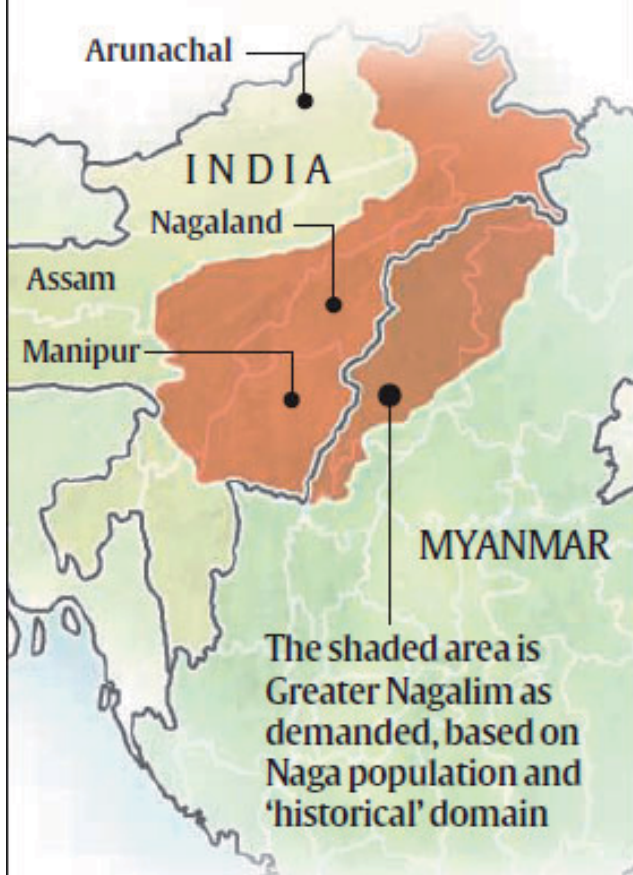
⊙ ANALYSIS:

Why the complexities of the Nagaland problem have kept peace at bay for a long time?

- The government itself never had a long-term vision to delve into this issue in an integrated manner. The governments have been buying time to tire out and disintegrate the various factions of the Naga movement.

- **Wrong approach of government:** All the governments of the day have attempted to solve the problem in isolation, taking one north-eastern state at a time, not realising that while each of the respective state's insurgency had its own character and start point.

- **State politics:**

  ➤ The Indian Constitution provides for a federal structure, however, when the Centre intervenes with additional security forces, including the Army, the onus shifts from the state to the central government. This has been the one single factor that has allowed the states to play politics with the peace processes in the state and shift the blame for the failure on the Centre, thus, causing inordinate delays in finding peace in the region time and again.

  ➤ In the negotiations for the peace processes, the states seem to have distanced themselves from success or failure, denying their own stakes in normalising the situation.

- **Extension of ceasefire agreements:** A number of ceasefire agreements that were once worked out

with the various insurgent groups, continue to get extended indefinitely, thereby chasing the now seemingly elusive peace.

WHAT NSCN-IM WANTS

Demand for Greater Nagalim includes all of Nagaland and parts of Assam, Arunachal, Manipur — and Myanmar

Arunachal

INDIA

Nagaland

Assam

Manipur

MYANMAR

The shaded area is Greater Nagalim as demanded, based on Naga population and 'historical' domain

What is Naga Peace accord 2015?

- It is the accord signed in August 2015 by the Government of India and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) to end the insurgency.

- The framework agreement is based on the "unique" history of Nagas and recognising the universal principle that in a democracy sovereignty lies with the people.

- NSCN given up its demand for 'Greater Nagaland' and vowed allegiance to the constitution of India.

- The details of the accord are yet to come in public domain.

Main challenges to the Naga Naga Peace accord 2015:

- Defining of Greater Nagaland, called 'Nagalim'.

- Integration of adjoining Naga inhibited areas.

- Unity amongst all Naga groups, despite the NSCN (IM) being the strongest and the lead group.

- Building up of greater confidence among the Naga groups, the state government and the Centre.

The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN):

- It is a Naga nationalist separatist group operating mainly in Northeast India, with minor activities in northwest Myanmar (Burma).

- The main goal of the organisation is to establish a sovereign Naga state, "Nagalim".

- There are two major factions of NSCN

  ➤ **NSCN (K),** led by S. S. Khaplang.

  ➤ **NSCN (I-M),** led by Isak Chishi Swu and Thuingaleng Muivah.

What should be the government's Policy Prescription and Action Plan?

- Surrendering arms and weapons as a pre-condition for peace talks.

- No suspension of operations by the security forces supported by subsistence allowance by the government.

- A comprehensive and thought through rehabilitation package that must cater to, and be in sync with, the ground realities and not comprise half-baked politically-expedient media grabbing shows.

- Enhancing the capacity and capabilities of the state security apparatus, including state armed police forces to deal with these groups so that the Army is pulled out of all these states, and also relieves the states from the AFSPA.

- Develop these states as viable self-sustaining economic entities and not keep them dependent entirely upon central aid packages to the tune of over 90 percent dependency, as is the case currently.

- There is a need to follow a comprehensive and all-inclusive developmental model for these states with better accountability of the 'fund flow,' since large amounts of funds are allotted by the central government due to the financial non-viability of these states.

- Connectivity to the mainland and a greater push for development of the border areas will go a long way in ensuring better assimilation of the northeast and its people.

○ Government need to engage more with the India's immediate neighbours, particularly Bhutan and Bangladesh.

◉ WAY FORWARD:

○ It needs to be accepted that regardless of the government in power at the Centre, the consistent Indian policy for conflict resolution in the northeast has been one of buying time through talks. Most of these talks have lacked good governance models.

○ An equally pressing reality is that New Delhi, for decades, has not really known the ground realities of the northeast despite its best efforts – resulting in the absence of economic viability combining with an all-inclusive model of development for this region. A huge amount of infrastructure, particularly road connectivity and investments, especially in the power sector are the needs of the hour.

○ For far too long, India has protected these areas with Inner Line Permits, and it is time to open them up and allow the people of the region to enjoy the fruits of modern amenities.

○ The northeast is full of natural resources that could be put to optimum usage for the betterment of the native people's lives and will aid in bridging this area to connect India to its eastern and south eastern neighbours even though considerable time has been lost in keeping the insurgency in the northeast in a state of suspended animation.

📄 Practice Question

○ **Why the complexities of Nagaland problem have kept peace at bay for a long time? What should be the governments action plan to tackle this issue?**

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Naga Peace Accord : Dilemma for the Rest of India's NorthEast

Context

The Church has been arguing that symbols are integral to the identity of the Nagas and the identity would not be safe without them

The NSCN (IM), the largest Naga group, is unwilling to sign an accord with the Centre without a separate Naga flag and constitution

Naga groups are also demanding a separate Naga flag

It has been reported that the government and Nagas have not been able to conclude negotiations due to a tough stand taken by the Naga groups on some of the 'symbolic' issues.

A timeline of the issue

1918: Naga Club formed. Seeds of Naga nationalism sown	Agreement interpreted as offer for sovereignty by NNC
1946: Naga National Council (NNC) born under the leadership of A.Z. Phizo	1955: NNC begins armed insurgency. Delhi imposes Assam Disturbed Areas' Act
August 14, 1947: NNC declares independence	1958: AFSPA comes into force
June 1947: Haidari	1963: Nagaland born

1964: Nagaland Peace Mission created, ceasefire signed

1975: Shillong Accord signed, calls for unconditional ceasefire, termed a 'complete sellout'

1980: National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) formed

1988: NSCN splits into NSCN (K) and NSCN (I-M)

1997: NSCN (I-M) signs ceasefire

2001: NSCN (K) signs ceasefire

March 2015: NSCN (K) breaks ceasefire

August 2015: Naga peace accord signed

A.Z. Phizo

Background

In 1975, Shillong Accord was signed wherein NNC accepted the Indian Constitution

To oppose this, NSCN was formed in 1980 which later split into NSCN-K and NSCN-IM with latter emerging as most dominant

NSCN-IM agreed to a ceasefire in 1997 and peace talks were held leading eventually to the Naga Peace Accord in 2015

What are the broad contours of the agreement ?

The framework agreement is based on the "unique" history of Nagas and recognising the universal principle that in a democracy sovereignty lies with the people

NSCN gave up its demand for 'Greater Nagaland' and vowed allegiance to the constitution of India

There was a broad understanding on a settlement within the Indian constitutional framework, with due regard to the uniqueness of Naga history and tradition

(However, the details of the accord are yet to come in public domain)

What makes the issue complex ?

The other states are wary of this and this makes the situation sensitive

NSCN-IM demands a "Greater Nagalim" that also includes parts of bordering states

There are groups within Nagaland that have demand for a state separate from that of NSCN-IM

Maximum autonomy may be accorded in ethnic, cultural and developmental realms to autonomous councils for all Naga areas in Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and even Assam, through suitable amendment to the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

Unification of Naga-inhabited areas without disturbing the existing boundaries of the northeastern states (Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh) is viewed as a viable option

What can be done ?

Reckoning the unique history and legacy of the Nagas, a tribal cultural collective body could be constituted under an act of parliament.

The government of Myanmar will have to be on board the Naga settlement, at least tacitly.

Bottomline

There can be no solution without integration of Nagas. But it would have to be achieved through a democratic process. It is imperative that prior to finalisation of any 'framework agreement', care is taken to see that there is an across the board acceptance of 'fundamental principles' and 'objective necessities'.

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE: A CHALLENGING DEVELOPMENT ISSUE

CONTEXT

● A woman's menstrual health is crucial to her well-being and also to the well-being of her family and community. But too often — especially in the developing world — mind-sets, customs and institutional biases prevent women from getting the menstrual health care they need. Menstrual hygiene continues to be amongst the most challenging development issues today.

◉ BACKGROUND

- Menstruation is a natural, normal biological process experienced by all adolescent girls and women, yet it is not spoken about openly causing unnecessary embarrassment and shame.

- India's 113 million adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable at the onset of menarche. At this time they need a safe environment that offers protection and guidance to ensure their basic health, well-being and educational opportunity is realised.

- Assessments show that reproductive tract infections are 70 per cent more common among women who use unhygienic materials during menstruation.

- Lack of a separate and usable girl's toilet in schools and a toilet at home leaves adolescent girls and women to face the indignity of open defecation.

- The taboo to talk about "periods" and lack of girls toilets in schools leads to an astounding 30 per cent drop out of girls upon reaching puberty.

◉ ANALYSIS

Infrastructural Challenges

- At least 500 million women and girls globally lack adequate facilities for menstrual hygiene management (MHM).

- Inadequate WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) facilities, particularly in public places, such as in schools, workplaces or health centers, can pose a major obstacle to women and girls.

- The lack of separate toilets with doors that can be safely closed, or the unavailability of means to dispose of used sanitary pads and water to wash hands, means that women and girls face challenges in maintaining their menstrual hygiene in a private, safe and dignified manner.

Challenges due to social norms and beliefs

- Even today in many families freedom of women continues to be in the hands of patriarchal discourse and thus there has not been any significant change in people's attitudes and mentality towards menstruation.

- In many cultures, **menstruating women are considered impure** and are systematically **excluded** from participating in every-day activities, such as education, employment, and cultural and religious practices.

- The taboos and stigmas attached to menstruation lead to an overall culture of silence around the topic, **resulting in limited information** on menstruation and menstrual hygiene. Even mothers are reluctant to talk about this topic with their daughters and many of them lack scientific knowledge on puberty and menstruation.

Impacts due to inadequate menstrual hygiene management (MHM)

- A **recent World Bank Group (WBG) study** illustrated how a disregard of menstrual hygiene **needs serves to entrench the lower status of women and girls.**

- It brings with it rules, restrictions, isolation and changed expectations from the girls by the society. This changed attitude towards girls such as restrictions on their self-expressions, schooling, mobility and freedom has far reaching consequences on the mind-set of women.

- A growing body of evidence shows that girls' inability to manage their menstrual hygiene in schools, **results in school absenteeism**, which in turn, has **severe economic costs on their lives and on the country.**

- The misinformation on menstrual hygiene management can have ramifications on the health and dignity of girls and women.

Steps taken by government and civil society to address the problem

- Over the last few years, the issue of menstrual hygiene has been addressed by the government, NGOs and corporates **under their CSR activities**. Eco-friendly and affordable sanitary napkins are catching on in the country.

- The **Menstrual Hygiene Management Guideline** is issued by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation to support all adolescent girls and women. It outlines what needs to be done by state governments, district administrations, engineers and technical experts in line departments; and school head teachers and teachers.

- **Menstrual Hygiene for Adolescent girls Schemes** is supported by Government of India under which**, funds are provided to States/UTs through National Health Mission** for decentralized procurement of sanitary napkins packs for provision primarily to rural adolescent girls at subsidized rates as per proposals received from the States and UTs in their Programme Implementation Plans. It encompasses the following:

    ➤ Increasing awareness among adolescent girls on Menstrual Hygiene

    ➤ Improving access to and use of high quality sanitary napkins by adolescent girls in rural areas.

    ➤ Ensuring safe disposal of Sanitary Napkins in an environmentally friendly manner.

    ➤ Provision of funds to ASHAs to hold monthly meeting with adolescents to discuss issues related to menstrual hygiene.

- A Member of Parliament is asking for 100% exemption on the production and distribution of health-friendly sanitary napkins.

- Movies like PadMan and #YesIBleed campaign are causing awareness in the masses about this social taboo.

- NGO Humanify Foundation has started a nationwide campaign Paavni to make people aware about menstrual health and hygiene. It also provides information to dispel myths and taboos surrounding this issue

Menstrual Waste: A rising problem

- India has 12.3 billion disposable sanitary napkins to take care of every year, majority of which are not biodegradable / compostable.

- Sanitary waste disposal has become an increasing problem in India as the **plastic used in disposable sanitary napkins** are not bio-degradable and lead to health and environmental hazards.

- Unorganised ways of municipal solid waste management and poor community collection, disposal and transportation networks in the cities and villages have further enhanced the problem.

- According to the MHAI, **three main concerns** are central to management of this largely non-compostable menstrual waste in India

➤ Paucity of appropriate disposal and treatment options leading to unsafe management of the waste.

➤ Many girls and women lack access to those waste management options that exist due to their limited ability to negotiate for solutions because of a continued culture of silence associated with menstruation.

➤ Lack of access to disposal options may lead girls and women using otherwise hygienic products in an unhygienic manner (e.g., use a pad for longer than it should be).

Thus it is important to consider safe menstrual hygiene disposal options and ensure that girls and female teachers know how to use them. The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation along with the Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs efforts should be directed to offer safe and appropriate waste management solutions.

⊙ WAY FORWARD

Human Rights Watch and WASH United recommend that groups that provide services to women evaluate their programs to determine whether a woman or girl has:

- Adequate, acceptable, and affordable menstrual management materials;

- Access to adequate facilities, sanitation, infrastructure, and supplies to enable women and girls to change and dispose of menstrual materials.

- Knowledge of the process of menstruation and of options available for menstrual hygiene management.

Practitioners engaged in programming or advocacy related to menstrual management should also:

- Have an awareness of stigma and harmful practices related to menstruation in the specific cultural context where they are working;

- Support efforts to change harmful cultural norms and practices that stigmatize menstruation and menstruating women and girls;

- Address discrimination that affects the ability to deal with menstruation, including for women and girls with disabilities, LBTI and gender non-conforming people, and other at-risk populations.

- Be aware of and incorporate human rights principles in their programming and advocacy, including the right to participate in decision-making and to get information.

📄 Practice Question

- **Menstrual hygiene is one of the neglected areas of women's health. Critically analyze the steps taken by Government to address the problem.**
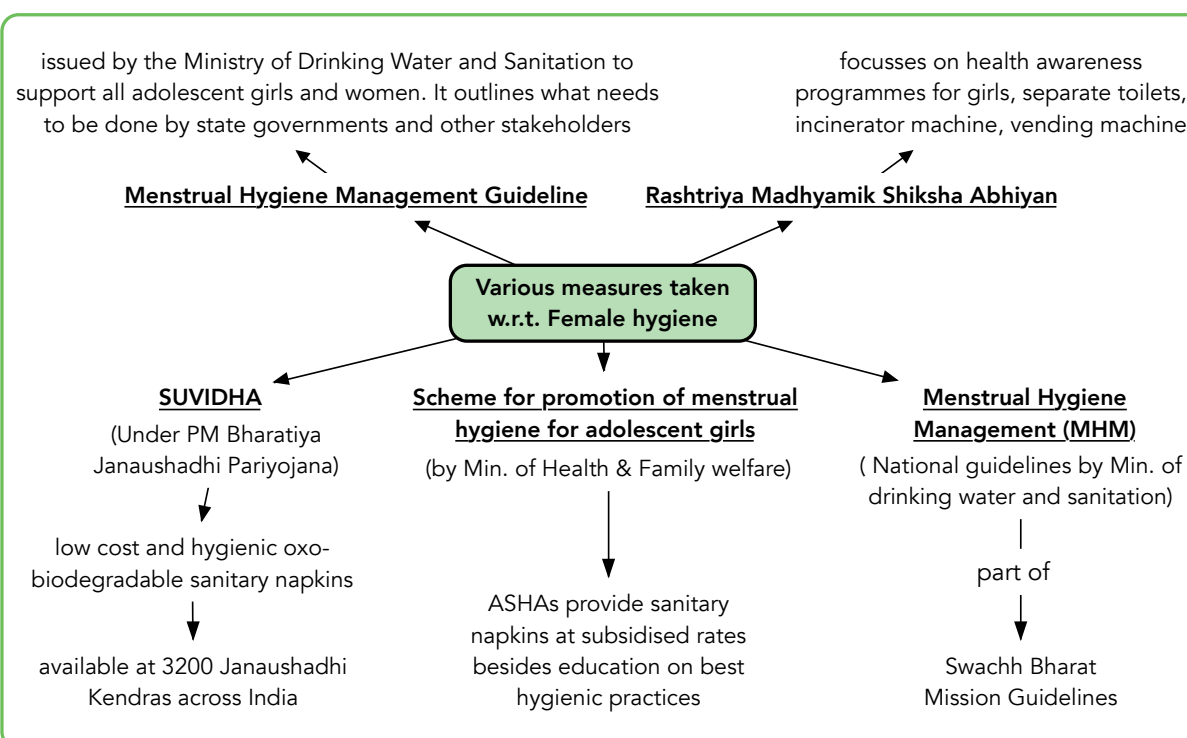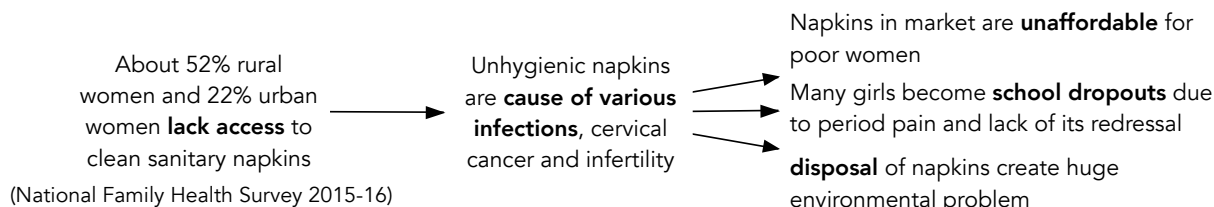
Menstrual Hygiene : A challenging development issue

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Learning Aid

Context

A woman's menstrual health is crucial to her well-being and also to the well-being of her family and community. But too often - especially in the developing world - mind-sets, customs and institutional biases prevent women from getting the menstrual health care they need making this one of the most challenging development issues today

Concerns

About 52% rural women and 22% urban women **lack access** to clean sanitary napkins

(National Family Health Survey 2015-16)

→ Unhygienic napkins are **cause of various infections**, cervical cancer and infertility →

Napkins in market are **unaffordable** for poor women

Many girls become **school dropouts** due to period pain and lack of its redressal

disposal of napkins create huge environmental problem

---

issued by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation to support all adolescent girls and women. It outlines what needs to be done by state governments and other stakeholders

focusses on health awareness programmes for girls, separate toilets, incinerator machine, vending machine

Menstrual Hygiene Management Guideline

Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan

Various measures taken w.r.t. Female hygiene

SUVIDHA

(Under PM Bharatiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana)

↓

low cost and hygienic oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins

↓

available at 3200 Janaushadhi Kendras across India

Scheme for promotion of menstrual hygiene for adolescent girls

(by Min. of Health & Family welfare)

↓

ASHAs provide sanitary napkins at subsidised rates besides education on best hygienic practices

Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM)

(National guidelines by Min. of drinking water and sanitation)

|

part of

↓

Swachh Bharat Mission Guidelines

Coordination on various schemes and campaigns need to be heightened

Taxes on sanitary pads could be reduced or completely done away with

Disposal solutions for menstrual waste should be further explored

Way Ahead

The issue of menstruation should be an **integral part of the education system** and societal awareness campaigns

Promoting health and hygiene amongst adolescent girls will also lead to their **higher retention in schools**

Bottomline

If girls and women are to live healthy and productive lives, with dignity, menstrual hygiene is a priority. In many areas, there is complete neglect of menstrual hygiene due to low awareness levels and lack of access to sanitary products. The various programmes for promotion of Menstrual Hygiene combining health education for adolescent girls, providing a regular supply of sanitary napkins and enabling other sanitation measures such as access to water and toilets in schools can go a long way in women empowerment if implemented well.

SECTION: B
(PRELIMS)
CURRENT AFFAIRS

# THE ANCIENT PORT TOWN OF MAMALLAPURAM

⊙ **CONTEXT**

The ancient port town of Mamallapuram is selected for the scheduled visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping during a two-day second India-China informal summit from October 11.

⊙ **ABOUT**

- **First India-China informal summit:** It was held in Wuhan, China on April 27-28, 2018, to exchange views on overarching issues of bilateral and global importance, and to elaborate their respective visions and priorities for national development in the context of the current and future international situation.

About Mamallapuram:

- Mahabalipuram or Mamallapuram is a historic city and UNESCO World Heritage site in the state of Tamil Nadu.

- Mahabalipuram was the second capital of the Pallavas who ruled Kanchipuram. Formerly, mahabalipuram was known and called as Mamallapuram.

- It was during the reign of King Narasimha Varman I(630 - 668AD), the name Mahabalipuram was changed. King Narasimha Varman I was a great and valiant warrior. He was given the title Mamalla which means 'the great wrestler' so the name was converted from Mahabalipuram to Mamallapuram considering the great king and his achievements.

- During the reign of the Pallava dynasty, between the 3rd century CE and 7th century CE, it became an important centre of art, architecture and literature.

- Mahabalipuram was already a thriving sea port on the Bay of Bengal before this time. A significant amount of coins and other artefacts excavated from this region also indicate a pre-existing trade relation with the Romans even before it became a part of the Pallava Empire.
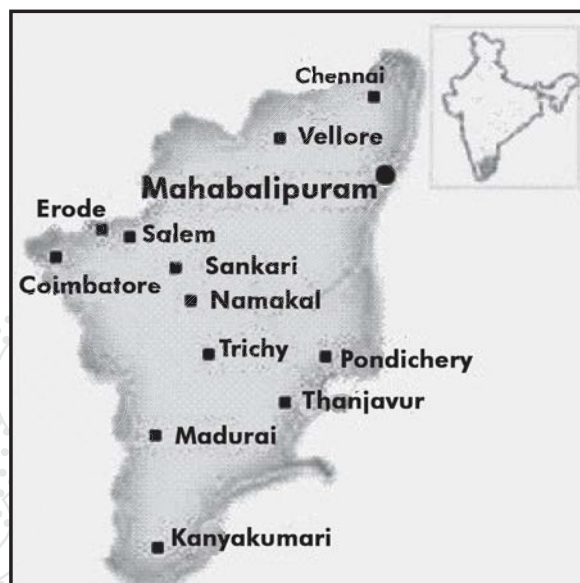
Art & Architectural Masterpieces at Mamallapuram:

- Shore Temple: The Shore Temple (built in 700–728 AD) is so named because it overlooks the shore of the Bay of Bengal. It is a structural temple, built with blocks of granite, dating from the 8th century AD. It was built during the reign of Narasimhavarman II. It is a remnant of a larger complex of temples and civil structures much of which lie under the depth of the sea now.

- Descent of the Ganges: It is alternatively known as Arjuna's Penance. Descent of the Ganges is a gigantic open air bas-relief sculpted out of pink granite. The dramatic relief sculpture narrates the tales from Indian epics such as the Mahabharata.

- Pancha Ratha: Pancha Ratha (five chariots) is an architectural ode to Mahabharata's five Pandava brothers Yudhistir, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, Sahadeva, and their wife Draupadi. Thematically and structurally, each ratha is significantly different from the other ones, but all of them were carved out of a long stone or monolith.

DIP IN GROWTH OF CORE SECTORS

⊙ **CONTEXT**   The growth of eight infrastructure sectors contracted 0.5 per cent in August, 2019 following broad-based deterioration in output.

⊙ **ABOUT**

- The index of eight core infrastructure industries declined 0.5% during August against the growth in July, according to government data.

- Production in five sectors, including electricity and cement, shrank.

- Output of coal (-8.6%), crude oil (-5.4%), natural gas (-3.9%), cement (-4.9%) and electricity (-2.9%) contracted in August, indicating a broad-based slowdown, while production of refinery products (2.6%), fertilizers (2.9%) and steel (5%) increased.

Core Industry sector

- Core industry can be defined as the main industry of the economy. In most countries, there is particular industry that seems to be backbone of all other industries and it qualifies to be the core industry. In India, there are eight core sectors comprising of coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity.

- The electricity has the maximum weight of 10.32% followed by Steel (6.68%), Petroleum Refinery (5.94%), Crude Oil production (5.22 %), Coal production (4.38 %), Cement (2.41%), Natural Gas production (1.71 %) and Fertilizer production (1.25%). These eight Core Industries comprise nearly 40% of weight of items included in Index of Industrial Production (IIP), which measures factory output.

Index of Industrial Production

- It is a monthly production index, which is also considered as lead indicator of the monthly industrial performance. It contains production and growth figures of eight core sectors.

- It is compiled by Central Statistic Organisation (CSO) under Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry based on monthly production information received from source agencies.

⊙ **CONCLUSION**

- Given that private final consumption expenditure growth declined to its slowest in 18 quarters, there are expectations that the RBI could go beyond the 25 basis point cut to support growth.

- Festival demand may push industrial growth.

- The government's decision to cut the corporate tax rate is expected to boost investment and consumption.

MADHYA PRADESH SET TO GET ITS SEVENTH TIGER RESERVE - RATAPANI TIGER RESERVE

⊙ **CONTEXT**   A committee set up by the state government to finalise contours of the core and buffer areas of the proposed reserve, to be carved out of the Ratapani wildlife sanctuary, has submitted its report.

⊙ **ABOUT**

- Recently declared the Tiger State of India, Madhya Pradesh is inching closer to getting its seventh tiger reserve — the Ratapani Tiger Reserve.

- Of the 823.065 sq km area of the existing sanctuary, 763.812 sq km has been redrawn as the core and the remaining 59.253 sq km will be the buffer area of the proposed reserve.

- While residents of Dantkhow village have been relocated, the process to relocate residents of three other villages is on.

- About 40 tigers live in the areas falling in the proposed reserve and it will be one of the bigger reserves in the state.

- The sanctuary is spread over Raisen and Sehore districts, but the tiger reserve will also include some part of the Bhopal forest division.

Ratapani Tiger Reserve

- Established in the year 1976, the Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary boasts a forest area of around 688 sq km – mainly comprising a beautiful teak forest.

- The Ratapani Tiger Reserve, located in the Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh, in Vindhya Range.

- Other tree species found here include bijasal, saj, tendu and khair.

- Although the tiger holds the position of top predator in the park, leopards, striped hyenas, jackals, Indian foxes and wild dogs also inhabit its forested tracts.

- Members of the deer family such as chausingha, chinkara, and barasingha are spotted often, and you can also expect to see herds of nilgai, the largest Indian antelope.

- Around 150 species of birds can be spotted here. Birders can expect to spot the Indian robin, white spotted fantail fly-catcher, crimson breasted barbet and the State Bird of MP – paradise flycatcher, amongst other species.

- Many rare migratory birds from Tibet, Nepal, Russia and Siberia also visit this sanctuary and are a great attraction.

- Dahod Dam, Ratapani Dam and Barna Dam are large water bodies inside the park and home to aquatic avifauna such as ducks, geese, cranes, storks and snipes. Among reptiles, pythons and crocodiles are also seen here.

NEW IPCC REPORT WARNS OF DIRE THREAT TO OCEAN

⊙ **CONTEXT**

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its special report underlined the dire changes taking place in oceans, glaciers and ice-deposits on land and sea.

⊙ **ABOUT**

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the apex referee for scientific evidence on the impact of global warming, in its 'Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate' found that over the 21st century, the ocean is projected to transition to unprecedented conditions with increased temperatures, further ocean acidification, marine heat waves and more frequent extreme El Niño and La Niña events.

- The report was prepared following an IPCC Panel decision in 2016 to determine the impact on the world's oceans and ice-covered regions.

- Rising seas are already threatening low-lying coastal areas that today are home to 680 million people, about 10 percent of the world's population.

- The Southern Ocean accounted for 35%–43% of the total heat gain in the upper 2,000 m global ocean between 1970 and 2017, and its share increased to 45%–62% between 2005 and 2017.

- Since the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report came out in 2013, scientists have learned a great deal about the impacts of absorbing atmospheric carbon dioxide on the oceans and their denizens, as well as in coastal areas. Unfortunately, the ocean has largely been left out of the discussion on climate.

Evidences of Impacts of Global warming on Oceans

- Since 1993, the rate of warming in the oceans has more than doubled. Melting of the two great ice sheets blanketing Greenland and West Antarctica is speeding up as well, accelerating sea level rise. And West Antarctica's glaciers may already be so unstable that they are past the point of no return.

- Warming ocean waters are yielding fewer fish and are fueling more intense, rainier tropical storms.

- Ocean heat waves are increasing, threatening corals and other sea life.

- Arctic sea ice continues to dwindle

Concerns for India

- Global Warming is a concern for all the nations in the world including India.

- A major impact is in the Hindu Kush Himalayan Regions. Floods will become more frequent and severe in the mountainous and downstream areas of the Indus, Ganges and Brahmaputra river basins, because of an increase in extreme precipitation events... the severity of flood events is expected to more than double towards the end of the century.

About IPCC

- Created in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

- Headquarter: Geneva

- Objective: To provide governments at all levels with scientific information that they can use to develop climate policies. IPCC reports are also a key input into international climate change negotiations.

- Composition: The IPCC is an organization of governments that are members of the United Nations or WMO. The IPCC currently has 195 members.

- IPCC Studies: Thousands of people from all over the world contribute to the work of the IPCC. For the assessment reports, IPCC scientists volunteer their time to assess the thousands of scientific papers published each year to provide a comprehensive summary of what is known about the drivers of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and how adaptation and mitigation can reduce those risks.

IPCC Reports

Reports	Year
First	1990
Second	1995
Third	2001
Fourth	2007
Fifth	2013

How to mitigate impacts of global warming on oceans?

- The ocean isn't just part of the problem; it should be a key part of the solution.

- The 1.5°C report was a key input used in negotiations at Katowice, Poland in 2018 for countries to commit themselves to capping global temperature rise to 1.5°C by the end of the century.

- Researchers find five ways to harness ocean resources to reduce or mitigate global greenhouse gas emissions

  ◉ Build offshore wind farms and other ocean-based renewable energy to shift away from dependence on fossil fuels;

  ◉ Eliminate carbon emissions from the shipping industry;

  ◉ Restore coastal ecosystems such as mangroves and salt marshes, which not only store carbon but also provide myriad benefits, including serving as buffers against tropical storms, filtering pollutants and providing habitat for fish and other wildlife;

  ◉ Harvest more ocean-based protein sources, which have a much lower carbon footprint than any land-based animal protein;

○ Store carbon in the seafloor, which theoretically has high potential for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, but also a lot of uncertainty in terms of its environmental impact.

⊙ **CONCLUSION**

- None of these potential solutions are new concepts, but there has been little political will to invest in the necessary research and development to move them forward.

- These actions may finally get some traction in December, when nations head to Santiago, Chile, for COP25, the annual meeting to review progress of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change.

- At the COP21 meeting in Paris in December 2015, 195 nations signed on to the 2015 Paris climate agreement, pledging to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions enough to keep global warming to "well below" 2 degrees C above preindustrial times. The United States was one of the signing nations, but President Donald Trump has said he plans to withdraw the country from the accord in 2020

DELAYED WITHDRAWAL OF MONSOON

⊙ **CONTEXT**

The Monsoon season of 2019 officially ended with September, but rainfall has continued in several parts of the country which indicates the delayed withdrawal of Monsoon.

⊙ **ABOUT**

Monsoon trends this year:

- After an extremely dry June, which saw a rain deficiency of 33 per cent, the monsoon brought generous rainfall in July, August and September, each subsequent month exceeding the normal by a higher deviation.

- September produced rainfall that was 152 per cent of normal, and this was the second highest rainfall ever recorded in this month. The only higher deviation during September was way back in 1917, when the rainfall was 165 per cent of the then normal for the month.

- August and September together produced 130 per cent of normal rainfall, and this was the highest since 1983. And this was the first time since 1931 that the monsoon ended up producing more than 100 per cent rainfall after having a 30 per cent or more deficiency at the end of the first month.

> **Monsoon prediction terminology:**
> - **Long Period Average (LPA):** It is the average rainfall received by the country as a whole during the south-west monsoon, for a 50-year period. The current LPA is 89 cm, based on the average rainfall over years 1951 and 2000. This acts as a benchmark against which the rainfall in any monsoon season is measured.
> - **Deficient rainfall:** The country is said to have received deficient rainfall if the actual rainfall falls below 90 per cent of LPA.
> - **Excess rainfall:** The country is said to have received excess rainfall if the rainfall is greater than 110 per cent of LPA.
> - **Normal rainfall:** The country is said to have received normal rainfall when the actual rainfall received falls between 96 and 104 per cent of LPA.

Why there is late withdrawal of monsoon?

- September marks the beginning of the withdrawal of the monsoon. This year, however, withdrawal has seen a record delay. So far, the longest delay happened in 1961 when the withdrawal started on October 1. According to IMD this year the withdrawal is likely to begin only after October 10.
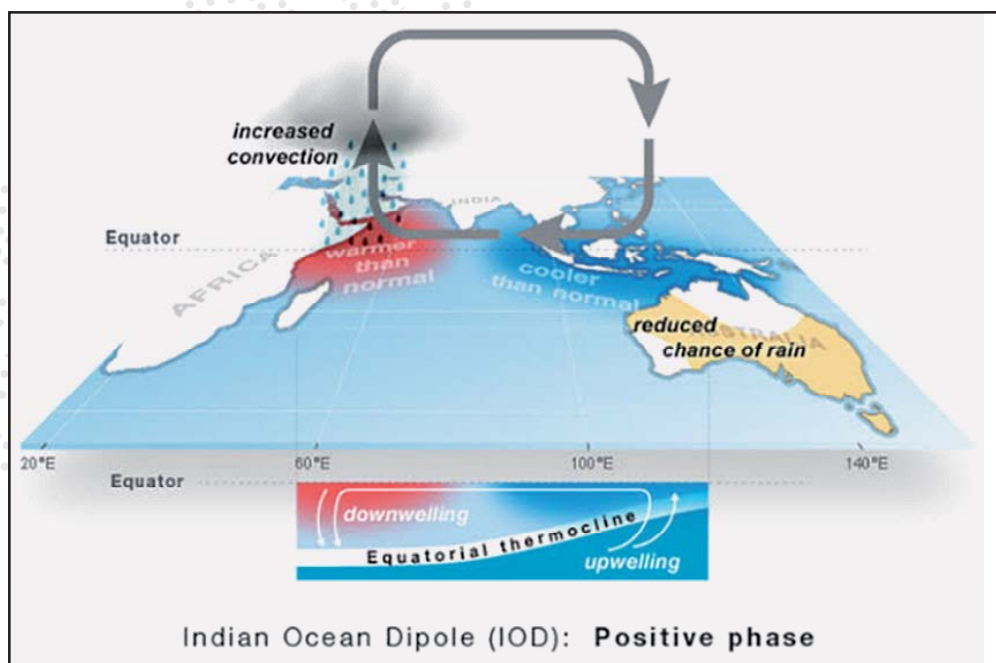
- **Reasons:**

  ⊙ Last time September produced so much rain, 1917 which happened to be a La Niña year. This year is not a La Nina year but instead of that the rainfall is higher in September. Though there was no La Niña, a similar phenomenon called the Indian Ocean Dipole, could have contributed to the enhanced rainfall.

- **La Nina:** It is a climate pattern that describes the cooling of surface ocean waters along the tropical west coast of South America.

- **El Nino:** El Nino is a part of a routine climate pattern that occurs when sea surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific Ocean rise to above-normal levels for an extended period of time.

  ⊙ During the monsoon season, the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) is located over the Indian subcontinent. By September, as the temperature begins to go down, the ITCZ starts moving southwards of the Indian landmass, towards the equator, and further into the southern hemisphere. This year, this process has not yet started.

- **The Inter Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ):** It is a belt of low pressure which circles the Earth generally near the equator where the trade winds of the Northern and Southern Hemispheres come together. It is characterised by convective activity which generates often vigorous thunderstorms over large areas. It is most active over continental land masses by day and relatively less active over the oceans.

  ⊙ In September this year, the northern hemisphere was much warmer than the southern hemisphere, and that could be one reason why the ITCZ has remained longer than usual over the northern hemisphere which resulted into longer stay of monsoon.

  ⊙ There was a cooling of the eastern equatorial Indian Ocean, below Sumatra, and that could be one of the reasons for this years extended withdrawal of Monsoon.

What is Indian Ocean Dipole?

Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD): **Positive phase**

- The Indian Ocean Dipole is a phenomenon similar to the ENSO condition observed in the Pacific Ocean which creates the El Niño and La Niña events.

- The sea surface temperatures in the Indian Ocean gets warmer and cooler than normal, and this deviation influences regional atmospheric and weather patterns i.e. The Indian monsoon.

- While the Pacific Ocean only has an El Niño or a La Niña condition at a time, the Indian Ocean experiences both warm and cold conditions at the same time – that's why known as dipole.

- One of these poles is located in the Arabian Sea while the other is in the Indian Ocean, south of Indonesia.

- The Indian Ocean Dipole is said to be positive when the western pole is warmer than the eastern one and negative when it is cooler.

- The Indian Ocean Dipole and ENSO are not unrelated. Positive Indian Ocean Dipole events are often associated with El Niño and negative Indian Ocean Dipole with La Niña.

- When the Indian Ocean Dipole and ENSO happen at the same time, the Dipole is known to strengthen the impacts of the ENSO condition.

CHINA'S CONTINUING RARE EARTH DOMINANCE

◉ **CONTEXT**

- **China had used its dominance over rare earth elements (REEs) to effectively implement its ban on exports to Japan, ostensibly following the collision of a Chinese fishing vessel with Japanese coast guard vessels. Almost a decade later, as China threatens to ban exports to the United States (US), a replay of the same could be in the offing.**

◉ **ABOUT**

- The REEs are a set of 17 minerals used to make, among other things, permanent magnets which are used in defence equipment, including actuators, to control guidance systems for airborne smart missiles, as well as in aerospace applications for aircraft components and airstrip maintenance equipment.

- REEs are also used in electronic items like television sets and cell phones and renewable energy equipment like wind turbines and solar panels.

- However, of the 17 minerals, neodymium and praseodymium form the majority of minerals used in permanent magnets, while dysprosium is used in neodymium-iron-boron permanent magnets to improve their high temperature performance.

- Rare earths are not rare at all. In fact, they are found in several countries including China, the US, Australia, Brazil, Burundi, India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam – with global deposit reserves estimated at 120 million tonnes.

- They are considered 'rare' as they usually exist as compounds fused with other metals, and they also oxidise quickly, making the process of refining and extracting them in commercially viable quantities very expensive, especially in countries with strict environmental and effluent standards.

The concern

- In the 1980s, China took the decision to make rare earths a strategic commodity. Due to the country's low labour costs and lax environmental regulations, it soon became a market leader.

- Although it possessed around 40 per cent of the REE deposits, it produced around 80 per cent of the global supply.

- To put China's position in the REE export market in perspective, it may be noted that the second largest supplier, which is Australia, produces around 20,000 metric tonnes as against China's 120,000 metric tonnes.

- Moreover, in China, the REEs are mostly located in clay deposits which make it easier to extract. Also, the Chinese environmental standards are less stringent than in the US.

- The first signs of Beijing's intention to use REEs as a strategic tool became apparent during its dispute with Japan in 2010; although some studies suggest that the decline in

the REE exports to Japan was a result of China's decision to cut worldwide exports due to environmental concerns.

- Beijing indicated that it may weaponise its rare earth resources in the event of an escalation of the trade war with the US.

Options for India

- India is one of the few countries that have substantial REE reserves. However, it ranks low in the REE market and is seen, at best, as a low-cost supplier of raw materials.

- Although over the years India has developed some expertise in extracting and processing rare earths from mineral ores (mainly monazite), it has yet to acquire the requisite expertise in the downstream sector, that is, in the manufacture of intermediate products like permanent magnets, phosphors, etc., mainly due to the volatility of the REE market prices.

- India imports most of the rare earths in finished form as electric vehicle manufacturing is still in its infancy.

- India and Japan had set up a joint venture company Toyotsu Rare Earths India in Visakhapatnam for the extraction and processing of rare earth oxides.

- While a beginning has been made with the announcement of a National Mineral Policy 2019, covering non-fuel and non-coal minerals, India must strive to acquire expertise in valorising these minerals and shift to developing its downstream sector.

- India should seek to leverage its ties with Japan and other countries that have the requisite technology for manufacturing downstream equipment so that it can set itself up as an alternative source of the REE-based technology, with its own supply chain of minerals and metals required for the same, instead of being content with being a mere supplier of upstream materials.

EC POWERS TO REDUCE/REMOVE DISQUALIFICATION OF MLAS AND MPS UNDER RPA

⊙ **CONTEXT**

Election Commission cuts short disqualification term for Sikkim Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang.

⊙ **ABOUT**

- Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang was barred by law from contesting elections for six years in 2016 for graft charges.

- He had been sentenced to one year imprisonment for misappropriation of funds in the procurement of cows when he was state Animal Husbandry Minister under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. However, the section under which he was convicted had been omitted in an amendment in 2018. He completed the one-year sentence on August 10, 2018.

- After completing his one-year prison term in 2018 his disqualification was sharply reduced to just a year and a month by the Election Commission of India (ECI) recently.

- EC cited Section 11 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 which empowers it to remove/reduce the period of disqualification prescribed by statutory rule for reasons to be recorded.

- The EC justified its decision on the ground that Tamang was convicted of an offence committed in 1996-97, when a minimum punishment of two years was warranted under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, for attracting the six-year disqualification. Tamang was imprisoned for a year. The EC also noted that he had already served his sentence, and hence, his case merited a disqualification waiver.

Criticism

- It is not conducive in controlling criminalisation of politics. The issue of Mr. Tamang not contesting elections and the ECI citing socio-economic-political factors were not relevant to the issue.

- Morally, it is wrong of parties to give ticket to those convicted of crimes or to appoint someone convicted. Today, we have 43% of the people sitting in the Lok Sabha with pending criminal cases.

Much-needed relief

P.S. Tamang was found guilty of corruption in a cow distribution scheme while he was the Animal Husbandry Minister

- He was appointed as Chief Minister on May 27 and needs to be elected to the Assembly within six months

- The EC reduced his period of disqualification under Section 11 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951

- It said the offence went back to 1996-1997, when a sentence of two years or more would lead to disqualification under the Act

- He was jailed between 2017 and 2018, and was released on August 10, 2018

- The Section of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, under which he was convicted, was omitted in an amendment in 2018

PRESS FREEDOM IN INDIA

⊙ **CONTEXT**

Journalists in Kashmir staged a silent demonstration in Srinagar to protest the ongoing communication blockade in Kashmir. Both national and international media highlighted the increased restrictions on media in Kashmir after August 5th.

⊙ **ABOUT**

- After the scrapping of Special Status and re-organisation of Jammu and Kashmir, it is being reported in certain sections of media that Journalists are facing increased curbs to perform their professional duties.

- Anuradha Bhasin, editor of Kashmir Times, local English daily filed a petition in Supreme Court challenging the restrictions on Media in Jammu and Kashmir.

- New Delhi amended Article 370 of the Indian constitution and bifurcated the state into two union territories on August 5. The move stripped J&K of its separate flag and constitution. Fearing reprisals, the authorities imposed strict restrictions and a communication blockade across the Valley. Though restrictions were eased last month, the communication blockade is still in force.

- Facing criticism, the government set up a make-shift media communication centre at a private hotel in Srinagar for journalists.

- The centre has one internet connection and nine terminals where journalists working with international, national and local media houses have to wait in a queue for their turn to send reports and check mails.

- The information department managing the centre has allotted 15 minutes for each journalist to access the internet.

- India has dropped two places on a global press freedom index -2019 to be ranked 140th out of 180 countries brought about by Reporters Without Borders.

- The World Press Freedom Index 2019 finds an increased sense of hostility towards journalists across the world.

- The violent attacks in India leading to at least six Indian journalists being killed in the line of their work in 2018

- Violence against journalists including police violence, attacks by Maoist fighters and reprisals by criminal groups or corrupt politicians is one of the most striking characteristics of the current state of press freedom in India.

- Indian journalists, especially those working for non-English-language media outlets in rural areas, face threats to their lives on daily basis.

- South Asia in general features poorly on the index.

- Pakistan and Bangladesh rank below India at 142 and 150 respectively.

- The number of countries regarded as safe, where journalists can work in complete security, continues to decline, while authoritarian regimes continue to tighten their grip on the media, RSF concludes.

- Norway is ranked first in the 2019 Index for the third year running while Finland has taken second place. An increase in cyber-harassment caused Sweden (third) to lose one place.

Reports Without Borders

- Founded in 1985

- Paris-based Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF), or Reporters Without Borders, is a non-profit organisation that works to document and combat attacks on journalists around the world.

- Reporters without Borders has two primary spheres of activity: one is focused on Internet censorship and the new media, and the other on providing material, financial and psychological assistance to journalists assigned to dangerous areas.

- In its 2019 index, RSF finds that hatred of journalists has degenerated into violence, contributing to an increase in fear around the world.

⊙ **CONCLUSION**   Media is an important pillar of democracy. Any effort to restrict the freedom and independence of journalists would amount to shaking the foundation of democracy. No doubt security of the nation is of prime importance and can be the infused as a reasonable restriction in the freedoms enjoyed by media. But it is the duty of the courts to determine whether the restriction is fair, just and reasonable.

WORLD HINDU ECONOMIC FORUM

⊙ **CONTEXT**   **The 7th Annual World Hindu Economic Forum (WHEF) held in Mumbai.**

⊙ **ABOUT**
- WHEF is a non-profit organization headquartered in Delhi, India.

- It was founded by Swami Vigyanand in 2010.

- It is as an independent international organization committed to make Hindu society prosperous through creation and sharing of surplus wealth.

- The forum brings together eminent Hindu intellectuals and businesses for the purposes of collaboration.

- The organization holds an annual international conference and several regional conferences in different parts of the world.

- World Hindu Economic Forum has earlier been organised in London, Chicago, Losa Angeles, Hong Kong, and Nairobi.

- 2019 World Hindu Economic Forum held from 27-29 September in Mumbai.

- Dharmasya Moolam Arthah (Economy is the strength) is the philosophy of WHEF. (Kautilian Arthashastra)

Why were these organisations created?

- Hindus contributed 35-49% of the World economy from 1st century to 15 century CE. The Hindu knows how to create wealth and also freely shares this knowledge. During the period of foreign rule, Hindu civilization substantially lost means of production, trade and commerce which led to the destruction of its economic prowess. The Hindu needs to regain this lost status. WHEF wants Hindus to cooperate and collaborate globally so that market access and appropriately priced capital is facilitated among them, and technologically savvy Hindus are matched with those who can convert technical innovation into business.

What are the main activities of WHEF/HEF?

- Provide a platform to promote business and facilitate networking
- Knowledge/Information sharing related to Business and Economy
- Providing expert connectivity
- Access to data base of PEs (Private Equity), VCs (Venture Capital), Investors etc.
- Organising economic conferences across the world
- Local chapter activities for regular interactions

DOUBLE BURDEN OF MALNUTRITION

⊙ **CONTEXT**   **Study finds there is a relationship between undernutrition, overweight and obesity.**

What is Double Burden of Malnutrition?

- The double burden of malnutrition is characterized by the coexistence of undernutrition along with overweight, obesity or diet-related Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs), within individuals, households and populations, and across the life-course.

Who is affected by double burden of malnutrition?

- The double burden of malnutrition can manifest at three levels:
- **At individual level:**
  - It occurs at individual level through the simultaneous development of two of more types of malnutrition – for example obesity with nutritional anaemia or any vitamin or mineral deficiencies or insufficiencies.
  - It can also occur across the life-course and be temporally separated, owing to contrasting nutrition environments resulting from a shift in economic or other circumstances. For example overweight in an adult who was previously stunted from chronic undernutrition during childhood.
- **At the household level:**
  - An example would include nutritional anaemia in a mother, with a child or grandparent who is overweight or has diabetes (type 2).
  - The dual-burden household is more common in middle-income countries undergoing rapid nutrition transition.
- **At the population level:**
  - This burden is also observed at population level with both undernutrition and overweight, obesity or NCDs prevalent in the same community, region or nation.
  - Undernutrition and overweight, obesity or NCDs now coexist in many countries, with women disproportionately affected at the population level.

- While rates of undernutrition are declining in many countries, the dramatic increases in overweight, obesity and associated NCDs place heavy tolls on individuals, families, economies and health-care systems.
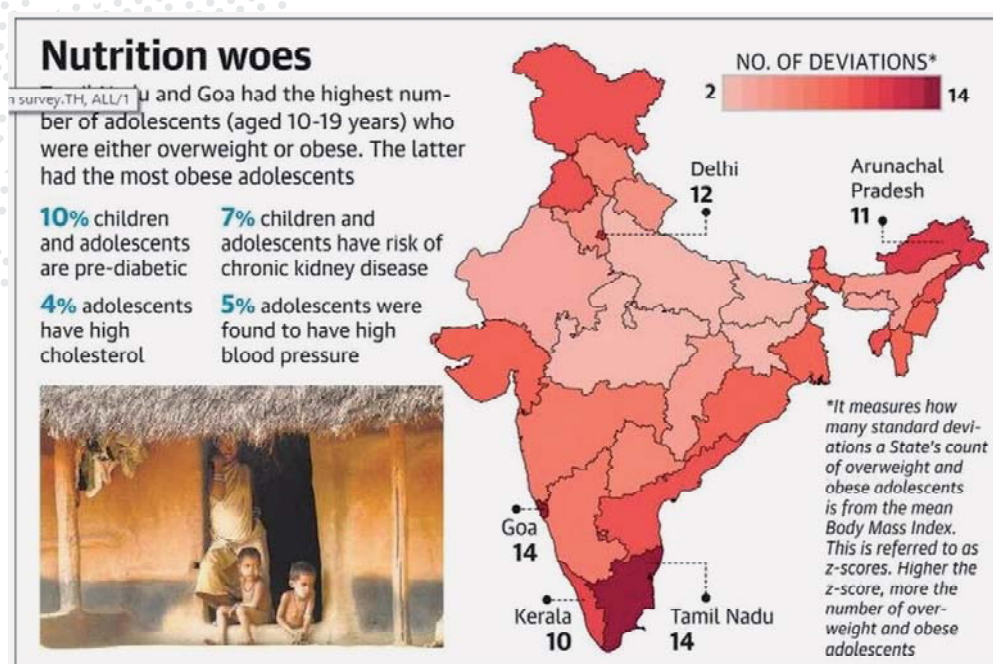
What are the drivers and detriments of the double burden of malnutrition?

The causes of the double burden of malnutrition relate to a sequence of epidemiological changes known as the nutrition transition, the epidemiological transition and the demographic transition.

- **The nutrition transition:** It describes the shift in dietary patterns, consumption and energy expenditure associated with economic development over time, often in the context of globalization and urbanization. This change is associated with a shift from a predominance of undernutrition in populations to higher rates of overweight, obesity and NCDs.

- **The epidemiological transition:** It describes the changes in overall population disease burden associated with the increase in economic prosperity – with a shift from a predominance of infection and diseases related to undernutrition to rising rates of NCDs.

- **The demographic transition:** It describes the shift in population structure and lengthening lifespans. This sees a transformation from populations with high birth rates and death rates (related to the above transitions), with relatively high proportions of younger people, to populations with increasing proportions of older people (with age also being a risk factor for many NCDs).

Global status of burden:

- In 2014, more than 1.9 billion adults worldwide, 18 years and older, were overweight while 462 million were underweight.

- • More than 600 million were obese. In the same year, 42 million children under the age of five were overweight or obese but 156 million were affected by stunting (low height-for-age).

- While 50 million children were affected by wasting (low weight-for-height). Poor nutrition continues to cause nearly half of deaths in children under five, while low- and middle-income countries now witness a simultaneous rise in childhood overweight and obesity – increasing at a rate 30% faster than in richer nations.

Nutrition woes

n survey.TH, ALL/1 u and Goa had the highest number of adolescents (aged 10-19 years) who were either overweight or obese. The latter had the most obese adolescents

10% children and adolescents are pre-diabetic

7% children and adolescents have risk of chronic kidney disease

4% adolescents have high cholesterol

5% adolescents were found to have high blood pressure

NO. OF DEVIATIONS*
2   14

Delhi
12

Arunachal Pradesh
11

Goa
14

Kerala
10

Tamil Nadu
14

*It measures how many standard deviations a State's count of overweight and obese adolescents is from the mean Body Mass Index. This is referred to as z-scores. Higher the z-score, more the number of overweight and obese adolescents

Prevalence of indicators of non-communicable diseases alongside indicators of undernutrition in India:

- Nearly 10% of children in the age group of 5-9 years and adolescents in the age group of 10-19 years are pre-diabetic, 5% are overweight and another 5% suffer from blood pressure.

UMMID INITIATIVE

⊙ **CONTEXT**

The Union Minister for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Health & Family Welfare, Dr. Harsh Vardhan launched UMMID (Unique Methods of Management and treatment of Inherited Disorders) initiative.

⊙ **ABOUT**

Why need UMMID?

- The contribution of genetic disorders to infant and childhood mortality and morbidity is increasing.

- In India's urban areas, congenital malformations and genetic disorders are the third most common cause of mortality in new-borns. With a very large population and high birth rate, and consanguineous marriage favoured in many communities, prevalence of genetic disorders is high in India.

- The congenital and hereditary genetic diseases are becoming a significant health burden in India, and there was the need for adequate and effective genetic testing and counselling services.

- Though there are excellent medical genetics centres in India providing state-of-the-art patient care services to families with genetic disorders, the number of such centres is small.

- Hence establishment of patient care services for genetic disorders is the need of the time.

- Therefore the Department of Biotechnology has initiated the UMMID program to establish many genetic diagnostic centres in different parts of the country.

- To achieve this, a combined program of training doctors in genetic diagnostics and providing funding to establish genetic diagnostic laboratories and to create awareness about genetic disorders amongst doctors and lay persons, has been meticulously planned.

About UMMID:

- The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) has started the UMMID (Unique Methods of Management and treatment of Inherited Disorders) Initiative which is designed on the concept of 'Prevention is better than Cure'.

- UMMID aims to create awareness about genetic disorders amongst clinicians to establish molecular diagnostic in hospitals.

Goals of UMMID initiative:

- To establish NIDAN (National Inherited Diseases Administration) Kendras to provide counselling, prenatal testing and diagnosis, management, and multidisciplinary care in Government Hospitals wherein the influx of patients is more.

- To produce skilled clinicians in Human Genetics.

- To undertake screening of pregnant women and new born babies for inherited genetic diseases in hospitals at aspirational districts.

What is a genetic disorder?

- A genetic disorder is a disease that is caused by a change, or mutation, in an individual's DNA sequence. It is an illness caused by changes in a person's DNA.

Genetic disorders can be grouped into three main categories:

- **Single gene disorders:** These disorders are caused by defects in one particular gene, often with simple and predictable inheritance patterns.

  Examples:

  - **Huntington's disease:** It is a single gene disorder that occurs when an individual has one altered copy of the relevant gene and one healthy copy.

  - **Cystic fibrosis:** It is a single gene disorder that only occurs when an individual has two altered versions of the relevant gene.

- **Chromosome disorders:** These disorders result from changes in the number or structure of the chromosomes.

  Examples:

  - **Down's syndrome:** It is a genetic disorder caused when abnormal cell division results in an extra full or partial copy of chromosome 21.

- **Multifactorial disorders:** These disorders are caused by changes in multiple genes, often in a complex interaction with environmental and lifestyle factors such as diet or cigarette smoke.

  Example: Cancer

INDIA IS NOW OPEN DEFECATION FREE

⊙ **CONTEXT**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 2, 2019 declared India open-defecation free (ODF).

⊙ **ABOUT**

- Swachh Bharat Mission was initiated on the 2nd October 2014 when toilet coverage in the country was 39 per cent. On 2nd October 2019 India is having 100% toilet coverage.

- Swachh Bharat Mission is an outstanding example of participatory approach and transformative development.

- Construction of toilets improves the socio-economic and health status of people.

- The first step of toilet construction was achieved through constant communication and information and the next step would be to bring a behavioural change so that people are motivated to ensure usage of the toilets.

- This achievement of making India ODF is in line with Mahatma Gandhi's vision for India.

- PM Modi was given Global Goalkeeper award for making India ODF by Gates Foundation in 2019.

Challenges

- In Odisha, a few villages had achieved open-defecation free (ODF) status prior to Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). Every household now has an extra toilet, due to SBM. Yet people are forced to defecate in the open because of acute water scarcity.

- Unsafe child stool disposal has received limited attention in sanitation policy in India with the country's historic focus on household toilet infrastructure.

- India lags in drinking water, sanitation and hygiene facilities.

⊙ **CONCLUSION**   Rs 3.5 lakh crore was allocated under Jal Shakti Mission dedicated for water sustainability. If people adopt the principles of water recycling and water recharge, it would help achieve sustainable water connectivity and availability to toilets ensuring constant usage.

SCHOOL EDUCATION QUALITY INDEX

⊙ **CONTEXT**   **Niti Aayog released School Education Quality Index (SEQI) for the year 2016-17.**

⊙ **ABOUT**

- The School Education Quality Index (SEQI) was developed to evaluate the performance of States and Union Territories (UTs) in the school education sector.

- The index aims to bring an outcomes focus to education policy by providing States and UTs with a platform to identify their strengths and weaknesses and undertake requisite course corrections or policy interventions.

- In line with NITI Aayog's mandate to foster the spirit of competitive and cooperative federalism, the index strives to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and best practices across States and UTs.

Aim and Purpose of the index:

- SEQI aims to drive policy reforms that will improve the quality of school education.

- The index seeks to institutionalise a focus on enhancing education outcomes by driving improvements in learning levels, access, equity, infrastructure and governance processes.

- The index recognises that school education is a subject on the Concurrent List and that State-level leadership is crucial for improving outcomes in a cost-effective manner.

- The index will serve as a regular and transparent review of the status of school education quality across the States and UTs.

Index categories and Domains:

- SEQI is based on a set of indicators that measure the overall effectiveness, quality and efficiency of the Indian school education system.

- To facilitate like-to-like comparisons, States and UTs have been grouped as Large States, Small States and Union Territories. Within each of these groups, the indicator values have been appropriately scaled, normalized and weighted to generate an overall performance score and ranking for each State and UT.

- States and UTs are ranked on their overall performance in the reference year 2016-17, as well as on the change in their performance between the reference year and base year (2015-16). The rankings present incredible insights on the status of school education across States/UTs and their relative progress over time.

Summary of Index Categories and Domains			
Category	**Domain**	**Number of Indicators**	**Total Weight**
1. Outcomes	1.1 Learning Outcomes	3	360
	1.2 Access Outcomes	3	100
	1.3 Infrastructure & Facilities for Outcomes	3	25
	1.4 Equity Outcomes	7	200
2.Governance Processes Aiding Outcomes	Covering student and teacher attendance, teacher availability, administrative adequacy, training, accountability and transparency	14	280
Total		**30**	**965**

Key findings of the report:

- **Large States:**

  ◎ Kerala topped the list of large states in India in the Overall Performance and Rank in school education for the year 2016-17 with a total evaluation point of 82.2%.

  ◎ Tamil Nadu retained the second spot with 73.4% points.

  ◎ Kerala and Tamil Nadu were the top two performing states at the national level in the academic year 2015-16 as well.

  ◎ Uttar Pradesh ranks last among the Large States, with an overall performance score of 36.4 percent.

  ◎ Kerala, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Assam are the best-performing Large States, each achieving an overall performance score above 60.0 percent.

  ◎ In the Outcomes category, Karnataka leads the Large States, with a score of 81.9 percent while Uttar Pradesh has the lowest score of 34.1 percent.

  ◎ In the Governance Processes Aiding Outcomes category, Kerala has the highest score of 79.0 percent while Jharkhand comes in last with a score of 21.0 percent.

- **Small States:**

  ◎ Manipur, Tripura and Goa are the top-performing Small States, each achieving an overall performance score above 55 percent.

  ◎ Manipur has the highest overall performance score of 68.8 percent.

  ◎ Arunachal Pradesh ranks last, with an overall performance score of 24.6 percent.

  ◎ Manipur ranks first among the Small States on the Outcomes category, with a score of 82.1 percent. Arunachal Pradesh has the lowest score, at 27.2 percent.

  ◎ In the Governance Processes Aiding Outcomes category, Mizoram has the highest score of 47.5 percent while Arunachal Pradesh ranks last with a score of 18.3 percent.

- **Union Territories:**

  ◎ Chandigarh and Dadra & Nagar Haveli are the top-performing UTs, with each achieving an overall performance score above 50.0 percent.

  ◎ Chandigarh has the highest overall performance score of 82.9 percent while Lakshadweep ranks last, with an overall performance score of 31.9 percent.

  ◎ Chandigarh is also the best-performing UT on the Outcomes and Governance Processes Aiding Outcomes categories, with scores of 88.4 percent and 69.5 percent respectively. Lakshadweep received the lowest score (28.9 percent) on the Outcomes category while Dadra & Nagar Haveli received the lowest score (33.5 percent) on the Governance Processes Aiding Outcomes category.

LARGE STATES:	
Andhra Pradesh	Kerala
Assam	Madhya Pradesh
Bihar	Maharashtra
Chhattisgarh	Odisha
Gujarat	Punjab
Harayana	Rajasthan
Himachal Pradesh	Tamil Nadu
Jammu & Kashmir	Telangana
Jharkhand	Uttar Pradesh
Karnataka	Uttarakhand

SMALL STATES:	
Arunachal Pradesh	Mixoram
Goa	Nagaland
Manipur	Sikkim
Meghalaya	Tripura

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MISCELLANEOUS

CURRENT AFFAIRS

GALO TRIBE OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

⊙ **ABOUT:**

- The Galo are a central Eastern Himalayan tribe, who are descendants of Abo Tani and speak the Tani language Galo language.

- Other names which have been used to reference the Galo in the past include Duba, Doba, Dobah Abor, Gallong Abor, Galong, Gallong Adi, etc.

- The Galo have been listed as a scheduled tribe under the name Gallong since 1950.

- Galo tribe has been listed in the Indian constitution as a separate tribe or scheduled tribe by the name of Galong. The efforts are being made to change the name to Galo by the community.

- According to the census of 2001, the total population of Galo community is 80,597. They are found in West Siang, southwestern side of East Siang, southwestern side of upper Subansiri, lower Dibang Valley, and Changiang Districts of Arunachal Pradesh.

- Wet Rice cultivation is the main cultivation style in the state besides Jhumming Cultivation, which is still practiced by the tribe.

- Galo tribe has a distinct culture. It celebrates a number of festivals throughout a year with joy. One such religiously important festival for the tribe is Mopin that is celebrated by the community only.

- The festival is celebrated every year to ward off evil spirits that bring bad luck to the community.

BATHUKAMMA FESTIVAL

⊙ **ABOUT:**

- Bathukamma is a colourful and vibrant festival of Telangana and celebrated by women, with flowers that grow exclusively in each region. This festival is a symbol of Telangana's cultural identity.

- The festival begins a week before the grand 'Saddula Batukamma' (the grand finale of the Batukamma festival) which falls two days before Dussehra.

- Bathukamma is a beautiful flower stack, arranged with different unique seasonal flowers most of them with medicinal values, in seven concentric layers in the shape of temple gopuram.

- Batukamma celebrates the inherent relationship between earth, water and the human beings.

BRU REFUGEES OF MIZORAM

⊙ **ABOUT:**

- Mizoram officials have re-identified 26,128 Bru refugees belonging to 4,278 families lodged in six relief camps in North Tripura district

- The Brus are in Tripura since late 1997 in the wake of a communal tension triggered

by the murder of a forest guard inside the Dampa Tiger Reserve on October 21, 1997 by Bru National Liberation Front militants.

● The Brus, also referred to as the Reangs, are spread across the northeastern states of Tripura, Assam, Manipur, and Mizoram.

ELEPHANT ENDOTHELIOTROPIC HERPESVIRUS

⊙ **ABOUT:**

● Elephant endotheliotropic herpesviruses (EEHV) or Elephantid betaherpesvirus 1 (ElHV-1) is a type of herpesvirus, which can cause a highly fatal hemorrhagic disease when transmitted to young Asian elephants.

● The four deaths in Nandan Kanan Zoo are the first reported cases of EEHV-related deaths in an Indian zoo

● Most elephants carry just as most humans carry a cold virus. When EEHV is triggered, the elephant dies of massive internal bleeding and symptoms which are hardly visible

● Some elephants show symptoms such as reduced appetite, nasal discharge and swollen glands

● There is no true cure for herpesviruses in animals or in humans, because herpes viruses go latent.

● EEHV is lethal for young elephants between the ages of one and 12. If a young elephant dies before reproducing, it affects the population of the species as a whole in the concerned geography.

● In India, the CZA will set up a national committee of scientists from Guwahati, Kerala, IVRI and Nandan Kanan to develop protocols for the country lest an EEHV outbreak occurs elsewhere in the future.

INS NILGIRI

⊙ **ABOUT:**

● INS Nilgiri is the first ship of Project 17A frigates

● Project 17A frigates are a design derivative of the Shivalik class stealth frigates with much more advanced stealth features and indigenous weapons and sensors.

● The P17A frigates incorporate new design concepts for improved survivability, sea keeping, and stealth and ship manoeuvrability.

WHAT IS A CONSTITUTION BENCH?

⊙ **ABOUT:**

- Constitution bench is the name given to the benches of the Supreme Court of India which consist of at least five judges of the court which sit to decide any case "involving a substantial question of law as to the interpretation" of the Constitution of India or "for the purpose of hearing any reference" made by the President of India under Article 143

- This provision has been mandated by Article 145 (3) of the Constitution of India.

- The Chief Justice of India has the power to constitute a Constitution Bench and refer cases to it.

- Constitution benches have decided many of India's best-known and most important Supreme Court cases, such as A. K. Gopalan v. State of Madras, Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (basic structure doctrine) and Ashoka Kumar Thakur v. Union of India (OBC reservations) etc.

WHAT IS GOLDSCHMIDTITE?

⊙ **ABOUT:**

- A new, curious mineral has been discovered inside a diamond unearthed from a mine in South Africa.

- The mineral has been named goldschmidtite, after Victor Moritz Goldschmidt, the Norwegian scientist acknowledged as the founder of modern geochemistry.

- Goldschmidtite has an unusual chemical signature for a mineral from Earth's mantle

- While the mantle is dominated by elements such as magnesium and iron, goldschmidtite has high concentrations of niobium, potassium and the rare earth elements lanthanum and cerium.

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