

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY

WEEK-4
OCTOBER
2020

MAINS

➤ The concept of Precision Farming in India

➤ India's DisCom stress is more than the sum of its past

➤ Mapping the 'UNEMPLOYMENT' in India

ECONOMY

➤ Rationalization of Autonomous Bodies

GOVERNANCE

➤ US asks India to join the Blue Dot Network

➤ India's UN journey, from outlier to the high table

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PRELIMS

➤ 'Life in Miniature' Project launched

ART & CULTURE

➤ Arctic Ice fails to refreeze by late October, setting a new record

CLIMATE CHANGE

➤ First-of-its-kind flash flood warning system for South Asian countries launched

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

➤ Base year for Consumer Price Index-IW revised from 2001 to 2016

ECONOMY

➤ Project Lion could displace Maldharis within Gir to create 'leonine Eden'

ENVIRONMENT

➤ World Polio Day 2020, Where does India stand?

GOVERNANCE

➤ India gets chairmanship of International Labour Organisation's governing body

➤ India-Nepal Border Dispute

➤ The US 'State Sponsor of Terrorism' list

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

➤ The plasma therapy debate

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

GS SCORE

An Institute for Civil Services

www.iasscore.in

— **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- 1 (NOVEMBER, 2020)

CONTENTS

Section - A: MAINS CURRENT AFFAIRS		
Area of GS	Topics in News	Page No.
AGRICULTURE	• The concept of Precision farming in India	02
ECONOMY	• India's DisCom stress is more than the sum of its past	04
	• Mapping the 'unemployment' in India	06
GOVERNANCE	• Rationalization of autonomous bodies	08
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	• US asks India to join the Blue Dot Network	10
	• India's UN journey, from outlier to the high table	12

Section - B: PRELIMS CURRENT AFFAIRS		
Area of GS	Topics in News	Page No.
ART & CULTURE	• 'Life in Miniature' Project launched	16
CLIMATE CHANGE	• Arctic Ice fails to refreeze by late October, setting a new record	17
DISASTER MANAGEMENT	• First-of-its-kind flash flood warning system for South Asian countries launched	18
ECONOMY	• Base year for Consumer Price Index-IW revised from 2001 to 2016	19
ENVIRONMENT	• Project Lion could displace Maldharis within Gir to create 'leonine Eden	20
GOVERNANCE	• World Polio Day 2020, Where does India stand?	22
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	• India gets chairmanship of International Labour Organisation's governing body	24
	• India-Nepal Border Dispute	24
	• The US 'State Sponsor of Terrorism' list	26
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY	• The plasma therapy debate	27

LIVE & INTERACTIVE CLASSES

PATHWAYS

for UNDER GRADUATES

3 & 2 Year IAS FOUNDATION
PROGRAMME



10 NOVEMBER
2020

BATCH
3

GS MAINS ADVANCE

A Solution for 1250 Marks



18 NOVEMBER
2020

OPTIONAL FOUNDATION

BATCH - 5

POLITICAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

By: Dr. PIYUSH CHOUBEY



25
NOVEMBER

BATCH - 2

GEOGRAPHY FOUNDATION

By: Dr. PIYUSH CHOUBEY



25
NOVEMBER

SECTION: A

(MAINS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

THE CONCEPT OF PRECISION FARMING IN INDIA

CONTEXT

India is one of the largest producers of food grains globally. Though its agriculture is very small-scale, yield from farming is low and the pressure on land is enormous. This needs to change with the help of digital precision technology.

◎ BACKGROUND

- The world's population is steadily growing and as per the United Nations estimate, roughly 83 million people are added to the global population every year.
- By 2050, the number of people on planet Earth is projected to reach 9.8 billion.
- While the scientific community has begun to view old fears about overpopulation as unfounded, the rapidly expanding human population presents genuine & real-time challenges to economic, agricultural, and communal infrastructures.
- Farmers, especially in the emerging and developing economies like Asia Pacific, Africa and SAARC regions face an ever-growing demand to produce more food on smaller landholdings, even as they struggle to protect their farms against extreme weather, climate change, environmental impact, market fluctuations, etc.
- To inclusively feed this massive population, it is imperative to have transformation in Agriculture with disruptions from next-generation technologies like the Internet of Things, AI, ML, Robotics etc.
- Precision agriculture techniques can be a game changes. It can give farmers productive tools to optimize every farming task.

◎ ANALYSIS

What is Precision farming?

- Precision farming is an approach where inputs are utilised in precise amounts to get increased average yields, compared to traditional cultivation techniques.
- In India, one major problem is the small field size.
 - ▶ More than 58 per cent of operational holdings in the country have size less than one hectare (ha).
 - ▶ Only in the states of Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana and Gujarat do more than 20 per cent of agricultural lands have an operational holding size of more than four ha.
- Commercial as well as horticultural crops also show a wider scope for PA in the cooperative farms.

Why farmers today need to take up precision farming?

- Sustainable PA is this century's most valuable innovation in farm management that is based on using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).
- This is the most recent innovation technology based on sustainable agriculture and healthy food production and it consists of profitability and increasing production, economic efficiency and the reduction of side effects on the environment.
- Today, farmers really need to take up precision farming due to the following reasons:
 - ▶ To increase agriculture productivity
 - ▶ Prevents soil degradation
 - ▶ Reduction of chemical application in crop production
 - ▶ Efficient use of water resources
 - ▶ Dissemination of modern farm practices to improve quality, quantity and reduced cost of production
 - ▶ Developing favourable attitudes
 - ▶ Precision farming changing the socio-economic status of farmers

Advantages

- Agronomical perspective
- Technical perspective
- Environmental perspective
- Economic perspective

Drawbacks of precision farming

- High cost
- Lack of technical expertise knowledge and technology
- Not applicable or difficult/costly for small land holdings
- Heterogeneity of cropping systems and market imperfections

What are the major challenges in the application?

Educational and economic challenges as the two most important in the application of precision agriculture.

- **Educational challenges:** Among the variables that contribute to educational challenges, lack of local experts, funds, knowledgeable research and extension personnel have more of an impact compared to others.
- **Economic challenges:** PA and initial costs have more of an impact among the economic challenges compared to the other issues.

Suggestive measures to promote precision farming

- Identify the niche areas for the promotion of crop specific precision farming
- Creation of multidisciplinary teams involving agricultural scientists in various fields, engineers, manufacturers and economists to study the overall scope of precision agriculture

- Provide complete technical backup support to the farmers to develop pilots or models, which can be replicated on a large scale
- Pilot study should be conducted on farmers' fields to show the results of precision agriculture implementation
- Creating awareness among farmers about consequences of applying imbalanced doses of farm inputs like irrigation, fertilisers, insecticides and pesticides.

◎ CONCLUSION

Precision digital agriculture is currently very much in demand. It presents significant potential in enhancing food productivity while at the same time providing sustainable management of resources. It may also help to reduce stubble in the fields: Internet of Things, big data, drones and robotics have a big role to play in driving precise solutions for every field.

INDIA'S DISCOM STRESS IS MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PAST

CONTEXT

Distribution Companies (DisComs) have been called the lynchpin but also the weakest link in the electricity chain.

◎ BACKGROUND

- For all of India's global leadership for growth of renewable energy, or ambitions of smart energy, the buck stops with the DisComs, the utilities that typically buy power from generators and retail these to consumers.
- Long gone are the days of scarcity of power; while the physical supply situation has mostly improved, the financial picture has not brightened much — and this was before COVID-19.
- The Indian government responded to COVID-19's economic shock with a stimulus package of 20-lakh crore, out of which 90,000 crore was earmarked for DisComs (later upgraded to 1, 25,000 crore). While it was called a stimulus, it is really a loan, meant to be used by DisComs to pay off generators.
- Unfortunately, the dues to generators are several times higher than this number, and, worse, the total short-term dues of DisComs are multiple times higher, which excludes long-term debt.

for inefficiency, including high losses, called Aggregate Technical and Commercial losses, a term that spans everything from theft to lack of collection from consumers. However, this is only an incomplete explanation.

Major Issues with DisComs

- The recent study on DisComs shows a much graver picture than one that can be solved by a fillup, even though such a liquidity injection is required.
- The media reports suggested that the DisComs owe one lakh crore rupees to generators, and without the financial infusion the electricity chain will collapse.
- Over the years, the DisComs have delayed their payments upstream (not just to generators but others as well) i.e. treating payables like an informal loan.
- The state governments are the biggest defaulters and responsible for an estimated a third of trade receivables, besides not paying subsidies in full or on time.
- The pandemic has completely shattered incoming cash flows to utilities. The lockdown disproportionately impacted revenues from commercial and industrial segments. But a large fraction of DisCom cost structures are locked in through PPAs that obligate capital cost payments.

◎ ANALYSIS

Data on liabilities

- How did this magic figure of one-lakh crore capture popular imagination?**
 - This figure is roughly what the government's PRAAPTI (or Payment Ratification and Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators) portal shows for DisCom dues to generators.
 - However, what is not widely appreciated is that the portal is a voluntary compilation of dues, and is not comprehensive.
 - The Power Finance Corporation (PFC)'s Report on Utility Workings for 2018-19 showed dues to generators were 2, 27,000 crore, and this is well before COVID-19. It also showed similar Other Current Liabilities.
 - Over the years, DisComs have delayed their payments upstream (not just to generators but others as well) — in essence, treating payables like an informal loan.
 - But why do DisComs not pay on time? Conventional wisdom blames the utilities

Impact of COVID-19 on Discoms

- The equilibrium of increasing the dues as well as relying on continued subsidies, all worked as long as there was steady growth but the COVID-19 has completely shattered incoming cash flows to utilities.
- The revenue implications were far worse since the lockdown disproportionately impacted revenues from so-termed paying customers, commercial and industrial segments.
- The reduced demand for electricity did not save as much because a large fraction of DisCom cost structures are locked in through Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) that obligate capital cost payments, leaving only fuel savings with lower off take.
- The revenues of power distribution companies have nosedived as people are unable to pay for the electricity consumed while power supplies have been maintained.

- The operations of commercial establishments and industries came to a grinding halt due to nationwide lockdown, which are the major source of revenue for DISCOMs.

Measures to be adopted for Discoms in India

- It is necessary to have a much larger liquidity infusion than has been announced thus far, but it also must go hand-in-hand with credible plans to pay down growing debt.
- The rise of renewable energy means that premium customers will leave the system partly first by reducing their daytime usage and the improvement in AT&C losses is important.
- It is required to have a complete overhaul of the regulation of electricity companies and their deliverables because much of inefficiency is tolerated in the name of the poor but they do not get quality supply.
- The transparency in the disclosure/reporting of off-budget liabilities in the State budgets could be the first step towards recognizing the guarantees as a medium-term fiscal risk.
- Unlike discoms in the states, which fall under the remit of the respective state governments, there

is a separate dispensation for discoms in Union Territories, as they are administered directly by the central government.

◎ WAY FORWARD

- There is a need a much larger liquidity infusion so that the entire electricity chain will not collapse.
- Regulators must allow cost-covering tariffs.
- An Improving AT&C loss is important, but will not be sufficient. We need a complete overhaul of the regulation of electricity companies and their deliverables.
- The financial problems of DisComs have been brewing for many years and it is unlikely that a silver bullet i.e. privatisation, can solve the problems overnight.
- The power sector liquidity is not expected to improve in the short term, as economic activity and power demand will take some time to pick up and there is an immediate need to infuse liquidity in the sector for continued power supply.
- However, if business, as usual, was not even good enough before COVID-19, it will not be workable for the current national needs of quality, affordable, and sustainable power.

MAPPING THE 'UNEMPLOYMENT' IN INDIA'

CONTEXT

Recent data on the contraction of the economy raises concern on the employment situation in India. This sharp contraction has to be seen in the light of India having witnessed a wave of massive 'reverse migration' during the early phase of the lockdown, with millions of workers returning to their home States due to a loss of livelihoods.

ANALYSIS

- In the current pandemic situation, the world has been caught ill-prepared to deal with a crisis of high magnitude.
- Government's periodic labour force survey carried out in 2017-18 revealed that unemployment in the country reached an all-time high rate of 6.1%.
- At the heart of unemployment problem in India is the young, unemployed men aged from 15-29 which comprise 68% of all unemployed youths in the country.
- Adding to this are the ill-effects of the pandemic that have been essentially skewed against the youth (15-29 years) as they face a trilemma of unemployment, disruption in education, and struggling education system.

Which sectors are shrinking?

- The shrinking sectors that have been affected the most are:
 - ▶ construction (-50%)
 - ▶ trade, hotels and other services (-47%)
 - ▶ manufacturing (-39%)
 - ▶ mining (-23%)
- The above sectors are those that create the maximum new jobs in the economy.
- This sharp contraction has to be seen in the light of India having witnessed a wave of massive 'reverse migration' during the early phase of the lockdown, with millions of workers returning to their home States due to a loss of livelihoods.

Exposed vulnerability of employment

- The high and persistent incidence of vulnerable employment are a reflection of the nature of the structural transformation process, whereby capital and labour transfer from low to higher value-added sectors.
- India presents a curious case in this regard as capital and labour are moving from low value-added activities in a sector to another sector, but not to higher value-added activities.
- This leads to a situation where a large proportion of the jobs being created, is of poor quality.
- The service sector-led growth in recent years has

intensified this as there is coexistence of strong job creation in some Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-intensive services, along with a significant portion of the jobs being created in 'traditional low value-added services, where informality and vulnerable forms of employment are dominant.

- The outcome of such a process is the high incidence of informality which continues to undermine the prospects of reducing working poverty'.
- The pandemic and associated policy responses have exposed the vulnerability of these urban jobs.

What factors are responsible for the situation?

- **Boost in labour supply:** Firstly size of labour supply in India is getting a boost from the rapid expansion of the working age population.
- **Rising job aspirations:** Secondly the nature of labour supply is changing too, with increasing enrolment of young adults for education and their rising job aspirations.
- **Reduced workforce in agriculture:** Thirdly size of workforce engaged in agriculture has been declining in India from 258 million in 2005 to 197 million in 2018.
 - ▶ The decline has been partly due to stagnant public investment from 1990s and also driven by the pull of new opportunities in towns and cities.
- **Manufacturing sector:** Size of manufacturing workforce in India declined by one million from 2012-2018. Micro and small firms received severe setbacks. While sectors like education, professional businesses, allied services recorded acceleration in employment growth.
- **Poor skilling of youth:** According to Periodic Labour force survey 2018 the pervasive joblessness was due to poor training of youth as only 7% of the people surveyed declared any formal or informal training.

The trend of global economies

- On the basis of the five-year trend between 2014-19, the policies by all other major economies like the US, UK, Germany and Japan are showing positive results.
- As per the **International Labor Organization**, there has been a consistent downtrend in their unemployment percentage between 2014-19.
- The US and UK, which were at an unemployment rate of around 6.2% and 6.1% in 2014, have seen numbers come down to 3.7% and 3.9% respectively in 2019.
- India is the only exception.

How to create actual jobs?

- **Create stable demand:** The government should focus to create stable demand. Industries are operating at capacities below 70%. When demand picks up, the industrial activity will pick up, which in turn would lead to more jobs.
- **Cut in taxes to push sales:** Reducing and rationalising GST slabs for some of the commodities like two-wheelers from 28% to 18% will help push sales and create demand.
- **Increase in infrastructure spending:** Infrastructure spending by the Centre needs to go up. The spend needs to go up to create more jobs and push the money in the hands of the people so that consumption picks up.
- As compared to the Rs 9.47 lakh crore expenditure by the Centre between April and July 2019, this year it has only increased to Rs 10.54 lakh, that too mostly towards salaries and other regular expenses.

- **Non-farm employment opportunities:** Rural jobs have started falling again. Non-farm employment opportunities in the villages should be focused either by encouraging private investment or pushing public spending.
- Other important measures
- **Coordination between urban and local governments:** First, given the scale of urbanisation, the focus on urban employment generation programmes should be in coordination with local governments; this is key to solving other problems faced by cities.
- **More focus on skill development:** Lack of desired skill set makes it difficult for employers to fill job positions. Employer's collaboration with the educated bodies will ensure a skilled labour pool in coming years.
- **Large investment and focused approach:** The sectors which created the highest number of jobs for the past decade i.e. manufacturing, construction, trade, hotel and transport are most badly hit due to the pandemic. Large public investment and targeted effort especially towards the younger section of population is required to revive these sector.
- **Bridging the digital divide:** Additionally, special efforts need to be made to ensure minimal disruption in continued education and to bridge the digital divide.
- **Strengthening rural jobs scheme:** MGNREGA and rural jobs schemes have to be strengthened and their capacity increased, but only a portion of the workforce might be accommodated in it.

CONCLUSION

Given the situation, urgent action is needed in multiple fronts including investment in human capital, revival of productive sectors and programmes to stimulate small entrepreneurship

RATIONALIZATION OF AUTONOMOUS BODIES'

CONTEXT

In a report on the rationalization of 109 autonomous bodies under Central government ministries, the finance ministry's department of expenditure recommended that the environment ministry disengage with 23 bodies, merge 109 into 26 bodies and close six to reduce expenditure.

◎ BACKGROUND:

- Based on the recommendations of Expenditure Management Commission, NITI Aayog had undertaken a review of the Autonomous Bodies, under the DoHFW, that have been formed under Societies Registration Act, 1860 (SRA).
- The Interim Report of the Committee for the Review of Autonomous Bodies with recommendations to rationalize them was prepared.

◎ ANALYSIS

Autonomous Bodies

- An Autonomous Body (AB) is set up by the government for a specific purpose.
- It is independent in day-to-day functioning, but the government has some control over ABs.
- Autonomous Bodies are set up for some of the functions which need to be discharged outside the governmental set up.
- Functions
- These bodies are involved in activities such as formulating frameworks for policies, conducting research and cultural aspects.

Legal Status

- They are mostly registered as societies under the Societies Registration Act and in certain cases they have been set up as statutory institutions under the provisions contained in various Acts.
- Finance of Autonomous bodies
- The government funds ABs in some ways such as revenue expenditure, capital expenditure, or both.

Objectives behind their formulation

- The objective is to give them flexibility and independence in the functioning.
- Some of the autonomous Institutes impart technical, medical and higher education also.

Governance of these bodies

- The governing council or governing body, which is chaired by the minister or the secretary of the respective ministry, governs the functioning and existence of these bodies.

Accounting and Auditing procedure

- These Autonomous Bodies are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), and the annual report is presented in the Parliament every year.

Shortcomings of Autonomous Bodies

- Disparity in the methods of accountability:** These bodies are not accountable to the government as other government departments are. So a demand comes for their finance mechanism as they are finance by the taxpayer money though they are capable of doing so.
- High number of bodies:** The high number of Autonomous bodies and their higher number of employee count is also one of the reasons behind their rationalization.
- Non-uniformity in the functioning:** There exists the non-uniformity in the recruitment process of the employees as different institutions have different procedures for the recruitment.
- Lack of proper audit mechanism:** The lack of accountability is also an issue in terms of decision making and audition by CAG as some of the bodies are also audited outside the CAG.
- Lack of proper framework:** It lacks a proper framework to describe an Autonomous Body which defines the working capacity, its autonomy and policies it follows.
- Ambiguous and obsolete bodies:** Some of the bodies have become obsolete in terms of their functioning and tasks. So a complete closer and merger of some of these bodies is required.
- Non-uniform policies:** There is a lack of uniformity in the policies and functioning of these bodies. So a structural overhaul is also necessary to make them functioning in an efficient manner.
- Authoritarianism in decision making:** A lack of consensus in decision making is also observed during the official meetings.

Expected outcomes of the rationalization

- Enhanced effectiveness and efficiency:** The main concern of the Government is that ABs are required to be reviewed and rationalised with a view to improve their outcomes, effectiveness

and efficiency, utilisation of financial and human resources, synergy, governance and relevance in current policy and programme context, with improved monitoring and oversight.

- **More devolution of powers:** One of the aims behind the rationalization process is to enhance the 'minimum government, maximum governance'.
- **More autonomy:** It is done to push the autonomous bodies to be more self-dependent in terms of finance and be less dependent on government grants.
- **Efficient research and innovation:** The rationalization of these institutions would boost the research work and innovation in terms of working capacity.
- **Reduction in ambiguity:** The rationalization would avoid the duplication of activities and would help in attaining economies of scale.

- **More collaboration at governance:** It would help in making a cooperative governance system.

◎ CONCLUSION

The merging and abolition of the autonomous bodies is expected to lead the enhanced efficiency and governance mechanism. The reduced level of ambiguity of functioning is expected to yield better results. It would also help in reduction of burden over the government exchequer as the salaries given to the employees and officers were driven from the government. The autonomous bodies would continue to give support to government on the issues concerned and being asked by the government. The more of the powers devolve would bring the better research and results analysis. This process of rationalization would help in better resource utilization and management of the country by bringing the research collaborations on the table.

US ASKS INDIA TO JOIN THE BLUE DOT NETWORK'

CONTEXT

In a letter, the United States asked India to join the Blue Dot Network, a U.S.-led collaboration with Australia and Japan that supports private-sector led infrastructure financing opportunities in response to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

What is the Blue Dot network?

- Led by the US's International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), the Blue Dot network was jointly launched in November 2019 on the sidelines of the 35th ASEAN Summit in Thailand by the-
 - ▶ United States
 - ▶ Japan (Japanese Bank for International Cooperation)
 - ▶ Australia (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade)
- It is meant to be a multi-stakeholder initiative that aims to bring governments, the private sector and civil society together to promote "high quality, trusted standards for global infrastructure development".
- Under it, infrastructure projects within the **Indian Ocean Region** will be certified in keeping with **globally-recognised standards** that uphold **principles of transparency and financial viability**.

Which 'Principles' are to be followed?

- The infrastructure projects will have to follow the
 - ▶ **G-20 principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment**, aimed at sustainable lending and borrowing
 - ▶ **G7 Charlevoix Commitment** on Innovative Financing for Development
 - ▶ **Equator Principles**, which mandate financial institutions to assess and manage environmental and social risks in a given projects.
- Projects that aim to be certified under the Blue Dot Network will have to give an undertaking that they adhere to these principles. The undertaking will then be scrutinised.

Does it counter China's Belt and Road Initiative?

- The Blue Dot network is part of the US's Indo-Pacific strategy, which is aimed at countering Chinese President Xi Jinping's ambitious BRI.
- Prior to 2001, US foreign policy was focussed towards integrating China into its plan, but this changed after China's emergence as a global superpower.

- Under Barack Obama, US foreign policy started shifting focus to Asia, where the US wanted to counter China's growing influence.
- From the US's point of view, the Indo-Pacific region is the most economically dynamic and populous part of the world.
- Further, the US sees China's infrastructure investments and trade strategies as reinforcing its geopolitical aspirations, including efforts to build and militarise outposts in the South China Sea, which as per the US, restricts the free movement of trade and undermines regional stability.

What is China's Belt and Road Initiative?

- The project is often described as a 21st century silk road, made up of a "belt" of overland corridors and a maritime "road" of shipping lanes.
- The Belt and Road Initiative combines two initiatives
- **The (land based) Silk Road Economic Belt**, comprising six development corridors, namely:
 - ▶ New Eurasian Land Bridge Economic Corridor (NELBEC)
 - ▶ China – Mongolia – Russia Economic Corridor (CMREC)
 - ▶ China – Central Asia – West Asia Economic Corridor (CCWAEC)
 - ▶ China – Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor (CICPEC)
 - ▶ Bangladesh – China – India – Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIMEC)
 - ▶ China – Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)
- **The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road**
 - ▶ The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road connects China to Southeast Asia, Indonesia, India, the Arabian peninsula, Somalia, Egypt and Europe, encompassing the South China Sea, Strait of Malacca, Indian Ocean, Gulf of Bengal, Arabian Sea, Persian Gulf and the Red Sea.

Will joining the network will help India?

- **Boost to project capabilities efforts:** A country that joins the Blue Dot Network as a partner will boost its project capability efforts.
- **Adhering to highest level of global standards:** Further, if the infrastructure development projects of that particular country obtain a Blue Dot certification, they will be seen as adhering to the highest level of global standards.
- **Access to financing institution:** Access to private and public financing institutions will help mitigate financing risks, acting as an impetus for developing countries like India to smoothly undertake development projects domestically as well as internationally.

- **Clear project standards:** The Blue Dot Network will provide countries with clear project standards. Projects, companies, and governments that meet or uphold the standards can build public confidence in their commitment to good practices.

◎ CONCLUSION

Given the current circumstances, India needs to continue to infrastructure modernization to address regional inequality issues and create new growth opportunities. Joining the "Blue Dot Network" would enable New Delhi to advance its own "Act East policy" strategy. It will strengthen cooperation between India and its Southeast Asian neighbours. It could create new exchanges with neighbours.



INDIA'S UN JOURNEY, FROM OUTLIER TO THE HIGH TABLE'

CONTEXT

The 75th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations (UN) is an opportunity to look at the major trends, patterns and future challenges as far as India is concerned in terms of safeguarding its interests and promoting common good.

◎ BACKGROUND

- The name "United Nations", coined by United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt was first used in the Declaration by United Nations of 1 January 1942, during Second World War.
- In 1945, representatives of 50 countries met in San Francisco at the United Nations Conference on International Organization to draw up the United Nations Charter.
- Those delegates deliberated on the basis of proposals worked out by the representatives of China, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States at Dumbarton Oaks, United States in August-October 1944.
- The Charter was signed on 26 June 1945 by the representatives of the 50 countries. Poland, which was not represented at the Conference, signed it later and became one of the original 51 Member States.
- The United Nations officially came into existence on 24 October 1945, when the Charter had been ratified by China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States and by a majority of other signatories.
- United Nations Day is celebrated on 24 October each year.

◎ ANALYSIS

The Organization

- The United Nations is an international organization, committed to-
 - ▶ maintaining international peace and security
 - ▶ developing friendly relations among nations
 - ▶ promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights
- **Membership:** It is currently made up of 193 Member States.
 - ▶ Each of the 193 Member States of the United Nations is a member of the General Assembly. States are admitted to membership in the UN by a decision of the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council.

- **Main Organs:** The main organs of the UN are the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the UN Secretariat. All were established in 1945 when the UN was founded.

What is the current status of India in UN?

- India is a founding member of the United Nations, signing the UN Charter, along with 50 other countries, on 26 June, 1945.
- Currently, India is a non-permanent member of the UN.
 - ▶ In the past, India has gained a non-permanent seat into the Security Council in 1950- 1951, 1967-1968, 1972-1973, 1977-1978, 1984-1985, 1991-1992 and most recently in 2011-2012.

Membership and phases of India

- Seven and a half decades of India at the UN may be viewed with reference to roughly three distinct phases.
- In the first phase until the end of the Cold War in 1989, India had learnt the ropes of exploring and enhancing its diplomatic influence as a moderating force in easing armed conflicts in Asia and Africa by disentangling them from the superpower rivalry.
- In parallel, the Indian leadership learned the hard way that the UN could not be relied upon to impartially resolve vital security disputes such as Jammu and Kashmir.
- As such, it strove to utilise the UN only to focus on common causes such as anti-colonialism, anti-racism, nuclear disarmament, environment conservation and equitable economic development.
- India, in a clever way, seemed to claim the moral high ground by proposing, in 1988, a bold, but obviously impractical, three-phase plan to eliminate nuclear weapons from the surface of earth.
- But it resisted attempts by neighbouring countries to raise bilateral problems.

- This was reflected during the Bangladesh liberation war and after. In essence, a loss of face for India in the 1962 border war against China meant a definitive redesign of the country's diplomatic style to privilege bilateral contacts over the third party role by the UN.

How United Nations works in India?

- In India, UN's work is guided by the **United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF)**, a framework of cooperation, results and strategies between the Government of India and the United Nations system in India to contribute to the achievement of national priorities and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
- The focus areas include poverty and urbanization; health, water, and sanitation; education; nutrition and food security; climate change, clean energy, and disaster resilience; skilling, entrepreneurship, and job creation; and gender equality and youth development.
- The UNSDF is underpinned by the overarching principle of the SDGs to leave no one behind, echoing the Government of India's message of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas (development for all).
- The UNSDF also includes a set of UN flagship programs that are aligned with major government schemes.
- The flagship programs will be scalable, innovative and multi-sectoral solutions to some of the most pressing development challenges that India

faces, while also serving as catalysts for increased investment of development finance.

What are the different levels of Indian multilateral engagement?

The "levels" of multilateral cooperation, ranging from least to the most engaging and impactful, are:

- **Level One:** Proposing multilateral frameworks that promote cooperation, but failing to organise a coalition or a significant voting bloc that actualises such cooperation.
- **Level Two:** Participating in, or leading a coalition of like-minded to form a united position, but is not powerful enough to alter the debate and advance cooperation in any meaningful manner.
- **Level Three:** Participating in, or leading a coalition of like-minded countries to form a united position that is powerful enough to alter the debate and achieve cooperation on the issue, and create "class of actions" among member states of the UN.

◎ CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In the post-pandemic era, India will advance its vision of a self-reliant future, and that all of its programmes and initiatives are designed to benefit all of its citizens, without discrimination. Now, India wants to learn from the world, and share its experience with the world. The country is confident that, in its seventy-fifth year, the UN will maintain its relevance, because "stability in the United Nations and empowerment of the United Nations are essential for the welfare of the world".

GS SCORE

An Institute for Civil Services

IAS 2021 TEST SERIES

MAINS & PRELIMS

BATCH
04

MAINS TEST SERIES 2021

GS MAINS QA

21
NOVEMBER

BATCH
02

ETHICS & ESSAY TEST SERIES

A Solution For 500 Marks

05
NOVEMBER

BATCH
01

PRELIMS 2021
TEST SERIES

07
NOVEMBER

OPTIONAL TEST SERIES 2021

PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION
TEST SERIES 2021

By: ASHUTOSH PANDEY



22
NOVEMBER

GEOGRAPHY
TEST SERIES 2021

By: PRINCE MISHRA



29
NOVEMBER

1B, 2nd Floor, Pusa Road Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005,
(Adjacent to Karol Bagh Metro Gate No. 8)

✉ info@iasscore.in /iasscore

Visit: www.iasscore.in

8448496262

SECTION: B

(PRELIMS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

To Attempt

Weekly Current Affairs Test, Visit

www.iasscore.in

LIFE IN MINIATURE' PROJECT LAUNCHED'

◎ **CONTEXT:** The Government launched 'Life in Miniature' project, a collaboration between the National Museum, New Delhi, Ministry of Culture, and Google Arts & Culture.

◎ **ABOUT:** **What is 'Life in Miniature' Project?**

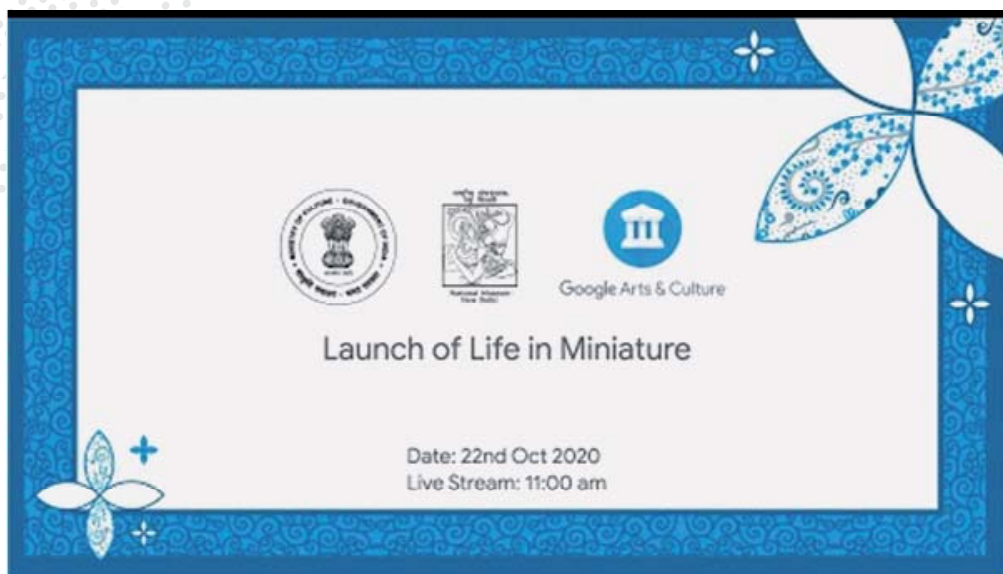
- Under the Project, several hundred miniature paintings from the National Museum, New Delhi can be viewed online on Google Arts & Culture by people around the world.
- The project uses technologies like machine learning, augmented reality and digitization with high-definition robotic cameras, to showcase these special works of art in a magical new way.
- Inspired by the domes and doorways that punctuate Indian homes and public spaces, this is the first AR-powered art gallery designed with traditional Indian architecture.

The National Museum

- The National Museum in New Delhi is the premiere **cultural institution of India** and has antiquities and art objects of more than 5000 years.
- During the pandemic, the museum has been actively attempting at getting digital engagement from visitors at online mode.

Miniature paintings

- Though compact (about the same size as a small book), miniature paintings typically tackle profound themes such as love, power and faith.
- Miniatures are rich in detailed representations of topics that have shaped Indian culture.
- The earliest Miniature paintings in India can be traced back to the 7th century AD, when they flourished under the patronage of the Palas of Bengal.
- Buddhist texts and scriptures were illustrated on 3-inch-wide palm leaf manuscripts, with images of Buddhist deities.
- Pala art was defined by subdued colours and sinuous lines, evocative of the murals in Ajanta.



ARCTIC ICE FAILS TO REFREEZE BY LATE OCTOBER, SETTING A NEW RECORD

◎ **CONTEXT:** For the first time since records began, the Laptev Sea, the main nursery of Arctic sea ice in Siberia has yet to start freezing in late October.

The Laptev Sea

- The Laptev Sea, located on the northwest coast of Siberia, is the Arctic Ocean's main sea ice nursery.
- Strong offshore winds accelerate ice formation, then, the wind circulates the ice across the Arctic, supplying the ocean with floating ice packs.
- However, a heat wave in the Arctic this summer caused the ice to melt more rapidly than usual, leaving the open water exposed to the sun for longer.

What caused it?

- **Warming:** The delayed annual freeze in the Laptev Sea has been caused by freakishly protracted warmth in northern Russia and the intrusion of Atlantic waters.
- **Ocean warming & heat waves:** Ocean temperatures in the area recently climbed to more than 5C above average, following a record breaking heatwave and the unusually early decline of last winter's sea ice.
 - The trapped heat takes a long time to dissipate into the atmosphere, even at this time of the year when the sun creeps above the horizon for little more than an hour or two each day.
- **Climate change:** Climate change is also pushing more balmy Atlantic currents into the Arctic and breaking up the usual stratification between warm deep waters and the cool surface. This also makes it difficult for ice to form.

What will be the impacts?

- **Decline of the sea ice:** Delayed freeze could amplify feedbacks that accelerate the decline of the sea ice.



- The Laptev Sea is known as the birthplace of ice, which forms along the coast there in early winter, then drifts westward carrying nutrients across the Arctic, before breaking up in the spring in the Fram Strait between Greenland and Svalbard.
 - **Thinner ice, more melting:** If ice forms late in the Laptev, it will be thinner and thus more likely to melt before it reaches the Fram Strait.
 - **Reduced capacity to absorb CO₂:** This could mean fewer nutrients for Arctic plankton, which will then have a reduced capacity to draw down carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- **Warmer water:** More open sea also means more turbulence in the upper layer of the Arctic ocean, which draws up more warm water from the depths.
- **More bad climatic situations:** Arctic sea ice helps cool the whole planet by reflecting sunlight back into space. So its loss inevitably will affect the climate and weather beyond the Arctic.

FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND FLASH FLOOD WARNING SYSTEM FOR SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES LAUNCHED

© **CONTEXT:** A first-of-its-kind system for South Asian countries that will provide alerts for flash floods 6-24 hours in advance was launched at the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

© **ABOUT:** **What is IMD's Flash Flood Guidance?**

- The Flash Flood Guidance is a robust system designed by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) to provide the necessary products in real-time to support the development of warnings for flash floods about 6-12 hours in advance at the watershed level with a resolution of 4kmx4km for the Flash Flood prone South Asian countries –
 - India
 - Nepal
 - Bhutan
 - Bangladesh
 - Sri Lanka
- The system has been developed by the WMO Commission for Hydrology, jointly with the WMO Commission for Basic Systems and in collaboration with the US National Weather Service, the US Hydrologic Research Centre (HRC).
- The system has in-depth science, dynamics and diagnostics to provide guidance for the possible occurrences of flash floods at the local level.
- The World Meteorological Department (WMO) has entrusted India with the responsibility of the Regional Centre of South Asia Flash Flood Guidance System for coordination, development and its implementation.
- India also shares cyclone warning alerts with neighbouring countries.

What is the need of such system?

- Flash floods are highly localised events of short duration with a very high peak and usually have less than six hours between the occurrence of the rainfall and peak flood.
- There is a general lack of flash flood warning capabilities and capacities among countries across the world.
- Recognising that flash floods have a particularly disastrous impact on lives and properties of the affected populations, the 15th WMO Congress had approved the implementation of a Flash Flood Guidance System (FFGS) project with global coverage.

BASE YEAR FOR CONSUMER PRICE INDEX- IW REVISED FROM 2001 TO 2016

◎ **CONTEXT:** The Union government revised the base year for computing Consumer Price Index (Industrial Workers) CPI-IW from the present 2001 to 2016 after a gap of 15 years.

◎ **ABOUT:** **What is CPI-IW?**

- The CPI-IW is the single most important price statistics, which has financial implications.
- It is primarily used to regulate the dearness allowance of government employees and the workers in the industrial sectors.
- It is a measure that examines the weighted average of prices of a basket of consumer goods and services, such as transportation, food, and medical care.
- The CPI-IW is used primarily for measuring the Dearness Allowance (DA) payable to workers in the organised sector including PSUs, banks and insurance companies, besides government employees.
- It also provides inputs to government in **macro policy planning**.
- It is calculated by taking price changes for each item in the predetermined basket of goods and averaging them.

Who maintains Consumer Price Index in India?

- In India, there are four consumer price index numbers, which are calculated, and these are as follows:
 - ▶ CPI for Industrial Workers (IW)
 - ▶ CPI for Agricultural Labourers (AL)
 - ▶ CPI for Rural Labourers (RL)
 - ▶ CPI for Urban Non-Manual Employees (UNME)
- The **Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation** collects CPI (UNME) data and compiles it.
- The remaining three (CPI-IW, CPI-AL, CPI-RL) are collected by the **Labour Bureau** in the **Ministry of Labour**.

The Base Year

- As per the norm, base year of price index numbers should be revised at frequent intervals generally not exceeding 10 years to reflect the changes that take place in the consumption pattern of consumers.
- Before the latest revision, the series was revised from 1944 to 1949; 1949 to 1960; 1960 to 1982 and 1982 to 2001.

The first Index for September (base year-2016)

- The Government also released the first index, with 2016 as the base year.
- The index for September, calculated for 88 centres as opposed to the previous 78 centres, was 118.
- The sample size was increased from 41,040 families to 48,384, and the number of selected markets for collecting retail price data from 289 to 317.
- The weight to food and beverage was reduced from 46.2% to 39%, while spending on housing increased from 15.2% to 17%.

Changes in the consumption pattern

- The new series also incorporates the changes in the consumption pattern of the working class families since the earlier base year of 2001.
- Under the new series,
 - the weightage for the food group has gone down to 39.17 per cent from 46.2 per cent in the 2001 series
 - The weight of miscellaneous items, like education and health has risen to 30.31 per cent from 23.26 per cent.
 - The weight of housing and clothing and footwear have changed to 16.87 per cent from 15.27 per cent and to 6.08 per cent from 6.57 per cent.
 - Weight of fuel and light segment will now have a weight of 5.5 per cent as against 6.43 per cent earlier
 - Pan, supari, tobacco and intoxicants will hold 2.07 per cent weight as against 2.27 per cent.

PROJECT LION COULD DISPLACE MALDHARIS WITHIN GIR TO CREATE 'LEONINE EDEN'

◎ **CONTEXT:** Maldharis, a traditional pastoral people found in and around the Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary, might end up being uprooted from their homes, if the Project Lion proposal takes shape, as per a report.

◎ **ABOUT:**

- **What is Project Lion?**
 - Project Lion was launched by the government on August 15, 2020.
 - The proposal, created by the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)** and the Gujarat forest department, talks of creating 'an inviolate space of 1,000 square kilometres' (sq km).
 - ▶ Inviolates spaces are areas free from anthropomorphic pressures.
 - ▶ Resource extraction of forest produce like fuel wood, fodder and minor forest produce as well as human habitation are not allowed in such places.

- **The proposal reads:**

"It is important that Project Lion restores sufficient exclusive lion habitat of about 1,000 sq km through incentivised voluntary relocation of forest villages and Maldhari (local pastoral communities) settlements from within the Gir Conservation Areas so that the only surviving Asiatic lion population gets the space it requires for performing its ecological role."

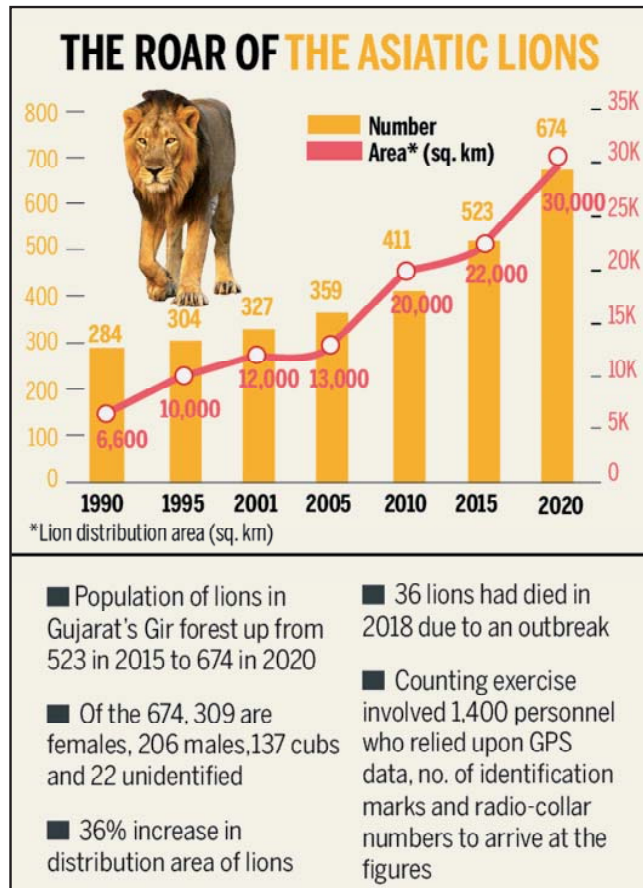
- The proposal draws from the practices adopted by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), the national body in charge for steering the government's flagship tiger conservation programme, Project Tiger.

Asiatic Lions

- Asiatic lion is the sub-species named *Panthera leo persica*.

Quick facts

- **Common name:** Asiatic Lion
- **Scientific name:** *Panthera leo persica*
- **Type:** Mammals
- **Group name:** Pride
- **Average life span in the wild:** 16 to 18 years
- **Weight:** 300 to 500 pounds
- **IUCN Red List Status:** Endangered



- Indian Lions are mostly found in North western and central parts of India and are easily spotted in the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary.
- According to the latest count, the lion population has registered an increase of 25 per cent in the last five years and now stands at 674.

Where's the problem?

- Lions are found in Gujarat across an area of 30,000 sq km called the Asiatic Lion Landscape (ALL).
- But only 250 sq km of the Gir National Park is the exclusive space for lions while the rest is shared with people, according to the Project Lion proposal.
- Presently Maldhari and lions coexist in a win-win state where lions get a considerable part of their food from Maldhari livestock and Maldharis profit substantially by free access to forest resources.

Maldharis – Devotees of lions

- In Gujarati, 'mal' refers to cattle and 'dhari' means owner. So the word Maldhari means owner of cattle stock.
- Though Maldharis, a community whose members belong to castes such as Bharwad and Rabari - of Gir, Alech and Barda - were included among the Scheduled Tribes since 1956, they are not classified as STs outside those forest areas.
- Six generations of Maldharis have been living in the Gir and they have refused the government decision to move them out of the forest.
- The Maldharis earn a living by selling milk and milk products other forest produce in towns.

WORLD POLIO DAY 2020, WHERE DOES INDIA STAND?

◎ CONTEXT

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

◎ ABOUT

• What is Polio?

- Polio, or poliomyelitis, is a disabling and life-threatening disease caused by the poliovirus.
- The virus spreads from person to person and can infect a person's spinal cord, causing paralysis (can't move parts of the body).
- **Transmission:** Poliovirus is very contagious and spreads through person-to-person contact. It lives in an infected person's throat and intestines.

World Polio Day

- World Polio Day was established by Rotary International over a decade ago to commemorate the birth of Jonas Salk, who led the first team to develop the vaccine against the disease.
- In the last three decades, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), led by national governments and the WHO, has been monitoring the disease situation globally.

What are the symptoms?

- Most people who get infected with poliovirus (about 72 out of 100) will not have any visible symptoms. About 1 out of 4 people with poliovirus infection will have flu-like symptoms that may include:
 - Sore throat
 - Fever
 - Tiredness
 - Nausea
 - Headache
 - Stomach pain
- These symptoms usually last 2 to 5 days, then go away on their own.
- A smaller proportion of people with poliovirus infection will develop other, more serious symptoms that affect the brain and spinal cord:
 - **Paresthesia** (feeling of pins and needles in the legs)
 - **Meningitis** (infection of the covering of the spinal cord and/or brain) occurs in about 1 out of 25 people with poliovirus infection
 - **Paralysis** (can't move parts of the body) or weakness in the arms, legs, or both, occurs in about 1 out of 200 people with poliovirus infection
 - Paralysis is the most severe symptom associated with polio, because it can lead to permanent disability and death.
 - ▶ Between 2 and 10 out of 100 people who have paralysis from poliovirus infection die, because the virus affects the muscles that help them breathe.
 - ▶ Even children who seem to fully recover can develop new muscle pain, weakness, or paralysis as adults, 15 to 40 years later. This is called **post-polio syndrome**.

POLIO

A notifiable disease under the Prevention & Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988

Transmitted through contaminated food & water/faecal-oral route

Can only be prevented through immunisation


Children under 5 years old are particularly vulnerable to the poliovirus

IMMUNISATION


- **Inoculant:**
Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV), given by injection
- **Amount:**
3 doses & 1 extra
- **Schedule:**
Given at 2, 3 & 5 months old, with the additional dose given at 18 months old (National Immunisation Table)

Vaccinations are critical to protect infants from preventable diseases


PREVENTION




Wash hands with soap & water after using the toilet




Ensure good sanitation facilities



Drink boiled/ bottled water

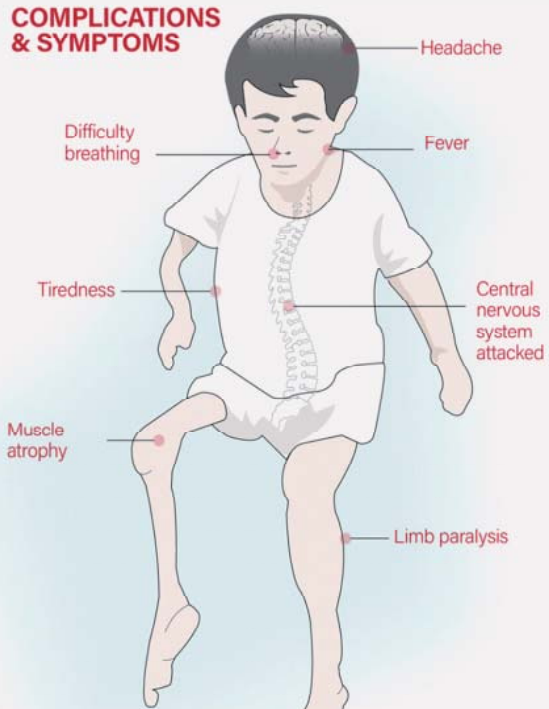


Use caution with undercooked food



Peel fruit to remove dirt & germs

COMPLICATIONS & SYMPTOMS



Source: World Health Organization (WHO), Ministry of Health, Malaysia & myhealth.gov.my Bernama Infographics

Prevention & Treatment

- There are two types of vaccine that can prevent polio:
 - **Inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV)** given as an injection in the leg or arm, depending on the patient's age. Only IPV has been used in the United States since 2000.
 - **Oral poliovirus vaccine (OPV)** is still used throughout much of the world.

The current status of the disease

- As per the WHO, since 1980, the cases of wild poliovirus have decreased by over 99.9 per cent as a result of vaccination efforts made around the world.
- In 2019, polio outbreaks were recorded in the Philippines, Malaysia, Ghana, Myanmar, China, Cameroon, Indonesia and Iran, which were mostly vaccine-derived (**a rare strain of the virus genetically mutated from the strain in the vaccine. According to the WHO, if the oral vaccine-virus is excreted and allowed to circulate in an un- or under-immunised population for at least 12 months, it can mutate to cause infections**).
- As per the CDC, Afghanistan and Pakistan are the two countries that are the last stronghold of the wild poliovirus.
- In Pakistan, the number of reported wild poliovirus cases has increased in 2020.
- On the other hand, on August 25, the African Region was certified as wild poliovirus free.

- As per the CDC, as of October 7, there were more than 440 cases of poliovirus around the world, as compared with 378 and 71 cases globally in 2018 and 2019 respectively.

Where does India stand?

- India was declared polio-free in January 2014, after three years of zero cases, an achievement widely believed to have been spurred by the successful pulse polio campaign in which all children were administered polio drops.
- The last case due to wild poliovirus in the country was detected on January 13, 2011.

INDIA GETS CHAIRMANSHIP OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION'S GOVERNING BODY

◎ **CONTEXT:** India has assumed the chairmanship of the governing body of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) after a gap of 35 years. Labour secretary Apurva Chandra has been elected as the chairperson of the governing body of the organisation for the period October 2020- June 2021.

- ◎ **ABOUT:**
- The only tripartite U.N. agency, since 1919 the ILO brings together governments, employers and workers of 187 member States, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.
 - The ILO was founded in 1919, in the wake of a destructive war, to pursue a vision based on the premise that universal, lasting peace can be established only if it is based on social justice.
 - The ILO became the first specialized agency of the UN in 1946.

The Governing Body

- The Chairperson of the Governing Body of ILO is a position of international repute.
- The governing body is the executive body of the ILO. It meets thrice a year, in March, June and November.
- It takes decisions on ILO policy, decides the agenda of the International Labour Conference, adopts the draft programme and budget of the organisation for submission to the conference, and elects the Director-General.
- At present, ILO has 187 members.

ILO in India

- India has been a founding Member of the ILO since 28 June 1919.
- In 1922, India became a permanent member of the ILO Governing Body and in 1928, the ILO office in India was established in New Delhi.
- The ILO's work in India is carried out within the framework of the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) which is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework.
- The overall objective of India's DWCP for 2018 to 2022 is to "create a more decent future of work through better quality jobs, and ensure the transition to formal employment and environment sustainability" and to support India's march towards "Leaving no one behind and Reach the furthest behind first" as articulated in the 2030 UN Agenda.

INDIA-NEPAL BORDER DISPUTE

◎ **CONTEXT:** After remaining closed for around 7 months due to coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, the Indo-Nepal border was reopened but Nepal government has decided to keep the border closed and has deployed police at the border.



How did it all start?

- India and Nepal share a 1,800 km (1,118 mile) border.
- Despite the diplomatic relationship between the two countries, the border dispute is speculated to have started a long time ago.
- A major misunderstanding between India and Nepal occurred when **India's new map** was released in November 2019, displaying **Kalapani as part of the Indian state of Uttarakhand**.
- However, the sudden outbreak of the border dispute was triggered when a new **80 km-long road in the Himalayas**, connecting to the border with China, was inaugurated at the **Lipulekh Pass**.
 - Lipulekh, in the Uttarakhand state of India, is a Himalayan pass on the border between India and the Tibet region of China.
 - This pass is located near Nepal, not in Nepal. Lipulekh pass was mainly launched for the wellness of pilgrims, as there is no other proper means of road transport present for the pilgrims to reach Kailash.
 - So, the Indian government has inaugurated an 80 kilometer long road in the Lipulekh pass for the benefit of pilgrims.
 - The new road is now the quickest link between Delhi and the Tibetan plateau in China. Hence, the road serves pilgrims to reach Kailas and Manasarovar with ease.

What are the disputed areas?

- Lipulekh and Kalapani are major regions in India, and the Susta region in Nepal is covered in the border dispute between India and Nepal. The territorial dispute between India and Nepal includes an area of 400 km² at the India-Nepal-China tri-junction region.
- **Limpiyadhura** is the tri-junction point where the territories of India-Nepal-China meet.
- The **Kalapani territory** is a region under Indian administration as a sector of Pithoragarh district in the Uttarakhand state, but has also been claimed by Nepal since 1998.

- However, the Nepal government claims that Kalapani province lies in Darchula district, **Sudurpaschim Pradesh**.
- Kalapani has been controlled by India's Indo-Tibetan border security forces since 1962.
- But Nepal demands the withdrawal of the Indian border forces in Kalapani area because they are claiming that Kalapani belongs to them.
- **Lipulekh** is a Himalayan pass situated on the border between Uttarakhand state of India and the Tibetan autonomous region of China, near their trijunction with Nepal.
 - Nepal affirms that the southern side of the Lipulekh pass, called Kalapani territory (which is controlled by India), belongs to Nepal.
 - The pass is near the Chinese trading town of and it has been used since ancient times by traders, mendicants and pilgrims traveling between India and China.
 - Lipulekh pass is also used by pilgrims to reach Kailas and Manasarovar.
- **Susta territory** is an area under Nepal province and it is near Nichloul, Uttar Pradesh, India.
 - Susta is a rural municipal region in the Parasi district present in the southern side of Nepal.
 - This area under dispute totals over 140 km² and is being controlled by the Indian Government.

THE US 'STATE SPONSOR OF TERRORISM' LIST

◎ **CONTEXT:**

In recent weeks, Sudan became the third Arab nation to normalise relations with Israel, days after the US removed it from its State Sponsor of Terrorism list, of which the North African country was a part for over 27 years.

◎ **ABOUT:**

● **What is the US State Sponsor of Terrorism list?**

- The US Secretary of State has been given powers to designate countries that "have repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism" as "State Sponsors of Terrorism".
- The US can place four categories of sanctions on countries part of the list–
 - ▶ restrictions on U.S. foreign assistance
 - ▶ a ban on defence exports and sales
 - ▶ certain controls over exports of dual use items
 - ▶ miscellaneous financial and other restrictions
- Sanctions can also be placed on countries and persons that engage in certain trade with designated countries.

● **Who are in the list?**

- After Sudan's delisting, three countries remain with the designation:
 - ▶ Syria (listed in 1979)
 - ▶ Iran (1984)
 - ▶ North Korea (2017)

- Apart from Sudan, other countries which were once part of the list and later removed include Iraq (first removed in 1982, relisted in 1990, and again removed in 2004), South Yemen (1990, when it merged with North Yemen), Libya (2006) and Cuba (2015).



- ◎ **BACKGROUND:**
- The US added Sudan to the terrorism list in 1993, after it was accused of harbouring groups such as Hezbollah and Palestinian militant outfits which Washington deems as terrorists.
 - At the time, Sudan was ruled by dictator Omar al-Bashir, who had come to power in 1989 after toppling a democratically elected government.
 - Bashir, who enforced hardline Islamist policies over Sudan for three decades until his ouster last year, was also blamed for the 1998 bombings of US embassies in East Africa, and the 2000 bombing of the US warship Cole in Yemen.
 - After its designation in the US terrorism list, Sudan was cut off from the global economy, and was starved of foreign investment.
 - The country's economy suffered another blow in 2011, when Christians and Animists in southern parts of the country, already up in arms against Khartoum for decades, seceded to form the new country of South Sudan, taking away more than three-quarters of Sudan's oil reserves.
 - The country's financial woes led to high inflation and price rises in essential commodities, leading to protests that led to Bashir being ousted from power in 2019.

How the current removal will benefit Sudan?

- Sudan would rejoin the global economy– and be able to access foreign investments and debt relief from international financial institutions (IFIs).
- However, experts say that because the delisting has been linked to Sudan recognising Israel, its unelected government could face a domestic backlash, as many are blaming the US of arm-twisting Sudan into compliance.

THE PLASMA THERAPY DEBATE

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** Recently published findings on convalescent plasma therapy on Covid-19 patients have triggered a debate over its efficacy.
- ◎ **ABOUT:**
- **What is plasma therapy?**
 - Plasma is the liquid part of the blood. Convalescent plasma, extracted from the blood of patients recovering from an infection, is a source of antibodies against the infection.
 - The therapy involves using their plasma to help others recover.

WHAT IS PLASMA THERAPY

THE THERAPY

- Entails giving patients a **transfusion with plasma** (or serum) **from those who have developed antibodies** to a virus or bacteria
- This process **grants the patient some passive immunity**. Convalescent blood is an option if there are no medicines or vaccines to treat an infectious disease
- The first valid trial was done in **1892** for diphtheria, using serum from animals

SIDE-EFFECTS

- No definitive studies exist showing effectiveness. In case of dengue, convalescent serum was found to make patients worse, as it led the virus to replicate
- There could be transfusion-associated reactions. Unknown pathogens could be transferred into a patient during transfusion

RISKS FOR COVID-19 PATIENTS

- Potential risks of therapy remain unknown. US FDA rules say suitable donors are those whose infection began 28 days prior
- A study from Wuhan published in March showed that **10 adults who were severely ill with Covid-19 tolerated the transfusion well and started developing antibodies** that helped reduce the viral load within seven days

COUNTRIES THAT HAVE TRIED PLASMA THERAPY FOR COVID-19

China, South Korea, Canada, US, Italy

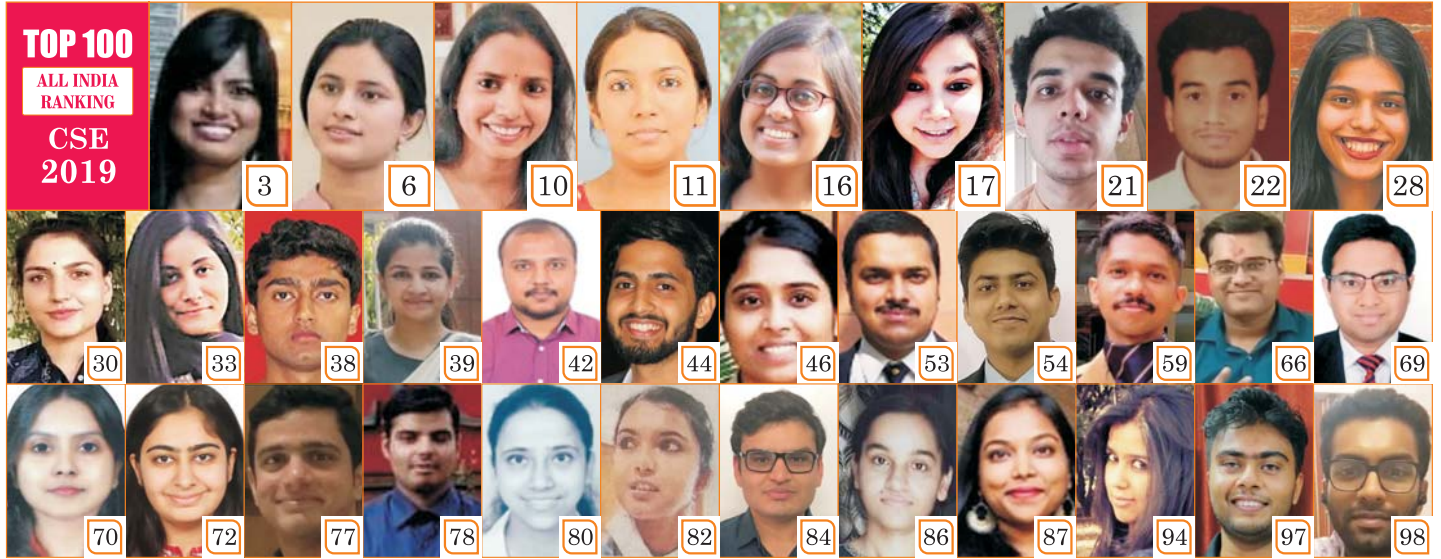
- For Covid-19, this has been one of the treatment options. The donor would have to be a documented case of Covid-19 and healthy for 28 days since the last symptoms.
- **What has been found in the trials?**
 - The country's largest such trial, known by the acronym PLACID has found the following:
 - Convalescent plasma was ineffective in arresting Covid-19
 - While use of convalescent plasma seemed to improve resolution of shortness of breath and fatigue in patients with moderate Covid-19, this did not translate into a reduction in 28-day mortality or progression to severe disease.

GS SCORE

An Institute for Civil Services



CSE RESULTS



SUCCESS IS A PRACTICE WE DO!

