

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY

WEEK - 2
APRIL, 2020

MAINS

PRELIMS

- India's largest bank reduces its MCLR'

- Market Intervention Scheme
RBI to set up exclusive wing for banking fraud oversight

ECONOMY

- Integrated Government Online training' (iGOT) portal'

- Medical devices to be treated as drugs

GOVERNANCE

- The Jallianwala Massacre

HISTORY

- Is WHO China-centric?

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- Can bacille Calmette-Guerin be a cure for Coronavirus?

- Cytokine Storm
Fall Armyworm

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- India's national research laboratories to conduct testing for 12. COVID-19

- Madhuban Gajar
➤ NASA's Artemis Project

- World Health Day
- SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- National Security Act

SECURITY

- Great Depression

ECONOMY

- Third Mass Bleaching

ENVIRONMENT

- Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation (Adaptation of State Laws) Order 2020

GOVERNANCE

- Cyber Attacks are on Rise: INTERPOL

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- Violence Against Women

SOCIAL ISSUE

GISSCORE

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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 (APRIL, 2020)

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SECTION: A

(MAINS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

GREAT DEPRESSION

CONTEXT

- Due to Coronavirus, businesses the world over are struggling. This reversal is worse than the Global Financial Crisis. It's beginning to rival the Great Depression.

● BACKGROUND:

- With the novel coronavirus pandemic severely affecting the global economy, some experts have begun comparing the current crisis with the Great Depression — the devastating economic decline of the 1930s that went on to shape countless world events.
- Italy, Spain, India, and the United Kingdom are among countries in lockdown.
- A state of emergency declared in the United States on March 13 and major restrictions rolled out across several states since then, which are set to be widened, have sounded alarm bells louder than the ones ending volatile trading in global bourses.
- Shuttered state and municipal governments, closed school gates, empty tills in restaurants and bars and boarded-up businesses are all part of an induced economic coma, with the hope that reanimation will occur when the brunt of the coronavirus has passed.
- Experts have warned that unemployment levels in some countries could reach those from the 1930s era, when the unemployment rate was as high as around 25 percent in the United States.
- Currently, unemployment levels in the US are already estimated to be at 13 per cent, highest since the Great Depression, according to a New York Times report.
- In the pandemic-induced depression scenario, a sudden negative supply shock reduces the labor supply (in person-hours), thereby causing sharp decreases in employment, output, and income.

unemployed and nearly half the country's banks had failed. In almost every country of the world, there were massive job losses, deflation, and a drastic contraction in output.

- Unemployment in the US increased from 3.2 per cent to 24.9 per cent between 1929 and 1933. In the UK, it rose from 7.2 per cent to 15.4 per cent between 1929 and 1932.

Economic depression:

- Economic depression is a time period when the economy slows down and there is widespread unemployment, lack of investments and scarce demand for consumer goods.
- An economic depression is primarily caused by worsening consumer confidence that leads to a decrease in demand, eventually resulting in companies going out of business.
- When consumers stop buying products and paying for services, companies need to make budget cuts, including employing fewer workers.
- The other major factors that lead to economic depression:
 - Stock market crash
 - Decrease in manufacturing orders
 - Control of prices and wages
 - Deflation
 - Oil price hikes
 - Loss of consumer confidence

● ANALYSIS:

What was Great Depression?

- Great depression was the worst economic downturn in the history of the industrialized world, lasting from 1929 to 1939. It began on "Black Thursday," October 24, 1929.
- It began after the stock market crash of October 1929, which sent Wall Street into a panic and wiped out millions of investors.
- Over the next several years, consumer spending and investment dropped, causing steep declines in industrial output and employment as failing companies laid off workers.
- By 1933, when the Great Depression reached its lowest point, some 15 million Americans were

What caused the Great Depression?

- Throughout the 1920s, the economy of the United States expanded rapidly, and the nation's total wealth more than doubled between 1920 and 1929, a period dubbed "**the Roaring Twenties.**"
- The stock market of the US was the scene of reckless speculation, where everyone from millionaire tycoons to cooks and janitors poured their savings into stocks.
- As a result, the stock market underwent rapid expansion, reaching its peak in August 1929.
- By then, production had already declined and unemployment had risen, leaving stock prices much higher than their actual value.
- Additionally, wages at that time were low, consumer debt was proliferating, the agricultural sector of

the economy was struggling due to drought and falling food prices and banks had an excess of large loans that could not be liquidated.

- During the summer of 1929, the American economy entered a mild recession as consumer spending slowed and unsold goods began to pile up, which in turn slowed factory production.
- Nonetheless, stock prices continued to rise, and by the fall of that year had reached stratospheric levels that could not be justified by expected future earnings.
- On October 24, 1929, as nervous investors began selling overpriced shares en masse, the stock market got crashed.
- A record 12.9 million shares were traded that day, known as **"Black Thursday."**
- Five days later, on October 29 or **"Black Tuesday,"** some 16 million shares were traded. Millions of shares ended up worthless, and those investors who had bought stocks "on margin" (with borrowed money) were wiped out completely.
- The global adherence to the gold standard, which joined countries around the world in a fixed currency exchange, helped spread economic woes from the United States throughout the world, especially Europe.
- In short, the Great Depression was induced by a large negative shock to aggregate demand.

Great Depression & impact on India:

- The Depression had an important impact on India's freedom struggle. Due to the global crisis, there was a drastic fall in agricultural prices, the mainstay of India's economy, and a severe credit contraction occurred as colonial policymakers refused to devalue the rupee.
- German economic historian **Dietmar Rothermund** writes in a 1980 paper at the Indian History Congress
- "The decline of agricultural prices, which was aggravated by British financial policy in India, made substantial sections of the peasantry rise in protest and this protest was articulated by members of the National Congress."
- The effects of the Depression became visible around the harvest season in 1930, soon after Mahatma Gandhi had launched the Civil Disobedience movement in April the same year.
- There were "No Rent" campaigns in many parts of the country, and radical Kisan Sabhas were started in Bihar and eastern UP.
- Agrarian unrest provided a groundswell of support to the Congress, whose reach was yet to extend into rural India.
- The endorsement by farming classes is believed to be among the reasons that enabled the party to achieve its landslide victory in the 1936-37 provincial elections held under **the Government of India Act, 1935**— which significantly increased the party's political might for years to come.

What Ended the Great Depression?

- In 1932, the country elected Franklin D. Roosevelt as president. He promised to create federal government programs to end the Great Depression.
- Within 100 days, he signed the New Deal into law, creating 43 new agencies throughout its lifetime.
- They were designed to create jobs, allow unionization, and provide unemployment insurance. Many of these programs still exist.
- They help safeguard the economy and prevent another depression.
- In the last, the Great Depression reshaped America, shifting migration patterns, and spawning new styles of music, art and literature. Under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, however, it also prompted creation of an array of programs like unemployment insurance, Social Security retirements benefits, and bank deposit insurance that make a repeat unlikely.

The difference:

- The 1929 economic crisis was triggered by stock market speculation, while the reason underlying the current crisis is the fact that we are face to face with a freeze in the economy due to the coronavirus epidemic.
- There was a situation in both the 1929 and 2020 coronavirus crises that had an adverse effect on workers. The further the coronavirus spreads and the further the economy shrinks, its impact on unemployment becomes deeper.
- The two crises are not only economic, but they rather stand out as a social and, in fact, as a political matter. In the event that the coronavirus epidemic is prolonged, it appears the unemployment issue will be the most serious matter in the social and political domain.
- The key difference today is that unlike other financial crises, health concerns trump economic ones.
- The zero growth we now project for 2020 will mark the second-weakest year for the global economy in almost 50 years of comparable data, with only 2009, in the depths of the financial crisis, worse.

CONCLUSION

The higher the toll of the virus, and the longer the outbreak lasts, the more damage to the world economy. Economy can return to normalcy as it happened after past recessions but once life is lost, it can not be restored. Hence, it is time for showing patience, contributing towards containment of this virus, supporting to the livelihood of masses and show compassion to deprived section of the society who are worst affected due to the outbreak of this virus.

THIRD MASS BLEACHING

CONTEXT

- Australia's Great Barrier Reef has suffered its most widespread coral bleaching on record. It is a big threat posed by climate change to the world's largest living organism.

◎ BACKGROUND:

- Bleaching was first seen on the reef in 1998 - at the time, the hottest year on record - but as temperature records continue to tumble its frequency has increased, giving coral less time to recover.
- Back-to-back bleaching events in 2016 and 2017 prompted the government agency overseeing the reef to downgrade its long-term outlook to 'very poor'.
- Aerial analysis conducted by Terry Hughes, director of the ARC Center of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies at James Cook University, and others from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, found that coastal reefs along the entire length of the iconic reef - a stretch of about 1,500 miles (2,300 kilometers) from the Torres Strait in the north, right down to the reef's southern boundary - have been severely bleached.
- This marks the third mass bleaching event on the reef in just the last five years and scientists say that the rapid warming of the planet due to human emissions of heat-trapping gases are to blame.

◎ ANALYSIS:

Why coral reefs are important?

- **Food resource:** More than 275 million people live within 10 kilometers of coastline and within 30 kilometers of coral. One eighth of the world's population, approximately 850 million people live within 100 kilometers of coral and are likely to reap the benefits of ecosystem services provided by coral reefs.
- **Economic benefits:** Coral reefs benefit about 850 million people worldwide, with at least 275 million depending directly on reefs for livelihoods and sustenance.
- **A medical future:** Coral reefs also contribute to the advancement of research. Reef organisms are used in the treatment of diseases such as certain cancers including leukemia, 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.
- **Tourism:** The reefs attract tourism 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.

- **3-D Habitat:** Coral reefs only take up about 1% of the ocean floor, but host an estimated 25% of all ocean species. Coral reefs provide complex, three-dimensional habitat for a huge variety of plants and animals (large and small!), and protect many young fish species as they grow.

What are the mains drivers of coral bleaching?

- Warm ocean temperatures are the main driver of coral bleaching, which is when corals turn white as a stress response to water that is too warm.
 - ▶ This happens because they are expelling the algae that grow inside them, which is their main energy source and gives them their color.
 - ▶ Bleaching doesn't kill coral immediately. But if temperatures remain high, eventually the coral will die, destroying a natural habitat for many species of marine life.
- **Ocean acidification:** Coral reefs are being damaged by ocean acidification—which occurs when the ocean absorbs carbon and becomes acidified. Increasing acidification degrades the physical structure of these reefs. This affects all the creatures living among the reef.
- **Carbon pollution:** Carbon pollution is warming our oceans and causing corals around the world to bleach. It has already led to increased levels of coral bleaching around the world, which are predicted to increase in frequency and severity in the coming decades.

Why is it a concern?

- The bleaching event this year is not only the largest, in terms of the area affected, but also second most severe on record, with the damage likely to be lasting and irreparable.
- In 2016, bleaching killed more than half of the shallow-water corals on the northern region of the Great Barrier Reef. A second mass bleaching in 2017 meant the coral could not recover.
- This year, the cumulative footprint of bleaching has expanded further south, affecting more fragile and heat-sensitive corals.

- As bleaching expands and becomes more frequent, corals are at greater risk of dying off -- and that will be devastating not only for the region's biodiversity, but for the thousands of people whose life and livelihood depend on the reefs.
- Past bleaching events have typically occurred in years with a strong El Nino-Southern Oscillation, a climate phenomena that can increase the odds of a host of extreme weather events around the globe. But as summers get hotter year on year in Australia, scientists found that bleaching can occur

even when El Nino is not active. That could have a huge impact on whether the reefs can recover.

- Normally, it takes decades for a reef to recover. In that case, what chance do we have for reefs recovering when events are coming back this fast? Though researchers around the world are exploring ways to revive reefs, those efforts will not benefit if the world do not address the root cause of reef's demise i.e., human caused climate change. The world needs to address climate change to protect coral reefs.



JAMMU AND KASHMIR REORGANISATION (ADAPTATION OF STATE LAWS) ORDER 2020

CONTEXT

- Eight months after the Centre revoked Article 370 of the Indian constitution, it has now notified 'Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (adaptation of state laws) order 2020' spelling out domicile of Jammu and Kashmir and who is eligible for employment in the region.

◎ BACKGROUND:

- On August 5, 2019, the Centre, amid siege, lockdown and arrests of nearly 8000 people, revoked the special status of J&K, which was guaranteed under Article 370 and Article 35A of the Constitution.
- Under Article 370 Jammu and Kashmir had a separate constitution and Article 35A prohibited people from outside from buying property in Jammu and Kashmir and ensuring job reservation for residents.
- Article 35A would empower the Government of J&K to define a class of persons as constituting "permanent residents" of the erstwhile State.
- Also, it would allow the government to confer on these persons special rights and privileges with respect to matters of public employment and acquisition of immovable property in the State.
- Annulled Article 35-A was included into the Constitution of India in 1954 by a presidential order made under Article 370 of the Constitution of India.

◎ ANALYSIS:

What does the law say?

- The domiciles under the order have been defined under Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services (Decentralisation and Recruitment) Act.
- Domiciles:** Under the law, the domiciles have been defined as those who have resided for a period of 15 years in the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir or have studied for a period of seven years and appeared in Class 10/12 examination in an educational institutions located in what is now a union territory.
 - It includes children of those central government officials, All India services officers, officials of public sector undertaking and autonomous body of central government, public sector banks, officials of statutory bodies, officials of central universities and recognized research institutes of central government who have

served in Jammu and Kashmir for a total period of ten years.

- Issuing authority:** The law has empowered Tehsildars within their territorial jurisdiction to issue domicile certificates.
 - The government of J&K UT has also been empowered to notify any other officer to be Competent Authority for issuance of domicile certificate.
- The law says any person fulfilling the conditions would be deemed to be domicile of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir for the purpose of appointment of any post carrying a pay scale of not more than level-4 (25500) under the UT of J&K or under local or any other (other than cantonment board) within the UT of Jammu and Kashmir.
- According to the new law, jobs up to lowest level of non-gazetted rank are reserved for Jammu and Kashmir domiciles.
- The provision, however, would be also available to children of central government employees serving in Jammu and Kashmir for ten years and all those non-locals residing in Jammu and Kashmir for more than 15 years.

The change:

- Employment of people in Jammu and Kashmir was earlier defined under Article 35A. Its scrapping has led the Centre to immediately bring into effect new terms of eligibility for jobs for people in the region.
- The Centre's redefinition of a domicile marks a complete departure in norm that was earlier held in the erstwhile state, previously under Article 370 and Article 35A.
- Prior to the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A, and its bifurcation into two Union territories, it was the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly that had the right to define a "resident" of the state.

109 laws amended, 29 repealed:

- The Centre has repealed the J&K Civil Services (special provisions) Act.

- It has also introduced changes in Sections 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 13 of the J&K Civil Services (decentralisation and recruitment) Act, 2010.
- The Act is among 109 laws of the erstwhile state that have been amended through Tuesday's order that also repeals 29 other laws.
- While Section 5A now states that no person shall be eligible for appointment to a post carrying a pay scale for not more than Level 4 "unless he is a domicile of UT of J&K", in Sections 6, 7 and 8 the words "permanent resident of the State" have been substituted with "Domicile of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir".
- These sections of the J&K Civil Services Act, 2010, dealt with appointments at district, divisional and state levels.

- The Section 13 of J&K Civil Services Act, 2010, which has been omitted completely, defined residence in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The impact:

- These two years will prove to be a very crucial transition period for Kashmir from being a state to now being a full-fledged Union territory.
- As far as the future of the reorganization is concerned, it will take at least two years for the dust to settle because a division is not just geographic division of a state.
- Laws will have to be changed, amendments will have to be made accordingly, administration will have to be restructured and governance will need to be overhauled, among other things.

CYBER ATTACKS ARE ON RISE: INTERPOL

CONTEXT

- An inter-governmental law enforcement organization, INTERPOL, the International Criminal Police Organization, has cautioned that it has detected a significant increase in cyber-attacks against hospitals around the world that are engaged in the COVID-19 response. Attacks that could “directly lead to deaths.”

◎ BACKGROUND:

- With over a million confirmed cases of SARS-CoV-2 virus across more than 200 nations and territories, coronavirus has spread its filthy feathers across the whole world.
- Globally, the total number of coronavirus cases neared 1.35 million while the death toll crossed 74,000.
- However, some people are out there who seek to gain advantage from crisis.
- According to an Interpol warning, cybercriminals are exploiting the coronavirus crisis and threatening to hold hospitals to ransom despite the life saving work they are carrying out.
- The International Criminal Police Organisation has issued a global alert to health care organizations about the ransomware attacks, often disguised as official advice from government agencies, which are designed to lock administrators out of the critical IT systems they need.
- Interpol's Cybercrime Threat Response has detected a “significant increase” in the number of attempted ransomware attacks against key organizations around the world.
- ▶ **Ransomware:** One form of cyberextortion is the **ransomware** attack, in which the attacker gains access to an organization's systems and encrypts its documents and files - anything of potential value - making the data inaccessible until a ransom is paid.
- **Cryptojacking:** An attack that uses scripts to mine cryptocurrencies within browsers without the user's consent. Cryptojacking attacks may involve loading cryptocurrency mining software to the victim's system.
- **Identity theft:** An attack that occurs when an individual accesses a computer to glean a user's personal information, which they then use to steal that person's identity or access their valuable accounts, such as banking and credit cards.
- **Cyberespionage:** A crime involving a cybercriminal who hacks into systems or networks to gain access to confidential information held by a government or other organization.
 - ▶ Cyberespionage activities can include every type of cyberattack to gather, modify or destroy data, as well as using network-connected devices, like webcams or closed-circuit TV (CCTV) cameras, to spy on a targeted individual or groups and monitoring communications, including emails, text messages and instant messages.
- **Software piracy:** An attack that involves the unlawful copying, distribution and use of software programs with the intention of commercial or personal use. Trademark violations, copyright infringements and patent violations are often associated with this type of cybercrime.
- **Exit scam:** The dark web, not surprisingly, has given rise to the digital version of an old crime known as the exit scam. In today's form, dark web administrators divert virtual currency held in marketplace escrow accounts to their own accounts -- essentially, criminals stealing from other criminals.
- **Dark web:** The **deep web** refers to all parts of the internet (sites, e-shops, forums, etc.) that are not accessible by a regular search engine like Google or Bing.

◎ ANALYSIS:

Cyber Crimes:

- The bane of the internet, cybercrime refers to any and all illegal activities carried out using technology.
- Cybercriminals, who range from rogue individuals to organized crime groups to state-sponsored factions, use techniques like phishing, social engineering, and all kinds of malware to pursue their nefarious plans.
- Cybercrime is defined as a crime in which a computer is the object of the crime (hacking, phishing, spamming) or is used as a tool to commit an offense (child pornography, hate crimes).

Types of Cybercrimes:

- **Cyberextortion:** A crime involving an attack or threat of an attack coupled with a demand for money to stop the attack.

What INTERPOL has found?

- INTERPOL has now issued a “**purple notice**” alert to law enforcement in all 194 member countries

(including India) to support the global fight against this cybercriminal endeavor.

- In the alert, Interpol said organisations at the forefront of the global response to the COVID-19 outbreak had also become targets of ransomware attacks, which were “designed to lock them out of their critical systems in an attempt to extort payments”.
- The agency’s Cybercrime Threat Response Team had detected an increase in the number of attempted ransomware attacks against key organisations and infrastructure engaged in the virus response.
- This despite less than one month ago, the operators of two of the most prevalent ransomware attack threats promising not to attack healthcare targets during the COVID-19 crisis.

About INTERPOL:

- Founded in 1923, Interpol is an international police organisation made up of 194 member countries.
- The International Criminal Police Organization, or the Interpol is an international police agency that helps other law-enforcement agencies track criminals who operate across national borders.
- In each country, an INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB) provides the central point of contact for the General Secretariat and other NCBs.
- An NCB is run by national police officials and usually sits in the government ministry responsible for policing.

About INTERPOL Notices:

- INTERPOL Notices are international requests for cooperation or alerts allowing police in member countries to share critical crime-related information.
- **Red Notice:** To seek the location and arrest of wanted persons wanted for prosecution or to serve a sentence.
- **Yellow Notice:** To help locate missing persons, often minors, or to help identify persons who are unable to identify themselves.
- **Blue Notice:** To collect additional information about a person’s identity, location or activities in relation to a crime.
- **Black Notice:** To seek information on unidentified bodies.
- **Green Notice:** To provide warning about a person’s criminal activities, where the person is considered to be a possible threat to public safety.

- **Orange Notice:** To warn of an event, a person, an object or a process representing a serious and imminent threat to public safety.
- **Purple Notice:** To seek or provide information on modus operandi, objects, devices and concealment methods used by criminals.

Cyber Laws and Legislation in India and Abroad:

At Global Level:

Budapest Convention on Cyber Security:

- It is the first international treaty seeking to address Internet and computer crime by harmonizing national laws, improving investigative techniques, and increasing cooperation among nations.
- It’s objective is to pursue a common criminal policy aimed at the protection of society against cybercrime, especially by adopting appropriate legislation and fostering international cooperation.

International Telecommunication Union (ITU):

- ITU is the specialized agency of the United Nations which deals with adopting international standards to:
- ensure seamless global communications and interoperability for next-generation networks
- building confidence and security in the use of ICTs
- emergency communications to develop early warning systems and to provide access to communications during and after disasters, etc.

International Governance Forum (IGF):

- Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is a multi-stakeholder forum for policy dialogue on issues of Internet governance which brings together all stakeholders in the Internet governance debate.
- It facilitates a common understanding of how to maximize Internet opportunities and address risks and challenges.
- It is convened under the auspices of the **Secretary-General of the United Nations**.

National Level:

National Technical Research Organization (NTRO):

- NTRO is a highly specialized technical intelligence gathering agency.
- It develops technology capabilities in aviation and remote sensing, data gathering and processing,

cyber security, cryptology systems, strategic hardware and software development, and strategic monitoring.

National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC):

- National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre is envisaged to act as a 24x7 center to battle cybersecurity threats in strategic areas such as air control, nuclear and space.
- It is placed under the National Technical Research Organization.

CERT-In:

- The Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has been designated to serve as the national agency to perform the following functions:
 - To collect and analyse information on cyber incidents
 - To forecast and give alerts of cybersecurity incidents
 - To provide emergency measures for handling cybersecurity incidents
 - To coordinate cyber incident response activities
 - To issue guidelines, advisories, vulnerability notes and white papers relating to information security practices, procedures, prevention, response and reporting of cyber incidents

National Cyber Coordination Centre (NCCC):

- NCCC is a critical component of India's cyber security against hackers and espionage as well as to track terrorist activity online.
- It will scan the country's web traffic to detect real-time cybersecurity threats and alert various organizations as well as internet service providers for timely action. It also will coordinate between intelligence agencies, specifically during network intrusions and cyber-attacks.

Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS):

- CCTNS is a nationwide network infrastructure for evolution of IT-enabled state-of-the-art tracking system around "investigation of crime and detection of criminals".
- It is initiated in 2009 which aims at to interconnect about 15000 Police Stations and additional 5000 offices of supervisory police officers across the country and digitize data related to FIR registration, investigation and charge sheets in all Police Stations.

Information Technology Act, 2000:

- It is the most significant piece of legislation addressing conduct in cyberspace in India.

- It provides legal recognition to e-commerce and e-governance and facilitates its development as an alternative to paper-based traditional methods.
- The Act seeks to protect the advancement in technology by defining crimes, prescribing punishments, laying down procedures for investigation and forming regulatory authorities.

National Cyber Security Policy, 2013:

- The policy provides for developing effective Public-Private Partnership and collaborative engagements through technical and operational cooperation and contribution for enhancing the security of cyberspace.
- **Key-features:**
 - Creating a secure and resilient cyberspace
 - Creating a secure cyber ecosystem, generate trust in IT transactions
 - Creation of a 24 x 7 National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Center (NCIIPC)
 - Testing of ICT products and certifying them

Suggestive measures:

- There are a number of steps hospitals and others can take to protect their systems from a ransomware attack:
- Only open emails or download software/applications from trusted sources
- Do not click on links or open attachments in emails which you were not expecting to receive, or come from an unknown sender
- Secure email systems to protect from spam which could be infected
- Backup all important files frequently, and store them independently from your system (e.g. in the cloud, on an external drive)
- Ensure you have the latest anti-virus software installed on all systems and mobile devices, and that it is constantly running
- Use strong, unique passwords for all systems, and update them regularly

◎ CONCLUSION

In the current situation, prevention and mitigation are key, with the malware mainly being spread by emails. The hospitals and healthcare companies need to ensure hardware and software are kept up to date, and that essential files are backed up. Moreover, the public needs to be encouraged to exercise caution when buying medical supplies online during the current health crisis, with criminals capitalizing on the situation to run a range of financial scams.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

CONTEXT

- As the COVID-19 pandemic sweeps through the globe leaving behind a trail of destruction, most countries are implementing different versions of lockdowns to facilitate social and physical distancing. The basic assumption underlying almost all these policy decisions during a crisis like this is that the effect of the pandemic is gender neutral.

◎ BACKGROUND:

- As more and more countries have entered lockdown, globally there is an alarming upshot in domestic violence related distress calls to support helplines and response shelters.
- Domestic violence has serious economic, social and health consequences – not only for women and children, but also for the wider family. It is an acute problem in India.
- The majority of Indian women who experience domestic violence do not share it with anybody or seek help.
- Among those who do, a “pyramid of reporting” of domestic violence exists: Informal sources (natal family followed by friends) are favoured sources of support and very few women report violence via institutional routes (nongovernmental organisations and police).

◎ ANALYSIS:

Tale of domestic violence:

- Domestic violence is not physical violence alone. Domestic violence is any behavior the purpose of which is to gain power and control over a spouse, partner, girl/boyfriend or intimate family member.
- Abuse is a learned behavior; it is not caused by anger, mental problems, drugs or alcohol, or other common excuses.
- Type of domestic violence include:
 - Stalking
 - Common Stalking Behaviors
 - Stalking Victim Recommendations
 - Domestic Violence and Arizona Law
 - Some Common Ways Abusers Control Victims

Why this lockdown is more challenging for women?

- Currently, around 67 percent of the world’s healthcare workers are women, they are naturally more prone to infection.

- Women are already burdened with three times more unpaid care work than men. During lockdowns the burden increases manifold.
- As the lockdowns impose stricter control on one’s mobility, they put women in abusive relationships at extremely high risk of damage from physical, sexual and emotional abuse.
- As government directives close schools, colleges, universities globally and the workforce largely switches over to working from home, women and girls are left more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse.
- In support of this, data from west African countries in the wake of the 2014 Ebola outbreak showed that concurrent with the lockdowns and closure of workplaces, schools and colleges, there was a steady increase in rape, sexual assault and violence against women and girls.
- NGOs working in Sierra Leone reported an upshot in teenage pregnancy rates from rapes and assaults, as young women and girls were at much higher risk at home.
- Overall, over one year, sexual violence increased 40 percent.
- In 2018, a United Nations study suggested globally, home was the most unsafe place for women.
- Of all female murders, an overwhelming 82 percent happen in their marital homes, and are committed by an intimate partner or a family member.
- As special cases, the dowry related death and honour killings have found special mention in the report, where the natal home of a woman also frequently becomes a dangerous place for her.
- 6 percent women in the same age group have experienced sexual violence at least once in their lifetime.
- About 31 percent of married women have experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence by their spouses.

What is the situation at global level?

- Globally, violence against women affects one in three women. Closer home, the National Family Health Survey-4 (2015-16) (NFHS-4) suggests that 30 percent women in India in the age group of 15-

49 have experienced physical violence since the age of 15.

- From the Hubei province in China to Brazil, from France to the UK, countries from all continents have already noted a rise in violent crimes against women.
- In the province of Hubei in Wuhan, China, which is the heart of the first outbreak of the Coronavirus, domestic violence reports to police tripled during the February lockdown period and rose to 162 from 47 last year.
- According to local activists, 90 percent of the new cases have their roots in the COVID-19 related lockdown.
- **Brazil:** In Brazil state-run shelters are estimating 40-50 percent rise in demands from endangered women. European countries report 20-30 per cent increases in calls to domestic violence helplines, from Catalonia to Cyprus.
- **Spain:** In Spain, where lockdown rules are among the strictest, with heavy fines levied on anyone not complying, domestic violence related fatalities have been reported in Valencia.
- **France:** In France, the interior minister has reported domestic violence incidents have shot up by more than 30 per cent since the country went into lockdown on March 17.
- **Paris:** Paris alone reported an up shot of 36 percent.
- **United Kingdom:** In the UK, calls to the national abuse hotline has gone up to 65 percent last weekend.

Domestic violence in India:

- In India, the **National Commission of Women** has recorded 291 complaints of domestic violence in March and is now only receiving complaints via email.
- Alarming, the hotlines run by NGOs and volunteer organisations, that are usually the avenues for women to report such attacks are eerily silent.
- This drop probably reflects the continuous presence of the abuser at home during the lockdown.
- With curtailed mobility and a police force that is more than apathetic towards gender-based violence, women are losing even the avenues that could have saved them from abuse, and in extreme cases, death.
- Under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), police are not the first responder for women who experience domestic violence.
- The counselling centres are supposed to reach out to the complainants. During the lockdown the

closure of these services can be lethal for women who need them.

- India direly needs an alternative alert system and a swift response to rescue women from dangerous situations.

Constitutional provisions to curb violence (in India):

- The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its:
 - ▶ Preamble
 - ▶ Fundamental Rights
 - ▶ Fundamental Duties
 - ▶ Directive Principles
- The Constitution not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio-economic, education and political disadvantages faced by them.

Constitutional provisions:

- **Article 14:** It confers on men and women equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic and social sphere.
- **Article 15:** It prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, etc.
- **Article 16:** It provides for equality of opportunities matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the state.
- **Article 39(a)(d):** It mentions policy security of state equality for both men and women the right to a means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
- **Article 42:** It directs the State to make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

Some Legal Provisions for Women:

- **Indian Penal Code:** Section 354 and 509 safeguards the interests of women.
- **Factories Act 1948:** Under this Act, a woman cannot be forced to work beyond 8 hours and it also prohibits employment of women except between 6 A.M. and 7 P.M.
- **Maternity Benefit Act 1961:** A Woman is entitled 12 weeks' maternity leave with full wages.
- **The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961:** Under this Act demand of dowry either before marriage, during marriage and or after the marriage is an offense.

- **The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1971:** It safeguards women from unnecessary and compulsory abortions.
- **The Equal Remuneration Act of 1976:** It provides equal wages for equal work to both men and women workers for the same work or work of similar nature. It also prohibits discrimination against women in the matter of recruitment.
- **The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1976:** It raised the age for marriage of a girl to 18 years from 15 years and that of a boy to 21 years.
- **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act:** These Constitutional Amendments Act reserved 1/3rd seats in Panchayat and Urban Local Bodies for women.
- **The National Commission for Women Act, 1990:** The Commission was set up in 1992 to review the Constitutional and legal safeguards for women.
- **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005:** It is a legislation aimed at protecting women from violence in domestic relationships. It refers to harming or injuring a woman in a domestic relationship, be it physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal or emotional abuse, or economic abuse.

Impact of Violence:

- Violence against women continues to be an obstacle to achieving equality, development, peace as well as to the fulfillment of women and girls' human rights.
- All in all, the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - to leave no one behind - cannot be fulfilled without putting an end to violence against women and girls.
- Due to the patriarchal traditions, women continue to pay the highest price as a result of gender inequality, discrimination, and negative stereotypes. They are also the most likely to be killed by intimate partners and family.
- Gender-based violence can pose a danger to a woman's reproductive health and can scar a survivor psychologically, cognitively and interpersonally.
- A woman who experiences domestic violence and lives in an abusive relationship with her partner may be forced to become pregnant or have an abortion against her will, or her partner may knowingly expose her to a sexually transmitted infection.
- A child who has undergone or witnessed violence may become withdrawn, anxious or depressed on the one hand; on the other hand, the child may become aggressive and exert control over younger siblings.
- Gender-based violence is heavy a health burden for women of ages 15-is as that posed by HIV, tuberculosis, and infection during childbirth, cancer, and heart diseases.

What needs to be done?

- **Human rights & intersectional based approach:** Governments must utilise a human rights and intersectional based approach to ensure that everyone, including the most marginalised, has access to necessary information, support systems and resources during the current crisis.
- **Extending help & publicising:** The state governments need to declare helplines as "essential services" that should remain open during lockdowns. Disseminate information about gender-based violence and publicise resources and services available.
- **Resourcing NGOs:** Increase resourcing for NGOs that respond to domestic violence and aid — including shelter, counselling, and legal aid — to survivors, and promote those that remain open.
- **Equitable sharing of domestic tasks:** Encourage the equitable sharing of domestic tasks at home.
- **Uninterrupted healthcare services:** Provide for the continued provision of healthcare services based on medical research and tests — unrelated to the virus — for women and girls.
- **Timely access to health service:** Ensure women's timely access to necessary and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services during the crisis, such as maternal health services, safe abortion etc.

SECTION: B
(PRELIMS)

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INDIA'S LARGEST BANK REDUCES ITS MCLR

◎ CONTEXT

- India's largest bank State Bank of India (SBI) reduced its marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR) by 35 basis points or bps (One bps is one-hundredth of a percentage point) across all tenors with one-year MCLR, effective April 10. This is the eleventh consecutive cut in MCLR in FY 2019-20.

◎ ABOUT

- The marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR) is the minimum interest rate that a bank can lend at.
- MCLR is a tenor-linked internal benchmark, which means the rate is determined internally by the bank depending on the period left for the repayment of a loan
- The RBI introduced the MCLR methodology for fixing interest rates from 1 April 2016.

Other important rates

- Base rate:**
 - Base Rate is the lending rate calculated based on the total cost of funds of the banks and is the minimum interest rate at which a bank can lend except for loans to its own employees, its retired employees and against bank's own deposits.
- PLR:**
 - PLR (Prime Lending Rate) is the internal benchmark rate used for setting up the interest rate on floating rate loans sanctioned by Non Banking Financial Companies (NBFC) and Housing Finance Companies (HFC).
 - PLR rate is calculated based on average cost of funds.
 - NBFC and HFC generally price their loan at discount on their existing PLR.

Highlights:

- The one-year MCLR comes down to 7.40% per annum from 7.75% per with effect from April 10, 2020.
- EMIs on eligible home loan accounts (linked to MCLR) will get cheaper by around Rs. 24.00 per 1 lakh on a 30 year loan.
- The country's largest lender also announced to realign its interest rates on savings bank deposits, with effect from 15 April 2020.
- The bank reduced the savings deposit rates by 25 bps from 3% to 2.75% for balances upto Rs.1 lakh and 25 bps from 3% to 2.75% for balances above Rs. 1 lakh.
- The move will benefit borrowers from SBI having MCLR-linked floating rate loans, like home loans.

How does it affect the economy?

- For every economy, the banking system is its lifeblood and any negative or positive changes in the sector directly impacts the economy.
- The MCLR system aims to improve the faith of the individual borrowers and business in the banking sector.
- By improving transparency in how lending rates are calculated, it encourages more individuals and entrepreneurs to rely on the country's banking system for their credit needs.
- Moreover, the MCLR, by enhancing the faster and effective transmission of policy rates, helps the country's financial regulatory body to take more effective monetary policy measures.
- It also ensures that interest rate cuts by the RBI directly reduce Equated Monthly Instalments (EMIs) on Home Loans, small Personal Loans, Business Loans, etc. Additionally, it will help borrowers to get fast loans or instant loans from banks.

MARKET INTERVENTION SCHEME

◎ CONTEXT

- Amidst the lockdown, the Union government has asked all States / UTs asked to implement Market Intervention Scheme to ensure remunerative prices to farmers for perishable crops.

◎ ABOUT

- The Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) is an ad-hoc scheme under which are included horticultural commodities and other agricultural commodities which are perishable in nature and which are not covered under the minimum price support scheme.
- It aims to intervene the market to protect the growers of their commodities from making distress sale in the event of a bumper crop during the peak arrival period when the prices tend to fall below economic levels and cost of production.
- In order to protect the growers of these horticultural/agricultural commodities from making distress sale in the event of bumper crop during the peak arrival period when prices fall to very low level, Government implements M.I.S. for a particular commodity on the request of a State Government concerned.
- Losses suffered are shared on 50:50 basis between Central Government and the State.
- Market Intervention Scheme works in a similar fashion to Minimum Support Price based procurement mechanism for food grains.

Minimum Support Price (MSP):

- Minimum support price (MSP) is one of the instruments of Agricultural Price Policy (APP).
- APP basically means government intervention to influence agricultural productivity and/or farm input prices.
- The kind and degree of intervention (or the policy instruments and their objectives) vary with the stage of agricultural development.
- The basic intent of announcing MSP before the sowing season is to help farmers take sowing decision keeping in mind that if they are not able to get a reasonable price by selling in the market, at least they will be able to get the MSP.
- In that sense, MSP is an assured or guaranteed price (insured price).

Other progress:

- The Government has decided that start date of procurement of pulses and oilseeds under the Price Support Scheme (PSS) may be decided by the respective States. The procurement shall continue for 90 days from the date of commencement of procurement.
- Under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme during the lockdown period, about 7.92 crore farmer families have been benefitted and an amount of Rs. 15,841 crore has been released so far.
- Advisory issued to State Governments/ UT on 4th April 2020 to facilitate Direct Marketing, enabling direct purchase from the farmers/ FPOs/ Cooperatives etc. by Bulk Buyers/Big Retailers/Processors by limiting regulation under State APMC Act.
- Several States like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Jharkhand have already initiated action on lines of issued advisory.
- Logistics module had been added in the e-NAM App earlier. This module is being used by farmers / traders and already more than 200 people have started using it.

RBI TO SET UP EXCLUSIVE WING FOR BANKING FRAUD OVERSIGHT

◎ CONTEXT

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is in the process of putting together an exclusive wing for banking fraud oversight, which will have teams for meta-data processing and analysis, artificial intelligence analysis units, as well as pro-active risk assessment cell.

◎ ABOUT

- Bank fraud can be defined as an unethical and/or criminal act by an individual or organization to illegally attempt to possess or receive money from a bank or financial institution.
- In Contractual term as described in the Indian Contract Act, Sec 17 suggests that a fraud means and includes any of the acts by a party to a contract or with his connivance or by his agents with the intention to deceive another party or his agent or to induce him to enter in to a contract.
- Banking Frauds constitute a considerable percentage of white-collar offences being probed by the police.
- Unlike ordinary thefts and robberies, the amount misappropriated in these crimes runs into lakhs and crores of rupees.
- Bank fraud is a federal crime in many countries, defined as planning to obtain property or money from any federally insured financial institution. It is sometimes considered a white collar crime.

◎ BACKGROUND

- The idea of a fraud oversight wing was floated in October 2019 by the top management of RBI.
- The working conditions, however, were very strict and anyone opting for that cadre would not be allowed to leave for three years.
- To overcome the problem, the RBI sought to create an entire new wing and hire fresh people, including industry veterans who would lead the teams.
- These new teams will also be given training in the latest technologies, so that they can also prevent another Yes Bank kind of event.

Year	Entity	Scandal/fraud
2013-19	Bank NPAs	A mix of aggressive and carefree lending, alongside wilful loan defaults/frauds and economic slowdown resulted in a rapid rise in bank NPAs. Not a single public or private sector has been spared.
2018	Punjab National Bank (PNB) (Nirav Modi)	A handful of PNB bank staffer issued fake bank guarantees in excess of Rs 13,800 crore, over the years, aiding companies o two jewellery groups (Nirav Modi & Mehul Choksi). These groups received credit from overseas banks to fund their business/imports.

2018	IL & FS	IL&FS Financial Services fell short of cash and defaulted on several of its obligations. Even as new infrastructure projects dried up, IL&FS' running construction projects faced cost overruns amid delays in land acquisition and approvals. It defaulted on repayment of bank loans (including interest), term and short-term deposits and also failed to meet commercial paper redemption obligations.
2018	Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative Bank (PMC)	Former Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative Bank (PMC) Managing Director Joy Thomas has admitted to hoodwinking the auditors, bank's board and the RBI for many years by concealing the default on loans to the tune of Rs. 6,500 crore taken by real estate firm Housing Development and Infrastructure Ltd (HDIL).
2020	Yes Bank	Yes Bank, a medium-sized private sector bank, first ran into trouble following the central's bank's asset quality reviews in 2017 and 2018, which led to sharp increases in its impaired loans ratio and uncovered significant governance lapses.

INTEGRATED GOVERNMENT ONLINE TRAINING' (IGOT) PORTAL

◎ CONTEXT

- The Government of India has launched a training module for management of COVID-19 named 'Integrated Government Online training' (iGOT) portal, which aims to enhance capacity building of front line workers to handle the pandemic efficiently.

◎ ABOUT

- The module, named Integrated Govt. Online Training (iGOT), has been introduced on the Ministry of Human Resource Development's DIKSHA platform.
- The platform aims to train all frontline healthcare and COVID Warriors of India to meet the vision to care for those 'who care for the nation',
- Courses on iGOT have been launched for Doctors, Nurses, Paramedics, Hygiene Workers, Technicians, Auxiliary Nursing Midwives (ANMs), State Government Officers, Civil Defence Officers, Various Police Organisations, National Cadet Corps (NCC), Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), National Service Scheme, Indian Red Cross Society, Bharat Scouts and Guides and other volunteers at the stage.
- The platform currently hosts nine courses on topics given as below:
 - Basics of COVID
 - ICU Care and Ventilation Management
 - Clinical Management, Infection Prevention through PPE
 - Infection Control and Prevention
 - Quarantine and Isolation
 - Laboratory Sample Collection and Testing
 - Management of COVID 19 Cases
 - COVID 19 Training

What is DIKSHA Platform?

- Digital Infrastructure Knowledge Sharing' (DIKSHA) platform by HRD Ministry is an online initiative for education and training.
- DIKSHA's population scale infrastructure was launched in 2017 and is already being used by more than one crore teachers and students across the country in 30+ states & UTs for curriculum-based education and training.
- DIKSHA already has explanation, practice and assessment content linked to NCERT and state curriculum.
- DIKSHA platform is well equipped to cater to unlimited demands of learning, any time, anywhere.
- Multiple states in the country besides NCERT & CBSE will be using it for online teacher training, conducting quizzes, doing learning activities to promote creative & critical thinking, as well as for ensuring continuity in curriculum linked education for students in these times.

Significance of the Initiative:

- The uniqueness of the DIKSHA platform is its federated architecture which makes it possible for iGOT portal to leverage it and help train lakhs of 'Corona warriors' including government officials, frontline health workers & volunteers from organizations like NCC, NSS, NYKS etc, to prepare them to fight against the pandemic.
- The portal will provide agencies like the Health Department and NCC with the ability to upload their content suited for its various users and users to take training using mobile app(diksha app) and online.
- Furthermore, the iGOT portal will help equip our frontline warriors with capabilities to fight the Coronavirus Pandemic by getting just in time knowledge and skill sets to help tide over the present crisis.

MEDICAL DEVICES TO BE TREATED AS DRUGS

◎ CONTEXT

- The central government notified all medical devices sold in the country will be treated as drugs under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act with effect from April 1, 2020. This means, all medical devices will be regulated by the government as drugs for quality control and price monitoring.

◎ ABOUT

- 'Medical device' means any instrument, apparatus, implement, machine, appliance, implant, reagent for in vitro use, software, material or other similar or related article, intended by the manufacturer to be used, alone or in combination, for human beings, for one or more of the specific medical purpose(s) of:
 - diagnosis, prevention, monitoring, treatment or alleviation of disease
 - diagnosis, monitoring, treatment, alleviation of or compensation for an injury
 - investigation, replacement, modification, or support of the anatomy or of a physiological process
 - supporting or sustaining life
 - control of conception
 - disinfection of medical devices
 - providing information by means of in vitro examination of specimens derived from the human body
- The government is regulating 24 classes of medical devices which have been notified/regulated as drugs under Drugs & Cosmetics Act 1940 and Drugs & Cosmetics Rules 1945.

- Currently, 24 medical devices are regulated under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.
- Following this order, all medical devices used to treat a patient - be it syringes, needles, cardiac stents, knee implant, digital thermometers, CT scan, MRIs, dialysis machines - will be regulated under the DCA.
- As per the notification, four medical devices, cardiac stents, drug eluting stents, condoms and intra uterine devices (Cu-T), are scheduled medical devices for which ceiling prices have been fixed. These four medical devices are under price control.

What is the need for regulation?

- The **National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)**, a government regulatory agency, is monitoring Maximum Retail Prices (MRPs) of remaining non-scheduled medical devices, which have been regulated as drugs.
- The objective is to ensure that no manufacturer or importer increases the price of a drug more than ten per cent of MRP during preceding twelve months.
- As regard remaining non-scheduled medical devices which are notified/regulated as drugs, NPPA is currently monitoring Maximum Retail Prices (MRPs) under Para 20 of the DPCO, 2013 to ensure that no manufacturer/importers can increase the price more than ten per cent in preceding twelve months.
- Further, with the **Essential Commodities Act, 1955**, the manufacturer/importer will also be liable to deposit the overcharged amount along with interest thereon from the date of increase in price in addition to penalty.
- The government will now have oversight on the medical devices industry and its activities in the country.

THE JALLIANWALA MASSACRE

◎ CONTEXT

- On April 13, 1919, hundreds of unarmed men, women and children were gunned down by British troops at Jallianwala Bagh. The events of Jallianwala Bagh 101 years ago today reflect a shameful act in British-Indian history.

◎ ABOUT

- The massacre was the most barbaric act by British colonialists against a rising mass movement for independence and civil rights.
- Defiant speeches were made against British rulers prior to the incident.
- Then-acting military commander for Amritsar, Colonel Reginald Dyer, wanted to crush the rebellion, hence he ordered the killing of innocent protesters.
- Dyer marched a force of 90 Gurkha and Indian soldiers into the enclosure and, without warning, they opened fire for about 10 to 15 minutes on the panicking crowd trapped in the enclosure.
- According to an official figure, 379 were killed and some 1,200 wounded, though other estimates suggest much higher casualties.

What led to the massacre?

- After World War I, the British, who controlled a vast empire in India, agreed to give Indians limited self-government due to India's substantial contribution to the war effort.
- These reforms, named the **Montagu-Chelmsford reforms** after the secretary of state for India and the viceroy of India, promised to lead to more substantial self-government over time.
- However, around the same time the British had passed the draconian **Rowlatt Acts**, which allowed certain political cases to be tried without trial. And the trial was also to be conducted without juries. The acts were designed to ruthlessly suppress all forms of political dissent.

- The Rowlatt Acts were designed to replace the constraints on political activity that had been embodied in colonial rules, known as the **Defense of India Rules**, which had been in force during World War I.
- Not surprisingly, there were widespread public protests, led by the noted Indian nationalist leader, Mahatma Gandhi.
- In the immediate aftermath of the World War I, pressure for Indian independence mounted.
- Early in April 1919 news of the arrest of Indian nationalist leaders in the Sikh holy city of Amritsar sparked riots in which a mob went on the rampage, killing several Europeans, leaving an English female missionary for dead, and looting numerous banks and public buildings.
- British and Indian troops under the command of **Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer** were sent to restore order and Dyer banned all public meetings which, he announced, would be dispersed by force if necessary.
- Despite this, thousands gathered in protest in a walled enclosure called the Jallianwala Bagh, near the city's Golden Temple, sacred to Sikhs.

Aftermath:

- The news of the massacre provoked fierce disapproval. Speaking in the House of Commons, **Winston Churchill** condemned 'an extraordinary event, a monstrous event, an event which stands in singular and sinister isolation'.
- A committee under **Lord Hunter**, a Scottish judge, was appointed to report on what had happened.
- Dyer appeared before it to defend himself, but its conclusions were damning; he was strongly censured and forced to resign from the Indian Army.
- Opinion was divided between those who agreed with the Hunter Committee's verdict and those who thought that Dyer had acted effectively to prevent another Indian Mutiny.
- The episode soured relations between British and Indian politicians for years, but it helped to gather recruits to Mahatma Gandhi's policy of non-violent resistance to British rule.

Important Information

- Dyer's actions were praised by the governor of the Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, and he was made an honorary Sikh by the elders of the Golden Temple. Excused from growing a beard, he did promise to cut his smoking by one cigarette a year.
- Dyer died in England in 1927. Sir Michael O'Dwyer was assassinated in London in 1940 by a Sikh revolutionary, Udham Singh, who had been injured at Amritsar. He was duly hanged.
- Gandhi condemned his action as senseless, but in some quarters in India he was praised as a heroic martyr.

IS WHO CHINA-CENTRIC?

◎ CONTEXT

- US President Donald Trump has attacked the World Health Organization (WHO) for being too "China-centric" in its tackling of the Coronavirus pandemic.

◎ ABOUT

- The World Health Organization (WHO) was born during the moment of hopeful internationalism that followed the chaos of the second world war.
- The idea of global collaboration in fighting disease was not new – in the 19th century, at periodic International Sanitary Conferences, countries had standardised quarantine procedures for cholera and yellow fever – but the WHO constitution, adopted in 1948, envisioned a far grander global mission, nothing less than "the attainment by all people of the highest possible levels of health".

- WHO is the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system.
- It is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends.

How is the WHO funded?

- Geneva-headquartered World Health Organization, receives vast amounts of money from the United States. Mainly there are four kinds of contributions that make up funding for the organization:
 - **Assessed contributions:** From 1948, when WHO was established, the Organisation has relied on the assessed contributions of its member states for its regular budget. These are the dues countries pay in order to be a member of the Organization.
 - **Voluntary contributions:** These contributions come from Member States or from other partners.
 - **Core voluntary contributions:** Core Voluntary contributions allow less well-funded activities to benefit from a better flow of resources and ease implementation bottlenecks.
 - **Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) Contributions:** PIP contributions aim to improve and strengthen the sharing of influenza viruses with human pandemic potential, and to increase the access of developing countries to vaccines and other pandemic related supplies.

Claims made by US:

- The WHO helped the Chinese Communist Party hide the threat of COVID-19 from the world and now more than 10,000 Americans are dead, a number that is expected to rise dramatically in the coming weeks.
- The United States is the largest contributor to WHO. It is not right that Americans' hard-earned tax dollars are being used to propagate China's lies and hide information that could have saved lives.
- For reasons beyond understanding, the World Health Organization acted as a silent partner in this effort instead of protecting the lives of millions across the world, including hundreds of thousands of American citizens.
- Our hard-earned tax dollars should not go to a global organization more concerned with not offending the Chinese government than providing accurate information and protecting innocent lives.

How has the WHO responded?

- The WHO has rejected US's criticism, saying that the organization has done tremendous work in providing guidance as COVID-19 travelled across the world.
- It is clear that the WHO has been supporting numerous countries with equipment and training.

What is the reason behind such situation?

- There is a simple reason for this. For all the responsibility vested in the WHO, it has little power.
- Unlike international bodies such as the World Trade Organization, the WHO, which is a specialised body of the UN, has no ability to bind or sanction its members.
- Its annual operating budget, about \$2bn in 2019, is smaller than that of many university hospitals, and split among a dizzying array of public health and research projects.
- The WHO has been drained of power and resources.

- Its coordinating authority and capacity are weak. Its ability to direct an international response to a life-threatening epidemic is non-existent.

◎ CONCLUSION

- The World Health Organization is less like a military general or elected leader with a strong mandate, and more like an underpaid sports coach wary of “losing the dressing room”, who can only get their way by charming, grovelling, cajoling and occasionally pleading with the players to do as they say.

CAN BACILLE CALMETTE-GUERIN BE A CURE FOR CORONAVIRUS?

◎ CONTEXT

- The *Bacillus Calmette-Guerin* (BCG) vaccine, administered to millions of Indian children soon after birth to protect against tuberculosis, could be a “game-changer” in the fight against the deadly coronavirus, say US scientists.

◎ ABOUT

- BCG, or bacille Calmette-Guerin, is a vaccine for tuberculosis (TB) disease. BCG vaccine has a documented protective effect against meningitis and disseminated TB in children.
- It is 70-80% effective against the most severe forms of TB, such as TB meningitis. However, it is less effective in preventing the form of TB that affects the lungs.
- The vaccine prevents infant deaths from a variety of causes, and sharply reduces the incidence of respiratory infections.
- It does not prevent primary infection and, more importantly, does not prevent reactivation of latent pulmonary infection, the principal source of bacillary spread in the community.
- The impact of BCG vaccination on transmission of *Mtb* is therefore limited.
- The biological interaction between *Mtb* and the human host is complex and only partially understood.
- The bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine has existed for 100 years. The weakened virus was first used in humans in 1921 and was widely adopted after World War II.

How does it stimulate the immune system?

- The BCG vaccine contains live bacteria that have been weakened (attenuated), so that they stimulate the immune system but do not cause disease in healthy people.
- The vaccine seems to “train” the immune system to recognize and respond to a variety of infections, including viruses, bacteria and parasites.
- However the vaccine should not be given to people who are clinically immunosuppressed (either due to drug treatment or underlying illness).
- This is because the vaccine strain could replicate too much and cause a serious infection. This includes babies whose mothers have had immunosuppressive treatment while they were pregnant or breastfeeding.

Can it treat Coronavirus?

- Like other vaccines, BCG has a specific target: TB. But evidence accumulating over the past decade suggests the vaccine also has so-called off-target effects, reducing viral illnesses, respiratory infections and sepsis, and appears to bolster the body’s immune system.
- The idea is an offshoot of the “hygiene hypothesis,” which suggests that the modern emphasis on cleanliness has deprived children of exposure to germs.

- The lack of "training" has resulted in weakened immune systems, less able to resist disease.
- A recent review by the World Health Organization concluded that BCG had beneficial "off-target effects," and recommended doing more trials of the vaccine against a wider range of infections.

What the study has found?

- The study has found that countries without universal policies of BCG vaccination, such as Italy, the Netherlands, and the United States, have been more severely affected compared to countries with universal and long-standing BCG policies.

India & BCG:

- The BCG vaccine is part of India's universal immunisation programme and administered to millions of children at birth or soon after it.
 - It is the live weakened form of mycobacterium bovis -- the causative agent of tuberculosis in cattle -- related to mycobacterium tuberculosis, the bacteria which causes tuberculosis in humans.
 - India, with the world's highest TB burden, introduced BCG mass immunisation in 1948.
- According to the study, a combination of reduced morbidity and mortality could make the BCG vaccination a game-changer in the fight against coronavirus.
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CYTOKINE STORM

◎ CONTEXT

- Of all the possible compounding effects of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, the cytokine storm is one of the most feared.

◎ ABOUT

- Cytokines are small proteins released by many different cells in the body, including those of the immune system where they coordinate the body's response against infection and trigger inflammation.
- The name 'cytokine' is derived from the Greek words for cell (cyto) and movement (kinos). Sometimes the body's response to infection can go into overdrive.
- For example, when SARS -CoV-2 – the virus behind the covid-19 pandemic – enters the lungs, it triggers an immune response, attracting immune cells to the region to attack the virus, resulting in localised inflammation.
- But in some patients, excessive or uncontrolled levels of cytokines are released which then activate more immune cells, resulting in hyperinflammation.
- This can seriously harm or even kill the patient.
- Cytokine storms are a common complication not only of covid-19 and flu but of other respiratory diseases caused by coronaviruses such as SARS and MERS. They are also associated with non-infectious diseases such as multiple sclerosis and pancreatitis.
- The phenomenon became more widely known after the 2005 outbreak of the avian H5N1 influenza virus, also known as "bird flu", when the high fatality rate was linked to an out-of-control cytokine response.

- Cytokine storms might explain why some people have a severe reaction to coronaviruses while others only experience mild symptoms.
- They could also be the reason why younger people are less affected, as their immune systems are less developed and so produce lower levels of inflammation-driving cytokines.

How does our immune system work?

- The immune systems in our bodies protect us from bacteria, viruses, and parasites by removing them from our systems.
- The immune system gets activated by things that the body does not recognise as its own. These things are called antigens, and include bacteria, fungi and viruses.
- An effective immune system response involves inflammation, an important and indispensable part of the process.
- Inflammation has an important protective function. The release of inflammatory mediators increases the blood flow to the area, which allows larger numbers of immune system cells to be carried to the injured tissue, thereby aiding the repairing process.
- However, if this inflammatory response is not regulated, very dangerous consequences can follow.
- This is when a 'cytokine storm' can be triggered. The damage to the surrounding cells can be catastrophic, leading to sepsis and potentially, death.

What is role of cytokines in the immune system?

- Evidence is emerging that a subset of the infected patients develop severe COVID-19 because of an overreaction of their immune systems, which triggers cytokine storm syndrome (CSS).
- While various studies have shown that the disease has more severe consequences for those above the age of 60 years, and especially those with existing co-morbidities such as heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, chronic respiratory disease and cancer, some countries have also reported deaths of younger people, including teenagers, after catching the infection.
- Cytokines are signalling proteins that are released by cells at local high concentrations — a cytokine storm or CSS is characterised by the overproduction of immune cells and the cytokines themselves because of a dysregulation in the process.
- A severe immune reaction, leading to the secretion of too many cytokines in the bloodstream, can be harmful since an excess of immune cells can attack healthy tissue as well.
- A cytokine storm can occur due to an infection, auto-immune condition, or other diseases. Signs and symptoms include high fever, inflammation (redness and swelling), severe fatigue, and nausea. Cytokine storms are not exclusive to coronavirus patients. It is an immune reaction that can occur during other infectious and non-infectious diseases as well.

FALL ARMYWORM

◎ CONTEXT

- A pest attack, albeit confined to a district, has added to the COVID-19-related woes of Assam's farmers.

◎ ABOUT

- The fall armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) is a Lepidopteran pest that feeds in large numbers on leaves and stems of more than 80 plant species, causing major damage to maize, rice, sorghum, sugarcane but also other vegetable crops and cotton.
- The caterpillar stage of a moth, the Fall Armyworm is not a picky eater though. Besides corn, it likes to feed on the leaves and stems of more than 350 plant species, including rice, sorghum, sugarcane and wheat.

- An adult female moth can lay up to a thousand eggs in her lifetime. They are also terrific fliers and can travel up to 100 km in a single night.
- Fall armyworm is native to tropical and subtropical regions of the Americas.

Why north-eastern states are prone to such attacks?

- In India, FAW found suitable environmental conditions and appropriate host plants.
- But taking into account environmental conditions and availability of host species the Eastern side of India is more vulnerable to the pest in the near future.
- The north-eastern states with their "high humidity and moderately high temperatures" are suitable for the spread of FAW.

Pest attacks in India:

- In India, pest attacks are on rise, yet no significant step has been taken by the central government or state government.
- The threats farmers face from pest attacks are often localised but underlines the multitude of risks apart from those related to monsoon failure or a crash in crop prices.
- Major pest attacks in India:

Major Pest Attacks in India	
States	Pest
Haryana	Grasshopper, Heliothis spp., Diamond back moth
Jammu & Kashmir	Sanjose-scale, Blast, Late blight
Tamil Nadu	Red hairy caterpillar
Jharkhand	Neck blast
Uttar Pradesh	Diamond back moth, Top borer
Andaman & Nicobar	Fruit & Shoot borer
Kerala	Stem borer, Rhinoceros beetle
Assam	Spodoptera mauritia, Spodoptera litura.

◎ CONCLUSION

- At present, the government needs to conduct studies on pest attack to help to identify risk areas for mapping spatial and temporal distribution of diseases and insect-pests under a changing climate scenario. In the long run, the findings will be helpful in the development of better, more accurate disease- and pest-prediction models.

INDIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH LABORATORIES TO CONDUCT TESTING FOR COVID-19

◎ CONTEXT

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) allowed all national research laboratories including those under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) to conduct testing for the novel coronavirus. Since the CSIR labs will now have access to virus samples, they will be in a position to sequence the genome too.

© ABOUT

- Whole-genome sequencing is the method used to determine the complete DNA sequence of a specific organism's genome.
- The approach for sequencing the latest coronavirus involves getting samples from patients that are positive and sending these samples to a sequencing centre.
- The term 'genome' generally refers to the entire sequence of DNA of an organism, including all of its genes.
- Each genome contains all of the information needed to build and maintain that organism.

How will they do it?

- The research teams will sequence the whole genome of the virus isolates and analyze if there any differences in genetic codes. This will be key to tracking the source of new positive cases.
- It is an RNA (ribonucleic acid) virus, whose genome consists of 30,000 base pairs (letters).
- The current evidence shows the SARS-CoV2 has not shown any major mutation, which is a good sign as otherwise it could have significantly impacted vaccine development.

Sharing of Genome sequencing:

- In March this year, **India became the fifth country in the world to sequence the genome of the novel Coronavirus, or Covid-19**, and share its data with the international community.
- As on April 7, India has shared nine whole genome sequences of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) with the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID).
- All the sequences have been shared by the Pune-based National Institute of Virology.
- So far, 3,086 sequences of the virus isolated from humans have been shared by 57 countries.
- With 621, the U.S. has shared the most number of sequences, followed by the U.K. (350), Belgium (253) and China (242).

What is GISAID?

- Launched in 2008, the GISAID Initiative promotes the international sharing of all influenza virus sequences, related clinical and epidemiological data associated with human viruses, and geographical as well as species-specific data associated with avian and other animal viruses.
- It aims to help researchers understand how the viruses evolve, spread and potentially become pandemics.
- The Initiative ensures that open access to data in GISAID is provided free-of-charge and to everyone, provided individuals identify themselves and agree to uphold the GISAID sharing mechanism governed through its Database Access Agreement.

Significance of this step:

- Sequencing the genome of SARS-CoV-2 will help understand where the virus came from, if there are different strains circulating in India, and how the virus has spread.
- It could open up potential treatment lines against the rapidly spreading Covid-19 in India.
- The sequencing will also enable us to determine the route the virus took to India. That in turn will help us link lineages of patients in the country and respond accordingly.

MADHUBAN GAJAR

◎ CONTEXT

- Madhuban Gajar, a biofortified carrot variety with high carotene and iron content has been developed in Junagadh district, Gujarat by Shri Vallabhbhai Vasrambhai Marvaniya, a farmer scientist.

◎ ABOUT

- The Madhuban Gajar is a highly nutritious carrot variety developed through the selection method with higher β -carotene content (277.75 mg/kg) and iron content (276.7 mg/kg) dry basis and is used for various value-added products like carrot chips, juices, and pickles.
- Among all the varieties tested, beta-carotene and iron content were found to be superior.

How it is benefiting the local economy?

- It is benefitting more than 150 local farmers in the area. It is being planted in an area of over 200 hectares in Junagadh, and the average yield, which is 40-50 t/ha, has become the main source of income to the local farmers.
- The variety is being cultivated in more than 1000 hectares of land in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh during the last three years.

◎ BACKGROUND

- National Innovation Foundation (NIF) conducted validation trials for this variety at Rajasthan Agricultural Research Institute (RARI), Jaipur, between 2016 and 2017.
- In the trials, it was found that Madhuban Gajar carrot variety possesses a significantly higher root yield (74.2 t/ha) and plant biomass (275 gm per plant) as compared to check variety.
- The on-farm trials of the variety were conducted over 25 hectares of land by NIF in different states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Assam, Haryana, Punjab and West Bengal which involved more than 100 farmers where the performance of the variety (Madhuban Gajar) was found to be appreciable in term of yield and its other properties.
- During 1943, Shri Vallabhbhai Vasrambhai Marvaniya found that a local carrot variety which was profoundly used for fodder to improve the quality of milk.
- He selectively cultivated this variety and sold this carrot in the market at a good price.
- During the early years of the development of this variety, Shri Vallabhbhai selected the best plants for seed production and grew them in a small area for domestic consumption as well as for marketing.
- Later on, demand for this carrot grew, and he started cultivation on a large scale during the 1950's.
- He also started distributing the seeds to other farmers in his village and adjoining areas in the 1970s. During 1985, he started selling the seeds on a large scale.
- The average yield of Madhuban Gajar is 40 – 50 t/ha and had been cultivated in Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan successfully.

What is biofortification of staple crops?

- Fortification is the practice of deliberately increasing the content of an essential micronutrient, i.e. vitamins and minerals (including trace elements) in a food, so as to improve the nutritional quality of the food supply and provide a public health benefit with minimal risk to health.
- Biofortification is the process by which the nutritional quality of food crops is improved through agronomic practices, conventional plant breeding, or modern biotechnology.

- Biofortification differs from conventional fortification in that biofortification aims to increase nutrient levels in crops during plant growth rather than through manual means during processing of the crops.
- Biofortification may therefore present a way to reach populations where supplementation and conventional fortification activities may be difficult to implement and/or limited.

NASA'S ARTEMIS PROJECT

◎ CONTEXT

- NASA is forging ahead with its 'Artemis program' to land humans on the moon by 2024, but the agency has also just offered its first plan for what a U.S. lunar presence may look like after that milestone.

◎ ABOUT

- NASA is committed to landing American astronauts, including the first woman and the next man, on the Moon by 2024.
- Through the agency's Artemis lunar exploration program, NASA will use innovative new technologies and systems to explore more of the Moon than ever before.
- With the Artemis program NASA will:
 - Demonstrate new technologies, capabilities, and business approaches needed for future exploration including Mars
 - Establish American leadership and a strategic presence on the Moon while expanding our U.S. global economic impact
 - Broaden our commercial and international partnerships
 - Inspire a new generation and encourage careers in STEM

The new plan:

- The new plan comes from the report, titled "NASA's Plan for Sustained Lunar Exploration and Development".
- It summarizes the vision NASA has laid out for justifying and accomplishing the 2024 moon landing.
- But the report also looks farther out to focus on what a long-term presence on the moon and in lunar orbit would permit the U.S. to accomplish.

Artemis Base Camp

- The star of the report is what NASA has dubbed **Artemis Base Camp**, meant to be a long-term foothold for lunar exploration, perhaps in **Shackleton Crater** at the moon's south pole.
- Artemis Base Camp itself would be a lunar foundation surface habitat that could host four astronauts at the south pole for visits of perhaps a week.
- In the long term, the facility would also require infrastructure for power, waste disposal and communications, as well as radiation shielding and a landing pad.
- The base could also be a site for testing new techniques for dealing with pesky lunar dust and the long, cold lunar nights, turning local materials into resources like water, and developing new power and construction technologies.
- The camp would be accompanied and supported by two mobility systems:
 - a lunar terrain vehicle to facilitate astronaut movement across the surface
 - a habitable mobility platform that could support trips away from base for up to 45 days.
- Mobility is a major part of the Artemis Base Camp. Robust mobility systems will be needed to explore and develop the moon.

- The same is true for Mars, making the habitable mobility platform a particularly important element as we will need a similar type of vehicle to explore the Red Planet.

◎ CONCLUSION

- In the long term, the base camp will need infrastructure for power, waste disposal and communications, besides radiation shielding and a landing pad. The base camp will demonstrate the US's continued leadership in space and will eventually help them prepare to undertake humanity's first mission to Mars.

WORLD HEALTH DAY

◎ CONTEXT

- The World Health Day is celebrated every year on April 7 to spread the awareness around maintaining good health and a balanced lifestyle.

◎ ABOUT

- April 7 of each year marks the celebration of World Health Day.
- From its inception at the First Health Assembly in 1948 and since taking effect in 1950, the celebration has aimed to create awareness of a specific health theme to highlight a priority area of concern for the World Health Organization.
- Over the past 50 years this has brought to light important health issues such as mental health, maternal and child care, and climate change.
- The celebration is marked by activities which extend beyond the day itself and serves as an opportunity to focus worldwide attention on these important aspects of global health.
- World Health Day comes this year at a time when the entire globe is struggling to contain the spread of novel coronavirus.
- Over 1 million people have been infected by the deadly contagion while more than 60,000 have lost their lives to Covid-19 infection.

World Health Organization:

- On April 7, 1948, the United Nations established WHO by constitution, putting it in charge of classifying diseases.
- WHO acts as the branch of the United Nations responsible for global public health.
- The organization's team, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, has worked to advance health through the last 70-plus years.
- As a part of its foundation, WHO created a definition of health that hasn't needed to be altered since:
 - "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."
- Some highlights of WHO's long list of impacts on the world include:
 - Smallpox was eradicated in 1979 after WHO's 12-year vaccination campaign.
 - WHO developed a treatment plan for tuberculosis in 1995 that has saved more than 37 million lives.
 - The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control was adopted in 2005, which prompted countries to establish smoke-free public spaces and print pictorial warnings on cigarette packages.
 - In 2014, WHO sponsored thousands of health care workers to research and treat the Ebola virus. West Africa was officially Ebola free by 2016.
 - The WHO declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic on March 11, 2020.

The Theme:

- This year's World Health Day theme couldn't be more apt as it is dedicated to honour the indefatigable work of nurses and midwives across the globe.
- In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, thousands and millions of nurses are leaving behind their comfort and safety to fight the Covid-19 crisis and help those infected or suspected of coronavirus.
- On this day, the World Health Organization calls for people to extend their gratitude and support nurses and midwives across the world.
- The WHO has named this year the 'International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife'.
- WHO also pledges to make a "series of recommendations to strengthen" the nursing and midwifery workforce.
- The year 2020 has also been designated by the World Health Assembly as the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife.

What role is the WHO playing in the coronavirus pandemic?

- The World Health Organization has taken on a central role in the fight to stem the spread of the coronavirus by coordinating the international response.
- With the current pandemic, that means orchestrating research cooperation and the development of tests, medical treatments and vaccines.
- Recently, it initiated an international clinical study with the aim of testing existing medicines against the virus.
- The declaration of a **Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)** is the most powerful weapon in the WHO's arsenal.
 - It allows the WHO to allocate additional funds and resources and to articulate the concrete steps its experts think should be taken by member states — such as quarantine measures or travel restrictions.
- An emergency committee made up of health experts, virologists and other scientists constantly adjusts the organization's response as the situation evolves.
- WHO recommendations are not binding; nevertheless, most countries follow them.

NATIONAL SECURITY ACT

◎ CONTEXT

- **Taking a tough stand in the wake of attack on officials amid the Coronavirus update, the Uttar Pradesh government has directed for strict action, including under the National Security Act.**

◎ ABOUT

- The National Security Act is a stringent law that allows preventive detention for months, if authorities are satisfied that a person is a threat to national security or law and order.
- The person does not need to be charged during this period of detention. The goal is to prevent the individual from committing a crime.
- Under the law, the maximum span for which a person can be detained is 12 months. However, the government can extend it, if it feels so.
- As per the National Security Act, the grounds for preventive detention of a person include:
 - acting in any manner prejudicial to the defence of India, the relations of India with foreign powers, or the security of India.
 - regulating the continued presence of any foreigner in India or with a view to making arrangements for his expulsion from India.

- preventing them from acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of the State or from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order or from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community it is necessary so to do.

How is it Draconian?

- Typically, if a person is arrested, then he/she enjoy certain rights bestowed by the Indian Constitution.
- The person has to be informed of the reason for the arrest. Under Section 50 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), the person arrested has to be informed.
- However, in the case of the NSA, the person can be held up to ten days without being informed of the reason.
- Sections 56 and 76 of the same penal code guarantee the detained person to be produced before a court within 24 hours.
- Apart from this, Article 22(1) of the Constitution allows the detainee to seek legal advice from a legal practitioner.
- However, under the NSA, none of these above mentioned basic rights is permitted to the suspect.

◎ BACKGROUND

- Preventive detention laws in India date back to early days of the colonial era when the Bengal Regulation III of 1818 was enacted to empower the government to arrest anyone for defence or maintenance of public order without giving the person recourse to judicial proceedings.
- A century later, the British government enacted the Rowlatt Acts of 1919 that allowed confinement of a suspect without trial.
- Post-independence India got its first preventive detention rule when the government of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru enacted the Preventive Detention Act of 1950.
- The NSA is a close iteration of the 1950 Act.
- After the Preventive Detention Act expired on December 31, 1969, the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, brought in the controversial Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) in 1971 giving similar powers to the government.
- Though the MISA was repealed in 1977 after the Janata Party came to power, the successive government, led by Mrs. Gandhi, brought in the NSA.

Why the Act is imposed in UP?

- The state government's move to invoke the NSA comes in view of reports of several incidents of attack on policemen enforcing the lockdown.
- The police is doing its duty by preventing people to come out during lockdown. There have been incidents in the state in which policemen were attacked by people.
- To deter such persons, it has been decided to invoke NSA against such persons.
- The move is aimed to deter those who are taking lockdown lightly and even attacking policemen when they are prevented.

MISCELLANEOUS

CURRENT AFFAIRS

ASTRONOMERS SPOT 'MISSING LINK' BLACK HOLE

- Scientists have detected a mid-size black hole - considered the "missing link" in the understanding of these celestial brutes - eviscerating an unfortunate star that strayed too close.
- Using data from the Hubble Space Telescope and two X-ray observatories, the researchers determined that this black hole is more than 50,000 times the mass of our sun and located 740 million light years from Earth in a dwarf galaxy, one containing far fewer stars than our Milky Way.
- This is one of the few "intermediate-mass" black holes ever identified, being far smaller than the supermassive black holes that reside at the center of large galaxies but far larger than so-called stellar-mass black holes formed by the collapse of massive individual stars.
- The star was probably roughly a third the mass of the sun.
- The supermassive black hole at the center of the Milky Way is 4 million times the mass of the sun and located 26,000 light years from Earth.
- The closest stellar-mass black star is about 6,000 light years from Earth. A light year is the distance light travels in a year, 5.9 trillion miles (9.5 trillion km).

BENGALURU VOTED BEST CITY FOR IT PROFESSIONALS

- Even as there are traffic snarls, most IT professionals consider Bengaluru as the best city to work for as the city offers high living standards, highest appraisal and career growth opportunities, according to TechGig's survey.
- Over 40 per cent of information technology (IT) professionals voted Bengaluru as the top city to work.
- Hyderabad and Pune secured the second and third spots, respectively, with 13 per cent and 11 per cent votes.
- Delhi-NCR (20 per cent) secured the least votes among the preferred city chart.
- The survey was conducted online at the beginning of April among over 1,830 IT professionals in the 25-35 years age group having at least two years of experience.
- Further, the survey has showed that 58 per cent of IT professionals prefer Bengaluru as the city provides high living standards.
- The survey also revealed that over 57 per cent of IT professionals are already working in the city of their choice.

CRPF VALOUR DAY

- President led the nation in saluting Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) on its Valour Day on April 9.
- On April 9th, 1965 a small contingent of 2nd Bn CRPF, successfully fought and repulsed an attack by a Pakistani Brigade on Sardar Post in the Rann of Kutch, Gujarat, eliminating 34 Pakistani soldiers and capturing 4 alive.
- Never in the history of military battles have a handful of policemen fought back a full-fledged infantry Brigade in such a manner.
- In this conflict, six valiant CRPF men also attained martyrdom. As a tribute to the saga of the brave men of the Force, 9th April is befittingly celebrated as "Valour Day" in the Force.

ICMR CREATES NEW STRATEGY FOR COVID-19 TESTING IN INDIA

- Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has devised a new strategy for Covid-19 testing in India and in hotspots or cluster and in large migration gatherings or evacuees centres.
- The new strategy for Covid-19 testing in India include all symptomatic individuals who have undertaken international travel in the last 14 days and all symptomatic contacts of laboratory confirmed cases.
- It also include all symptomatic health care workers and all patients with severe acute respiratory illness like fever, cough and shortness of breath.
- Asymptomatic direct and high-risk contacts of a confirmed case should be tested once between day five and day 14 of coming in his or her contact.
- In hotspots or cluster defined by Health and Family Welfare Ministry and in large migration gatherings or evacuees centres, all symptomatic having fever, cough, sore throat and runny nose will real-time polymerase chain reaction, rRT-PCR within seven days of illness.
- After seven days of illness antibody test will be done if rRT-PCR confirms it negative.

ITALY UNVEILS RECORD 430 BN US DOLLARS STIMULUS TO BOOST ECONOMY

- Italy has unveiled a record 430 billion US Dollar stimulus to help businesses hurt by a month- long national lockdown that is like to run on for many more weeks.
- The programme will add to the 340 billion euros in government-backed loans announced last month.
- Half of the new package will be earmarked for export-oriented companies whose turnover has imploded over the past month.
- The government also announced that it will take steps to protect Italian companies weakened by the economic crisis from being taken over by foreign competitors.

OFFICIAL MASCOTS OF 19TH ASIAN GAMES UNVEILED IN HANGZHOU

- The official mascots of the 19th Asian Games were unveiled at a digital launch ceremony in Hangzhou, China.
- The three robots, which are going to be the mascots for the 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games are collectively known as the smart triplets.
- The Mascots - Congcong, Lianlian and Chenchen, which reflect the internet prowess of Hangzhou city and Zhejiang province, were unveiled at a digital ceremony.
- The Olympic Council of Asia's 19th Asian Games will be held in Hangzhou from September 10 to 25, 2022.
- It will be the third Asian Games to be hosted by China following Beijing in 1990 and Guangzhou in 2010, with the participation of 45 NOCs of Asia in 42 sports.

“OPERATION SHIELD” LAUNCHED BY THE DELHI STATE GOVERNMENT

- Delhi Government announced ‘Operation SHIELD’ in 21 containment zones to curb the spread of COVID-19 and warned of strict action against those misbehaving with healthcare personnel in the city.

- **S:** Under the first 'S' of the operation, the government seals the area immediately and its surroundings after geographical marking following positive cases there.
- **H:** In the next stage, the government will put people of sealed areas under home quarantine and then
- **I:** In the third stage, the process begins to isolate those who have symptoms of COVID-19 and trace their contacts.
- **E:** About 'E' character of 'Operation SHIELD' the government ensures home-delivery of essential items.
- **L:** After this stage, the government sanitises such areas where one or two positive cases have been found.
- **D:** Under 'D', checking of door-to-door houses is conducted to ascertain whether anybody in containment has cough or any other symptoms of COVID-19.

REVISED VERSION OF SWACHHATA APPLICATION LAUNCHED TO FIGHT COVID-19

- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs announced the launch of a revised version of the existing **Swachhata-MoHUA App**.
- The Swachhata-MoHUA App, a highly popular grievance redressal tool for citizens under the ambit of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) already has over 1.7 Crore+ urban users across the country.
- This app has now been modified and strengthened further in order to enable citizens to get their COVID-related complaints also redressed by their respective ULBs.
- The revised version of the Swachhata App essentially leverages the popularity and huge user base of the app to better support citizens during this COVID pandemic.
- However, the addition of these new categories has no impact on the existing categories of the App and citizens may continue to post their grievances in either of the categories.
- To provide further support to States, UTs and Cities in this respect, MoHUA has introduced nine additional categories of complaints specific to COVID-19 on the Swachhata-MoHUA App to make it more responsive to the needs of the present times.

SAUDI-LED COALITION ANNOUNCES CEASEFIRE IN FIVE-YEAR YEMEN WAR

- The Saudi-led coalition fighting Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis said that it was halting military operations nationwide in support of U.N. efforts to end a five-year war that has killed over 100,000 people and spread hunger and disease.
- The move aims to facilitate talks sponsored by U.N. special envoy Martin Griffiths for a permanent ceasefire.
- The announcement is the first major breakthrough since the United Nations convened the warring parties in late 2018 in Sweden, where they signed a ceasefire in the Red Sea port city of Hodeidah.
- Yemen, already the Arab world's poorest country, has been mired in violence since the Houthis ousted the government from power in Sanaa in late 2014.

SPACE STATION CREW TO BLAST OFF DESPITE VIRUS-HIT BUILD UP

- A three-man crew is set to travel to the International Space Station, leaving behind a planet overwhelmed by the coronavirus pandemic.

- Anatoly Ivanishin and Ivan Vagner of Russia's Roscosmos space agency and NASA's Chris Cassidy will blast off from Russia's Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, where COVID-19 has caused changes to pre-launch protocol.
- Astronauts routinely go into quarantine ahead of space missions and give a final press conference at Baikonur from behind a glass wall to protect them from infection.
- The ISS typically carries up to six people at a time and has a livable space of 388 cubic metres (13,700 cubic feet) -- larger than a six-bedroom house according to NASA.
- The International Space Station—a rare example of cooperation between Russia and the West—has been orbiting Earth at about 28,000 kilometres per hour (17,000 miles per hour) since 1998.

UNGA ADOPTS RESOLUTION CALLING FOR GLOBAL SOLIDARITY IN FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

- The United Nations General Assembly has unanimously adopted a resolution on COVID-19, calling for intensified international cooperation to defeat the pandemic.
- Co-sponsored by 188 nations including India, the resolution titled Global solidarity to fight the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is first such document on the global pandemic to be adopted by the world organization.
- The resolution called for intensified international cooperation in exchanging information, scientific knowledge and best practices and applying guidelines recommended by the World Health Organization.
- The UN Security Council is yet to discuss the Corona virus outbreak, even as the total number of coronavirus cases across the world crossed one million.

US SIGNS EXECUTIVE ORDER FOR RECOVERY, USE OF SPACE RESOURCES

- US has signed a new executive order aimed at encouraging international support for its policy allowing private industry for recovery and use of space resources from the Moon, Mars and other celestial bodies.
- This Executive Order establishes US policy toward the recovery and use of space resources, such as water and certain minerals, in order to encourage the commercial development of space.
- The executive order titled '**Encouraging International Support For The Recovery And Use Of Space Resources**' will create long-time suitability in the human exploration of Moon, Mars and other celestial bodies.
- The order reaffirms US support for the 1967 Outer Space Treaty while continuing to reject the 1979 Moon Agreement, which only 17 of the 95 Member States of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space have ratified in the past four decades.
- The order also says that the US is not part of the moon agreement.
- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted Moon Resolution says that Moon and other celestial bodies should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and their environments should not be disrupted.
