

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY

WEEK-2
SEPTEMBER
2020

MAINS

- Presence of mercury in birds near Thermal Power Plants paves way for Modern Analysis

BIODIVERSITY

- Why India needs Bold Economic Reforms?

ECONOMY

- UN report flags changes in Food System to boost Climate Action

ENVIRONMENT

- All Ministries to list IAS, IPS, other officers with 'doubtful Integrity' for Early Retirement

ETHICS

- Mission Karmayogi for Civil Services Capacity Building

GOVERNANCE

- After China & Pakistan, India & Vietnam emerging as the next 'Iron Brothers' of Asia

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PRELIMS

- Pan-India GTAM in electricity launched
- RBI announces Open Market Operation

ECONOMY

- Sree Narayana Guru

HISTORY

- Failed Pakistan bid to taint India at UN Security Council

- India to Host Quad Meet Later This Year

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

- ICJ raises concern on SC's decision on Bhutan case

- No Question Hour, Curtailed Zero Hour In Parliament's Monsoon Session

POLITY

- Novichok nerve agent

- World's largest solar tree

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- Asteroid 465824 2010 FR to cross Earth's orbit soon: NASA

SPACE

GS SCORE

An Institute for Civil Services

www.iasscore.in

— NOTE —

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 (SEPTEMBER, 2020)

CONTENTS

Section - A: MAINS CURRENT AFFAIRS		
Area of GS	Topics in News	Page No.
BIODIVERSITY	• Presence of mercury in birds near thermal power plants paves way for modern analysis	02
ECONOMY	• Why India needs bold economic reforms?	04
ENVIRONMENT	• UN report flags changes in food system to boost climate action	07
ETHICS	• All ministries to list IAS, IPS, other officers with 'doubtful integrity' for early retirement	09
GOVERNANCE	• Mission Karmayogi for civil services capacity building	12
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	• After China & Pakistan, India & Vietnam emerging as the next 'Iron Brothers' of Asia	14
Section - B: PRELIMS CURRENT AFFAIRS		
Area of GS	Topics in News	Page No.
ECONOMY	• Pan-India GTAM in electricity launched	19
	• RBI announces Open Market Operation	19
HISTORY	• Sree Narayana Guru	20
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS	• Failed Pakistan bid to taint India at UN Security Council	21
	• India to Host Quad Meet Later This Year	22
POLITY	• ICJ raises concern on SC's decision on Bhusan case	23
	• No Question Hour, Curtailed Zero Hour In Parliament's Monsoon Session	24
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY	• Novichok nerve agent	26
	• World's largest solar tree	28
SPACE	• Asteroid 465824 2010 FR to cross Earth's orbit soon: NASA	29

IAS 2021-22

GS FOUNDATION

LIVE & INTERACTIVE CLASSES

IAS 2021
GS FOUNDATION
PRELIMS *cum* MAINS
ONLINE CLASSES
LIVE & INTERACTIVE
BATCH STARTS
15 SEPTEMBER 2020

IAS 2021
GS MAINS
FOUNDATION
BASICS TO ADVANCE
GS PAPER 1, 2, 3, 4 & ESSAY
+ MAINS TEST SERIES
BATCH STARTS
15 SEPTEMBER 2020

IAS 2021
BATCH 2
GS MAINS
ADVANCE
GS PAPER 1, 2, 3, 4 & ESSAY
+ MAINS TEST SERIES
BATCH STARTS
21 SEPTEMBER 2020

IAS
2021

OPTIONAL FOUNDATION

BATCH -3 POLITICAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION By: Dr. PIYUSH CHOUBEY BATCH STARTS 15 SEPTEMBER 2020	BATCH -2 HISTORY FOUNDATION By: PIYUSH KUMAR BATCH STARTS 15 SEPTEMBER 2020	BATCH -1 GEOGRAPHY FOUNDATION By: PRINCE MISHRA BATCH STARTS 01 OCTOBER 2020
---	---	--

SECTION: A
(MAINS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

PRESENCE OF MERCURY IN BIRDS NEAR THERMAL POWER PLANTS PAVES WAY FOR MODERN ANALYSIS

CONTEXT

A new study found mercury (Hg) in birds concentrated around two thermal power plants (TPP) in Maharashtra's Nagpur could lead to bioaccumulation and biomagnification.

◎ KEY-HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STUDY

- Traces of Hg on the feathers of the avifauna (birds of a particular region) in this area was linked to the Hg present in the ash ponds of the TPPs.
- Coal-based TPPs are the major source of mercury — the ninth most toxic element found on earth — emissions into the environment.
- Mercury contributed over 80 per cent of emissions released by the TPPs, according to 2016 estimates by Delhi-based think-tank Centre for Science and Environment.
- Fly ash generated by TPPs was one of the ways through which Hg was released into the environment.
- Fly ash is usually disposed in ash ponds in the form of ash slurry, forming an aquatic ecosystem of its own.
- In a wetland, Hg was found in two forms: organic (MeHg) and inorganic (iHg).
- MeHg has more bioconcentration than its counterpart, resulting in bioconcentration — the process by which a chemical concentration in an aquatic organism exceeds that in water — and subsequent physiological, reproductive and behavioral changes.

Hg in Bird feathers samples

- Bird feathers sample of eight bird species, like Indian pond heron, darters, Moorhen, etc, were collected and observed. It was seen that some of the species had a higher concentration of Hg.
- This could be because of feeding on fishes and insects in ash ponds. A majority of the bird species, however, had extremely low traces of Hg.
- In conclusion, it was seen that except in soil, other samples collected from fly ash, plants, water and bird feathers had low quantities of Hg in them.
- The purpose of the study was to establish new ways to analyse the presence of toxic elements like Hg. One such unique method was the non-invasive biomonitoring of bird feathers. Bird feathers turned out to be an ideal specimen, as they did not hurt the organism or require the physical presence of the bird.

Monitoring by TPPs

- In 2018, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change claimed all units of TPPs will be able to comply with Hg emission standards once the required technologies are installed.
- These technologies include-
 - Flue-gas desulfurisation (FGD)
 - electrostatic precipitators (ESP)
 - selective catalytic reduction (SCR)
- Technologies to monitor Hg emissions specifically, however, were not mandated. If plants fail to install FGDs, ESPs, and SCR, monitoring Hg will become difficult.
- Coal-fired TPPs are the major source of electricity in India. While these anthropogenic activities contribute to the development of our country, it also added to environmental degradation.
- In the longer run, regular monitoring by TPPs, along with finding different strategies to understand the levels and impact of toxins like Hg in the ecosystem, can help find solutions and avoid future pitfalls.

About Mercury

- Mercury is one of the most toxic elements and a threat to wildlife because it accumulates and magnifies to unsafe levels in aquatic food chains
- Mercury exists naturally and as a man-made contaminant. Mercury is classified as a heavy metal and is well known as being among the most toxic of metals.
- Mercury is a non-transition metal and is an extremely rare element in the earth's crust.
- Hg has three valence states (0, I and II), and exists in three main forms-
 - elemental mercury or Quick silver (Hg^0 , metallic mercury, and mercury vapor)
 - inorganic mercury (Hg^+ and Hg^{2+})
 - organic mercury such as methylmercury (CH_3Hg , MeHg) and ethylmercury ($\text{C}_2\text{H}_5\text{Hg}$, EtHg).

How does mercury accumulate in organisms?

- Mercury has the ability to build up in organisms and up along the food chain.
- Although all forms of mercury can accumulate to some degree, methylmercury is absorbed and accumulates to a greater extent than other forms.
- Inorganic mercury can also be absorbed, but is generally taken up at a slower rate and with lower efficiency than is methylmercury.
- The biomagnification of methylmercury has a most significant influence on the impact on animals and humans.

What is Bioaccumulation and Biomagnification?

- Bioaccumulation:** The term bioaccumulation refers to the net accumulations over time of metals within an organism from both biotic (other organisms) and abiotic (soil, air, and water) sources.
- Biomagnification:** The term biomagnification refers to the progressive build up of some heavy metals (and some other persistent substances) by successive trophic levels - meaning that it relates to the concentration ratio in a tissue of a predator organism as compared to that in its prey.
- Toxic Effects of Mercury**
- The toxic effects of mercury depend on its chemical form and the route of exposure.
- Methylmercury:** Methylmercury [CH₃Hg] is the most toxic form.
 - It affects the immune system, alters genetic and enzyme systems, and damages the nervous system, including coordination and the senses of touch, taste, and sight.
 - Methylmercury is particularly damaging to developing embryos, which are five to ten times more sensitive than adults.

- Exposure to methylmercury is usually by ingestion, and it is absorbed more readily and excreted more slowly than other forms of mercury.
- Elemental mercury:** Elemental mercury, Hg(0), the form released from broken thermometers, causes tremors, gingivitis, and excitability when vapors are inhaled over a long period of time.
 - Although it is less toxic than methylmercury, elemental mercury may be found in higher concentrations in environments such as gold mine sites, where it has been used to extract gold.
 - If elemental mercury is ingested, it is absorbed relatively slowly and may pass through the digestive system without causing damage.
- Ingestion of other common forms of mercury, such as the salt HgCl₂, which damages the gastrointestinal tract and causes kidney failure, is unlikely from environmental sources.
- When released into the environment, it accumulates in water laid sediments where it converts into toxic methylmercury and enters the food chain.
- Mercury contamination is a significant public health and environmental problem because methylmercury easily enters the bloodstream and affects the brain.

CONCLUSION

The new findings call for additional research to advance the very limited understating of the threats posed to migrating birds by mercury pollution. Uncovering the impacts of mercury pollution to wildlife has been and will continue to be a critical driver of improved mercury emissions regulations around the world.

WHY INDIA NEEDS BOLD ECONOMIC REFORMS?

CONTEXT

Covid-19 economic pain will pass but we need to create enduring change for firms and citizens with reforms.

Need to revisit economic reform in India

- The pandemic created by the outbreak of coronavirus or COVID-19 has shaken the world, which is unparalleled in the modern world. The US, Europe, got into a deep crisis that has threatened life and economy simultaneously and injected unprecedented uncertainty into the psyche of the capitalist economy.
- India also failed to remain insulated. However, the death toll remains much lower in comparison to the West. Nonetheless, the Indian economy has reached a standstill situation with a complete halt in all types of economic activities. Both supply-side and demand side of the economy became claustrophobic. These have multi-layered short-term and long term ramifications on the lives and livelihoods of Indian people.
- The projected economic growth has been slashed down by most of the International agencies. World Bank projected a growth rate for India in 2020-21 between 1.5 per cent and 2.8 per cent. IMF and Crisil's projection stand at 1.8 per cent and 1.9 per cent, respectively. It is estimated that the fiscal deficit may be closer to 9 per cent of GDP in 2021.
- Unemployment is likely to reach a historically highest level in the post-independence period. According to CMIE data (CMIE, 2020), the unemployment rate has reached at 23.60 per cent, and for the urban area, the rate stands at 25.30 per cent, and for rural India, the rate is 22.80 per cent on 28th April 2020.
- The emerging scenario has exposed the glaring reality of India's informal sector, which does not receive much attention before the outbreak of a pandemic. Besides, the pathetic plight of daily wage-earners, migrant labourers that have been unfolded during the lockdown period, raised few fundamental questions on efficacy and outcome of economic reforms in India and on the theoretical underpinning of the philosophy of neo-liberal economy.

Government Economic Measures during Pandemic

Monetary Measures

- In March 2020, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced its bi-monthly monetary policy statement, 2019-20 resolution of the monetary policy committee (MPC) to infuse liquidity in the

economy through banking and non-banking financial institutions.

- Repo rate has been reduced by 75 basis point and brought down to 4.4 per cent, and the reverse repo rate has been cut down by 90 points and brought to 4 per cent. This rate cut intervention by RBI has come after central banks across the world announced rate cuts to stave off a coronavirus related recession. Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) has also been reduced by 100 basis points (1 per cent) and stands at 3 per cent.
- A special refinancing facility of 500 billion to institutions such as National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), the Small Scale Bank of India (SIDBI) and the National Housing Bank (NHB) has been announced.
- These institutions play an essential role to meet up the long-term funding requirements of agriculture and the rural sector, small industries, housing finance companies, Non-banking Financial Companies and Microfinance Institutions (RBI Press Release, 17th April 2020).

Fiscal Policy Response

- Immediately after the lockdown, Finance Minister announced a fiscal package of Rs. 1.7 lakh crore, which is closer to 1% per cent of GDP to ensure food and cash for the poor and vulnerable section of the society.
- It has been announced that under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana Food Scheme, everyone within this scheme receives 5kg of wheat/ rice in addition to the current 5 kg allocation for coming three months for free. 1kg of a preferred pulse (based on regional preference) will be given for free to each household will also be provided through Public Distribution Scheme.
- 23 crore of families who are having ration cards or roughly 82 crore population or two-third of the population is supposed to be benefitted. Under PM-KISAN scheme (minimum income support scheme), farmers currently receive Rs. 6000 every year in three equal instalments.
- Under Jhan Dhan Scheme, 200 million woman account holders shall be provided ex-gratia amount of Rs. 500 per month for the next three months. Women in 83 million families below the poverty line covered under Ujjwala scheme get free LPG cylinders for three months.

- Government is also providing collateral-free loans amounting Rs. 200,000 for 630,000 Self-Help Groups (SHGs), which is likely to help 70 million households. It is further stated that the District Mineral Fund tuned Rs, 310 billion shall be used for the people who are facing economic disruption due to lockdown.

The Policy Impact

- Considering both monetary and fiscal measures, few pertinent questions are to be raised. From the monetary policy perspectives, the general observations say that it will temporarily reduce the volatility in the share market. Borrowers will feel relieved because there shall be interest cut on loan taken by industries, big, medium and small.
- Housing loan shall be cheaper and those who are paying Equated Monthly Installments (EMI), their interest payment will be reduced and which will be resulted in lower EMI payment. Credit requirements for the agricultural sector will be eased out.
- Moratorium on loan repayments and interest payments will help the small borrowers from the transport sector, especially who run SUVs, Auto-rickshaw, Battery driven Rickshaw and even a rickshaw.

Health:

- India will continue to remain least prepared to fight the pandemic because of feeble public health structure. As per World Bank data, The hospital bed availability is 0.55 per thousand population in 2019, which was 0.718 in 1980.
- Physician per thousand population stands at 0.739 in 2011 in comparison to 0.27 in 1981. Community health workers per 1000 population stood at 0.504 in 2011 and which was 0.627 in 2003. The figure for nurses and midwives was 0.9 in 2011, which 0.787 in 1991.
- In overall human Development performance, in 2019, India achieved a human development score of 0.647 and ranked 129th among 189 countries which are falling medium Human Development Category of Countries.
- On the contrary country like Sri Lanka made considerable progress and ranked 71 with an HDI value of 0.708 and is falling under high Human Development Category of countries and also outperformed the rest of the SAARC countries, including China.

Employment and Unemployment

- The unemployment rate has already touched at 23 per cent. The average economic growth rate during the entire reform period remain closer to 6 per cent. Now growth –employment relationship itself get into serious doubt.

- In 2019-20 Budget, Agriculture and Rural Development together find an allocation closer to 11 per cent of GDP together, but numerous schemes for these two sectors failed to improve the rural economy. The situation is such that around 43 per cent of the agricultural community is sharing only 14 per cent of income.
- The rise in rural distress has increased the supply of labour force in the urban informal sector and increased the percentage of migrant labourers. In brief, Economic reforms and expansion of the informal sector went hand in hand.
- Informal workers do not have any written contract, paid leave, health benefits or social security. Closer to 90 per cent of the workforce are engaged in informal sectors.
- Therefore, lockdown situation and concomitant severe economic recession have created a scenario where both life and livelihoods of 90 per cent of the workforce and their survival are at stake.

Fall in Consumption Expenditure

- In spite of having a plethora of schemes for rural India, it has become gradually clear that the economic condition of rural India has started deteriorating much before the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.
- As per the "Key Indicators: Household Consumer Expenditure in India" conducted by the NSO, the average monthly spending by an individual has been reduced to Rs. 1446 in 2017-18 from Rs. 1501 in 2011-12. This implies that there is an overall decline in per-capita consumption expenditure by 3.7 per cent. But the worrying factor is that in rural India, consumption expenditure has been reduced by 8.8 per cent and for urban India by 2 per cent.
- The crucial issue is that Rural India's monthly spending on food has declined by 10 per cent between 2011-12 and 2017-18. Rural India spent Rs. 643 per month on food items and in 2017-18, the spending has been reduced Rs. 580. The figures are inflation-adjusted, and hence the decline is in real terms.
- During the lockdown period and in post lockdown period, disruption in supply chain prices of vegetables and other food items has already been increasing. Lockdown and halt in economic activities are going to throw minimum employment and income opportunities for both rural people as well as people associated with the large urban informal sector. The spread of hunger and impoverishment has become imminent.

Income Inequality

- Almost three decades passed away since India initiated economic reforms in 1991. The country many times have tagged as a fastest-growing

country or second fastest growing country after China. The average growth rate during this entire period is closer to 6 per cent. The moot point is that does growth bring equity or increase income inequality.

- The famous research paper of two well-known economists Lucas Chancel and Thomas Piketty (Chancel & Piketty, 2017) highlighted that India's income inequality reached at the highest level since the income tax was introduced in 1922. The study further revealed that between 1951 and 1980, the gap between rich and poor was narrowing, but the trend was reversed during 1980-2014. The Gini coefficient is estimated to be close to 0.50, which would be an all-time high. A general rise in the Gini coefficient indicates that government policies are not inclusive and may be benefiting the rich as much as (or even more than) the poor.
- The survey conducted by Oxfam India in 2018 suggests the rising inequality in India in the recent past. The report stated '73 percent of the wealth generated last year went to the wealthiest one percent

the country at this crucial juncture of COVID-19 pandemic. The short-term solution lies to keep the demand side alive so that the supply side of the economy shall have a breathing space in future. Therefore, the focus should be on people associated with the informal sector of the economy, including agriculture. Cash and kind transfer are one of the options.

- There is a need to reorient the food items distributed through PDS. Addition of egg, soybean, mustard oil, salt, Potato, onion and milk will keep the nutritional level intact and save the millions of vulnerable people from fighting hunger and starvation.
- The budgetary allocation under MGNREGA, Rural and Urban Livelihood Mission, Mid-Day Meal, Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, Pradhan Manti Kishan Pension Yojana, Atal Pension Yojana can be clubbed to ensure the cash and kind transfer till the normal economic activities are taking off.
- India's debt-GDP ratio stands at 69.04 per cent (Union Budget 2020-21). Given the fact that revenue collection will be much lower as anticipated, India must relax its fiscal deficit to remain contained within 3.5-4.5 per cent, and at least 5-6 per cent of GDP should be spent to support the families associated to the informal sector.

◎ WAY FORWARD:

- How to strike a balance between lives and livelihoods is possibly the primary concern before

UN REPORT FLAGS CHANGES IN FOOD SYSTEM TO BOOST CLIMATE ACTION

CONTEXT

The world has missed out on significant opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but it is not too late, a report published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on strengthening food systems in the age of climate crisis stated.

◎ ABOUT:

- Food loss and waste has been ignored widely, according to the report. However, by simply adding these aspects to national climate plans, policymakers can improve their mitigation and adaptation contributions from food systems by as much as 25 per cent, the report said. This will enhance the process of achieving the Sustainable Development (SDG) goals by 2030, it added.
- Currently, diets and food loss and waste are widely ignored in national climate plans, but by adding them, policymakers can improve their mitigation and adaptation contributions from food systems, by as much as 25 per cent.
- The report, Enhancing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for Food Systems, was released on September 1, 2020. The report identified 16 ways to address the issue and put it forward in the public domain for policymakers to take action.
- According to the 2015 Paris Agreement, all member countries are expected to revise or resubmit their NDCs every five years. The meeting was scheduled for September 2, 2020.
- The report was put forward to help policymakers adopt food systems solutions and set more ambitious targets and measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and, in turn, improve biodiversity, food security, and public health.
- Food security, hunger and food wastage are being discussed largely, especially in the wake of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID -19) pandemic, which exposed the fragility of the food supply chain. On the other hand, the pandemic has demonstrated how business need to rebuild food systems.
- This crisis offers us a chance to radically rethink how we produce and consume food. For example, reorienting consumption by halving food waste and catalysing a shift towards more plant-rich diets is also a powerful climate mitigation tool to take advantage of.

Effects of climate change on food security:

● Effects on availability and production of the food:

- Climate change alters the agro-ecological conditions and effects the production and growth pattern of the crops
- Change in land quality, precipitation, temperature, availability of the gases in atmosphere greatly affects the crops.
- Climate change hits the drier spots the most as the land becomes more dry and loses the productivity.
- Crops in temperate lands might increase the productivity due to increase in the temperature but however other conditions resulted due to climate change such as drought, unpredictable rainfall, heat waves, coastal storms however brings more devastation than the production.
- Although crop production increases 10% to 20% at 550ppm CO₂, the nutritional quality decreases. Most crops do not survive at the high concentration of greenhouses gases.
- Increase in temperature is favorable for the pest and the insects. This increases the pest invasion in the agricultural fields.
- Beside the crops, climate change also effects the livestock, marine species and others.

Effects on the stability of the food supplies:

- Climate change results in extreme weather events such as floods, landslide, soil-erosion, cyclone, droughts, etc.
- These events affects the agricultural production and the pattern.
- They too affect in access and utilization of food thus disrupting the food security strategies of individual and government.

Effects on health and life:

- With the climate change many vectors borne (like malaria), water borne diseases increases.

- Warmer climate also increases the prevalence of food poisoning, diarrhea, salmonellosis etc.
- Climate change directly or indirectly forms the cycle of hunger, disease and poverty.
- Higher exposure of people to disease, added food insecurity, health problems, healthcare practices decreases their capacity to utilize the food.

Effects in the food access:

- Climate change can increase the price of the major crops.
- The change in the global agricultural pattern would alter the balance between food demand and the supply. With demand being much higher than the supply the price of the food are sure to increase.
- Those people who were already at the risk of losing their access to the food would be further more in risk.
- Poverty, hunger and malnourishment are more likely to increase and the poor are hit the hardest.

Measures to cope up with the food insecurity can be summed up in three steps:

- Risk reduction
- Risk management
- Risk coping

Risk reduction

- One cannot undo the steps that has caused climate change but can definitely prevent it from getting worst. Risk reduction usually refers to the measures to reduce and prevent the emission of the greenhouse gases.

Risk management

- It refers to minimizing the effects of the climate change.
- Improve the irrigation facility
- Utilization of scientific tools, improvised seeds and fertilizers etc in agricultures.
- Improve agricultural research on drought tolerant crops.

Risk coping

- Disaster preparedness strategies
- Diversifying towards climatically optimal crop and livestock varieties, adjusting land use and cropping patterns
- Public policies that focuses more on the vulnerable and the marginalized groups.
- Collective efforts from the individual, governmental and global level to reduce the burden of climate change.

◎ CONCLUSION:

Climate change has significant implications for agriculture and food security, creating new risks and challenges and exacerbating existing vulnerabilities from the local to the global level. In this regard, report published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on strengthening food systems is vital in dealing with food security issues due to climate change.

ALL MINISTRIES TO LIST IAS, IPS, OTHER OFFICERS WITH 'DOUBTFUL INTEGRITY' FOR EARLY RETIREMENT

CONTEXT

The central government has instructed all ministries and departments to maintain a register of government servants in the 50-55 year age bracket, and those who have completed 30 years in service, as it plans to weed out more "corrupt" and "inefficient" officials.

◎ BACKGROUND

The Indian Bureaucracy

- The Indian bureaucracy is much celebrated and, at the same time, much reviled. It has been called the 'steel frame' and is also called 'babudom'.
- Its performance draws reactions ranging from total despondency to cautious accolade.
- However, in the present times, across all sections of society, it has ceased to draw unqualified praise or recognition for its role. How has it travelled from the 'steel frame' days to being seen as a 'laid back and laggard' phenomenon today?
- There is great need to introspect on these issues as any sustainable economic development can only be premised on the edifice of a transparent, accountable and ethical governance structure, which is what the civil service is meant to provide.

◎ ANALYSIS

What is in the 'Order'?

- According to an order issued by the **Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)**, all ministries and government departments will have to conduct a quarterly review of the officials, in order to ascertain who among them need to be prematurely retired from service.
- In order to bring in better clarity to the existing instructions and enable uniform implementation, an effort has been made to review, consolidate and reiterate the guidelines so far issued on the subject at one place.
- The register of the government servants who are due to attain the age of 50/55 years or to complete 30 years of service, has to be maintained.
- The register maintained by each ministry will have to be reviewed at the beginning of every quarter by a senior official of the ministry or department.
- As such, a review would be mandatory for the January-March, April-June, July-September and October-December periods.

Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions

- The Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions is the coordinating agency of the Central Government in personnel matters specially issues concerning recruitment, training, career development, staff welfare as well as the post retirement dispensation.
- The Ministry is also concerned with the process of responsive people-oriented modern administration. Allocation of Business Rules defines the work allotted for the Ministry.
- The Ministry comprises of the following three Departments.
 - The Department of Personnel & Training
 - The Department of Pensions & Pensioners' Welfare
 - The Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances

What will be the 'criteria' of 'premature retirement'?

- **Doubtful integrity:** Government servants whose integrity is doubtful, shall be retired.
- **Ineffective service:** Government servants found to be ineffective shall also be retired.
- The basic consideration in identifying such government servants should be their **fitness/competence** to continue in the post held.
- No government servant should ordinarily be retired on ground of ineffectiveness, if, in any event, he would be retiring on superannuation within a period of one year from the date of consideration of his case.
- However, in case where there is a sudden and steep fall in the competence, efficiency or effectiveness of a government servant, it will be open to review such a case also for premature retirement.
- The **entire service record**, in addition to the **Annual Performance Appraisal Report (APAR)**, of a government servant should be considered at the time of review.

Committee to decide on officers for premature retirement

- The names of officials whose integrity is found to be doubtful will be forwarded to a **Review and Representation Committee**, which will need to be constituted.
- **Group A Officers:** In case of Group A officers, such as those of the IAS and IPS officers, the review committee will constitute of the secretary of the service's **Cadre Controlling Authority**.
 - For example, Ministry of Home Affairs in case of IPS officers, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change in case of Indian Forest Service officers, and Ministry of External Affairs for Indian Foreign Service officers, among others.
- **Boards:** In cases where there are boards — for example, the Railway Board and the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), among others, the Review Committee will be headed by the chairman of such a board.
- The broad criteria of this committee would be to recommend names of officers for premature retirement in cases where the officer's "integrity is doubtful" or the officer is found to be ineffective.

The premature retirement

- The premature retirement would be done under Fundamental Rules 56(j), 56(l) or Rule 48 (1) (b) of **Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 1972**.
- According to the order,

"The objective of Fundamental Rule (FR) 56(1)(l) and Rule 48 of CCS (Pension) Rules, 1972, is to strengthen the administrative machinery by developing responsible and efficient administration at all levels and to achieve efficiency, economy and speed in the disposal of Government function."
- It is clarified that premature retirement of government servants under these rules is **not a penalty**.
- It is distinct from 'compulsory retirement', which is one of the prescribed penalties under Central **Civil Services (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules, 1965**.

Retirement Rule

- The government may, at any time after a government servant has attained the age of 50/55 years or completed 30 years of service, as the case may be, retire him/her prematurely in public interest.

Applicability

- **FR 56 (J):** The service record of a **group A and B category officer** can be reviewed if he/she has attained the age of 50 years (in case of joining service before 35 years of age) or after attaining 55 years (in case of joining service after 35 years of age).
- **FR 56 (I):** Under FR 56 (I), the appropriate authority has the absolute right to retire a government servant in **Group C service** or post who is not governed by any pension rules, after he has completed 30 years' service by giving him/her notice of not less than three months in writing or three months' pay and allowances in lieu of such notice.
- **Rule 48 (1) (b) of CCS (Pension) Rules, 1972:** For employees covered under Rule 48 (1) (b) of CCS (Pension) Rules, 1972, the review can be done at any time after a government servant has completed 30 years' qualifying service.

The ailing bureaucracy of India

- There is no point in denying that the Indian bureaucracy is one of the worst in the world and is widely notorious for its labyrinthine rules and genetic negativity.
- India is also among the most corrupt nations; surely a large part of the bureaucracy must have either connived in it or abdicated its tasks.
- Appointments by governments are always in the danger of being politicised.

The other side of the coin

- Indians think of their bureaucrats as self-servers, rent-seekers, obstructive and corrupt.
- There is no doubt that civil servants do face dilemmas in decision making right through their careers. The tasks they have to perform, amidst rising expectations, are tough.
- On a number of occasions, the civil servant's side of the story never gets to be known. There are instances when politicians disown decisions that are subsequently found to be unpleasant.
- Bureaucracy, like any other segment of the society, has its share of the good, the bad and the ugly ones. What matters is who amongst these get recognised by the decision-makers.
- There are officers who are efficient and honest, but there are also those that are dishonest and inefficient. There is another category of dishonest but efficient officers.

Challenges

- **Average compensation formula:** The compensation structure today is not adverse in government.

- Being inadequately paid can hardly be ascribed to some of the ills that have crept in.
- Corruption or nepotism are a direct consequence of an individual not being able to see an exciting career for himself which permits him to rise to the highest echelons.
- ◉ **Outdated model:** This bureaucratic model of governance inherited from the colonial era was meant to be a steel frame, designed to provide basic civil administration.
- Structurally, generalist bureaucracy is geared towards being cautious and following precedents, which promotes the lack of a sense of urgency and is suboptimal in providing the responsiveness expected by the people in a democracy and, for that matter, for innovation.
- ◉ **Conservative approach:** To cede control of every aspect of government policy-making and implementation to generalist bureaucracy is essentially choosing a conservative approach, stifling India's growth.

How to re-engineer the bureaucracy?

Any attempt to re-engineer the bureaucracy would have to deal with two aspects.

- ◉ **Addressing the structure:** The first would have to address the systems or structures
 - No civil service structure can be static in its character.
 - It has to be dynamic and has to change with the times.

- ◉ **Ethical attitude:** The other would have to be the professional or attitudinal aspects of civil servants.

How 'Good Governance' can play a role?

- ◉ Good governance is the need of the hour. The citizen, having come centre stage, demands a more responsive, transparent and accountable set-up which is premised on probity and integrity.
- ◉ Our system needs to emulate some of the culture embedded in the civil services of Singapore, Scandinavian countries and the qualities that the British Civil services, from whom we derived our model, still espouse and maintain. It is not about compensation alone.
 - Any person seeking enhanced levels of compensation has enough opportunities elsewhere. He need not join government.
- ◉ We need to seek to create a bureaucracy of persons who are spirited, inspired and willing to work closely with public agencies, rather than sit in ivory towers. The civil servant has to be a team player first before he seeks to be a team leader.

◎ CONCLUSION

Revamping the bureaucracy is not a Herculean task. It merely requires a positive mindset of the government in power and a determination among the aspirants in the service to deliver as per the hallowed objectives of the service. It requires officers to remain committed to the job at hand and not be swayed by narrow sectarian, political or regional interests.

MISSION KARMAYOGI FOR CIVIL SERVICES CAPACITY BUILDING

CONTEXT

The programme sets competency goals for each role in the government services, allowing for better skill monitoring.

◎ ABOUT:

- Touting it as the largest capacity building programme for civil servants in the history of India and of the world, the Union government announced Mission Karmayogi that promises to build well-rounded professionals who "can stand up to the expectations of the people."
- Apart from setting competency levels for each role, programme also seeks to enhance skills of civil servants by allowing them specially-designed courses.
- The programme will be open to civil servants across all sections on a country-wide scale and will help them in performing their role better by establishing standardised competency levels for each role.
- In order to meet present-day challenges, "a civil servant has to be imaginative, innovative, proactive, polite, transparent, tech-oriented and creative" all at the same time.

◎ OBJECTIVE:

- The ultimate goal is better delivery of government services and to reduce the gap between the citizens and the government. The programme, through efficient capacity building, aims at better ease of living and greater ease of doing business.
- This apart, it also provides the government as well as civil servants insights on their capacities and competencies.

Need for Karma Yogi

- In a country where implementation of policies is a major hurdle, setting competency goals for civil servants will enable them to understand their role better and serve the people better.
- **Fragmented Learning:** Present day training landscape is diverse and fragmented, leading civil servants to think departmentally and in silos. Since thinking is parochial, there is a lack of a shared understanding of India's national developmental aspirations and needs.
- **Lack of continuous learning** : While courses are

**MISSION KARMAYOGI:
RULES-BASED TO
ROLES-BASED**

**National Programme for Civil Services
Capacity Building (NPCSCB)**

- Shift from 'Rules-based' to a 'Roles-based' human resource management
- Emphasise role of "On-Site learning" in complementing "Off-Site learning"
- Linking training and development of competencies of civil servants
- Transforming training institutions into Centres of Excellence
- Ministries to directly invest and co-create a common learning ecosystem
- Focus on massive scale training on e-learning

**MISSION KARMAYOGI:
A NEW CAPACITY BUILDING
PARADIGM**

**National Programme for Civil Services
Capacity Building (NPCSCB) (2/2)**

- Strengthens Common Foundations and remove departmental Silos
- Sets Benchmarks in Learning for Public Servants
- Democratization of learning to cover all categories

offered in patches for civil servants, there's an absolute lack of a lifelong-learning environment. There is a need to view training and learning as a continuous process and not something that is done in bits and pieces.

- **Redundancy & duplication of efforts:** Since the learning process is fragmented and department-wise, there's duplication of effort and there is an absence of common shared knowledge and faculty.

The focus areas

- The government feels that there's too much of focus on rules at the moment and wants to shift the attention away to stressing on role. Under this each role has been divided into functions and activities and a competency level has been set against each.
- Competencies are further divided into domain, functional and behavioral aspects for the role to be better understood and thereby better served.
- Additionally, a digital platform named iGOT has been set up which would offer learning content from across the world as well as from home.
- Since this is a digital platform, it would enable the civil servant to measure her career growth by keeping a track of the number of courses that a civil servant takes.
- There will be more focus on 'on-site learning' in complementing "off-site learning". There will be more focus on e-learning.

Components of the programme

- **HR Council:** The programme will be headed by a National HR Council chaired by PM Modi. It will include select Union ministers, chief ministers, national-international experts, and thought and industry leaders. It will provide direction and oversee capacity building plans.
- **Capacity Building Commission:** The commission will establish testing standards and help the HR council with reports and recommendations on capacity augmentations and development of a comprehensive national training programme. It will create shared faculty and resources and have supervisory role over all central training institutions.
- **SPV:** The special purpose vehicle will be a 100 percent government-owned company, which will be responsible for managing digital resources and curating the best of courses from the world and India and offer it to civil servants for a subscription of Rs 431. Around Rs 510 crore will be invested in over a period of 5 years.

CONCLUSION:

Hence, Mission Karmayogi will shift the focus from rule-specific to role-specific. The project will provide a mechanism for continuous capacity building, a constant updating of the talent pool, and an equal opportunity for personal as well as professional growth and esteem of self-training for value addition at all levels.

AFTER CHINA & PAKISTAN, INDIA & VIETNAM EMERGING AS THE NEXT 'IRON BROTHERS' OF ASIA

CONTEXT

Chinese actions in the South China Sea have pushed together Hanoi and New Delhi in a partnership experts liken to the Beijing-Islamabad alliance.

◎ BACKGROUND

- Vietnam remains among the most important South-east Asian nation for India's security interests.
- People of Vietnam resolutely supported the freedom struggle in India; and while facing international reprimand, India stood by Vietnam in its testing times during the 60s and 70s.
- The two had strategically remained closer to the Soviet Union than the US or China due to ideological differences, their individual strategic relations with either US or China, relations with neighbours, and Cold War politics.
- Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and President Ho Chi Minh made state visits during the 50s, making the Indian Prime Minister the first to visit Hanoi.
- India also supported the Hanoi government during the Vietnam War.
- The relationship in between India and Vietnam started getting a formal shape after India joined the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1996.

- India has taken a firm stand against growing Chinese expansion.
- Similar to how India has accused China of unitarily trying to alter the status quo at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh, Vietnam and other South Asian nations have accused China of doing the same in the South China Sea.

India and China Face Off Again at Border

- After months of efforts to defuse tensions, soldiers rushed to shout in each others' faces again.
- Though the confrontation wasn't bloody, where it happened was significant.
- For more than half a century, the border has been a sore spot.
- This kept the occasional border confrontation or dispute from turning deadly, up until the enormous brawl in June.

Why did the troops clash?

- The Line of Actual Control, as the disputed border between the two nations is known, is poorly demarcated.
- The presence of rivers, lakes and snowcaps mean the line can shift.
- The soldiers on either side - representing two of the world's largest armies - come face to face at many points.
- India has accused China of sending thousands of troops into Ladakh's Galwan valley and says China occupies 38,000sq km (14,700sq miles) of its territory.
- Several rounds of talks in the last three decades have failed to resolve the boundary disputes.
- The two countries have fought only one war so far, in 1962, when India suffered a humiliating defeat.
- There are several reasons why tensions have risen recently - but competing strategic goals lie at the root, and both sides blame each other.

◎ ANALYSIS

The next 'Iron Brothers' of Asia

- In reaching out to India, Vietnam had showcased not only a comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries but also showed its continued support of India's freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea.
- India and Vietnam now find themselves at a geostrategic convergence.
- Both sides oppose China treating the South China Sea as its backyard and have interests in preserving peace and stability in the contested waters.
- Vietnam's diplomatic moves would encourage India's engagement in the South China Sea.
- Boosting defence cooperation would send "a timely message" to Beijing.

How South Asian nations are coming closer against China?

How India and Vietnam coordinating closely?

- Both India and Vietnam perceive China as an irredentist and expansionist power that can never be territorially satiated and therefore presents a clear and present danger.

A brief history of China and Vietnam

- In 1974, China captured Paracel Islands in South China Sea from the anti-Communist regime in Saigon, South Vietnam.
 - In 1975, both Vietnams were joined under the Communist rule.
 - However, this cordial relationship was disrupted when Vietnam joined the Soviet-dominated "Comecon" for economic cooperation in 1978 and also signed a mutual treaty of friendship.
 - China branded Vietnam as "Cuba of the East" with hegemonic intentions of dominating South East Asia.
 - In December 1978, Vietnam annoyed Beijing by launching a full-scale war on the Khmer Rouge regime in Kampuchea (Cambodia), seizing its capital Phnom Penh.
 - It toppled the brutal Pol Pot who had killed nearly two million Cambodians through forced labour and executions.
 - Like in India, the Sino-Vietnam War started with a border skirmish on August 25, 1978. The real invasion started in the early hours of February 17, 1979.
 - On February 17, 1979, that Communist China invaded Communist Vietnam.
 - On February 18, 1979, Prime Minister Morarji Desai expressed "profound shock and distress over the invasion" and called for an immediate withdrawal of the Chinese forces from Vietnam.
 - Also, like in India in 1962, the Chinese suddenly withdrew on March 16, 1979, declaring that the mission was accomplished.
 - Since 2004, China has been Vietnam's biggest trade partner and the second-largest export market after America, according to "Vietnam News" of April 25, 2019.
 - Even after Chinese Coast Guards sank a Vietnamese vessel off Paracel Islands on April 3, 2020, Vietnam was seen trying their policy of "compartmentalising" its response to China and "not allow them to disrupt other parts of the bilateral relationship".
- India seeks to do to China what China has done to India, that is, containment and encirclement.

- Just as Islamabad and Beijing closely coordinate and support their military moves against India, New Delhi and Hanoi have now begun briefing and supporting each other vis-à-vis Beijing.
- And just as Pakistan favours a strong Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean, Vietnam favours an Indian naval presence in the South China Sea.

Recent developments

- Exploration of oil and gas blocks:** Despite opposition from China, Vietnam has sought India's greater role in exploring oil and gas blocks off its coast in the South China Sea saying that the area falls in its economic zone.
- Financial grants:** Earlier India had extended a \$100 million Line of Credit (LOC) to Vietnam to help acquire Patrol boats. It has also announced another \$500 million LOC for Hanoi to help it procure military equipment from India.
- Close official meetings:** Both India and Vietnam have maintained close relations with frequent meetings between senior officials from both countries.
 - For instance, Pham Sanh Chau, Vietnam's ambassador to India, recently met with Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla, and briefed him about the recent tensions following China's deployment of an H-6J bomber to Woody Island, part of the disputed Paracel Islands.
- The ambassador conveyed Vietnam's determination to further the bilateral Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with greater energy and vigor.

Expansion of Indo-Pacific Partnership

- India and Vietnam recently decided to explore closer cooperation in emerging areas -- **civil nuclear energy, space, marine sciences and new technologies** and decided to expand their Indo-Pacific partnership.
- India and Vietnam agreed to enhance their bilateral cooperation in line with India's **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)** and the **ASEAN's Outlook on Indo-Pacific** to achieve shared security, prosperity and growth for all in the region.
- India invited Vietnam to collaborate on one of the seven pillars of the IPOI. This is significant in the backdrop of Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific region including South China Sea region.
- The outcomes were result of the **17th Meeting of the India-Vietnam Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation** co-chaired by Dr. S. Jaishankar and Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Vietnam.

Impediments to India-Vietnam's close cooperation

- When Vietnam showed interest in buying the BrahMos missile, developed jointly by India and Russia, it was not sold to Vietnam for fear of angering China.
- Any strengthening of India-Vietnam defence ties would be driven by controlled Chinese belligerence towards both India and Vietnam, and would most likely be incremental. Neither India nor Vietnam wants to aggravate their relations with China.

Suggested areas of cooperation

- **Military cooperation:** India and Vietnam could further enhance their cooperation by "information sharing, military training and perhaps weapons procurement". The militaries of the two countries are highly complementary as they both largely relied on Soviet-era or Russian equipment.
- **Manufacturing of rifles:** Vietnam also lacks in the manufacturing of small arms which is associated with coastal security. There is significant scope for the manufacture of assault rifles that is used by Indian Coast Guard personnel.
 - ▶ The Indian defence establishment can also set up manufacturing facilities of carbines and small range missiles for which the potential buyers will be both from India and Vietnam.

- **Coastal defence mechanism:** Both countries can work out a coastal defence mechanism to integrate coordination between marine or sea police, coastguards and navy, to thwart away attacks on commercial or strategic installations along the coast of both the countries.
- **Technology cooperation:** Another area of cooperation remains to be the area of nano and microsatellite technology.
 - ▶ Both India and Vietnam hold a wide range of offshore assets, including oil exploration sites and islands.
 - ▶ The security of these assets should be reinforced by better aerial surveillance systems.
 - ▶ These satellites can be used for geospatial mapping as well as for gathering environmental data and sea explorations.

The Road Ahead

- India and Vietnam have come a long way together, fostering a relationship based on mutual trust and understanding. With the fast-changing scenario in the neighbourhood and the rising challenges that are faced by Vietnam, India can play a larger role in strengthening the regional strategic theatre by coming closer to Vietnam in the strategic and defence sectors.

IAS 2021 TEST SERIES (PRELIMS & MAINS)

IAS 2021

BATCH 3

**INTEGRATED
TEST SERIES**

for **PRELIMS & MAINS**

SINGLE SOURCE FOR
INTEGRATED PREPARATION

STARTS

25 SEPTEMBER
2020

**IAS 2021
MAINS TEST SERIES
GS MAINS
QA**

Complete GS & ESSAY through
Test Series
1500+ Topics of
GS Paper 1, 2, 3, 4 Covered

BATCH STARTS

12 SEPTEMBER
2020

IAS MAINS 2021

**ETHICS & ESSAY
TEST SERIES**

BY: MANOJ K. JHA

**A Solution for
500 Marks**

BATCH STARTS

03 OCTOBER
2020

OPTIONAL TEST SERIES 2021

**POLITICAL SCIENCE
TEST SERIES 2021**

By: **Dr. PIYUSH CHOUBEY**

TEST STARTS

04 OCTOBER
2020

**HISTORY
TEST SERIES 2021**

By: **PIYUSH KUMAR**

TEST STARTS

10 OCTOBER
2020

**GEOGRAPHY
TEST SERIES 2021**

By: **PRINCE MISHRA**

TEST STARTS

11 OCTOBER
2020

SECTION: B
(PRELIMS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

————— To Attempt —————
Weekly Current Affairs Test, Visit

www.iasscore.in

PAN-INDIA GTAM IN ELECTRICITY LAUNCHED

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** As a first step towards the 'greening' of the Indian short term power market, the Government launched the pan-India Green Term Ahead Market (GTAM) in electricity.
- ◎ **ABOUT:**
- The GTAM platform is the first Exclusive product for the renewable energy sector in the world and is a step towards Greening the Indian short term power Market.
 - The GTAM contracts will allow additional avenues to RE generators for sale of renewable energy, enable obligated entities to procure renewable power at competitive prices to meet their RPOs and provide a platform to environmentally conscious open access consumers and utilities to buy green power.
 - The key features of GTAM include bilateral transaction (of RE) in nature with clear identification of corresponding buyers and sellers. Thus, there will not be any difficulty in accounting for RPO.
 - Besides, the GTAM contracts will be segregated into Solar RPO and Non-Solar RPO as RPO targets are also segregated.
 - The price discovery will take place on a continuous basis i.e. price time priority basis. Subsequently, looking at the market conditions open auction can be introduced for daily and weekly contracts.
 - The energy scheduled through GTAM contract shall be considered as deemed RPO compliance of the buyer.
 - The country's target of 175 GW RE capacity by 2022 is driving accelerated renewable penetration.

Significance of the initiative

- **Lessen the burden on energy-rich states:** The introduction of GTAM platform would lessen the burden on Renewable Energy-rich States.
- **Increased participants:** The platform will lead to an increase in the number of participants in the renewable energy sector.
- **Transparent structure:** It will benefit buyers of renewable energy through competitive prices and transparent and flexible procurement.
- **Access to pan-India market:** It will also benefit renewable energy sellers by providing access to the pan-India market. GTAM contracts will allow additional avenues to the renewable energy generators for sale of energy.

RBI ANNOUNCES OPEN MARKET OPERATION

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** The RBI had announced simultaneous purchase and sale of government securities under Open Market Operation (OMO) for an aggregate amount of ₹20,000 crores in two tranches of ₹10,000 crores each.
- ◎ **ABOUT:**
- What is Open Market Operation?**
- Open market operations are conducted by the RBI by way of sale or purchase of government securities (g-secs) to adjust money supply conditions.
 - The central bank sells g-secs to suck out liquidity from the system and buys back g-secs to infuse liquidity into the system.
 - These operations are often conducted on a day-to-day basis in a manner that balances inflation while helping banks continue to lend.

- The RBI uses OMO along with other monetary policy tools such as repo rate, cash reserve ratio and statutory liquidity ratio to adjust the quantum and price of money in the system.
- The Reserve Bank reserves the right to decide-
 - on the quantum of purchase/sale of individual securities
 - accept bids/offers for less than the aggregate amount
 - purchase/sell marginally higher/lower than the aggregate amount due to rounding-off
 - accept or reject any or all the bid/offers either wholly or partially without assigning any reasons.

Importance of OMO

- **Smoothens the availability of money:** In India, liquidity conditions usually tighten during the second half of the financial year (mid-October onwards).
 - This happens because the pace of government expenditure usually slows down, even as the onset of the festival season leads to a seasonal spike in currency demand.
 - Moreover, activities of foreign institutional investors, advance tax payments, etc. also cause an ebb and flow of liquidity.
 - However, the RBI smoothens the availability of money through the year to make sure that liquidity conditions don't impact the ideal level of interest rates it would like to maintain in the economy.
- **Liquidity management:** Liquidity management is also essential so that banks and their borrowers don't face a cash crunch. The RBI buys g-secs if it thinks systemic liquidity needs a boost and offloads them if it wants to mop up excess money.

SREE NARAYANA GURU

◎ **CONTEXT:** 164th birth anniversary of the father of Kerala's renaissance Sree Narayana Guru observed on 2nd September.

◎ **ABOUT:** Who was Sree Narayana Guru?

- Sree Narayana Guru was born in 1864 in Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram.
- Sree Narayana Guru was a **social reformer** from Kerala who led a reform movement against casteism and promoted new values of spiritual freedom and social equality.
- He led a reform movement against the injustice in the caste-ridden society of Kerala in order to promote spiritual enlightenment and social equality.
- He laid great emphasis on the idea of 'one caste, one religion and one god.'

Key-contributions

- Sree Narayana Guru learned Sanskrit and poetry, drama & literary criticism, and logical rhetoric. The knowledge gained earned him the respect of many and he was then known as "Nanu Asan".
- In 1904 the Guru gave up his life of a wanderer and decided to settle down in a place to continue his spiritual practices. He chose Sivagiri at Varkala, twenty miles north of Thiruvananthapuram.
- He started a Sanskrit school in Varkala and poor boys and orphans were given free education regardless of their caste. Temples were built at different places – **Thrissur, Kannur, Anchuthengu, Tellicherry, Calicut, and Mangalore.**

- It was in the year 1912 he built the **Sharada Devi Temple** at **Sivagiri**.
- In 1913, he founded the **Advaita Ashram** at **Aluva**. This was an important event in his spiritual quest.
 - This Ashram was dedicated to a great principle – **Om Sahodaryam Sarvatra** (all men are equal in the eyes of God).
 - This became the motto of the new Ashram.
- Between 1918 and 1923 he visited Sri Lanka many times.
- In 1921, a Conference of Universal Brotherhood was held at Aluva.
- Again in 1924, a conference of all religions was held there. The Guru stressed the need for a Brahma Vidyalaya for a comparative study of different religious faiths.

FAILED PAKISTAN BID TO TAINT INDIA AT UN SECURITY COUNCIL

◎ **CONTEXT:**

In a recent development, the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) blocked an attempt by Pakistan to list two Indians under the 1267 Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee targeting international terrorism.

◎ **ABOUT:**

- The 1267 Committee was first set up in 1999, and strengthened by a series of resolutions in the months and years after the September 11, 2001 attacks.
- It is now known as the Da'esh and Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee.
- The 1267 list of terrorists is a global list, with a UNSC stamp. It is full of Pakistani nationals and residents, and Pakistan would like to get a few Indians on it as well.

Background

- Pakistan has been trying for a year now to get four Indians, who had been working in Afghanistan, sanctioned under the **UN's 1267 regime**.
- It moved separate proposals against them between September and November 2019.
- The latest move was the third time this year that Pakistan's efforts have been thwarted.

What is the process by which people are listed under UNSC 1267?

- **Proposal submission:** Any member state can submit a proposal for listing an individual, group, or entity.
 - Any proposal for listing must meet set criteria.
 - The proposal must include acts or activities indicating the proposed individual/group/entity had participated "in the financing, planning, facilitating, preparing, or perpetrating of acts or activities" linked to "ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida or any cell, affiliate, splinter group or derivative thereof".
- **Committee decision:** The 1267 Committee, which comprises all permanent and non-permanent members of the UNSC, meets as required with a notice of four working days. Decisions on listing and de-listing are adopted by consensus.
 - Under the Committee's guidelines, the "detailed statement of case in support of the proposed listing" should provide "as much detail as possible on the basis(es) or justification for the listing", including specific findings and supporting evidence.
- **Adoption of proposal:** The proposal is sent to all the members, and if no member objects within five working days, the proposal is adopted. An "objection" means curtains for the proposal.

- **Technical hold:** Any member of the Committee may also put a “technical hold” on the proposal, and ask for more information from the proposing member state.
 - During this time, other members may also place their own holds.
- The matter remains on the “pending” list of the Committee until such time as the member state that has placed the hold decides to turn its decision into an “objection”, or until all those who have placed holds remove them within a timeframe laid down by the Committee.
- Pending issues must be resolved in six months, but the member state that has placed the hold may ask for an additional three months.
- At the end of this period, if an objection is not placed, the matter is considered approved.

INDIA TO HOST QUAD MEET LATER THIS YEAR

◎ **CONTEXT:** India will host the Quad foreign ministers meet later this year. Apart from the Quad meeting, details are also being worked out for the India-US 2+2 dialogue.

- ◎ **ABOUT:**
- Known as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, the four-member group is an informal strategic forum that holds semi-regular summits and discusses regional economic and development assistance.
 - At its core, the Quad is a symbolic and substantive addition to an existing network of strategic and defense cooperation among four highly capable Indo-Pacific democracies.
 - Though the group has seen several ups and downs but it was in November 2017, the informal forum saw re-establishment with emphasis on maintaining rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific region.
 - Beijing sees this as a means of containing China.
 - The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or the Quad has regained strength in the face of an aggressive China.

The gained traction

- The grouping has gained greater traction since early 2020 because of Beijing’s role in the COVID-19 pandemic and the manner in which it has attempted to hijack multilateral institutions, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).
- The four countries are also concerned about global supply chain problems, recognizing the vulnerability of their dependence on China.
- The upcoming in-person foreign ministers meeting appears, at the least, aimed at sending a strong message to China about the resoluteness of the Quad.

Why this year’s meeting assumes significance?

- Both of these meetings are taking place at a time when China is facing the global ire for-
 - trampling democracy in Hong Kong
 - human rights violations in Xinjiang
 - alleged breach of internet privacy in various countries
 - attempting to unilaterally change the status quo at the India China border violating all bilateral agreements and protocols

- displaying strong-arm tactics in the South China Sea
- Beijing is also being blamed by some quarters for the spread of COVID-19 globally which originated in its labs in Wuhan.
 - US President Donald Trump has referred to COVID-19 as “Chinese virus”.
- The US had also imposed restrictions on Chinese diplomats in the country. India has also banned several Chinese apps and popular game Pubg and Indian Railways has cancelled Chinese investment.
- As major powers of the world get sceptical about China, India is looking forward to replacing the Asian giant as a production and services hub of the world.
- Quad countries including Australia and Japan have assured huge investments in India’s infrastructure technology and supply chain.
- The United States has also hailed India as a big power in India-Pacific.
- Beijing will be watching Quad and 2+2 meet very closely as it views this grouping of democratic powers with a sense of alarm.

ICJ RAISES CONCERN ON SC’S DECISION ON BHUSAN CASE

◎ CONTEXT:

While the Supreme Court only imposed a symbolic fine of one rupee, rather than imprisonment, the International Court of Jurists (ICJ) considers that the conviction appears to be inconsistent with international standards on freedom of expression and the role of lawyers.

◎ ABOUT:

- The International Commission of Jurists is comprised of up to sixty lawyers (including senior judges, attorneys and academics) dedicated to ensuring respect for international human rights standards through the law.
- Composed of 60 eminent judges and lawyers from all regions of the world, the International Commission of Jurists promotes and protects human rights through the Rule of Law, by using its unique legal expertise to develop and strengthen national and international justice systems.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.
- Established in 1952 and active on the five continents, the ICJ aims to-
 - ensure the progressive development and effective implementation of international human rights and international humanitarian law
 - secure the realization of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights; safeguard the separation of powers
 - guarantee the independence of the judiciary and legal profession.

Key-points of ICJ

- While the Court only imposed a symbolic fine of one rupee, rather than imprisonment, the ICJ considers that the conviction appears to be **inconsistent with international standards on freedom of expression and the role of lawyers**.
- The ICJ stressed that the ruling risks having a chilling effect on the exercise of **protected freedom of expression in India**.
- It urged a review of the laws and standards on criminal contempt as applied by the Indian courts.
- Specifically, the ICJ has voiced its concern regarding the conviction in so far as it appears

to be inconsistent with international laws on freedom of expression as guaranteed by the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 19, ICCPR)**, to which India is a party.

Article 19 of the ICCPR

- Article 19 of the ICCPR provides in part that,
- "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice."
- However, it also specifies that, the exercise of those rights may be subject to certain restrictions, "but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:
 - For respect of the rights or reputations of others
 - For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals."

Background

- Noted advocate and activist Prashant Bhushan, held guilty of contempt of court for two tweets against present Chief Justice SA Bode and past four CJs.
- The Supreme Court found that the allegations were based on distorted facts and amounted to a scurrilous and malicious attack on apex court and **destabilized the foundation of the judiciary**, was sentenced to a token fine of Rs 1.
- The Supreme Court bench, comprising Justices Arun Mishra, B R Gavai and Krishna Murari, directed the lawyer to deposit the amount by September 15, failing which he will attract a jail term of three months and debarment from law practice for three years.
 - The Court considered that its ruling was consistent with freedom of speech and expression under Article 19 of the Indian Constitution, saying that it will have to balance its exercise of power to punish for contempt for itself (Article 129) with freedom of speech and expression.
 - The freedom of speech cannot be curtailed but rights of others need to be respected.

What needs to be done?

- Agreeing that while certain limitations on the freedom of expression are allowed as per international standards, ICJ emphasized that discussions involving the role of the judiciary, access to justice, and democracy by members of the public must be given the widest possible scope in terms of exercising that freedom.
- Restrictions, the Commission opined, must be imposed only when necessary and in a proportionate manner in order to fulfil a legitimate purpose such as securing public order.

NO QUESTION HOUR, CURTAILED ZERO HOUR IN PARLIAMENT'S MONSOON SESSION

◎ CONTEXT:

There will be no Question Hour, a curtailed Zero Hour and no private members' bills during the upcoming monsoon session of Parliament, the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha secretariats decided.

◎ ABOUT:

What is Question Hour?

- Question Hour is the liveliest hour in Parliament. It is during this one hour that Members of Parliament ask questions of ministers and hold them accountable for the functioning of their ministries.
- The questions that MPs ask are designed to elicit information and trigger suitable action by ministries.
- Their questions have exposed financial irregularities and brought data and information regarding government functioning to the public domain.
- **Types of Questions:** There are four categories of questions that can be asked in this period —
 - **starred questions:** Starred questions require an oral answer from the minister-in-charge and must be submitted 15 days in advance.
 - **unstarred questions:** They require a written response and generally address concerns related to data and information, but do not allow supplementary questions. These too must be submitted 15 days in advance.
 - **short notice questions:** They address urgent matters that have public importance and can be submitted within less than 10 days.
 - **questions to private members:** They are usually related to “some Bill, Resolution or other matter connected with the business of the House for which that Member is responsible”.

Origin of the Hour

- Over the last 70 years, MPs have successfully used this parliamentary device to shine a light on government functioning.
- With the broadcasting of Question Hour since 1991, Question Hour has become one the most visible aspects of parliamentary functioning.
- Asking questions of the government has a long history in our legislative bodies. Prior to Independence, the first question asked of government was in 1893.
- It was on the burden cast on village shopkeepers who had to provide supplies to touring government officers.

What is Zero Hour?

- While Question Hour is strictly regulated, Zero Hour is an Indian parliamentary innovation.
- The phrase does not find mention in the **rules of procedure**. The concept of Zero Hour started organically in the first decade of Indian Parliament, when MPs felt the need for raising important constituency and national issues.
- During the initial days, Parliament used to break for lunch at 1 pm. Therefore, the opportunity for MPs to raise national issues without an advance notice became available at 12 pm and could last for an hour until the House adjourned for lunch.
- This led to the hour being popularly referred to as Zero Hour and the issues being raised during this time as Zero Hour submissions.
- Over the years, presiding officers of both Houses have given directions to streamline the working of Zero Hour to make it even more effective.
- Its importance can be gauged from the support it receives from citizens, media, MPs and presiding officers despite not being part of the rulebook.

When Question Hour was dropped amid extraordinary circumstances?

In the past, the Question Hour had been suspended during wars and the Emergency.

- **India-China war of 1962:** During the India-China war of 1962, Parliament’s winter session had skipped the Question Hour.

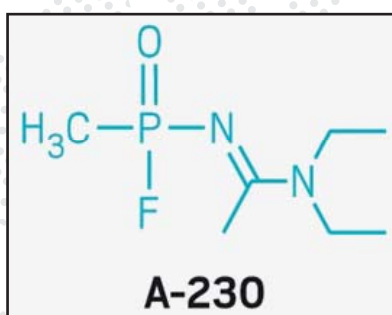
- **1971 War:** During the 1971 war, too, the daily schedule was changed. From December 6 to 23 (due to Pakistani aggression), the Question Hour and Calling Attention matters were suspended,
- **The Emergency (June 25, 1975 – March 21, 1977):** During the Emergency, imposed by the Indira Gandhi regime, Parliament continued to function but without Question Hour in at least two sessions.
 - The monsoon session of 1975 — the first after the declaration of the Emergency — didn't have a Question Hour
 - The winter session of 1976, too, didn't have a Question Hour.
 - Several constitutional amendments were cleared hurriedly during this period.
 - One of the most significant one was the **42nd Amendment that added the words "Socialist" and "Secular" to the Preamble to the Indian constitution.**

NOVICHOK NERVE AGENT

◎ **CONTEXT:** The German government says Russia's opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, has been poisoned with a Novichok nerve agent.

◎ **ABOUT:** **What are Novichok agents**

- The name Novichok (A-230) means "newcomer" in Russian, and applies to a group of **advanced nerve agents** developed by the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s.
- They were known as **fourth-generation chemical weapons** and were developed under a **Soviet programme codenamed Foliant**.



- Novichok's existence was revealed by chemist Dr Vil Mirzayanov in the 1990s, via Russian media.
 - He later defected to the US, where he published the chemical formula in his book, State Secrets.

How is it used?

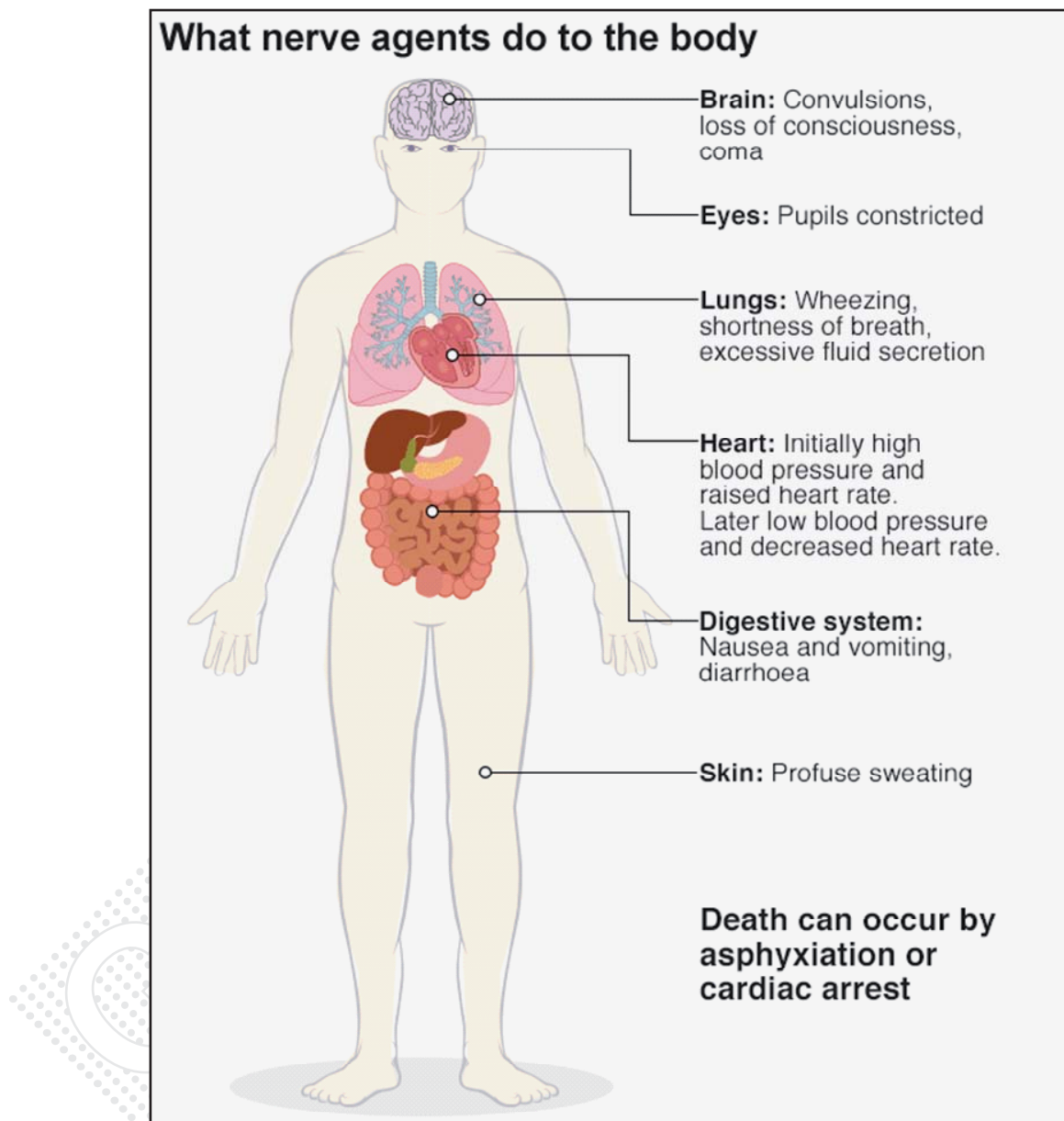
- Novichok agents are dispersed as an ultra-fine powder rather than a gas or vapour.
- They can be inhaled, ingested, or absorbed through the skin.

Variants of Novichok

- Some variants of Novichok are thought to be five to eight times more toxic than the VX nerve agent.
- While some Novichok agents are liquids, others are thought to exist in solid form. This means they could be dispersed as an ultra-fine powder.

- Some of the agents are also reported to be “binary weapons”, meaning the nerve agent is typically stored as two less toxic chemical ingredients that are easier to transport, handle and store.
- When these are mixed, they react to produce the active toxic agent.

Similar symptoms to those of other nerve agents



- Novichok agents have similar effects to other nerve agents - they act by blocking messages from the nerves to the muscles, causing a collapse of many bodily functions.
- The first sign to look out for was miosis, the excessive constriction of the pupils.
- A larger dose could cause convulsions and interrupted breathing.
- Continuous convulsions and vomiting, and then a fatal outcome.

Is there an antidote?

- All nerve agents have an antidote in atropine, but it needs to be administered as soon as possible.

- A common problem is that it can take time to diagnose that a nerve agent has been used.

Who controls the world's most toxic chemicals?

- The work of the **Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)** is carried out as part of an international control regime that governs what is, or is not, permissible as far as very toxic chemicals are concerned.
- This was established by the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), to which 192 countries are signed up members.
 - Only four countries are outside the CWC - North Korea, Israel, Egypt and South Sudan, which has begun the process of signing. They are still bound by the treaty's provisions, under international law.
- The CWC's operational arm, the Hague-based inspectors of the OPCW, have overseen the destruction of nearly 97% of the world's declared stockpiles of chemical weapons.
- Novichoks were added to the **Chemical Weapons Convention's** list of **controlled substances**, in one of the first major changes to the treaty since it was agreed in the 1990s.

WORLD'S LARGEST SOLAR TREE

◎ CONTEXT:

Scientists at the Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute (CMERI) in West Bengal have installed a 'solar tree' that is likely to be the largest of its kind in the world.

◎ ABOUT:

What is solar tree?

- A solar tree is a metal structure resembling a tree that has solar panels fitted on the branches.
- The solar panels connected through metal branches produces solar power.
- The working of a solar tree is much like that of a real one—leaf-like solar panels connected through metal branches using sunlight to make energy.
- The Solar tree panels charge batteries during the day. At dusk, the tree automatically switches on LED lights. It is programmed to regulate the amount of light it produces.
- Solar trees are flexible and rotate to face the sun and produce maximum possible amount of energy using a technique called "**spiralling phyllotaxy**".
- **Main body:** Main body of solar tree is a simple hollow tube closed at one end to enable the attachment of the upper, smaller rod which should carry the upper panel.
 - This panel is placed high above the other panels at a vertical angle.
 - The angle provides a constant area for the sunlight regardless of the sun trajectory during the day.
 - The height at where it is placed enables a greater panel area which will not cover the lower placed panels.

Key-details of CMERI solar tree

- This is the largest solar tree as per our knowledge producing up to 11,500 watts (11.5kw).
 - The second largest tree has been set up in London and produces around 8.6kw.
- The CMERI solar tree has 35 panels each with a capacity of 330 watts.

- The solar tree has capabilities to adapt a bevy of Internet of Things (IoT)-based features, such as
 - round-the-clock CCTV surveillance in agricultural fields
 - real-time humidity, wind speed, rainfall prediction
 - soil analytics sensors

PM KUSUM

- For developing a renewable energy-based grid, interested micro, small, and medium enterprises can align their business models with the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan (PM KUSUM) program for farmers.
 - The KUSUM program is expected to help Indian farmers by providing them financial and water security through the mobilization of solar projects and solar-powered water pumps.
 - The program has been divided into three components and aims to add a solar capacity of 25,750 MW by 2022.
- The solar tree can also be connected to CSIR-CMERI's solar-powered e-savidha kiosks for real-time access to the massive agricultural database, as well as to the eNAM (National Agricultural Marketplace) for instant and real-time access to a unified online market.

Significance of the initiative

- **Cutting CO₂:** Producing around 12,000–14,000 units of clean and green power in a year, the solar tree has the potential to save 10–12 tons of CO₂ from being released into the atmosphere every year.
- **Energy reliant and carbon negative India:** This solar tree is a quantum leap towards making an energy reliant and carbon negative India.
- **Widespread usage:** The CSIR-CMERI developed solar tree, besides being the world's largest solar tree, also has certain customizable features for application at diverse sites. The solar trees were designed in a manner to ensure minimum shadow area, potentially making these solar trees available for widespread usage in agricultural activities such as high capacity pumps, e-tractors, and e-power tillers.

ASTEROID 465824 2010 FR TO CROSS EARTH'S ORBIT SOON: NASA

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** NASA has been tracking asteroid 465824 2010 FR, which is twice as big as the Pyramid of Giza and is expected to cross the Earth's orbit on September 6.
- ◎ **ABOUT:**
 - It is classified as a Near-Earth Object (NEO) and a potentially hazardous asteroid (PHA).
 - NEOs occasionally move close to the Earth as they orbit the Sun, and when this happens, NASA's Center for Near-Earth Object Study (CNEOS) determines their distance.
 - ▶ NASA defines NEOs as comets and asteroids nudged by the gravitational attraction of nearby planets into orbits that allow them to enter the Earth's neighbourhood.
 - ▶ These objects are composed mostly of water ice with embedded dust particles.

- The space rock is considerably large in size and is expected to range from 120 to 270 metres in diameter.

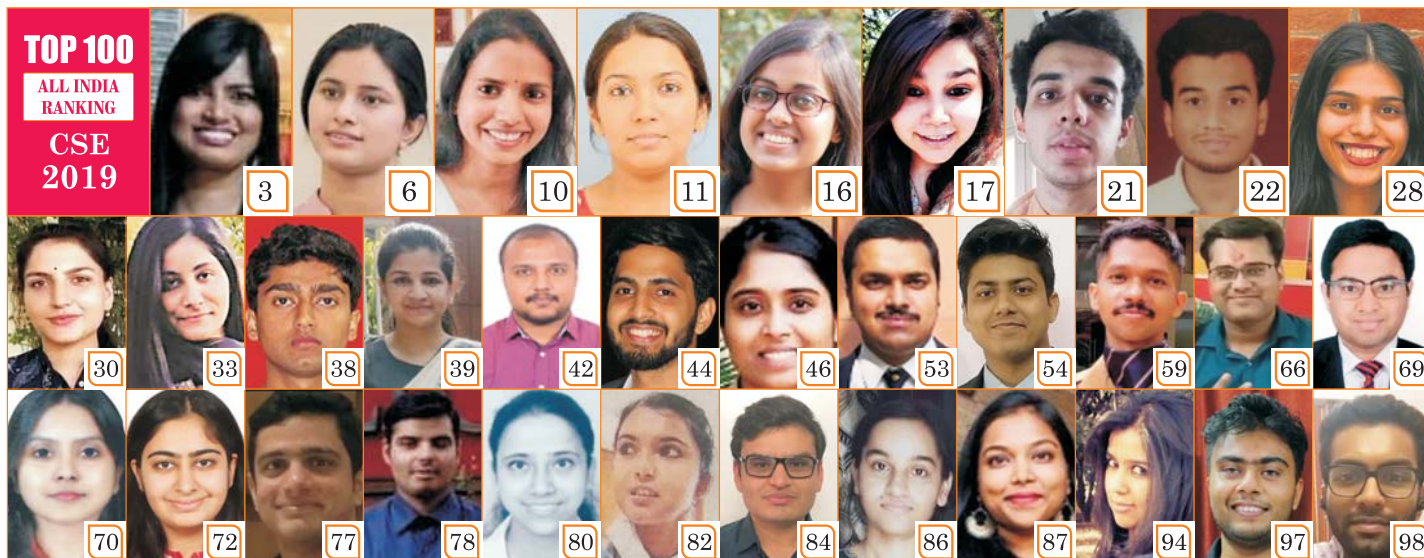
Key Facts

- Categorized as a Apollo-class Asteroid
 - Comparable in size to a school bus or smaller
 - Will pass within 7,412,769 km of Earth in 2020
 - Classified as a Near Earth Asteroid (NEA)
 - Classified as a Potentially Hazardous Asteroid (PHA)
- 2010 FR orbits the sun every 440 days (1.20 years), coming as close as 0.72 AU and reaching as far as 1.55 AU from the sun.
 - Based on its brightness and the way it reflects light, 2010 FR is probably between 0.121 to 0.272 kilometers in diameter, making it a small to average asteroid, very roughly comparable in size to a school bus or smaller.
 - Asteroid 465824 2010 FR was discovered on March 18, 2010 by the Catalina Sky Survey (CSS).

What are Asteroids?

- Asteroids are rocky objects that orbit the Sun, much smaller than planets. They are also called minor planets.
- Asteroids are named by the International Astronomical Union (IAU).
- As per NASA, 994,383 is the count for known asteroids, the remnants from the formation of the solar system over 4.6 billion years ago.
- Most such objects can be found in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter, which is estimated to contain somewhere between 1.1-1.9 million asteroids.
 - The explanation for the concentration of asteroids in this belt comes from the formation of Jupiter, whose gravity brought an end to the formation of any planetary bodies in this region, as a result of which the smaller bodies kept colliding with each other, fragmenting into asteroids.
- Trojans: Other than those found in the main asteroid belt, asteroids can be classified into trojans, which are asteroids that share an orbit with a larger planet.
 - NASA reports the presence of Jupiter, Neptune and Mars trojans. In 2011, they reported an Earth trojan as well.
- Near-Earth Asteroids (NEA): The third classification of asteroids can be as Near-Earth Asteroids (NEA), which have orbits that pass close by the Earth.
 - Those that cross the Earth's orbit are called Earth-crossers.
- Potentially hazardous asteroids (PHAs): More than 10,000 such asteroids are known, out of which over 1,400 are classified as potentially hazardous asteroids (PHAs).

GSSCORE



SUCCESS IS A PRACTICE WE DO!

