

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY

WEEK - 3
FEBRUARY, 2020

MAINS

- Cover Unorganised, Migrant Labourers Too
- Economic Sanctions as a Foreign Policy Tool

- Why Industrial Production has contracted and what it means for the Economy?

ECONOMY

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- Reservation in Promotion for SC & ST

- Uniform Civil Code - The Debate, The Status

POLITY

Addition of 3 Endangered Indian Species to the Global Conservation List

Cauvery Delta and Protected Special Agriculture Zone

- Kerala bans CFL and Filament Bulbs
- Madhya Pradesh radio-tags first-ever Indian Pangolin

CONSERVATION

- Dividend Distribution Tax
- Thalnomics

ECONOMY

- Polar Vortex and its Effects

ENVIRONMENT

- Africa has been spared so far from coronavirus. Why?

- Lassa Fever

HEALTH

- Kalidasa

HISTORY

- United States Trade Representative (USTR)

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- The difference between private and government Bills in Parliament

- "Unparliamentary" speech and conduct in Parliament

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

- Arsenic-resistant Rice Genome India Project

- Voyager 2

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- How wide is the gender gap in science?

SOCIAL ISSUES

PRELIMS

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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-3 (FEBRUARY, 2020)

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SECTION: A
(MAINS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

COVER UNORGANISED, MIGRANT LABOURERS TOO

CONTEXT

- The unorganised sector, including contract workers, must be brought under the purview of the bill on the Labour Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Condition of Workers, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour has proposed.

◎ BACKGROUND:

- The informal sector is an unorganized one which is neither taxed nor monitored by any form of government.
- The Economic Survey of 2018-19, released in July 2019, says "almost 93%" of the total workforce is 'informal'.
- But the Niti Aayog's Strategy for New India at 75, released in November 2018, said: "by some estimates, India's informal sector employs approximately 85% of all workers".
- Meanwhile, as per the International Labor Organization, over 80 per cent of the Indian economy is in the informal sector, while only 6.5 per cent constitutes the formal sector.
- Clearly, India's unorganised sector is not the residual sector of the economy. In fact, it is the dominant sector.
- To bring labour reforms in the country, the bill on **the Labour Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Condition of Workers** was introduced in 2019 in the Lok Sabha.
- Then it had been referred to the Standing Committee on Labour which held meetings with stakeholders.
- In its report tabled in the Parliament, the Standing Committee on Labour said there should be uniform definitions and clarity in interpretation of the provisions contained in the Code.

◎ ANALYSIS:

What's in the Bill?

- The **Labour Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Condition of Workers** seeks to regulate health and safety conditions of workers in establishments with 10 or more workers, and in all mines and docks.
- It subsumes and replaces 13 labour laws relating to safety, health and working conditions. These laws include: **Factories Act, 1948; Mines Act, 1952; Dock Workers Act, 1986; Contract Labour Act, 1970; and Inter-State Migrant Workers Act, 1979.**

- **Conditions:** Welfare facilities, working conditions and work hours for different types of establishments and workers will be prescribed by the central or state governments through rules.
- **Occupational safety board:** The Code sets up occupational safety boards at the national and state level to advise the central and state governments on the standards, rules, and regulations to be framed under the Code.
- **Special provisions:** The Code creates special provisions for certain classes of establishments such as factories, mines, dock workers, and constructions workers. These include separate provisions on licenses, safety regulations, and duties of employers.
- **Coverage:** The Code applies to establishments employing at least 10 workers, and to all mines and docks. It does not apply to apprentices.
 - ▶ Further, certain provisions of the Code such as health and working conditions, apply to all employees.
 - ▶ Employees include workers and all other persons employed in a managerial, administrative, or supervisory role (with a monthly wage of at least Rs 15,000).
- Establishments covered by the Code are required to register with registering officers, appointed by the central or state governments.

Key-issues in the Bill:

- **Rationale for some special provisions unclear:** The Code replaces 13 laws regulating health, safety and working conditions of workers. While the Code consolidates existing Acts, it falls short of simplifying their provisions.
- **Certain workers not covered under the Code:** The Code covers establishments with 10 or more workers. It excludes establishments with less than 10 workers. This raises the question of whether workers in smaller establishments should be covered by health and safety laws.
- **Civil Court barred from hearing matters under the Code:** The Code bars civil courts from hearing any matters under the Code.

- **Wages not defined:** The Code refers to “wages” in provisions relating to overtime work and calculation of leave. However, it does not define the term. Different laws contain varying definitions of the term ‘wages’.

Significance of the Bill:

- **Legal framework on fixed-term employment:** Apart from offering some degree of flexibility on government permissions for retrenchment, the most important aspect of the Bill is that it presents the legal framework for ushering in the concept of ‘fixed-term employment’ through contract workers on a pan-India basis.
- **Flexibility:** Currently, companies hire contract workers through contractors. With the introduction of fixed-term employment, they will be able to hire workers directly under a fixed-term contract, with the flexibility to tweak the length of the contract based on the seasonality of the industry.
- **Wider reach:** The move to include it in a central law will help in wider reach, and states are expected to follow similar applicability.
- **Pan-India impact:** The government had tried a move last year to apply fixed-term employment across “central sphere establishments” in all sectors, but it failed to elicit the desired results as states did not notify similar provisions for it. The Bill now ensures a pan-India impact of this move.

Major recommendations of the Committee:

The major recommendations of the Standing Committee on Labour are as given below:

- **Inclusion of all:** While the original bill said the code will not apply to contract workers of the Centre and state governments. The committee has proposed to include all unorganised workforce under the purview of the code.
 - ▶ It would mean extending the code to an estimated 50 crore unorganised workers, including railway porters, construction workers and security guards who do not come under the memberships/purview of most trade unions.
- **Inter-state migrant workers:** The committee has also recommended that **inter-state migrant workers** be given the benefit of the proposed safety-health-working conditions under the code bill.
- **Extending the line:** Trade Unions work only in the organised sectors and account for only around 8 crore workers. The committee has recommended streamlining and expanding the government’s labour department to reach out to the unorganised sectors and bring such workers under the code purview.

- The committee has also asked the government to find ways to ensure enough rest and safety measures for workers in highly mechanised sectors such as software industry, textile, hospitality and media who may need to work more than eight hours a day due to the nature of their work.
- In other sectors, the panel is for going by ILO norms that stipulate a maximum of eight hours of work a day.

The “untouched” part:

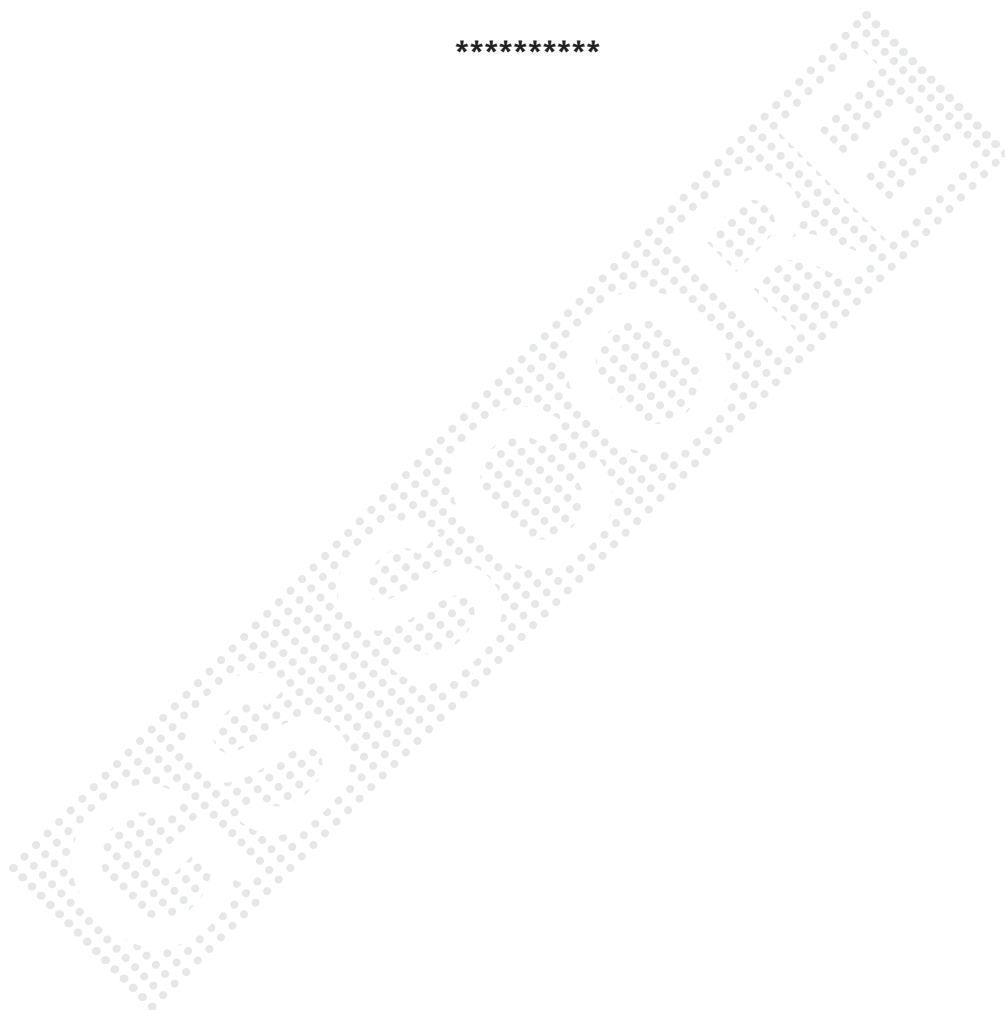
- The committee has left it to the government to find a way to make a distinction between ‘employees’ and ‘workers’, the two categories of the workforce in the bill, by ensuring the deserving sections of workers won’t be left out of the benefits of the code.
- Five members of the committee — Husain Dalwai, Dean Kuriakose (Congress), Elamaram Karim (CPM), K Subbarayan (CPI) and M Shanmugham (DMK) — have given a joint note of dissent in which they, among other things, said the working hours can’t exceed eight hours a day for all sections of workers and instead of categorising as ‘employees’ and ‘workers’ everyone in the workforce should be called ‘workmen’ to safeguard against any of them being excluded from the benefits of the code.
- The dissent note also said that while the code replaces the Plantation Labour Acts, workers of plantations with a size of less than five acres be excluded from its purview so that such workers continue to get the pre-code benefits.

The need for labour reforms in India:

- In the case of India, Labour law reform is necessary as jobs in the manufacturing sector have reduced by 3.5 million between 2011-12 to 2017-18, and economic growth was at a 26-quarter low of 4.5% in the July-September 2019 quarter.
- Currently, 44 labour-related laws enacted by the central government deal with wages, social security, labour welfare, occupational safety and health, and industrial relations.
- Labour is on the concurrent list, giving both central and state governments the power to legislate, resulting in more than 100 state labour laws.
- Most companies in the country find it difficult and impossible to follow this myriad of laws and find ways to subvert them.
- No job security: Organised sector is stringently regulated while the unorganised sector is virtually free from any outside control and regulation with little or no job security.
- **‘too low’ wages:** Wages are ‘too high’ in the organised sector and ‘too low’, even below the subsistence level in the unorganised sector. This dualistic setup suggests how far the Indian labour market is segmented.

Importance of the informal sector:

- In India, the informal sector generates income-earning opportunities for a large number of people and contributes a sizeable portion of the country's net domestic product.
- The sector plays a vital role in providing employment opportunity to a large segment of the working force and contributes to the national product significantly.
- The share of the formal sector is around 12 -14 percent in our national income while that of the informal sector is more than 30 percent.
- The informal forms of organizations are major players in such activities as manufacturing, construction, transport, trade, hotels and restaurants, and business and personal services.
- Moreover, the sector plays a significant role in the economy regarding employment opportunities and poverty alleviation.
- Reforms are needed for the organised sector as well as the unorganised sector at the earliest to recognise their rights and promote better working conditions.



WHY INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION HAS CONTRACTED, WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE ECONOMY

CONTEXT

- The fall in IIP comes just a day after the Finance Minister quoted IIP data to argue the emergence of ‘green shoots’ in the Indian economy.

◎ BACKGROUND

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation released the December data, which, in turn, shows that the IIP contracted by 0.3 per cent.
- In November, the IIP had expanded by 1.8% after witnessing three consecutive months — August, September, and October — of contraction.
- A key reason for positive growth in November was the favourable base effect.
- The latest contraction would predictably undermine the FM’s assertion about the economy turning around.
- On the whole, between April and December 2019, the IIP has now shown a cumulative growth of a meagre 0.5%.
- According to the Quick Estimates of IIP released on Wednesday, in terms of industries, 16 out of the 23 industry groups in the manufacturing sector have shown negative growth during the month of December 2019 as compared with the corresponding month of the previous year.
- In other words, the contraction continues to be widespread.

What is IIP?

- The IIP is an index used to track the performance of the industrial sector in the Indian economy.
- It does this by mapping the volume of production.
- But since it is an “index”, it targets a basket of industrial products — ranging from the manufacturing sector to mining to energy — and allocates different weights to them.
- Then, depending on the production of this basket, it throws up an index value.
- The index value is then compared with the value of the index in the same month a year ago to arrive at a percentage growth or decline figure.

How is IIP data read?

- There are two ways to understand the IIP data.
- One can either drill down the IIP data and look at the sectoral performance — where the whole

industrial sector is divided into three sub-sectors, namely manufacturing, mining and electricity — or look at the use-based classification.

What is the sectoral classification?

- In the sectoral classification, manufacturing has the highest weight of 77.6%, mining has 14.4% share and electricity has 8% weight.
- In December, while production in mining grew by 5.4%, in manufacturing, which is the biggest chunk, production contracted by 1.2%; electricity contracted too, albeit marginally.

What is the use-based classification?

- Within the use-based classification, data is provided for six categories. These are:-
 - ▶ Primary Goods (consisting of mining, electricity, fuels and fertilisers) — this has a weight of 34%
 - ▶ Capital Goods (e.g. Machinery items) — this has a weight of 8%
 - ▶ Intermediate Goods (e.g. yarns, chemicals, semi-finished steel items, etc) — this has a weight of 17%
 - ▶ Infrastructure Goods (e.g. paints, cement, cables, bricks and tiles, rail materials, etc) — this has a weight of 12%
 - ▶ Consumer Durables (e.g. garments, telephones, passenger vehicles, etc) — this has a weight of 13%
 - ▶ Consumer Non-durables (e.g. food items, medicines, toiletries, etc) — this has a weight of 15%.
- In December, while production of primary goods and intermediate goods has picked up, that of capital goods has contracted heavily.
- This shows there is little demand for new machinery, which in turn shows there is little enthusiasm in the economy to make new investments.
- The other three categories also witnessed contraction.

What about green shoots of the economy?

- Observers who have tracked IIP for long argued that the key variable from the point of view of

sustained growth or decline is the category of "intermediate goods".

- That's because it tallies with the order books.
 - If intermediate goods are growing at a sustained pace month after month, then the domestic economy cannot continue to flounder for long.
 - Similarly, if this category shows contraction, sustained growth appears far away.
- In December, this category has grown by 12.5%; in November it grew by over 17%, in October it grew by over 22% and in September by 7%.
 - As such, there is hope that perhaps the economy has seen its worst.
 - However, the weakness across most other categories continues to be a matter of worry.



ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AS A FOREIGN POLICY TOOL

CONTEXT

- From Iran and Venezuela to Russia and Syria, economic sanctions are vastly preferred over military action or quiet diplomacy. In this context, we analyse economic sanctions as a foreign policy tool and dig deeper into how different countries have been affected by it.

◎ BACKGROUND:

- **Recent economic sanctions by the US:** As of February 2020, sanctioned countries by United States (either unilaterally or in part) include the **Balkans, Belarus, Burundi, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Zimbabwe.**
 - ▶ As the wealthiest country in the world, economic sanctions by the US have **far-reaching consequences and global repercussions.**
 - ▶ As of August 2019, the US treasury department's office of foreign assets control had fined 16 companies nearly **\$1.3 billion for sanction violations in 2019 alone.**
 - ▶ Other countries sanctioned by the US include **Venezuela, Russia and Turkey.**
- **Economic sanctions - Definition:** Economic sanctions are defined as the withdrawal of customary trade and financial relations with the receiving country, for the sake of foreign and security purposes.
 - ▶ **Sanctions may be comprehensive,** prohibiting commercial activity with regard to an entire country, like the long-standing U.S. embargo of Cuba, **or they may be targeted,** blocking transactions by and with particular businesses, groups, or individuals.
- **Rise of secondary sanctions:** Secondary sanctions are designed to **prevent third-parties from engaging with sanctioned countries** on the basis that they will lose access to the sanctioning country.
 - ▶ With the rise of secondary sanctions, a vast number of **new compliance and risk concerns** have emerged, especially for those considered to be **non-US actors.**

◎ ANALYSIS:

Economic sanctions as a Foreign policy tool

- Economic sanctions are prominently being used in today's foreign policy. Their expanse as a foreign policy tool appears to be **growing at a relentless pace, in terms of scale, scope and complexity.**

- **Military action isn't the only option** for countries that are in the midst of a political dispute. Instead, economic sanctions provide an **immediate way for the U.S. to crack down on rogue countries without putting lives on the line.**
- As a tool of foreign policy, they are being vastly **preferred over military action or quiet diplomacy.**

Countries facing sanctions and Reasons:

Iran

- **Trade embargo:** Following the **Iranian Revolution of 1979**, the Western-friendly Shah of Iran was deposed in favour of a theocratic government.
 - ▶ The **Iranian Hostage Crisis** and other ensuing events pushed the U.S. to levy a trade embargo on Iran.
- **Reason:** Sanctions on Iran continue as **political relations with the US** get more strenuous, the **sponsoring of terrorism**, and debates over **enrichment of uranium.**
- **Industries affected:** US targets **sources of revenue** used by the Iranian regime. Among others, they target the metals industry, including the largest **steel, aluminium, and iron** manufacturers in Iran.

Cuba

- **Longest-standing:** One of the U.S.'s longest-standing and most well-known sanctions is against Cuba. In February 1959, **Fidel Castro** became Prime Minister of Cuba, unseating a **post-revolution Cuban government** that was favoured by the US.
 - ▶ Ironically, the **previous Batista regime** was defeated in part because of a U.S. imposed an **arms embargo.**
- **Reason:** Since Castro took power, the U.S. has had trade embargoes in place as a **punishment for impediments to democratic rule.**
 - ▶ While Americans aren't generally allowed to trade or travel with Cuban interests, the close geographic proximity—and large Cuban-American population—have ensured that a **number of exemptions exist** for humanitarian work and visiting relatives.

Syria

- **Most comprehensive sanctions:** The sanctions campaign applied to Syria by OFAC, HM Treasury, EU, UN, and several other regulatory entities is one of the most comprehensive ever implemented.
- **Reason:** Sanctions were imposed in response to the **Syrian government's support of international terrorism** and **violations against democratic and human rights** in the country.
- **Affected areas:** Since first being implemented, the sanctions have been **strengthened several times** due to escalating violence in the region.
 - ▶ Currently imposed sanctions include trade restrictions, travel bans and asset freezes on certain Syrian officials, as well as a ban on Syrian investment by US persons.

North Korea

- **Most affected country:** North Korea is arguably the country most brutally affected by U.S. economic sanctions. The U.S. imposed sanctions on North Korea began under President George W. Bush to impose **trade and financial embargos**. The UN also sanctioned the nation.
- **Reason:** North Korea's battles with the U.S. started in the 1950s with the US's entry into the Korean War—a move designed to counter the USSR's support for a unified, communist Korea.
 - ▶ North and South Korea continue to technically be at war—albeit under a **ceasefire since 1953**—and the **U.S. maintains stringent trade restrictions** on the country.
- **Panmunjom Declaration:** In 2018, **tensions eased** between the two Korean nations, and the respective leaders signed the Panmunjom Declaration agreeing to **greater cooperation** between the two nations.

Venezuela

- **Sanctions:** For more than a decade, the US have imposed sanctions **in response to activities of the Venezuelan government and Venezuelan individuals**. Recently, the US State Department **revoked visas** of hundreds of Venezuelan individuals and their families.
 - ▶ Sanctions were also imposed on **Venezuela's state oil company, government, and central bank**.
- **Reasons:** Since 2006, the US Secretary of State has made an annual determination that **Venezuela is not "cooperating fully with US anti-terrorism efforts."** It has imposed varied sanctions related to **drug trafficking, financial sector, anti-democratic actions, human rights violations, and corruption**.

- ▶ Sanctions have increased **economic pressure** on the Venezuelan government, accelerating a **decline in oil production**.

Russia

- **Sanctions:** Recently, sanctions were **imposed in 2014 by the US, EU and other countries and international organisations** against individuals, businesses and officials from Russia and Ukraine
- **Reason:** International sanctions were imposed on Russia during the **Ukrainian crisis** by a large number of countries following the **Russian military intervention in Ukraine**.
- **Russia's response:** Russia responded with sanctions against a number of countries, including a total ban on food imports from the EU, United States, Norway, Canada and Australia.

Turkey

- **Threat to impose sanctions:** Recently, US Congress threatened to impose sanctions on Turkey, a NATO ally, in order to punish the government for a military assault on Kurdish regions in northern Syria. **Delivery of state-of-art F-35 stealth fighter jet has been stopped** because **Turkey acquired S-400 missile defence system from NATO adversary Russia**.
 - ▶ In addition, **US arms embargo on the Republic of Cyprus**, which has been in conflict with Turkey since 1974, would be **lifted**.
 - ▶ Companies involved in the **Turkish Stream pipeline** project are to be sanctioned.
 - ▶ US House of Representatives passed a **resolution to recognize the mass murder and displacement of Armenians at the end of the Ottoman Empire as genocide**.
- **Turkey's response:** Turkish President **threatened to close down the Incirlik Air Base**, where US troops are deployed, and **Kurecik Radar Station**, which is used by NATO, should the United States impose sanctions.

Why do countries impose Economic sanctions?

- **Way to express disapproval:** Economic sanctions are a popular way for large governments to exert their disapproval over one another.
 - ▶ The US sanctions countries that **sponsor terrorism** or perpetrate **human rights violations** on their people.
- **Less costly and tangible for the country imposing it:** While wars are costly—both economically and politically—economic sanctions tend to be somewhat less tangible, at least for the country doing the sanctioning.

- **Intensive impact on the receiving country:** For the country being sanctioned, results can be enormous and long-lasting. This instrument of foreign policy and economic pressure is preferred over military action and can hit worse.

Implication on sanctioned countries

- **The economic cost for businesses:** Doing business is not easy under a sanctions regime. There are many examples of companies being **fined severely** for engaging in business with economically sanctioned countries.
 - ▶ Recently, a company was **fined nearly \$1 million** for violation by its third-party suppliers who sourced some materials from North Korea.
 - ▶ Hence, sanctions can have **adverse economic effects on businesses.**
 - ▶ Sanction violation by a company can cause **public embarrassment, reputational damage and loss of its loyal customer base.**
- **Economic cost for the country:** Being the wealthiest country in the world, economic and trade sanctions laid by the US can have **far-reaching repercussions on the receiving country.** Following are a few of them:
 - ▶ Negative impact on the growth of the economy.
 - ▶ Reduce foreign investments flowing into the country.
 - ▶ Reduce the availability of necessary products and services.
 - ▶ Adversely affect the market mechanism.
 - ▶ Lead to the outflow of labour and capital.
 - ▶ Reputational damage at a global level.
 - ▶ Loss of foreign trade and income etc.

Issues around the imposition of Economic sanctions

- **Lack of clarity:** Complexity, lack of clarity, and conflicting laws that accompany sanctions **question the effectiveness of unilateral sanctions.**
- **Impact on global markets:** In today's globalised world, international trade plays a significant role for every country. Imposition of sanction **can cut global supply chains.** Imposition of **sanctions on oil-producing nations has graver consequences** as it causes energy supply disruptions throughout.
 - ▶ Rising importance of **global value chains (GVCs) is also threatened.**
- **Overuse of sanctions:** There is a possible threat of overuse of sanctions anytime a country is irked by the actions of another country.

- **Questions legal sovereignty:** Resorting to sanctions **by a richer and bigger nation** can be viewed as a **bully**, and raises the question on legal sovereignty of nations on which sanctions are being imposed upon.
- **Secondary sanctions:** Recent secondary sanctions added to North Korea as part of the National Defence Authorization Act 2020 could impact Asian businesses without a US footprint.
- **Reactionary threat:** On one hand, recent US sanctions are intended to intensify pressure on Iran. On the other, it is increasingly making difficult for the so-called E3 (UK, Germany, and France) to preserve the Iran nuclear deal in its current form.
 - ▶ In response to US back-out, **Iran announced that it would no longer observe certain commitments of the 2015 deal**, in which it had agreed to limit its sensitive nuclear activities.
 - ▶ Such reactionary threats can have serious consequences and start a **never-ending war of sanction impositions.**
- **Unintended consequences:** Sanctions, though directed at governments or certain groups, end up **affecting the general population of the country**, who have to bear the final cost of sanction imposition.

Way forward

- **Compliance:** To be successful in today's economic environment, every industry must pursue rigorous sanctions compliance programmes and **invest in the development of compliance officers.**
- **Following with rigour:** If companies **avoid loopholes** and follow the sanctions with rigour, **they can help deprive those who are subject to sanctions**—in some cases, terrorists, organized crime groups, and those carrying out human rights abuses—of the resources that keep them in business.
- **Clarity:** Countries must devise sanctions with clarity, and not make them complex. **Complexity can lead to loopholes.** The clarity in sanctions **will hit those for whom the sanctions are intended** without having unintended consequences.
- **Justified exemptions:** Sanction protocols must have justified exemptions such that **supply of basic products and facilities is not denied** to the larger population; like food products, medical supplies etc.

RESERVATION IN PROMOTION FOR SC & ST

CONTEXT

- Reservation in promotion in public posts cannot be claimed as a fundamental right, the Supreme Court reiterated in a judgment.

◎ BACKGROUND

- In India, the reservation policy is an age-old policy being practised. Its origin has its roots scattered from the ancient times when the practice of the caste system, untouchability and Varna system was dominant in the society.
- Reservation Policy is a process of reserving a certain percentage of seats (maximum 50%) for a certain class (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward classes, etc.) in the public sector units, union and state civil services, Union and state government departments and in all public and private educational institutions.

Reservation Policy in Pre- Independence Era:

- During the British rule, various elements of reservation in the **Government of India Act of 1909** and the legal origin of Reservation Policy began with lying down of the **Government of India Act, 1919**. Given below are the major policy initiatives that rooted down the concept of reservation in India:

Important Commissions on Reservation:

- **Hunter Commission (1882):** The Hunter Commission was appointed in 1882. Mahatma Jyotirao Phule made a demand for free and compulsory education for all along with proportionate reservation/representation in government jobs.
- **Kelkar Commission (1953):** The Commission was established in 1953 to assess the situation of the socially and educationally backward class. The report was accepted as far as SCs and STs were concerned. However, recommendations for OBCs were rejected.
- **Mandal Commission (1979):** Mandal Commission was established in 1979 to assess the situation of the socially and educationally backward.
- **Sachar Committee (2003):** The Sachar Committee headed by Justice Rajinder Sachar, was appointed for preparation of a report on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community of India. The Committee, gave its report in 2006 and it clearly found that

the Muslim community was really "seriously lagging behind in terms of most of the human development indicators."

- ▶ **The Government India Act, 1919:** The Act not only introduced several reforms for the Indian Governmental institutions but also addressed many issues of minorities including the formation of **communal electorates**.
- ▶ **The announcement of MacDonald Award:** A significant turn took place from the **Round Table Conference of June 1932**, when **Ramsay MacDonald** (Prime Minister of Britain), proposed the Communal Award, which provided for separate representation for Muslims, Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, and Europeans.
- ▶ **The Government of India Act, 1935:** The stamping of the provisions of the Poona Pact, 1932 were done in the Government of India Act of 1935 where the reservation of seats for depressed classes was allotted.

Reservation Policy in Post- Independence Era:

- The scenario changed in the post-independence era and the reservation policy gained even more momentum.
- The Constituent Assembly chaired by **Dr B.R Ambedkar** framed the reservation policy and many Articles (Articles 15, 16) in the Indian Constitution were dedicated for the same.

◎ ANALYSIS:

What is Reservation?

- In India, reservation is a system which ensures that individuals born in the castes categorised as SCs and STs and Other Backwards Classes are given priority over **General Category** candidates in recruitment to government jobs, admission in higher educational institutions, and selection of Legislative and parliament members.
- The objective of the reservation is to address the historic oppression, inequality and discrimination faced by these communities.

The current scenario of reservation in India:

- Today 50% of seats in government-aided

educational institutions and public jobs are reserved for the SC, ST and, OBCs.

- The central government of India reserves 27% of higher education, and individual states may legislate further reservations.
- The current scenario of Reservation in India is:
 - ▶ 15% seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes (SC).
 - ▶ 7.5% of seats are reserved for Scheduled tribes (ST).
 - ▶ 27% seats are reserved for Other backward classes (OBC).
 - ▶ Total constitutional reservation percentage is 49.5% and the rest 50.5% seats are open to all i.e. general, SC, ST And OBC.
- However, there are states laws that exceed this 50% limit and these are under litigation in the Supreme Court.
- The most recent development in the reservation system was seen in 2019 when the Union Cabinet has approved of **10%** reservation in educational institutions and jobs for the economically weaker sections (EWS) in the general category.
- This is the first time that reservations have been suggested for a section of society based only on economic criteria.
- The **Constitution (124th Amendment) Bill** passed by both the houses will be over and above the already existing 50% reservation quotas and will be given to those who do not fall under any reservations as of now.

How does the Indian Constitution deal with Reservation?

- **Article 15(4):** It was added by the Constitution (1st Amendment) Act, 1951. It provides for special provision for the advancement of backward classes.
- **Article 16(3):** Article 16(3) is an exception to **clause 2 of Article 16** which forbids discrimination on the ground of residence. It provides for reservation of Posts in Public Employment on the Basis of Residence:
- **Article 16(4):** Article 16(4) is the second exception to the general rule embodied in Articles 16(1) and (2). It provides for reservation for Backward Classes in Public Employment. It empowers the **state to make special provision for the reservation** in appointments of posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which in the opinion of the State are not adequately represented in the services under the State.
- **Fundamental Right:** The Constitution of India provides for the right to equality. A fundamental right, it provides for equality irrespective of

religion, race, gender, caste or place of birth. It also includes the right of equal opportunity in employment as well as the abolition of titles and untouchability.

- **Preamble:** The preamble states, "**Equality of status and of opportunity**". Reservation hence seemed to be a justified recourse. It elevated those sections of society that had for generations been neglected. It provided a chance for equal opportunities or status in society and culture.

Important Case:

Indra Sawhney vs. Union of India (*The Mandal Case*):

- In the landmark **Mandal case, Article 16(4-A) (through 77th Amendment)** and **Article 16(4-B) (through 81st Amendment)** inserted into the constitution:
 - ▶ **Clause 4-A:** According to clause 4-A, nothing in this Article shall prevent the state from making any provision for reservation in matters of promotion to any class or classes of posts in the service of state in favour of the SCs and STs which in the opinion of the State, are not adequately represented in the services under the State.
 - ▶ **Clause 4-B:** Clause 4-B seeks to end the 50% ceiling on the reservation for SCs/STs and BCs in backlog vacancies which could not be filled up in the previous years due to the non- availability of eligible candidates.

The Judgement:

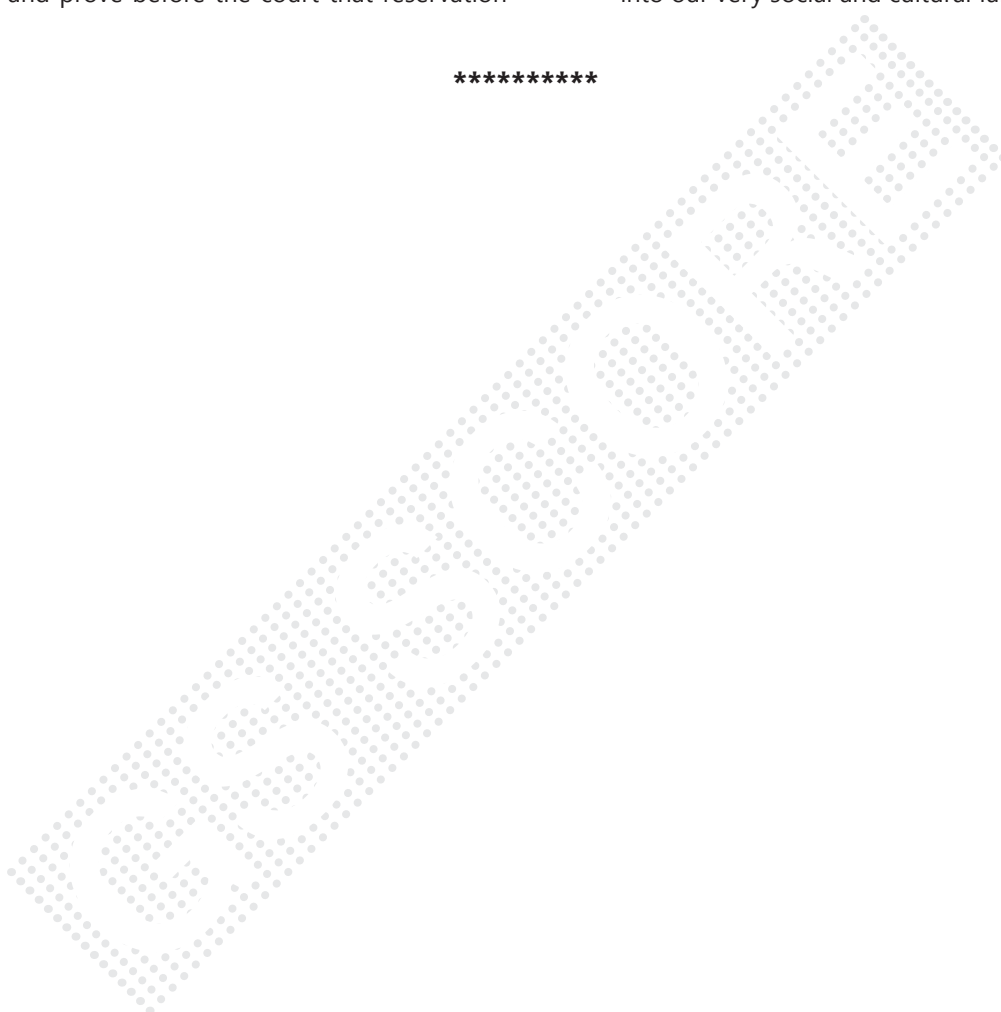
- A Bench of **Justices L. Nageswara Rao** and **Hemant Gupta** observed that State governments are not bound to make reservations. Even the courts could not issue a mandamus directing States to provide reservations.
- **Not a fundamental right:** There is no fundamental right which inheres in an individual to claim reservation in promotions. **Articles 16 (4) and 16 (4-A)** of the Constitution did not confer individuals with a fundamental right to claim reservations in promotion.
- The Articles empower the State to make a reservation in matters of appointment and promotion in favour of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes only "if in the opinion of the State they are not adequately represented in the services of the State".
- The inadequacy of representation is a matter within the subjective satisfaction of the State.
- Thus, the State government has discretion "to consider providing reservations, if the circumstances so warrant.

- It is settled law that the State government cannot be directed to provide reservations for appointment in public posts. Similarly, the State is not bound to make a reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in matters of promotions.
- However, if a State wishes to exercise its discretion and make reservation in promotions, it has to first collect quantifiable data showing the inadequacy of representation of a class or community in public services.
- If the decision of the State government to provide SC/ST reservation in promotion to a particular public post is challenged, it would have to place the data and prove before the court that reservation

was necessary and does not affect the efficiency of administration.

The court gave the verdict during a case regarding the validity of a 2012 notification by the Uttarakhand government to fill up vacancies in government jobs without giving reservation to the SC/ST communities. The Uttarakhand High Court had struck down the notification and asked the government to provide representation to the specified categories.

- The debate and sentiments on reservations continue to play a major role in the case of India. It will not die out any time soon because it permeates into our very social and cultural fabric.



UNIFORM CIVIL CODE - THE DEBATE, THE STATUS

CONTEXT

- Recent observations by the Supreme Court have put the spotlight back on the debate over a Uniform Civil Code. What would such a Code seek to achieve, and what have been the arguments for and against it?

◎ BACKGROUND

- A Uniform Civil Code is one that would provide for one law for the entire country, applicable to all religious communities in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc.
- Article 44** of the Constitution lays down that the state shall endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for the citizens throughout the territory of India.
- Article 44 is one of the directive principles.
- These, as defined in Article 37, are not justiciable (not enforceable by any court) but the principles laid down therein are fundamental in governance.
- Fundamental rights are enforceable in a court of law.
- While Article 44 uses the words "the state shall endeavour", other Articles in the 'Directive Principles' chapter use words such as "in particular strive"; "shall, in particular, direct its policy"; "shall be the obligation of the state" etc.
- Article 43 mentions "state shall endeavour by suitable legislation" while the phrase "by suitable legislation" is absent in Article 44.
- All this implies that the duty of the state is greater in other directive principles than in Article 44.

What are more important - fundamental rights or directive principles?

- There is no doubt that fundamental rights are more important.
- The Supreme Court held in *Minerva Mills* (1980): "Indian Constitution is founded on the bedrock of the balance between Parts III (Fundamental Rights) and IV (Directive Principles).
- To give absolute primacy to one over the other is to disturb the harmony of the Constitution".
- Article 31C inserted by the 42nd Amendment in 1976, however, lays down that if a law is made to implement any directive principle, it cannot be challenged on the ground of being violative of the fundamental rights under Articles 14 and 19.

Does India not already have a uniform code in civil matters?

- Indian laws do follow a uniform code in most civil matters – Indian Contract Act, Civil Procedure

Code, Sale of Goods Act, Transfer of Property Act, Partnership Act, Evidence Act, etc.

- States, however, have made hundreds of amendments and therefore in certain matters, there is diversity even under these secular civil laws. Recently, several states refused to be governed by the uniform Motor Vehicles Act, 2019.
- If the framers of the Constitution had intended to have a Uniform Civil Code, they would have given exclusive jurisdiction to Parliament in respect of personal laws, by including this subject in the Union List.
- But "personal laws" are mentioned in the Concurrent List. Last year, the Law Commission concluded that a Uniform Civil Code is neither feasible nor desirable.

Is there one common personal law for any religious community governing all its members?

- All Hindus of the country are not governed by one law, nor are all Muslims or all Christians.
- Not only British legal traditions, even those of the Portuguese and the French remain operative in some parts.
- In Jammu and Kashmir until 2019, local Hindu law statutes differed from central enactments.
- The Shariat Act of 1937 was extended to J&K a few years ago but has now been repealed.
- Muslims of Kashmir were thus governed by a customary law, which in many ways was at variance with Muslim Personal Law in the rest of the country and was, in fact, closer to Hindu law.
- Even on registration of marriage among Muslims, laws differ from place to place.
- It was compulsory in J&K (1981 Act) and is optional in Bengal, Bihar (both under 1876 Act), Assam (1935 Act) and Odisha (1949 Act).
- In the Northeast, there are more than 200 tribes with their own varied customary laws.
- The Constitution itself protects local customs in Nagaland.
- Similar protections are enjoyed by Meghalaya and Mizoram.
- Even reformed Hindu law, in spite of codification, protects customary practices.

How does the idea of a Uniform Civil Code relate to the fundamental right to religion?

- Article 25 lays down an individual's fundamental right to religion; Article 26(b) upholds the right of each religious denomination or any section thereof to "manage its own affairs in matters of religion"; Article 29 defines the right to conserve distinctive culture.
- An individual's freedom of religion under Article 25 is subject to "public order, health, morality" and other provisions relating to fundamental rights, but a group's freedom under Article 26 has not been subjected to other fundamental rights
- In the Constituent Assembly, there was division on the issue of putting the Uniform Civil Code in the fundamental rights chapter.
- The matter was settled by a vote.
- By a 5:4 majority, the fundamental rights sub-committee headed by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel held that the provision was outside the scope of fundamental rights and therefore the Uniform Civil Code was made less important than freedom of religion.

What was the view of Muslim members in the Constituent Assembly?

- Some members sought to immunise Muslim Personal Law from state regulation.
- Mohammed Ismail, who thrice tried unsuccessfully to get Muslim Personal Law exempted from Article 44, said a secular state should not interfere with the personal law of people.

- B Pocker Saheb said he had received representations against a common civil code from various organisations, including Hindu organisations.
- Hussain Imam questioned whether there could ever be uniformity of personal laws in a diverse country like India.
- B R Ambedkar said, "no government can use its provisions in a way that would force the Muslims to revolt". Alladi Krishnaswami, who was in favour of a Uniform Civil Code, conceded that it would be unwise to enact Uniform Civil Code ignoring strong opposition from any community.
- Gender justice was not mentioned in these debates.

How did the debate on a common code for Hindus play out?

- In June 1948, Rajendra Prasad, President of the Constituent Assembly, warned Jawaharlal Nehru that to introduce "basic changes" in personal law was to impose "progressive ideas" of a "microscopic minority" on the Hindu community as a whole.
- Others opposed to reforms in Hindu law included Sardar Patel, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, M A Ayyangar, M M Malaviya and Kailash Nath Katju.
- When the debate on the Hindu Code Bill took place in December 1949, 23 of 28 speakers opposed it.
- On September 15, 1951, President Prasad threatened to use his powers of returning the Bill to Parliament or vetoing it.
- Ambedkar eventually had to resign.
- Nehru agreed to trifurcation of the Code into separate Acts and diluted several provisions.

SECTION: B

(PRELIMS)

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ADDITION OF 3 ENDANGERED INDIAN SPECIES TO THE GLOBAL CONSERVATION LIST

◎ CONTEXT

- India has proposed to include three species- the Indian elephant, the Great Indian Bustard and the Bengal Florican in the 'Appendix I' of the CMS Convention for 'migratory species threatened with extinction'.

◎ ABOUT

What is the CMS Convention?

- The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) of Wild Animals (the Bonn Convention) aims to conserve terrestrial, marine and avian migratory species throughout their range.
- It is an international treaty, concluded under the aegis of the **United Nations Environment Programme**, concerned with the conservation of wildlife and habitats on a global scale.
- India became its member in the year **1983**.
- At present, 173 species from around the world have found protection under the Convention by being part of Appendix 1 of the CMS.

Key-highlights:

- India is all set to host the Thirteenth Meeting of the **Conference of Parties (COP13)** to the **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)** in Gandhinagar (February 15 to 22).
- The theme of the conference is, "migratory species connect the planet and together we welcome them home".
- The session is all set to witness the inclusion of ten new species for protection under the CMS.
- Among the ten species to be added, there are three Indian species, viz., Asian Elephant, Bengal Florican, and the Great Indian Bustard.

About the species:

The Indian Elephant:

- There are about 47 lakh elephants in the wild in the 13 range countries, with 60% of them in India.
- The Indian elephant is struggling to survive in the continually shrinking, degraded and fragmented habitat and is frequently coming into conflict with people, apart from threats of poaching and illegal trade.
- Since it is known to naturally migrate across international borders; it faces similar challenges in other range countries, and there is a need for concerted action to protect them.

The Great Indian Bustard:

- Great Indian bustard, (*Ardeotis nigriceps*), a large bird of the bustard family (Otididae), one of the heaviest flying birds in the world.
- The species is listed in:
 - Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972,
 - CMS Convention
 - Appendix I of CITES
 - Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List

Bengal Florican:

- The Bengal Florican (*Houbaropsis bengalensis*) is a large grassland bird that is Critically Endangered with extinction, due to rapid habitat loss and hunting.
- Also known as Bengal bustard, it is a bustard species native to the Indian subcontinent, Cambodia, and Vietnam.
- Both the Great Indian Bustard and Bengal Florican have already been identified as critically endangered which face threats of hunting, and collision with power-lines during their migration to neighbouring countries, especially Pakistan and Nepal.

India & conservation of migratory species:

- Migratory species move from one habitat at particular seasons for food, sunlight, weather and many other reasons.
- A migratory route can involve nesting and also requires the availability of habitats before and after each migration.
- India has also signed non-legally binding MOU with CMS on the conservation and management of **Siberian Cranes (1998), Marine Turtles (2007), Dugongs (2008) and Raptors (2016)**.
- India provides temporary shelter to several migratory species including **Amur Falcons, Bar-headed Geese, Black-necked cranes, Marine turtles, Dugongs, Humpbacked Whales. The Indian sub-continent is also part of a significant bird flyway network, i.e., the Central Asian Flyway (CAF)** that covers at least 279 populations of 182 migratory waterbird species, including 29 globally threatened species.

Significance of the move:

- Inclusion of Asian elephant in the global list for international protection under UN's CMS would give the species international conservation importance
- Moreover, it would enable range countries to collaborate, to protect the species as they naturally migrate across international boundaries.

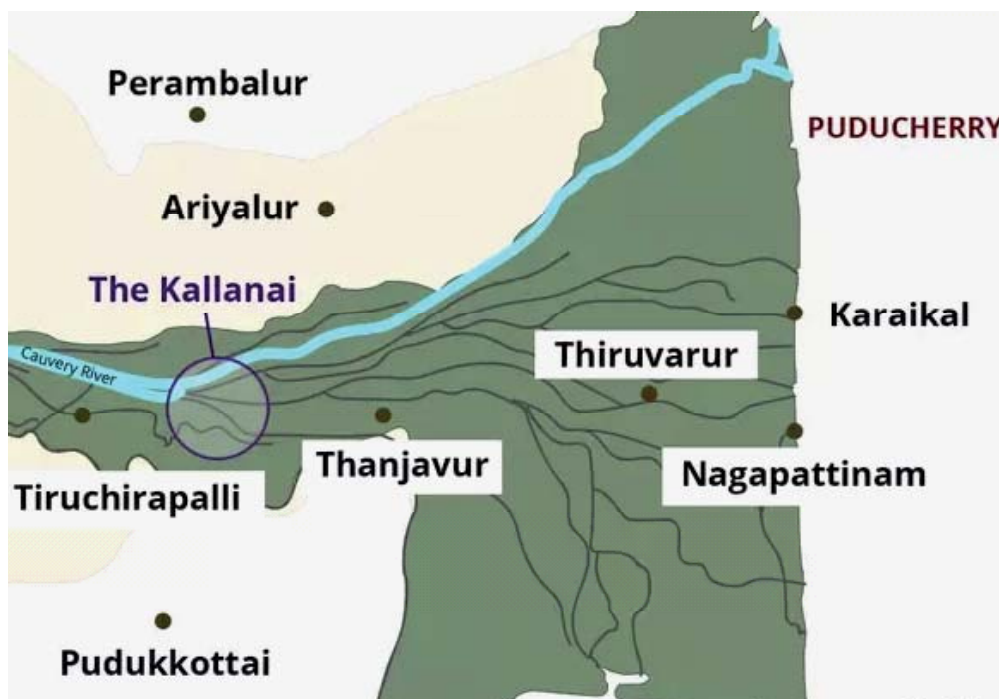
CAUVERY DELTA AND PROTECTED SPECIAL AGRICULTURE ZONE

◎ CONTEXT

- In a significant decision, the Tamil Nadu government has announced Cauvery delta region as Protected Special Agriculture Zone to prevent implementation of oil exploration projects in the state's rice bowl.

◎ ABOUT**A brief about Cauvery Delta**

- The Cauvery Delta lies at the bottom of the Cauvery river basin. The river Cauvery is the fourth largest river of the southern region and flows from North West to the south-east.
- Cauvery Delta zone consists of four districts of Nagapattinam, Thanjavur and Thrivavur and parts of the district Trichy, Cuddalore and Puddubottai in Tamil Nadu.
- Cauvery Delta zone has a total geographical land area of 1.45 million Ha which is equivalent 11% of the area of Tamil Nadu state.
- In the Cauvery Delta rice is the principal crop; it is either single or double-cropped. A third crop rice is also grown during summer in some parts.
- Because of plentiful rainfall during North-East monsoon and good irrigation facilities rice is the most suitable from September to December.



- The landholdings in the delta are quite small with more than 75% are one ha or less. Population growth has progressively diminished the size of landholdings.

Type of season:

- Tamil Nadu is heavily dependent on monsoon rains and thereby is prone to droughts when the monsoons fail.
- The climate of the state ranges from dry sub-humid to semi-arid. The state has three distinct periods of rainfall
 - The south-west monsoon from June to September, with strong southwest winds
 - North-East monsoon from October to December, with dominant northeast winds
 - The dry season from January to May
- The normal annual rainfall of the state is about 945 mm of which 48% is through the North-East monsoon, and 32% through the South-West monsoon.
- Since the state is entirely dependent on rains for recharging its water resources, monsoon failures lead to acute water scarcity and severe drought.

What is Protected Special Agriculture Zone (PSAZ)?

- A Special Agricultural Zone is one where agricultural land is preserved for posterity because of its importance to increasing agriculture production and promoting livelihood security for a large number of farm families.
- The idea is very similar to the theme of the Special Economic Zone. The difference is that there is no statutory backing as yet to the concept of Protected Special Agriculture Zone (PSAZ)

© CONCLUSION

- Since Climate change is a threat to agriculture, efforts should be taken to mitigate the risk. PSAZ can be a starter at least in drought-prone areas. Once implemented at the micro-level, its findings can be used to scale up the project. While 'Oil' and 'Gas' are essential components of civilization, then so is food security. The tough times call for a coordinated action plan. The Government of India must brainstorm ideas keeping in view the bigger picture.

KERALA BANS CFL AND FILAMENT BULBS

◎ **CONTEXT**

- Kerala will impose a ban on the sale of compact fluorescent lamps (CFL) and incandescent (filament) bulbs starting November this year as part of sustainable energy policy.

◎ **ABOUT**

Filament-free project:

- The announcement is in line with the government project of 'Filament-free Kerala' envisaged in 2018 as part of the state's Urja Kerala mission.
- Filament Free Kerala project is for replacing the entire Incandescent Lamps & CFLs of domestic consumers in the state by energy-efficient LED bulbs.
- The project is implemented by the Kerala State Electricity Board Ltd. and Energy Management Centre, Kerala.

In 2018, Kerala has launched '**Urja Kerala Mission**', an aggressive Energy generation and Conservation program - aimed at the integrated development of the electricity sector in the state. It aims at implementing FIVE important projects-Soura, Filament free Kerala, Dyuthi 2021, Transgrid 2.0 and e-safe.

Reason behind the ban:

- The mercury in a fluorescent bulb can be released as both dust and vapour if the light is broken.
- This toxic element is dangerous to people and animals and can easily migrate through the environment in the air, water and soil.
- LED bulbs use about 40% less power than fluorescent lights, and 80% less than incandescent lights, to produce the same amount of light.

Difference between CFL, Incandescent and LED:

	Fluorescent	Incandescent	LED
Longevity	Usually 6,000 to 15,000 hours. Up to 35,000 hours.	2,000 hours	20,000 to 50,000 hours
How they work	Fluorescent bulbs generate light by sending an electrical discharge through an ionized gas.	Incandescent light is emitted by heating the filament present in the bulb	The LED is a light source which uses semiconductors and electroluminescence to create light.
Materials used	Argon, mercury vapour, tungsten, barium, strontium and calcium oxides	Argon, tungsten, filaments	Gallium arsenide (GaAs) and gallium phosphide (GaP)
Cons:	Cannot be used with a dimmer switch Take a few moments to heat up and reach full brightness Contain mercury, a toxic heavy metal Can be sensitive to cold temperatures	energy inefficient short lamp lifetime i.e. about 1000 hours typically warm source of light and hence requires air conditioning to cool the room	Directional light that may not spread as evenly as other sources Currently cost more than CFLs

Why LEDs?

- Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs) use about 75% less energy than a typical incandescent bulb
- LEDs contain no mercury and have a much smaller environmental impact compared to CFL bulbs
- LED Light lasts up to 50 times longer than the conventional halogen light bulb and 10 times longer than a CFL light bulb
- LED Lights are instant on so they do not require any warm-up time compared to other light bulbs
- LEDs don't give off heat making it cooler to operate and may even lower your A/C Bill.
- Switching to LEDs can reduce electricity and maintenance costs of a commercial building by up to 30%
- An incandescent lamp converts about 10% of the energy fed to it into the light, whereas LEDs convert nearly 100% of the energy they consume as light. LED lights are way more cost-effective than traditional incandescent.

MADHYA PRADESH RADIO-TAGS FIRST-EVER INDIAN PANGOLIN

◎ CONTEXT

- In order to know the species' ecology and develop an effective conservation plan, the Madhya Pradesh forest department has radio-tagged an Indian Pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*) for the first time.

◎ ABOUT

- **Pangolins:**
 - Pangolins are uniquely covered in tough, overlapping scales. These mammals eat ants and termites using an extraordinarily long, sticky tongue, and are able to quickly roll themselves up into a tight ball when they feel threatened.
 - Commonly known as 'scaly anteaters', the toothless animals are unique, a result of millions of years of evolution.
 - Pangolins evolved scales as a means of protection. When threatened by big carnivores like lions or tigers they usually curl into a ball.
- **Species:** There are eight species of pangolins:
 - **Asia:** Four of them are found in Asia. They have been listed by the IUCN as **critically endangered**. They are:
 - ▶ **Chinese**
 - ▶ **Sunda**
 - ▶ **Indian**
 - ▶ **Philippine**
 - **Africa:** The following four African species have been listed as **vulnerable**:
 - ▶ **the Ground pangolin**
 - ▶ **Giant pangolin**
 - ▶ **White-bellied**
 - ▶ **Black-bellied**

Pangolin habitat map in India:

- India is home to two species of pangolin. While the Chinese Pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*) is found in northeastern India, the Indian Pangolin is distributed in other parts of the country as well as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

- Both these species are protected and are listed under the **Schedule I Part I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972** and under **Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)**.
- However, despite protective measures, pangolins in India are widely exploited and traded both domestically and internationally.

Rapid decline in population:

- When threatened by big carnivores like lions or tigers they usually curl into a ball. The scales defend them against dental attacks from the predators.
- However, this unique protection mechanism has now become the main cause of the pangolin's disappearance. The scales are in high demand in China, where they are used in traditional Chinese medicine.
- Pangolins are currently the most trafficked wildlife species in the world. Pangolin meat is also in high demand in China and southeast Asia.
- Consequently, pangolins have seen a rapid reduction in population globally. The projected population declines range from 50 per cent to 80 per cent across the genus.
- All species face declining populations because of illegal trade. In 2016, the 186 countries party to the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)**, the treaty that regulates the international wildlife trade, voted to ban the commercial trade in pangolins.

The plan:

- The radio-tagging is part of a joint project by the department and non-profit, the **Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT)** that also involves the species' monitoring apart from other activities.
- The measure comes as the world gets ready to observe the ninth '**World Pangolin Day**' on February 15, 2020.

World Pangolin Day is celebrated on the third Saturday in February, and this year, the special day falls on February 15, 2020. The day is an opportunity for pangolin enthusiasts to join together in raising awareness about these unique mammals — and their plight.

- It is an international attempt to raise awareness about pangolins and bring together various stakeholders to help protect them from extinction.
- This new initiative of radio tagging will hopefully ensure better survival rates of Pangolins in the wild and for sure, it will have a positive impact on the population of this endangered species.

DIVIDEND DISTRIBUTION TAX

◎ CONTEXT

- **Budget 2020 abolished the Dividend Distribution Tax (DDT).**

◎ ABOUT

- **Budget 2020** has proposed to make dividend income from shares and mutual funds taxable in the hands of recipients at the applicable income tax slab rates to the individual.
- Called the **Dividend Distribution Tax (DDT)**, it was hitherto levied on dividend income before distribution by the company or mutual fund house.
- Dividend distribution tax is the tax imposed by the Indian Government on Indian companies **according to the dividend paid to a company's investors**.
- **Dividend** is the **return given by a company to its shareholders out of profits earned by the company** in a particular year.

- Dividend constitutes **income in the hands of the shareholders** which ideally should be subject to income tax.
 - However, the income tax laws in India provide for an exemption of the dividend income received from Indian companies by the investors by levying DDT on the company paying the dividend.
- Previously, in addition to corporate tax, companies had to pay DDT at the time of distributing profits to its shareholders.
 - The effective DDT rate is **20.56 per cent**.
 - Although the government recently reduced the effective corporate tax rate to 25.17/17.16 per cent, **once DDT was factored in**, the effective tax rate for corporates became 37.93 per cent.

Evolution of DDT

- **System 1:** Historically, the dividend was always **taxable in the hands of shareholders**.
- **System 2:** Concept of '**DDT**' was for the first time was introduced by the **Finance Act, 1997**.
 - Dividend that was subjected to DDT was made exempt in the hands of shareholders.
- **System 3: Finance Act, 2002, replaced DDT with the earlier system** of taxing dividends in the hands of the shareholder.
- **System 4:** DDT was then **re-introduced** vide **Finance Act, 2003**.
 - Several changes were made to provisions including those that remove the cascading effect of dividends received from subsidiaries, grossing up mechanism, changes in the rate of tax etc.
- **System 5:** In **Finance Act, 2016** dividends earned in excess of Rs 10 lakh from domestic companies was made **taxable in the hands of resident individuals, partnership firms, private Trusts, etc.** at 10 per cent (plus surcharge and cess) on a gross basis.
 - The tax treaties entered by India with various countries, largely limit taxation on dividends in India at 10 per cent, and **shareholder have the ability to claim credit in its country of residence for tax deducted in India**.
- **Problems:** Since DDT was levied on the Indian company distributing dividend, it was believed that **tax treaty provisions were ineffective**.
 - Also, shareholders faced challenges in claiming credit for DDT in their home country, which typically resulted in high tax cost for foreign shareholders.
 - Though the existing system **facilitated easy tax collection**, it was viewed to be **regressive in nature**

Changes made in Budget 2020

- Budget 2020 **proposes to abolish DDT**. The proposal is to replace DDT with a classical system of taxation i.e. instead of levying DDT on companies; the **tax should be levied in the hands of shareholders**.
- This will put to an **end to litigation** related to the reduction in the rate of DDT.
- **Foreign tax credit** in respect of dividend would be available **to non-resident shareholders much easier** than when DDT was payable.
- The proposal suggests **deduction has to be restricted to 20 percent of dividend income**. No other deductions would be allowed.
 - Non-resident shareholders would be able to restrict the tax on the dividend to 5 per cent/10 per cent/15 per cent applying the **beneficial tax treaty provisions**.
 - The beneficial tax treaty provisions would be subject **to anti-abuse provisions of the India income-tax law** and provisions of Multilateral Instruments, which is effective from 1 April 2020.

- © **CONCLUSION**
- The earlier provisions levied a flat tax rate on distributed profits across the board, irrespective of the marginal rate at which the recipient is otherwise taxed. These provisions, therefore, were regressive. Removal of DDT is a welcome and much-expected move, in-line with the recommendations of the Direct Tax Code Panel, which will bring in vertical equity among taxpayers.

THALINOMICS

- © **CONTEXT**
- **The Economic Survey 2020 coined a new term called ‘Thalinomics’ and the government pitched the term as “economics for the common man”.**
- © **ABOUT**
- The Economic Survey 2020 made a unique attempt to **quantify the cost incurred** in putting together **one complete home-made meal** — the healthy Indian thali.
 - Thali prices represent the total money spent on preparing dishes for a meal in a household.
 - **Thalinomics** captures the **economics of a plate of food in India.**
 - **Rise in Affordability:** Despite recent concerns about rising food prices, the Economic Survey has stated that for a worker, a **vegetarian thali is 29% more affordable** since 2006-07. And affordability of a **non-vegetarian thali improved by 18 per cent.**
 - It also looked at an industrial worker’s **ability to pay for two thalis a day** for his/her household of **five individuals.**
 - **Conclusion:** Basically, the survey attempts to calculate the **cost that an average worker incurs based on his actual plate of food in India.**
 - On calculating that cost, the survey concludes that **works were able to save due to moderation in prices** of items that form part of a regular Indian thali.

Food inflation trends

Food inflation based on CPI declined to a low of 0.1% in 2018-19 against 1.8% in 2017-18, 4.2% in 2016-17 and 4.9% in 2015-16. However, the government revised the inflation projection from 3.5-3.7% in the second half of 2019-20 to 4.7-5.1%.

Calculations

- The analysis is based on data on prices taken from the Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (**CPI IW**) for around 80 centres in **25 States/UTs** from April 2006 to October 2019.
- The survey took into account the prices of **cereals** (rice/ wheat), **sabzi** (vegetables, other ingredients), **dal** (pulses with other ingredients) as well as the **cost of fuel.**
- In a non-vegetarian thali, **pulses are replaced by 60 gm of non-vegetarian components** keeping in mind prices of eggs, fresh fish and goat meat.
- It also took into consideration **prices of ingredients such as spices and condiments** such as mustard oil, coconut oil and groundnut oil, turmeric and chillies.
- For fuel, **cooking gas prices as well as firewood prices** were taken into consideration.

State-wise performance

- **Across the board gains:** Both across India and the four regions– North, South, East and West – we find that the absolute prices of a vegetarian Thali have decreased since 2015-16 though it increased during 2019.
 - **Exception:** Gains are observed across regions, with the exception of **the Northern Region and Eastern Region in 2016-17** in the case of vegetarian Thali.

- **Southern region with highest gains:** The highest gain in any year was in the Southern region for a vegetarian Thali in 2018-19 of around 12 per cent of annual earnings of a worker.
- **Jharkhand thali the cheapest:** Jharkhand emerged as the State with cheapest vegetarian thali during April-October 2019.
 - Two vegetarian thalis for a household of five in Jharkhand **required about 25 per cent of a worker's daily wage.**

Results from Thalonomics

- **Gains:** After 2015-16, an average household of five individuals that eats two vegetarian thalis a day gained around ₹10,887 on average per year, while a non-vegetarian household gained ₹11,787 on average per year.
 - Gains here are **spends that households saved** on due to **moderation in the prices** of commodities.
 - A worker who would have spent **70%** of their daily wage on two vegetarian thalis a day for a household of five **in 2006-07**, would only have to spend **50% of their income for the meals in 2019-20.**
- **Fall in prices:** Survey said there was a shift in the dynamics of thali prices from 2015-16. Gains are due to significant **moderation in prices of vegetables and dal** from 2015-16 when compared to the previous trend of increasing prices.
- **Reasons for gains due to reform measures:** Many reform measures were introduced during the period of analysis to enhance the productivity of the agricultural sector as well as **efficiency and effectiveness of agricultural markets** for better and more **transparent price discovery**.
 - PradhanMantriAnnadataAaySanraksHanAbhiyan (PM-AASHA).
 - PradhanMantriKrishiSinchayeeYojana (PMKSY) - Per DropMore Crop.
 - PradhanMantriFasalBimaYojana (PMFBY).
 - Soil Health Card.
 - E-National Agricultural Market (e-NAM).
 - National Food Security Mission (NFSM).
 - National Food Security Act (NFSA).
- **Recent trend is inflationary:** Survey shows that **accelerating food inflation** over the last few months has broken the earlier trend.
 - Workers are now forced to use an increasing share of their wages on food.

Challenges

- **Small sample size:** The calculations deal with workers engaged in the organised manufacturing sector, which form **only 28% of the total manufacturing workforce**.
 - It excludes workers from the unorganised sector, as well as rural and agricultural workers.
- **Fall in incomes:** While it is true that there was a decline in food prices during most of the period since 2015-16, this is also a **period of stagnant or declining rural wages and highest unemployment**.
 - Low inflation is meaningless when **real wages are falling in rural areas**, as this means that the poor are not able to consume more as their **incomes are falling**.

POLAR VORTEX AND ITS EFFECTS

◎ CONTEXT

- The mild winters in the northern regions of the hemisphere which are particularly south of the Arctic circle have led to the decrease in the energy consumption by the people.

◎ ABOUT

What is Polar Vortex?

- The polar vortex is a large area of low pressure and cold air surrounding both of the Earth's poles.
- It always exists near the poles, but weakens in summer and strengthens in winter.
- The polar vortex extends from the tropopause (the dividing line between the stratosphere and troposphere) through the stratosphere and into the mesosphere (above 50 km). Low values of ozone and cold temperatures are associated with the air inside the vortex.
- The term "vortex" refers to the counter-clockwise flow of air that helps keep the colder air near the Poles.
- Many times during winter in the northern hemisphere, the polar vortex will expand, sending cold air southward with the jet stream.
- Often when the polar vortex is strong, temperatures are mild in the mid-latitudes across the Eastern US and Northern Eurasia; and when the vortex is weak, temperatures tend to be cold across the Eastern US and northern Europe and Asia.

What is Strong Polar Vortex?

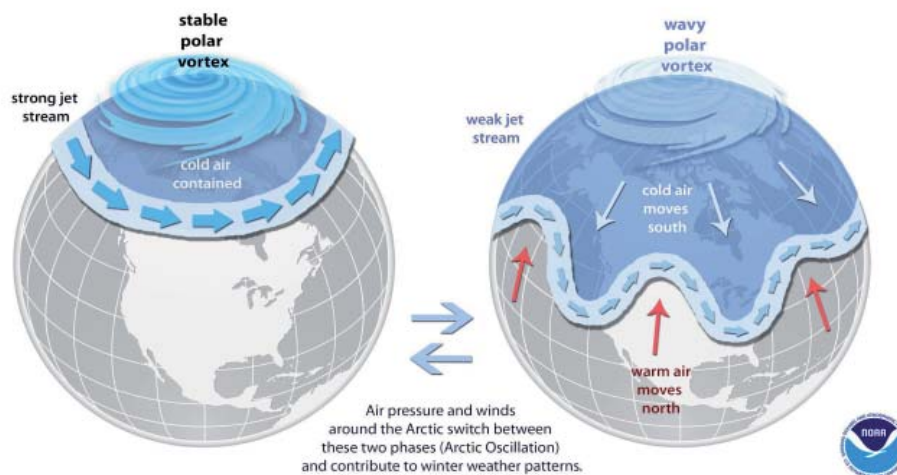
- The strong polar vortex is the more common state of the vortex which creates strong low pressure in the Arctic region.
- Because of the pressure difference between the Arctic and mid-latitudes, air flows into low pressure and this confines the cold air to high latitudes closer to the Arctic.
- Therefore it is often mild across the Eastern US, Europe and East Asia during winters when the polar vortex is strong.
- During strong polar vortex, the airflow is fast and in a direction from west to east.
- Low pressure in the Arctic region is referred to as the positive phase of the Arctic Oscillation (AO), which is also known as the North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO).

Weak polar vortex

- Occasionally, the polar vortex is disrupted and weakens, due to wave energy propagating upward from the lower atmosphere.
- When this happens, the stratosphere warms sharply in an event known as sudden stratospheric warming, in just a few days, miles above the Earth's surface.
- The warming weakens the polar vortex, shifting its location somewhat south of the pole or, in some instances, 'splitting' the vortex up into 'sister vortices'.
- The split higher up in the atmosphere can give rise to both, sudden and delayed effects, much of which involves declining temperatures and extreme winter weather in the eastern US along with northern and western Europe.

The Science Behind the Polar Vortex

The polar vortex is a large area of low pressure and cold air surrounding the Earth's North and South poles. The term vortex refers to the counterclockwise flow of air that helps keep the colder air close to the poles (left globe). Often during winter in the Northern Hemisphere, the polar vortex will become less stable and expand, sending cold Arctic air southward over the United States with the jet stream (right globe). The polar vortex is nothing new — in fact, it's thought that the term first appeared in an 1853 issue of E. Littell's *Living Age*.



Is global warming responsible for the weakening of polar vortex?

- It is being hypothesised that the weakening of polar vortex is a result of global warming. Warming leads to melting of polar ice during summer months. The melting ice warms the Arctic Ocean and the heat is radiated back to the atmosphere.
- In the absence of global warming, there used to be a substantial difference between the temperatures at the poles and in the mid-latitudes.
- As more and more ice melts in the coming years, more such events can be expected. But very little research on this is available as ice melting is a recent phenomenon.
- IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report says that the polar vortex is expected to become smaller in the coming years.

AFRICA HAS BEEN SPARED SO FAR FROM CORONAVIRUS. WHY?

◎ CONTEXT

- Some 24 countries apart from China have registered cases of the coronavirus, now officially named Covid-19. None of them is in Africa, despite the increasingly tight links between the two regions.

◎ ABOUT

- Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV).
- A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans.

Chinese in Africa:

- About 2 million Chinese live and work on the African continent.
- Africans are also increasingly visiting China for business and study.
- Before the novel coronavirus outbreak — which is centred on China's Hubei region and its provincial capital of Wuhan — about eight flights a day operated between China and African nations.

- Chinese travellers made up the biggest group of customers on Ethiopian Airlines, Africa's largest carrier.
- This booming travel between China and Africa is a possible route for transmission of the new coronavirus, which has killed 1,369 people and infected 46,997 globally, according to the latest WHO figures.

Limited testing

- A simple explanation could be that the continent simply hasn't had the ability to detect cases up until now.
- As of late last week, only two African countries — Senegal and South Africa — had laboratories capable of testing and confirming samples for the virus.
- This situation has changed. Medical teams from more than a dozen African countries met in Senegal last week to learn how to diagnose the new virus.
- Now 19 African nations are able to test for Covid-19, including Nigeria, Gabon, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Zambia and Sierra Leone.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) has also identified 13 priority countries in Africa with strong links to China and told DW it has dispatched experts to eight of these to help coordinate preparedness efforts.
- The priority countries have all introduced screenings at airports, as well as some seaports, according to the WHO.
- In Sierra Leone, more than 30 Chinese who arrived from China last week are under quarantine in Freetown.

Too warm for COVID-19?

- Another theory is that the continent is too warm for the Covid-19 virus to thrive.
- Coronaviruses, which include some of the viruses responsible for the common cold and flu, can show something called seasonality — that is, the peak and wane depending on the season.
- Many cold and flu viruses peak in winter, for example; the droplets sneezed and coughed out by people spread more easily in winter's cold dry air and when people are crowded inside together.
- They then die down in warmer weather.
- "When the season is warmer and more humid, the droplets transmitting the [flu virus] tend to fall out of the air more quickly, therefore limiting its transmission.
- Tropical countries aren't immune from seasonality, with flu peaking in the dry season in countries like Cameroon.
- However, not all coronaviruses spread through respiratory droplets and Boum cautions that it is too early to tell if Covid-19 is transmitted in a similar fashion.

'Doubt a big outbreak in Africa'

- But even if the coronavirus makes its way to Africa, It doesn't believe the continent will be as hard hit as China.
- Droplet diseases don't seem to be as big an issue in Africa. SARS, a respiratory disease that is also a coronavirus, spread through 26 countries in 2003 but failed to gain a hold in Africa.
- Influenza epidemics are also less intense on the continent.
- In addition, in Africa people generally don't live crammed together in such densely populated areas and they also spend a lot more time out-of-doors in Africa than they do in northern countries.

LASSA FEVER

◎ CONTEXT

- The Nigerian Academy of Science has called for the current outbreak of Lassa fever in Africa's most populous nation to be declared a national health emergency because of its severity.

◎ ABOUT

- Lassa fever is a viral haemorrhagic disease caused by the Lassa virus (a member of the arenavirus family of viruses) which naturally infects the widely distributed house rat.

Lassa Fever virus is a single-stranded, enveloped RNA virus that belongs to the genus **Mammarenavirus**, of the **Arenaviridae family of viruses**. The natural reservoir for Lassa fever virus is the **Mastomys natalensis rat**.

- **Transmission:** It is transmitted through the urine and droppings of infected rats found in most tropical and subtropical countries in Africa.
- **Communicable:** They are able to contaminate anything they come in contact with. The Lassa virus spreads through human to human contact with tissue, blood, body fluids, secretions or excretions.
- **Symptoms:** A fever is usually the first symptom followed by headaches and coughing, nausea and vomiting, diarrhoea, mouth ulcers and swollen lymph glands.
- **Treatment:** Lassa fever can be fatal, but it can be treated if diagnosed early.

How serious is the current Lassa fever outbreak in Nigeria?

- The current outbreak is serious enough given the worsening trend. It has spread from just two states when it was first diagnosed in 1969 to 23 states in 2019.
- In 2018, the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control reported the largest ever a number of cases in Nigeria, with over 600 confirmed cases and over 170 deaths.
- And the numbers have continued to rise. An alarm was raised over the tripling of the number of suspected cases between 2017 and 2018 only for the reported number of suspected cases to rise in 2019.
- Outbreaks have historically occurred during the dry season – November to April. But in recent years there have also been cases during the rainy season.

What difference would a public health emergency make?

- A recent, and good example, of the difference this can make, was the announcement of a public health emergency in 2014 to tackle the Ebola virus outbreak.
- The announcement led to an emergency mode being activated with the attendant political will and funding which ultimately stopped the spread of the disease within 93 days.
- This is why the Nigerian Academy of Science is calling for more action.
- In particular, it is recommending that an interdisciplinary committee be set up comprising medical and veterinary specialists, epidemiologists, social scientists, media practitioners, community representatives.
- This would be along the lines of an approach known as **One Health**.
- This is rooted in the understanding that human health is affected by interactions between people, the environment and animals.
- Equally important is the need for the government to enhance the capacity of the national laboratory network for reliable and efficient diagnosis of suspected cases.
- This is because only about 20% of suspected Lassa fever cases are usually diagnosed.
- The government should also provide adequate funds for a sensitive disease surveillance and response system. This is a system that ensures disease outbreaks (not just Lassa

fever) are quickly noticed, diagnosed, and appropriate responses or containment measures are started in the shortest possible time.

KALIDASA

◎ CONTEXT

- In the latest Budget 2020, the Finance Minister of India cited some poets in her Budget speech. The famous Kalidasa was also among them.

◎ ABOUT

- Kalidasa's **Raghuvamsa** was quoted by Finance Minister during her Budget 2020 presentation in the Parliament.
 - It said that just as **Surya** collects vapour from little drops of water, so must a government collect taxes—lightly.
- The three major themes of Budget 2020 are:
 - **Aspirational India**
 - **A caring society**
 - **Economic development for all**

Facts about Kalidasa

- Kalidasa was a **Classical Sanskrit writer**, widely regarded as the **greatest poet and dramatist in the Sanskrit language of India**.
- Much about his life is unknown, only what can be inferred from his poetry and plays.
- His plays and poetry are primarily based on **the Vedas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas**.
- His surviving works consist of three plays, two epic poems and two shorter poems.
- His works cannot be dated with precision, but they were most likely authored within the **4th–5th century CE**.
- **Palaeographic evidence:** The earliest paleographical evidence of Kalidasa is found in a Sanskrit inscription dated c. 473 CE, found at **Mandsaur's Sun temple**.
 - His name, along with that of **poet Bharavi**, is mentioned in a **stone inscription** dated 634 C.E. **found at Aihole**, located in present-day Karnataka.
- **Influenced:** Kalidasahad great impact on **Rabindranath Tagore**. Meghadutam's romanticism is found in Tagore's poems on the monsoons.
 - Father of Modern Medicine **Sir William Osler** always kept on his desk a poem written by Kalidasa.

Theories locating the origin of Kalidasa

- **Himalayas, Ujjain and Kalinga:** Scholars have speculated that Kalidasa may have lived near the Himalayas, in the vicinity of Ujjain, and in Kalinga.
 - This hypothesis is based on Kalidasa's detailed **description of the Himalayas in his Kumarasambhava**, the display of his **love for Ujjain in Meghadūta**, and his highly eulogistic descriptions of **Kalingan emperor Hemāngada in Raghuvamśa** (sixth sarga).
- **Kashmir: Lakshmi Dhar Kalla** (1891–1953), a Sanskrit scholar and a Kashmiri Pandit, concluded that Kalidasa was **born in Kashmir, but moved southwards**, and sought the patronage of local rulers to prosper. The evidence cited through Kalidasa's writings includes:
 - Description of flora, fauna and geographical features common to Kashmir, but not Ujjain or Kalinga: **saffron plant, deodar trees, musk deer, tarns, glades etc.**

- Reference to certain legends of Kashmiri origin, such as **Kashmiri text NilamataPurana mentioned in Shakuntala Nikumbha.**
- Some scholars posit **Garhwal in Uttarakhand** to be Kalidasa's birthplace.

Legends around Kalidasa

- According to folklore, Kalidasa became a great poet because he sought to **study Purana and other ancient texts in order to seek revenge from a princess** who mocked Kalidasa for being an unintelligent man when he had come to pursue her hand in marriage.
 - Challenged by the princess, Kalidasa visited a **Kali temple** and was **inspired to learn Sanskrit.**
 - He then wrote three epics **Kumarasambhava, Meghaduta** and **Raghuvamsa.**
- Another legend is that he **visited Kumaradasa, the king of Sri Lanka** formerly known as Ceylon and, because of some treachery, Kalidasa **was murdered there.**
- **Theory of multiple Kalidasa:** Some scholars believe that all the works attributed to "Kalidasa" are not by a single person.
 - From the 8th and 9th centuries, there may have existed **three noted literary figures that share the name Kalidasa.**

Literary works

- **Kalidasa wrote three plays:**
 - **Malavikagnimitram** (Pertaining to **Malavika and Agnimitra**) tells the story of King Agnimitra, who falls in love with the picture of an exiled servant girl named Malavika.
 - **Abhijnanasakuntalam** (Of the recollection of Shakuntala) tells the story of **King Dushyanta** who, while on a hunting trip, meets **Shakuntala**, the adopted daughter of a sage, and marries her. It was among the first Sanskrit works to be translated into English.
 - **Vikramorvasiyam** (Urvashi Won by Valour) tells the story of mortal King **Pururavas** and **celestial nymph Urvashi**, who fall in love.
- **Kalidasa is the author of two epic poems:**
 - **Raghuvamsa** is an epic poem about the kings of Raghu dynasty.
 - **Kumarasambhava** describes the birth and adolescence of the goddess Parvati, and her marriage with Lord Shiva.
- **Kalidasa also wrote two khandakavyas (minor poems):**
 - **Ritusamhara** describes the six seasons by narrating the experiences of two lovers in each of the seasons.
 - **Meghaduta** (The Cloud Messenger) describes the story of a Yaksha trying to send a message to his lover through a cloud. This **poem is elegiac in nature** through which Kalidasa created his own genre of poetry. Kalidasa set this poem to the **mandakranta meter**, which is known for its lyrical sweetness.

UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE (USTR)

© CONTEXT

- The United States removed India from its list of developing countries that are exempted from investigations into whether they harm American industry with unfairly subsidised exports. The United States Trade Representative (USTR) eliminated a host of countries including Brazil, Indonesia, Hong Kong, South Africa and Argentina

from getting special preferences under the methodology for countervailing duty (CVD) investigations, stating that the previous guidance that dated back to 1998 “is now obsolete”.

© ABOUT

• US internal list of developing and least-developed countries:

- The list is brought by the USTR. The countries are divided into categories of Developing, Developed and underdeveloped. The main criteria for the division of the countries include:
 - Share in the world trade
 - The number of exports from the countries
- It is a US-specific list which lists out the countries to get the various trade benefits while carrying out trade with the U.S.A.

Features of the listing of the countries as developing:

- The countries would be able to exempt from the investigations about the harm to American industry by the bilateral or multilateral trade.
- These investigations are related to the countervailing duty.
- The countries would be getting the trade benefits.
- The countries would be getting the exemptions in the countervailing duties.
- The countries would be given preference in the Generalised System of Preference (GSP).
- The Generalised System of Preference will bring about the various duty exemptions to the trade with the USA.
- The countries will be able to enjoy trade with the USA.
- There will be lesser trade barriers by the US government while trading with the developing countries.

Position of India:

- Previously, India was in the category of the developing nation. But USTR has removed India from this list.
- Now India will not be able to avail the trade benefits which are given to the developing countries.

Why the the decision taken by USTR?

- The decision has been taken due to a series of decisions taken by the Indian government has led to trade friction between two countries:
 - India’s new e-commerce rules — which have impacted American companies like Amazon and Walmart (majority owner of Flipkart).
 - Price controls on medical devices (cardiac stents).
 - Tariffs on products like smartwatches and high-end mobile phones.
 - Lack of greater market access for the U.S. dairy industry.
- The global economic slowdown and the competence of the Indian Industries have affected the decision taken by USTR.

Effect on Indo-US relationship:

- The decision will further affect the United States-India strategic partnership and highlight the strong and enduring bonds between the American and Indian people.
- The impact of the GSP will be much greater: India has been the biggest beneficiary of the GSP regime.
- In 2018, \$6.3 billion of Indian merchandise exports to the U.S. were covered by GSP.
- The sectors which could face the impact of the withdrawal of the GSP regime are gem and jewellery, leather and processed foods.

- However, India has said that the impact is “minimal”, given that Indian exporters were only receiving duty-free benefits of \$190 million on the country’s overall GSP-related trade of \$5.6 billion.
- This could impact India’s competitiveness in items groups such as raw materials in the organic chemicals sector and intermediary goods in the US market, alongside items such as iron or steel, furniture, aluminium and electrical machinery.
- The impact on small industries in the country could be significant. Such industries would lose their market share in the U.S. without financial support to help them maintain their edge.

◎ WAY FORWARD

- As part of bilateral trade discussions between India and US, India had offered a resolution on significant US requests in an effort to find a mutually acceptable way forward but unfortunately that this did not find acceptance by the US. Therefore, like the US and other nations, India shall always uphold its national interest in these matters and should consider significant development imperatives and concerns and its people who also aspire for better standards of living.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRIVATE AND GOVERNMENT BILLS IN PARLIAMENT

◎ CONTEXT

- A member in Rajya Sabha appeared to abandon his plan of introducing a private member’s Bill on the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), a code that would be applicable to all religious communities in personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance and adoption.

◎ ABOUT

What is a private member’s Bill?

- A private member’s Bill is different from a government Bill and is piloted by an MP who is not a minister.
- Individual MPs may introduce private member’s Bill to draw the government’s attention to what they might see as issues requiring legislative intervention.
- An MP who is not a minister is a private member and while both private members and ministers take part in the lawmaking process, Bills introduced by private members are referred to as private member’s Bills and those introduced by ministers are called government Bills.
- Government Bills are backed by the government and also reflect its legislative agenda.
- The admissibility of a private Bill is decided by the Chairman in the case of the Rajya Sabha and the Speaker in the case of the Lok Sabha.
- Before the Bill can be listed for introduction, the Member must give at least a month’s notice, for the House Secretariat to examine it for compliance with constitutional provisions and rules on legislation.
- While a government Bill can be introduced and discussed on any day, a private member’s bill can only be introduced and discussed on Fridays.

Has a private member’s bill ever become a law?

- As per PRS Legislative, no private member’s Bill has been passed by Parliament since 1970.
- To date, Parliament has passed 14 such Bills, six of them in 1956.
- In the 14th Lok Sabha, of the over 300 private member’s Bills introduced, roughly four per cent were discussed; the remaining 96 per cent lapsed without a single dialogue.
- The selection of Bills for discussion is done through a ballot.

UNPARLIAMENTARY” SPEECH AND CONDUCT IN PARLIAMENT

◎ CONTEXT

- In recent times, few instances of heated exchanges in Parliament have brought back recurring questions around ‘unparliamentary’ speech and conduct.

◎ ABOUT

What are Unparliamentary expressions?

- There are phrases and words, literally in thousands, both in English and in other Indian languages, that are “unparliamentary”.
- The Lok Sabha Secretariat has brought out a bulky tome titled ‘**Unparliamentary Expressions**’, the 2004 edition of which ran into 900 pages.
- The list contains several words and expressions that would probably be considered rude or offensive in most cultures; however, it also has stuff that is likely to be thought of as being fairly harmless or innocuous.
- The state legislatures too are guided mainly by the same book, which also draws heavily from unparliamentary words and phrases used in the Vidhan Sabhas and Vidhan Parishads of India.
- The book was first compiled in 1999. At the time, references were taken from debates and phrases declared unparliamentary by the pre-independence Central Legislative Assembly, the Constituent Assembly of India, the Provisional Parliament, the first to the tenth Lok Sabhas and Rajya Sabha, state legislatures, and Commonwealth parliaments like that of the United Kingdom.

Who is responsible to keep such word out?

- The Presiding Officers, Speaker of Lok Sabha and Chairperson of Rajya Sabha, have the job of keeping these bad words out of Parliament’s records.
- Under Rule 380 of the **Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha**, the Speaker is vested with the power to order expunction of words which, in the opinion of the Speaker, are defamatory or indecent or unparliamentary or undignified from the proceedings of the House.
- Similarly, the Speaker may order **expunction** of words which are defamatory or insinuatory in nature or levels allegation against a high dignitary or authority or organization.

Do MPs have the freedom to say anything (in the House)?

- While **Article 105(2)** of the Constitution of India lays down that “**no Member of Parliament shall be liable to any proceedings in any court in respect of anything said or any vote given by him in Parliament or any committee thereof**”, MPs do not enjoy the freedom to say whatever they want inside the house.
- **Article 121** prohibits discussion in Parliament with respect to the conduct of any Judge of the Supreme Court or of a High Court in the discharge of the duties except upon a motion for presenting an address to the President for the removal in the manner prescribed.
- Whatever an MP says is subject to the discipline of the **Rules of Parliament**, the “good sense” of Members, and the control of proceedings by the Speaker.
- These checks ensure that MPs cannot use “defamatory or indecent or undignified or unparliamentary words” inside the House.
- **Rule 380 (“Expunction”)** of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha says: “If the Speaker is of opinion that words have been used in debate which is defamatory or indecent or unparliamentary or undignified, the Speaker may while exercising discretion order that such words be expunged from the proceedings of the House.”

- **Rule 381** says: "The portion of the proceedings of the House so expunged shall be marked by asterisks and an explanatory footnote shall be inserted in the proceedings as follows: 'Expunged as ordered by the Chair'."

ARSENIC-RESISTANT RICE

◎ CONTEXT

- Researchers have developed and commercialised a rice variety that is resistant to arsenic.

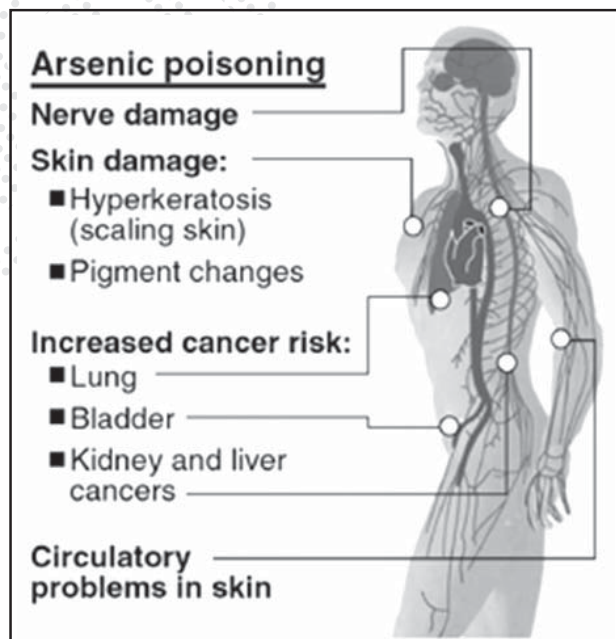
◎ ABOUT

Muktoshri:

- The new rice variety, Muktoshri, also called IET 21845, was developed jointly by the **Rice Research Station** at Chinsurah coming under West Bengal's **Agriculture** Department and the **National Botanical Research Institute**, Lucknow, over several years.
- Work on developing the variety started in 2006 and by 2013 the scientists were successful.
- This variety uptakes very less amount of arsenic from soil and water in comparison to other varieties of rice.
- The variety yields 5.5 metric tonnes per hectare in the Boro season and 4.5 to 5 metric tonnes per hectare in the Kharif season, respectively.

Arsenic contamination:

- Arsenic is naturally present at high levels in the groundwater of a number of countries. It is highly toxic in its inorganic form.
- Arsenic contamination of groundwater is widespread and there are a number of regions where arsenic contamination of drinking-water is significant.
- Arsenic is one of WHO's 10 chemicals of major public health concern.
- It is now recognized that at least 140 million people in 50 countries have been drinking water containing arsenic at levels above the WHO provisional guideline value of **10 µg/L (4)**.
- According to the latest report of the **Central Ground Water Board (CGWB)**, 21 states across the country have pockets with arsenic levels higher than the Bureau of Indian Standards' (BIS) stipulated permissible limit of **0.01 milligram per litre (mg/l)**.
- In India, arsenic contamination was first officially confirmed in West Bengal in 1983. Close to four decades after its detection, the scenario has worsened, about 9.6 million people in West Bengal are at immediate risk from arsenic contamination in groundwater.
- **West Bengal** is among the States with the highest concentration of arsenic in groundwater, with as many as 83 blocks across seven districts having higher arsenic levels than permissible limits.



Impacts:

- **Irreversible damages:** Major impacts of arsenic in water include skin damage, keratosis and skin cancer, cancers of lung and bladder and diseases of the vascular system.
- **Poisoning:** According to the World Health Organization, long-term exposure to arsenic, mainly through drinking water and food, can lead to poisoning.
- **A danger to livestock:** Rice husk, containing high levels of arsenic, is being used as fodder for livestock, exposing them to the hazardous impacts of arsenic contamination. This is also leading to a potential risk for humans when they consume cattle based food products.
- **Cancer-causing agent:** Arsenic poisoning is one of the greatest reasons for the growing cases of cancer for people living in India's Ganga plains. It can lead to the aggravated condition of Cancer.

GENOME INDIA PROJECT

◎ CONTEXT

- The government has cleared an ambitious gene-mapping project that is being described by those involved as the “first scratching of the surface of the vast genetic diversity of India”.

◎ ABOUT**What is a genome?**

- Every organism's genetic code is contained in its Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid (DNA), the building blocks of life.
- A genome, simply put, is all the genetic matter in an organism. It is defined as “an organism's complete set of DNA, including all of its genes.”
- Each genome contains all of the information needed to build and maintain that organism. In humans, a copy of the entire genome, more than 3 billion DNA base pairs, is contained in all cells that have a nucleus
- The discovery that DNA is structured as a “double helix” by James Watson and Francis Crick in 1953, for which they won a Nobel Prize in 1962, was the spark in the long, continuing quest for understanding how genes dictate life, its traits, and what causes diseases.

About the Project:

- The first stage of the project will look at samples of “10,000 persons from all over the country” to form a “grid” that will enable the development of a “reference genome”.
- **Nodal agency:** The IISc's Centre for Brain Research, an autonomous institute, will serve as the nodal point of the project.
- **Aim:** Its aim is to ultimately build a grid of the Indian “reference genome”, to understand fully the type and nature of diseases and traits that comprise the diverse Indian population.

Benefits of the Project:

- The Genome India Project, a collaboration of 20 institutions will enable new efficiencies in medicine, agriculture and the life sciences. The major benefits are as given below:
- **Improving health:** Several diseases develop through metabolic polymorphisms. If such propensities to disease can be mapped to variations across genomes, it is believed public health interventions can be targeted better, and diseases anticipated before they develop.
- **Agriculture:** A better understanding of the genetic basis of susceptibility to blights, rusts and pests can make it possible to deter them genetically, and reduce dependence on chemicals.

- **Mapping the diverse gene pools:** Global science would also benefit from a mapping project in one of the world's most diverse gene pools, which would provide data useful for the mapping of the spread and migration of a range of life forms in the Old World, from plants to humans.
- **Deep information on evolution:** Traversing from the world's tallest mountain range to warm seas through multiple bio-zones demarcated by climate and terrain, India could provide much information on the interplay of species and genetic groups within them.
- **A deeper understanding of ecology:** Eventually, a deeper understanding of ecology could emerge from the material thrown up.

Challenges:

- However, some caution must be exercised in the field of human genetics, because the life sciences sometimes stray into unscientific terrain and heighten political bias.
- The mapping of brain regions to mental functions spun off the utterly unscientific and racist field of phrenology.
- In India, a nation driven by identity politics and obsessed with the myths of pristine origins and authenticity, scientific work in mapping genetic groups may become grist to the political mill of the unscientific notion of race.

Hasn't the human genome been mapped before?

- The Human Genome Project (HGP) was an international programme that led to the decoding of the entire human genome.
- The HGP was an inward voyage of discovery, led by an international team of researchers looking to sequence and map all of the genes of members of our species.
- Beginning on October 1, 1990, and completed in April 2003, the HGP gave the ability, for the first time, to read nature's complete genetic blueprint for building a human being.
- In today's era, mapping of India's genetic landscape is essential for next-generation medicine, agriculture and biodiversity management. This move must be supported at all levels to map the diversity of India's genetic pool and put it on the global map.

VOYAGER 2

◎ CONTEXT

- **In an incredible feat of remote engineering, NASA has fixed one of the most intrepid explorers in human history. Voyager 2, currently some 11.5 billion miles from Earth, is back online and resuming its mission to collect scientific data on the solar system and the interstellar space beyond.**

◎ ABOUT

What is Voyager 2?

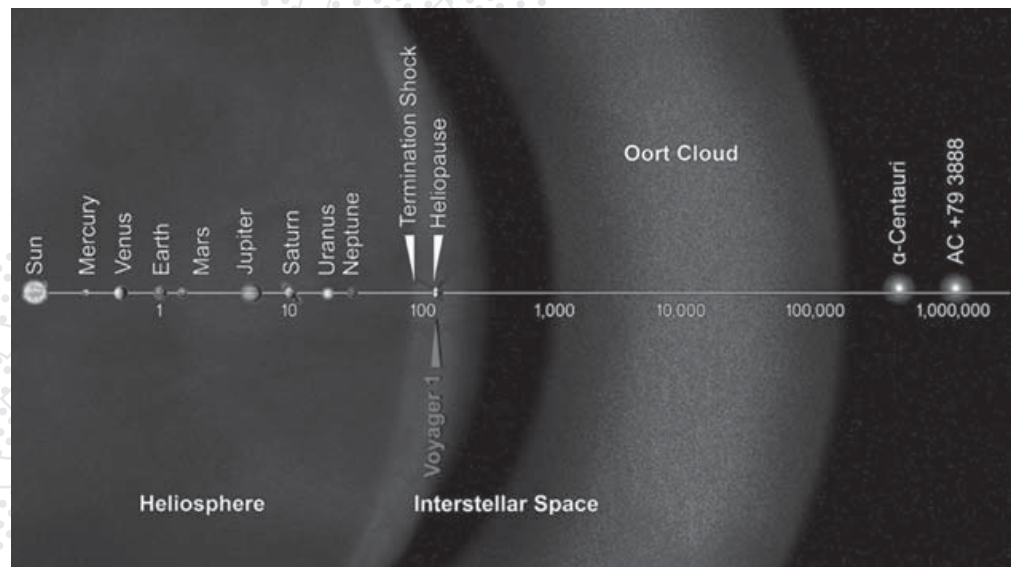
- NASA's Voyager 2 is the second spacecraft to enter interstellar space. It is sister craft to Voyager 1. Both have been travelling through the solar system, and now beyond it, for the last four decades.
- Both were launched a few weeks apart in 1977 to perform an unprecedented "grand tour" of the outer solar system.
- Both spacecraft conducted flybys of Jupiter and Saturn, revealing a great deal about the solar system's two biggest planets.
 - **Closest approach to Jupiter occurred on March 5, 1979, for Voyager 1; July 9, 1979**
 - **Closest approach to Saturn occurred on November 12, 1980, for Voyager 1; August 25, 1981**

- **Voyager 2 then zoomed past Uranus in 1986 and Neptune in 1989; the probe remains the only craft to have gotten up-close looks at either of these “ice giants.”**
- **Voyager 1 and Voyager 2 are currently about 13.8 billion miles (22.2 billion kilometres) and 11.5 billion miles (13.5 billion km) from Earth, respectively.**
- **Voyager 2 is the furthest away object made by humans: 11.5 billion miles from Earth. Not even light can travel such a distance instantaneously as it does on our planet.**
- **It takes more than 17 hours for light to travel from Earth to Voyager 2.**

Nation	United States of America (USA)
Objective(s)	Jupiter Flyby, Saturn Flyby, Uranus Flyby, Neptune Flyby
Spacecraft Mass	1,592 pounds (721.9 kilograms)
Mission Design and Management	NASA / JPL
Launch Date	August 20, 1977

Understanding Interstellar Space:

- ‘Inter’ means between. ‘Stellar’ refers to stars. Interstellar space is the part of space that exists between stars.
- Scientists define the beginning of interstellar space as the place where the Sun’s constant flow of material and magnetic field stop affecting its surroundings.
- This place is called the heliopause.



What happened to the spacecraft?

- The spacecraft had run into trouble on January 28, when NASA revealed that it had unexpectedly, and for unknown reasons, shut down.
- The venerable probe failed to execute a spin maneuver as intended. As a result, two onboard systems remained on longer than planned, sucking up so much energy that Voyager 2 automatically shut off its science instruments.
- But now, Voyager 2 is back online — gathering and relaying scientific information just as before.

HOW WIDE IS THE GENDER GAP IN SCIENCE?

◎ CONTEXT

- Between 1901 and 2019, 334 Nobel Prizes have been awarded to 616 Laureates in Physics, Chemistry and Medicine, of which just 20 have been won by 19 women.

◎ ABOUT

- February 11 was the **International Day of Women and Girls in Science**, established by the **United Nations** to promote equal access to and participation in science for women and girls.
- While some of the greatest scientists and mathematicians have been women, they remain under-represented in comparison to their male counterparts in higher studies involving science, as well as among the top scientific achievers.

Researchers and achievers

- According to a 2018 fact sheet prepared by UNESCO on women in science, just 28.8% of researchers are women.
- It defines researchers as “professionals engaged in the conception or creation of new knowledge”. In India, this drops to 13.9%.
- Between 1901 and 2019, 334 Nobel Prizes have been awarded to 616 Laureates in Physics, Chemistry and Medicine, of which just 20 have been won by 19 women.
- The double Laureate is Marie Curie, one of just three women who have won in Physics and one of just five in Chemistry, while 12 women have won the Medicine Nobel.
- In 2019, the American mathematician Karen Uhlenbeck became the first woman to win the Abel Prize, following 16 male mathematicians.
- The Fields Medal so far has also been awarded to only one woman mathematician, the late Maryam Mirzakhani of Iran, as opposed to 59 men since 1936.

Women in science courses

- UNESCO data from 2014-16 show that only around 30% of female students select STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics)-related fields in higher education.
- Female enrolment is particularly low in information technology (3%), natural science, mathematics and statistics (5%) and engineering and allied streams (8%).
- **In India, a 2016-17 NITI Aayog report compared female enrolment in various disciplines over five years, until 2015-16.**
- In 2015-16, 9.3% of female students in undergraduate courses were enrolled in engineering, compared to 15.6% across genders. Conversely, 4.3% of female students were enrolled in medical science, compared to 3.3% across genders.
- Then, at master's and doctoral levels, female enrolment remained lower than overall enrolment, and also fell behind for medical science in three of the five years.
- “This reflects that moving up from UG to a higher degree and research programmes, the restricted presence of women in higher studies and research in science becomes evident for a broader range of disciplines.
- Broadly, women showed a preference for arts; however, female enrolment in science streams rose from 2010-11 to 2015-16.
- The report found that in over 620 institutes and universities, including IITs, NITs, ISRO, and DRDO, the presence of women was 20.0% among Scientific and Administrative Staff, 28.7% among Post-Doctoral Fellows, and 33.5% among PhD scholars.

Why the gender gap?

- Girls excel at mathematics and science-oriented subjects in school, but boys often believe they can do better, which shapes their choices in higher studies.
- In 2015, an analysis of PISA scores by OECD found that the difference in maths scores

between high-achieving boys and girls was the equivalent of about half a year at school.

- But when comparing boys and girls who reported similar levels of self-confidence and anxiety about mathematics, the gender gap in performance disappeared — when girls were more anxious, they tended to perform poorly.
- The NITI Aayog report said, **“The problem of entry of women in science is not uniform across disciplines. Interventions geared to popularising subjects such as Engineering or the Physical sciences or Chemistry among female students at the school level in both urban and rural areas might be helpful in changing mind-set.”**

GSSCORE

MISCELLANEOUS

CURRENT AFFAIRS

APIARY ON WHEELS

- Union Minister of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises has flagged off the Apiary on Wheels.
- Apiary on Wheels is a unique concept designed by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC).
- It aims to address the challenges faced by the beekeepers by easy upkeep and migration of Bee Boxes having live Bee colonies.
- This initiative was launched as a part of the National Honey Mission.
 - The Honey Mission was launched in 2017 by the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC).
 - **Aim:** To Provide sustainable employment and income to rural and urban unemployed youth by conserving the honeybee habitat and tapping untapped natural resources.

BHUTAN'S "SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FEE" (SDF)

- Ending decades of free entry to Indian tourists visiting Bhutan, the government in Thimphu has decided to levy a daily ₹1,200 (\$17) fee for "regional tourists" from India, the Maldives and Bangladesh, beginning July 2020.
- The fee, called a Sustainable Development Fee (SDF), is meant to help the government deal with burgeoning numbers in tourist traffic, which it is seeking to regulate through a new tourism policy.

HIGH-SPEED ELECTRIC SCOOTER 'EPLUTO 7G'

- Pure EV, a start-up incubated at the Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad, launched its High-Speed Electric Scooter 'EPluto 7G'.
- The vehicle offers affordability, long-range, a top speed of 60 KMPH and battery warranty for 40,000 KM.
- A unique point of this vehicle is that the battery and the vehicle have been designed and developed after factoring in Indian terrain and weather conditions.
- Pure EV has established a 40,000-square foot state-of-the-art facility, co-located with IIT Hyderabad, for cutting-edge Research and Developing and for large scale production of electric vehicles and electric batteries.

INDONESIA'S MOUNT MERAPI ERUPTS

- Indonesia's most active volcano, Mount Merapi has erupted again sending ash and smoke more than three miles into the sky.
- Mount Merapi is an active stratovolcano located on the border between Central Java and Yogyakarta provinces, Indonesia.
- It is the most active volcano in Indonesia and has erupted regularly since 1548.

INS SHIVAJI

- President Ram Nath Kovind presented the President's Colour to INS Shivaji in Lonavala, Maharashtra.
- INS Shivaji houses the Naval College of Engineering which trains officers of the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard.

- It was commissioned on February 15, 1945, as HMIS Shivaji. It is located close to the Bhushi Dam and spreads across 876 acres.
- INS Shivaji motto: Karmasu Kaushalam, which means imbuing the concept of skill at work in all aspects of human endeavour.
- INS Shivaji is commanded by Commodore Ravnish Seth.
- The President's colour is the highest honour bestowed upon any Indian military unit.
- Last year, President Kovind had awarded the President's Colour to the Indian Naval Academy (INA), which was received by Academy Cadet Captain Sushil Singh.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE FOR FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

- In order to fight Genital Mutilation, the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation is celebrated on the 6th of February each year.
- The UN first officially commemorated the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation on February 6, 2003.
- Female genital mutilation (FGM) is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women.
- The practice involves the partial or total removal of external female genitalia or other injuries to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.
- The WHO classifies female genital mutilation into 4 major types.
 - **Type 1:** partial or total removal of the clitoral glans (the external and visible part of the clitoris, which is a sensitive part of the female genitals), and/or the prepuce/ clitoral hood (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoral glans).
 - **Type 2:** partial or total removal of the clitoral glans and the labia minora (the inner folds of the vulva), with or without removal of the labia majora (the outer folds of skin of the vulva).
 - **Type 3:** Also known as infibulation, this is the narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal by cutting and repositioning the labia minora, or labia majora, sometimes through stitching, with or without removal of the clitoral prepuce/clitoral hood and glans (Type I FGM).
 - **Type 4:** This includes all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g. pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterizing the genital area.]

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE ADVISORY GROUP (INSARAG)

- The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has organized the second BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise as per the International Search & Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) guidelines for familiarization & exercise purposes.
- The International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) was established in 1991.
- It is a network of disaster-prone and disaster-responding countries and organizations dedicated to urban search and rescue (USAR) and operational field coordination.
- It aims to establish standards and classification for international USAR teams as well as a methodology for international response coordination in the aftermath of earthquakes and collapsed structure disasters.
- The Secretariat is located in the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

KUMBHABHISHEKAM

- The consecration (kumbhabhishekam) of 1,010-year-old Brihadeeswarar Temple or the Big Temple in Thanjavur has been performed with religious fervour and gaiety.
- As per the customs of Hinduism, 'kumbhabhishekam' is done once in 12 years.
- According to the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR&CE) department, the temple had 'kumbhabhishekam' in 1010, 1729, 1843, 1980 and 1997.
- Built by: Brihadeeswarar Temple, which is dedicated to Shiva, was built by Raja Raja Chola I (985 CE-1014 CE).
- Structure: The structure is an example of Dravidian architecture and it represents the ideology of Tamil civilization and the Chola Empire.
- The temple, which is believed to be built between 1003 and 1010 AD, is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site and also known as Great Living Chola Temples.

LONGEST SPACEFLIGHT BY A WOMAN

- Christina Koch, a US astronaut set a record for the longest single spaceflight by a woman, breaking the old mark of 288 days with about two months left in her mission.
- The US record for longest space flight is 340 days set by Scott Kelly in 2015-2016.
- The world record is 15 months set in the 1990s by a Russian cosmonaut aboard the former Mir space station.

NASA TO HONOUR TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

- As part of its celebration of Black History Month, NASA will honour retired Air Force Col. Charles McGee at a ceremony, in the James Webb Auditorium at NASA Headquarters.
- The event is sponsored by the NASA Headquarters chapter of Blacks in Government.
- McGee, one of the last surviving Tuskegee Airmen and a veteran of World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. Of the 355 Tuskegee pilots who flew in combat, McGee is one of only nine surviving.
- McGee will be joined by NASA astronaut Alvin Drew, also a retired Air Force colonel, who logged more than 612 hours in space on space shuttle Endeavour on the STS-118 mission in 2007 and space shuttle Discovery on STS-133 in 2011.
- McGee is scheduled to receive an honorary promotion to the rank of brigadier general, as authorized by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020.

NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE COMPLEX (NMHC)

- A world-class National Maritime Heritage Complex will be developed at Lothal, Gujarat.
- The MoU between India and Portugal on National Maritime Heritage Complex, Lothal will pay the way for cooperation between the two countries for showcasing common Maritime Heritage.
- NMHC will consolidate all diverse and rich artifacts from ancient to modern times.
- It will provide access to the public and make them aware of India's rich Maritime Heritage.

NITI AAYOG'S SOCIAL PROTECTION FRAMEWORK

- Government has formed a Technical Committee headed by the Vice-Chairman of of NITI Aayog, Rajiv Kumar to prepare policy prescriptions for an integrated social protection framework.
- Social protection is defined as the set of policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labour markets and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards and interruption or loss of income.
- The committee will include senior officials of nodal central ministries delivering social benefits.
- It will also identify the top five priority areas for the government, which could range from employment and old-age security to health, agriculture and introduction of specific interventions.



GS SCORE

An Institute for Civil Services

IAS PRELIMS 2020

PRELIMS TEST SERIES

BATCH: 10 - PT MAXIMA

DAILY TEST

Total 63 Tests:

10 NCERT + 29 Sub Sectional + 6 Sectional +
5 Current Affair + 10 Mock Test + 3 CSAT

STARTS

**1 MARCH
2020**

TEST SCHEDULE

Test No.	Date	Subject	Subject	Topics Covered
Polity (01 March to 08 March, 2020)				
Test 1	1 March, 2020	Polity 1	NCERT	Fundamentals (NCERT 11th & 12th)
Test 2	2 March, 2020	Polity 2	NCERT	Fundamentals (NCERT 11th & 12th)
Test 3	3 March, 2020	Polity 3	Sub-Sectional	Constitutional Development + Preamble + Union Territories + Citizenship
Test 4	4 March, 2020	Polity 4	Sub-Sectional	FR + DPSP + FD + Other Constitutional Provisions such as Emergency Provisions etc.
Test 5	5 March, 2020	Polity 5	Sub-Sectional	Executive + Legislature + Judiciary - 1
Test 6	6 March, 2020	Polity 6	Sub-Sectional	Executive + Legislature + Judiciary - 2
Test 7	7 March, 2020	Polity 7	Sub-Sectional	Governance + Socio Economic Development + Reforms + Bills + Welfare Schemes + Policies
Test 8	8 March, 2020	Polity 8	Sectional	Polity & Governance
Economy (12 March to 18 March, 2020)				
Test 9	12 March, 2020	Economy 1	NCERT	Fundamentals (NCERT 11th & 12th)
Test 10	13 March, 2020	Economy 2	NCERT	Fundamentals (NCERT 11th & 12th)
Test 11	14 March, 2020	Economy 3	Sub-Sectional	Basic Concepts of National Income
Test 12	15 March, 2020	Economy 4	Sub-Sectional	Budgeting + Fiscal and Monetary Policy Agricultural and Industrial Policy
Test 13	16 March, 2020	Economy 5	Sub-Sectional	External Sector + International Institutes
Test 14	17 March, 2020	Economy 6	Sub-Sectional	Money, Banking Financial Market and Other Provisions
Test 15	18 March, 2020	Economy 7	Sectional	Indian Economy
Environment (21 March to 27 March, 2020)				
Test 16	21 March, 2020	Environment 1	NCERT	Fundamentals of Environment (NCERT Biology 12th - Ch. 10 to 16)
Test 17	22 March, 2020	Environment 2	Sub-Sectional	Environment and Ecology
Test 18	23 March, 2020	Environment 3	Sub-Sectional	Biodiversity
Test 19	24 March, 2020	Environment 4	Sub-Sectional	Environmental Pollution and Management
Test 20	25 March, 2020	Environment 5	Sub-Sectional	Climate Change + Global Warming
Test 21	26 March, 2020	Environment 6	Sub-Sectional	Environmental Governance
Test 22	27 March, 2020	Environment 7	Sectional	Environment and Ecology

Test No	Date	Subject	Subject	Topics Covered
HISTORY & CULTURE (30 March to 07 April, 2020)				
Test 23	30 March, 2020	History 1	NCERT	Fundamentals (Ancient + Medieval) (NCERT Old + New 11th & 12th)
Test 24	31 March, 2020	History 2	NCERT	Fundamentals (Modern) (NCERT Old + New 11th & 12th)
Test 25	1 April, 2020	Culture 3	Sub-Sectional	Visual Arts + Performing Arts
Test 26	2 April, 2020	Culture 4	Sub-Sectional	Religions + Languages + Literature + Institutions
Test 27	3 April, 2020	History 5	Sub-Sectional	Ancient India
Test 28	4 April, 2020	History 6	Sub-Sectional	Medieval India
Test 29	5 April, 2020	History 7	Sub-Sectional	Modern India (1757 – 1885)
Test 30	6 April, 2020	History 8	Sub-Sectional	Modern India (1885 – 1947)
Test 31	7 April, 2020	History 9	Sectional	History and Culture of India
GEOGRAPHY (10 April to 18 April, 2020)				
Test 32	10 April, 2020	Geography 1	NCERT	Fundamentals World Geography (NCERT 11th & 12th)
Test 33	11 April, 2020	Geography 2	NCERT	Fundamentals Indian Geography (NCERT 11th & 12th)
Test 34	12 April, 2020	Geography 3	Sub-Sectional	Geomorphology + Indian Physiography
Test 35	13 April, 2020	Geography 4	Sub-Sectional	Climatology + Indian Climate
Test 36	14 April, 2020	Geography 5	Sub-Sectional	Oceanography + Biogeography
Test 37	15 April, 2020	Geography 6	Sub-Sectional	Demography + Human Geography + Census
Test 38	16 April, 2020	Geography 7	Sub-Sectional	Economic Activities + Agriculture + Minerals + Energy
Test 39	17 April, 2020	Geography 8	Sub-Sectional	Industry + Transport + Trade + Communication
Test 40	18 April, 2020	Geography 9	Sectional	Geography of India and World
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (21 April to 25 April, 2020)				
Test 41	21 April, 2020	Science & Tech 1	NCERT	Biology + Everyday Science + + Institutions + Award
Test 42	22 April, 2020	Science & Tech 2	Sub-Sectional	Biotechnology + Health + Nuclear tech
Test 43	23 April, 2020	Science & Tech 3	Sub-Sectional	Space + Defence
Test 44	24 April, 2020	Science & Tech 4	Sub-Sectional	IT + Telecom + IPR + Nanotech + Robotics
Test 45	25 April, 2020	Science & Tech 5	Sectional	Science and Technology
CSAT (28 April to 30 April, 2020)				
Test 46	28 April, 2020	CSAT-1	Sectional	Reasoning
Test 47	29 April, 2020	CSAT-2	Sectional	General Mental Ability
Test 48	30 April, 2020	CSAT-3	Sectional	Reading Comprehension
CURRENT AFFAIRS (03 May to 07 May, 2020)				
Test 49	3 May, 2020	Current Affairs-1	Current Affairs	June + July + August 2019
Test 50	4 May, 2020	Current Affairs-2	Current Affairs	September + October, 2019
Test 51	5 May, 2020	Current Affairs-3	Current Affairs	Nov + Dec 2019 + Jan, 2020
Test 52	6 May, 2020	Current Affairs-4	Current Affairs	Feb + March + April, 2020
Test 53	7 May, 2020	Current Affairs-5	Current Affairs	Economy Survey + Budget + Indian Year Book 2020
FULL MOCK TESTS (08 May to 19 May, 2020)				
Test No.	Date	Test		
Test 54	8 May, 2020	MOCK 1PAPER 1 & 2		
Test 55	9 May, 2020	MOCK 2PAPER 1 & 2		
Test 56	12 May, 2020	MOCK 3PAPER 1 & 2		
Test 57	13 May, 2020	MOCK 4PAPER 1 & 2		
Test 58	14 May, 2020	MOCK 5PAPER 1 & 2		
Test 59	15 May, 2020	MOCK 6PAPER 1 & 2		
Test 60	16 May, 2020	MOCK 7PAPER 1 & 2		
Test 61	17 May, 2020	MOCK 8PAPER 1 & 2		
Test 62	18 May, 2020	MOCK 9PAPER 1 & 2		
Test 63	19 May, 2020	MOCK 10PAPER 1 & 2		

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