

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY

WEEK - 4
FEBRUARY, 2020

MAINS

PRELIMS

- ⌚ Economic impact of Coronavirus
- ⌚ India's 'imported' food inflation
- ⌚ Why is RBI aligning accounting year with a fiscal year?

ECONOMY

- ⌚ Over 1 lakh deaths in 29 cities due to air pollution: Study
- ⌚ Northern European Enclosure Dam (NEED)
- ⌚ State of India's Birds 2020
- ⌚ The Future of Earth, 2020

ENVIRONMENT

- ⌚ Child witnesses & India's legal system"

GOVERNANCE

- ⌚ 1946 Naval Mutiny: When Indian sailors rose in revolt against the Raj

- ⌚ Battle of Çanakkale

HISTORY

- ⌚ SyRI (System Risk Indicator)
- ⌚ What Supreme Court said on women in the Army

INTERNAL SECURITY

- ⌚ Centre begins the process of delimitation of assembly seats in J & K
- ⌚ World Mother Language Day: Which is most widely spoken?

POLITY

- ⌚ Aditya – L1 Mission Betelgeuse Supernova GISAT-1 Mission
- ⌚ ISRO to launch an unprecedented 10 earth imaging satellites

SCIENCE & TECH.

Increasing creamy layer ceiling for OBCs

GOVERNANCE

India-Maldives relations – an Analysis

Why Trade with the US matters to India

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Criminalisation of Politics

Decline of Habeas Corpus law

POLITY

CSR: Is India Increasing spending responsibly?

SOCIAL ISSUES

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— **Disclaimer** —

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

However, this doesn't mean that Mains articles don't cover facts and PT articles can't have analysis. You are suggested to read all of them for all stages of examination.

CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYST

WEEK-4 (FEBRUARY, 2020)

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IAS MOCK INTERVIEW

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Former Ambassadors & Secretary,
Association of Indian Diplomats (Former Ambassadors)

S.B. Singh

Well known IAS Interview Mentor

G.S. Patnaik

IAS, Former Vice Chairman - DDA,
Former Adviser to Governor of Arunachal Pradesh

R.P. Sinha

IAS, Former Secretary - Govt of India

B.K. Pandey

IES, Former Adviser - NITI Aayog

K.D. Singh

IFoS,
Former Principal Conservator of Forests - Arunachal Pradesh

Dr. N.K. Sahu

IES, Former Joint Secretary - HRD Ministry

Devi Prasad

IES, Celebrated Budget and Economic Survey Expert

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HIGHLIGHTS

-  Question on Debatable Topic for Self-paced Preparation
-  Analysis of Controversial Topics & Tips to handle
-  DAF Analysis
-  1 Mock Interview
-  Mock Feedback
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SECTION: A
(MAINS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

INCREASING CREAMY LAYER CEILING FOR OBCS

CONTEXT

- A Group of Ministers (GoM) headed by defence minister Rajnath Singh has been tasked to upwardly revise the gross annual income limit of Rs 8 lakh fixed for defining the creamy layer among Other Backward Classes.

◎ BACKGROUND:

- Originally, reservation for Dalits, Adivasis and the Other Backwards Classes did not specify any income criteria. Neither were any such riders introduced by central or state legislation. The sole basis of reservation was **caste**.
- In 1993, it was the Supreme Court of India which brought the concept of the "creamy layer" through its judgement in the **Indira Sawhney case**.
- The court said putting in the framework of the "creamy layer" was in keeping with the **basic structure of the Constitution** as it mapped to the **principle of equality**.
- Exclusion of such socially advanced members will make the 'class' a truly backward class.
- The principle, however, only applied to the **Other Backward Classes**, not Dalits and Adivasis, who are acknowledged as the country's most backward communities.
- It is used to refer to the relatively forward and better-educated members of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) who are not eligible for government-sponsored educational and other benefit programmes.
- It would include the children of Supreme Court judges, senior bureaucrats and military officers above the rank of colonel belonging to that community.
- The creamy layer test specifies that a candidate must be below a certain income ceiling in order to avail of reservation in government jobs and educational institutions.
- The Commission had confined the exclusion of creamy layer only to the OBCs and not the SC/STs. The difference between 'creamy layer' and 'non-creamy layer' is as given below:
 - ▶ **Creamy layer-** whose yearly income is more than Rs 8 lakh or government employees of greater than class 3
 - ▶ **Non-Creamy layer-** Whose yearly income is below Rs 8 lakh or government employees of class 3 or below 3

The Indra Sawhney Case:

- The Indra Sawhney case was decided by a nine-judge bench of the Supreme Court in 1992.
- The case is famous for decisively laying down several landmark propositions such as:
 - ▶ 50% threshold in reservations
 - ▶ the bar against reservations in certain types of posts
 - ▶ the exclusion of 'creamy layer'
- This piece is, however, limited to the debate on using caste as a factor in determining the backwardness of a group and how Indra Sawhney settled this debate to change the course of India's reservation jurisprudence and policy forever.

Mapping the OBCs in India:

- In India, Other Backward Classes (OBCs) constitute a little less than half of the country's electorate and is a vastly heterogeneous group.
- OBC is an umbrella term used for a range of castes and communities that are socially and economically disadvantaged.
- Currently, there is no updated census on the population of OBCs. There is only a caste data census (1931) before independence as the basis of population share of the sub-castes within OBCs.
- The next census, in 2021, is slated to count OBCs for the first time in 90 years.

◎ ANALYSIS:

What is the creamy layer?

- The concept of 'creamy layer' was introduced in 1971 by the **Sattanhan Commission**, which directed that the creamy layer should be excluded from the reservation of civil posts.

Reservation for OBCs:

- Reservation for OBCs, unlike that for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, was not initially guaranteed in the Constitution and extends only to jobs and education, not to elected representatives.

- It draws its roots from the **Mandal Commission**, which was set up in 1979, and its recommendation for 27% OBC quota accepted by the central government in 1990.
- In 2006, the reservation was extended to institutions of higher education.

Reservation (%) for different categories:

- **SCs & STs:** 5 percent and 7.5 percent of positions in central government services and central educational institutions are reserved for SCs and STs respectively.
- **OBCs:** 27 percent positions in central government services and central educational institutions are reserved for OBCs.
- **EWS:** With the addition of 10 percent for economically weaker section (EWS), as per the latest Constitution (103rd Amendment) Act, 2019, the percentage of reservations in central government services and educational institutions will now be around 59.5 percentage.
- In reservation to services and educational institutions at the state level, the percentage for SCs, STs and OBCs vary from state to state based on the demographics.

What does the Law say about OBCs?

- **Article 15 and 16 of the Constitution of India** which are applicable to the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are also applicable to members belonging to the Other Backward Class (OBC).
 - ▶ **Article 15(4):** Nothing in [Article 15] shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially, and educationally backward classes of citizens of or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.
 - ▶ **Article 16(4):** It enables the provision of reservation to Backward Class of citizens, who are not adequately represented in the State.
- **Mandal Commission:** The Mandal Commission, which submitted its report in 1980. The Commission recommended seat reservation for OBCs, in addition to the seats reserved for SCs and STs in educational institutions and avenues of public employment.

The ground reality:

- Not all castes among the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), entitled to reservations are reaping the same benefits.

- As per a recent report, 97 percent of all jobs and admissions, reserved under the OBC category have been claimed by just under 25 percent of sub-castes. 983 communities, 37 percent of the total -- did not get a single job or admission.
- Interestingly, just 10 communities in the OBC category have availed of as much as 24.95 percent of jobs and admissions.
- As many as 994 OBC sub-castes have a total representation of only 2.68 percent in recruitment and admissions.

Should the reservation be determined by 'economic criteria'?

- Reservation is, by definition, a means of ending discrimination based on caste which has been a feature of the Indian society for thousands of years.
- It is not a remedy for economic backwardness.
- This is why there is no reservation for low-income members of the upper castes.
- Reservation is meant to ensure that backward castes are fairly represented in public services, educational institutions and legislatures, and get a share in state power – something denied to them throughout Indian history.
- In 1937, when the British Raj reserved legislative seats for Dalits according to a pact between Mohandas Gandhi and BR Ambedkar, it did not specify income criteria.
- Neither did independent India's first government place such restrictions on Dalit and Adivasi reservation.
- Many commentators have argued that mandating an economic ceiling for reservation misunderstands how caste works: Dalits and Adivasis face discrimination even if they are well-off or educated.

The current situation:

- At present, OBCs are entitled to 27% reservation in higher educational institutions and public sector employment if the gross annual income of one's household does not exceed Rs **8 lakh**.
- A person with an annual income of Rs 8 lakh or more is classified as belonging to the 'creamy layer' among OBCs and cannot avail of reservations.
- The income criteria are usually reviewed every three years.
 - ▶ In 2013, the gross annual income criteria were raised from Rs 4.5 lakh to Rs 6 lakh.
 - ▶ In 2017, the government raised it to Rs 8 lakh.

What the government is planning?

- The government is planning to upwardly revise the gross annual income limit of Rs 8 lakh fixed for defining the creamy layer among Other Backward Classes.
 - The GoM is also considering whether the income criteria for classifying creamy layer for OBCs should be different for rural and urban areas. This is not the first time that the proposal has been mooted.
 - In 2011, the **National Commission for Backward Classes** had proposed that income criteria for creamy layer should be different as gross income levels were lower in rural areas.
- ▶ It proposed Rs 9 lakh for rural and Rs 12 lakh for urban areas as income limit for creamy layer classification.
 - ▶ However, the proposal was not accepted.
- Raising the ceiling of the annual income of OBC families to get benefits of quota would result in a larger pool of candidates being eligible for government jobs and seats in educational institutions. This step would also ensure greater social justice and inclusion for members of the Other Backward Classes.



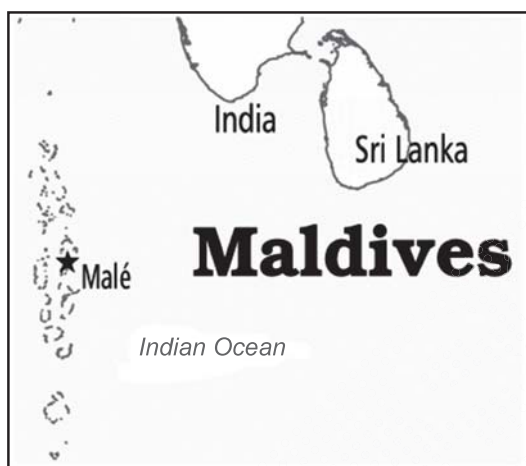
INDIA-MALDIVES RELATIONS – AN ANALYSIS

CONTEXT

- The Home Minister of Maldives, Mr Sheikh Imran Abdulla, visited India and met Indian Home Minister.

◎ BACKGROUND

- **India and Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and commercial links.** India was among the first to recognize the Maldives after its independence in 1965 and later established its mission at Male in 1972.
- Maldives' proximity to the west coast of India and its situation at the hub of **commercial sea-lanes** running through the Indian Ocean, and its potential to allow a third nation's naval presence in the area imbues it with significant strategic importance to India.



- India has a pre-eminent position in the Maldives, with relations extending to virtually most areas.
- Except for a brief period during former President Waheed's administration and to some extent during former President Yameen's regime, when there was a change in approach towards India, all Maldivian Presidents have recognized the importance of India's strategic role in Maldives and worked towards strengthening bilateral relationship with India, with India is seen as a net security provider.
- 'India First' has been a stated policy of the Government of Maldives. President Solih, ever since he assumed office in November 2018, has acted on 'India First' in right earnest.
- India's relationship with the Maldives is free of **any politically contentious issues**. The one-time claim of Maldives to Minicoy Island was resolved by the Maritime Boundary Treaty of 1976 between the two countries, whereby the Maldives has recognized Minicoy as an integral part of India.

- **India's prompt assistance during the 1988 coup attempt**, led to the development of trust and long-term and friendly bilateral relations with the Maldives. The immediate withdrawal of our troops when they were no longer required assuaged fears of any Indian dominance or territorial aspirations.
- India was the first to assist the Maldives during the 2004 Tsunami as well as the water crisis in Malé in December 2014.
- Under **Operation NEER**, India immediately rushed bottled drinking water to Malé utilising Air Force aircraft and Navy ships.

◎ ANALYSIS

Areas of Cooperation

- **Defence:**
 - ▶ Since 1988, defence and security have been a major area of cooperation between India and Maldives. India has adopted a very flexible and accommodating approach in meeting Maldivian requirements of defence training and equipment.
 - ▶ India provides the largest number of training opportunities for Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF), meeting around 70% of their defence training requirements,
 - ▶ '**Ekuverin**' is a joint military exercise between India and Maldives.
 - ▶ **Operation Cactus:** In 1988, in response to a request from the Maldives, India activated Operation Cactus to deploy its military and ensure regime continuity in Male.
 - ▶ During the meeting, both the Home Ministers discussed issues of mutual interest in the area of security and law enforcement cooperation.
- **Disaster Management:**
 - ▶ The Government of India has provided large-scale assistance to the Maldives in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and during the 2014 Male water crisis.
- **Trade and Tourism:**
 - ▶ **India is Maldives' 4th largest trade partner** after UAE, China and Singapore. In 2018, **India was the 5th largest source of tourist arrivals in the Maldives.**

South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation

- The South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Program, set up in 2001, brings together Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka in a project-based partnership to promote regional prosperity by improving cross-border connectivity, boosting trade among member countries, and strengthening regional economic cooperation.
- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) serves as Secretariat to the SASEC Program.

- ▶ The Maldivian economy is heavily dependent on its tourism sector, which is the major source of foreign exchange earnings and government revenue.

◦ Development Assistance Programme:

The major completed and ongoing development assistance projects executed by India are:

- **Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital;** The hospital was built with Indian Grant Assistance in 1995.
- **Maldives Institute of Technical Education (now called the Maldives Polytechnic):** The MoU for setting up Maldives Institute for Technical Education (MITE) was signed in March 1992. MITE was completed at a cost of INR 12 Cr and handed over to GoM in September 1996.
- **India-Maldives Faculty of Hospitality & Tourism Studies:** The foundation stone for the Faculty was jointly laid by PM Vajpayee and President Gayoom during the former's visit to the Maldives in September 2002. The Faculty was officially handed over to GoM in February 2014.
- **Technology Adoption Programme in Education Sector in the Maldives:** The US\$ 5.3 million project fully funded by GoI was launched in June 2011 to provide ICT training to Maldivian teachers and youth and for vocational training. The project concluded in December.

Key Highlights of the HMs Meet

- The Ministers welcomed the expansion of bilateral cooperation between India and Maldives in diverse fields including policing and law enforcement, counter-terrorism, counter-radicalization, organized crime, drug trafficking and capacity building.

- The Directorate of Enforcement will assist the Maldives in setting up a probe agency like itself and guide the island nation on raising a Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) infrastructure.
- The Directorate of Enforcement is a multidisciplinary organization mandated with the task of enforcing the provisions of two special fiscal laws – Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA) and Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA). It is headquartered in New Delhi.

- **Construction of National Police Academy (ISLES), Addu:** An MoU for setting up the National Police Academy at a cost of INR 98.75 Cr was signed in September 2012. The project cost was later revised to INR 195.05 Cr and construction finally commenced in 2016. As of 18 Aug 2019, the overall physical progress on the project is 48% and financial progress is 40%.

- **INR 50 Cr grant for bilateral projects and INR 40 Cr for High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs)**

- The assistance of **\$1.4 billion** through a credit line and budgetary support to **the Maldives in 2018 when Ibrahim Mohamed Solih visited India after winning Presidential Election.**

Significance of the Maldives for India

- **Strategic Importance:** Maldives' proximity to the west coast of India - Maldives is barely 70 nautical miles away from Minicoy -the southernmost island of Lakshadweep. Lakshadweep group is separated from the Maldives by Eight Degree Channel.
- **Economic Value:** It is situated at the hub of commercial sea-lanes running through the Indian Ocean. More than 97% of India's international trade by volume and 75% by value passes through the region. It's potential to allow a third nation's naval presence in the area.
- **Political and Regional Security:**
 - ▶ Since China's naval expansion into the Indian Ocean, Maldives significance has steadily grown and now it's at the heart of international geopolitics.
 - ▶ Moreover, the Maldives is an important aspect of India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy.
 - ▶ 'India First' has been a stated policy of the Government of Maldives.
 - ▶ Maldives is a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC).

- **Indian Community In Maldives:**

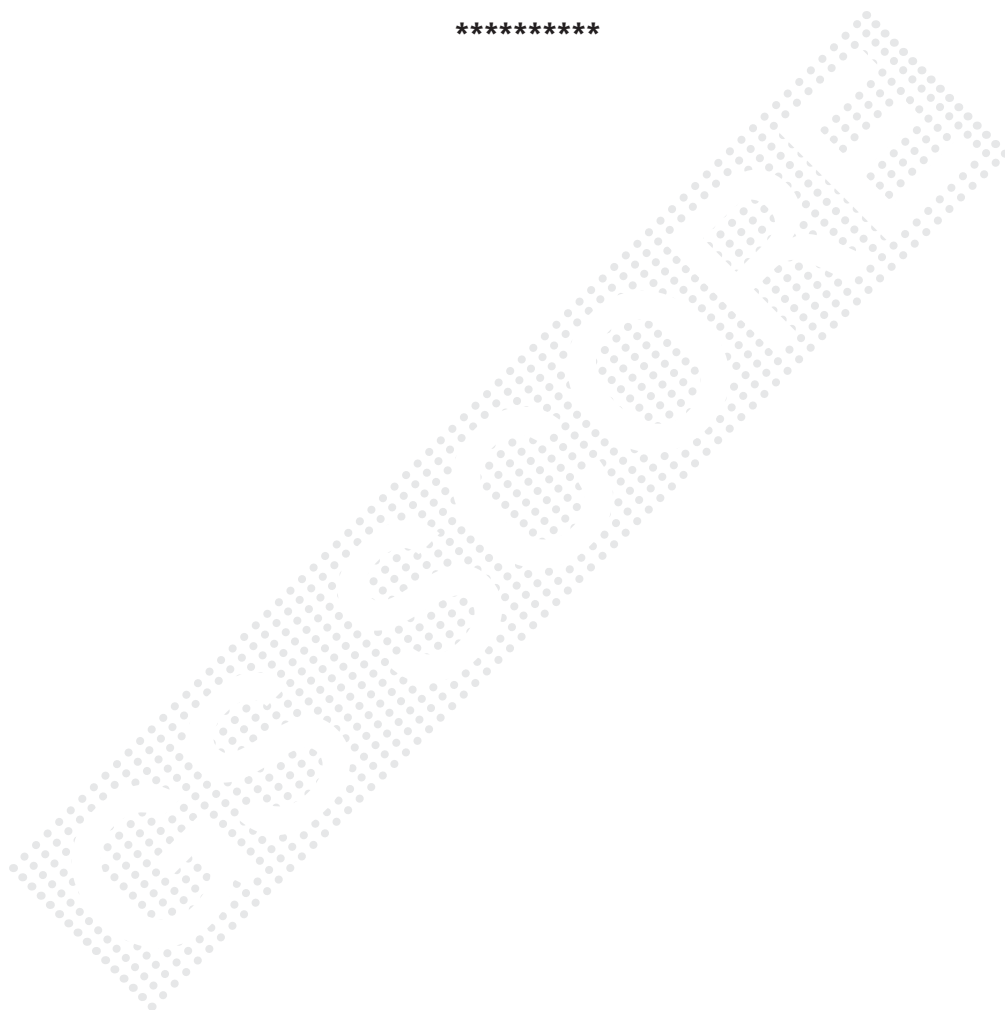
- ▶ There is a significant Indian diaspora in the Maldives. Innumerable Indians work across the hospitality, education, and health-care sectors of the Maldives economy.

- ◎ **WAY FORWARD**

- The Maldives had drifted away from India's strategic orbit as President Yameen was drawing his country closer to China. He crushed all opposition to his

authoritarian rule with an iron fist, either jailing or exiling his opponents. However, Solih has brought the Maldives again close to India. India must use this time positively to establish sovereign relations with the island nation.

- India must use its Diaspora more extensively for strengthening its relations.
- India must employ cultural aspects like films, music, and people to people contacts to strengthen the relations.



WHY TRADE WITH THE US MATTERS TO INDIA

CONTEXT

- India and the US have repeatedly resolved to strengthen trade ties — however, attempts at working out a short-term agreement have fallen apart in the past, and tensions have risen over tariffs. What is the current state of play?

◎ BACKGROUND

- India's existing and stalled bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) started to receive attention from the government last year, even as the country worked to conclude the seven-year negotiations to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the world's "largest" regional trade pact.
- But by backing out of the RCEP, India shut the door on the large "integrated market" that the deal was offering — and increased the pressure on itself to strengthen existing separate trade agreements with each member of the RCEP bloc.
- Without these, it may not be able to tap a sizeable portion of the global market; also, it may not be able to easily access the products and services of these countries.
- In the backdrop of the global economic slowdown, where India's global exports have fallen consistently, it is important for the country to diversify and strengthen bilateral relations with other markets.
- It has set its sights on "large developed markets", improved access to which would help its industry and services sectors.
- These include the US, which has, over the last two decades, become a crucial trading partner in terms of both goods and services.
- While the US's deficit with India is only a fraction of its deficit with China (over \$340 billion in 2019), Americans have repeatedly targeted the "unfair" trade practices followed by India.
- These include the tariffs that India imposes, which the American administration feels are too high.

◎ ANALYSIS

Locating the main sticking points

- Negotiations on an India-US trade deal have been ongoing since 2018, but have been slowed by "fundamental" disagreements over tariffs (taxes or duties on imports), subsidies, intellectual property, data protection, and access for agricultural and dairy produce.

- The office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) has underlined India's measures to restrict companies from sending personal data of its citizens outside the country as a "key" barrier to digital trade.
- The US wants India to strengthen patent regulations, and to ease the limitations American companies investing in India face.

The 'Harley tariffs'

- India is a "tariff king" that imposes "tremendously high" import duties, the American administration has complained repeatedly. They have cited the example of Harley-Davidson, the US motorcycle maker. Even after India halved the duty on the bike to 50% in 2018, they said the rate is "still unacceptable".
- While it is often assumed that duties on the large-engine motorcycles have put them beyond the reach of most Indian consumers, the fact is that a plant at Bawal in Haryana has been assembling the bikes since 2011, and Harley has still not captured a sizeable chunk of the Indian market.

Steel industry hit

- In 2018, the US imposed additional tariffs of 25% on steel and 10% on aluminium imports from various countries, including India.
- While India's government claims the impact is "limited", they brought down the US share in India's steel exports to 2.5% in 2018-19 from 3.3% in 2017-18.
- In March 2018, India challenged the US decision at the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- India held off on imposing retaliatory tariffs until the US struck again — by removing it from a scheme of preferential access to the American market.

GSP axe and response

- In 2019, the American administration decided to terminate India's benefits under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) scheme, which provides preferential, duty-free access for over \$6 billion worth of products exported from this country to the US.
- The decision followed a warning earlier that year after negotiations on a potential trade agreement had broken down.

- The US accused India of taking decisions over the previous few years that prevented “equitable and reasonable access” for Americans to its markets.
- These included a decision to slash maximum retail prices of life-saving cardiac stents and essential knee implants by 65%-80%, put tariffs on information and communication technology products, and demand that exporters of dairy products certify their produce was derived from animals not fed food containing internal organs. India was the largest beneficiary of the US GSP programme.
- While duty-free benefits accrued to only around \$200 million for the billions of dollars worth of exports, India is understood to have asked for restoration of these benefits in the ongoing trade negotiations.
- However this year, the USTR classified India as a “developed” country based on certain metrics. It is not clear whether the upgrade from “developing” will impact the restoration of benefits under the GSP scheme.
- Removal from the GSP list amidst rising trade tensions prompted India to finally impose retaliatory tariffs on several American imports, including almonds, fresh apples, and phosphoric acid.
- This was a significant move and the US approached the WTO against India.
- India is one of the largest importers of almonds from the US, having imported fresh or dried shelled almonds.

Farms, medical devices

- The US has long demanded greater access for American agriculture and dairy products. For India, protecting its domestic agriculture and dairy interests was a major reason to walk out of the RCEP agreement.

- “In the recent past, India has shown its resolve in an international trade deal (RCEP) to protect the interests of its farmers and dairy industry.
- Trade negotiations over the last one year have grappled with the issue of improved access for American medical devices firms to India.
- India is working to finalise a proposal to move from caps on prices of medical devices to limiting the margins of those involved in the supply of the products.
- It is unclear whether this would mean the government might be willing to reconsider its earlier, widely publicised decision to slash, in the public interest, prices of stents and knee implants.
- The health cess on imported medical devices announced in the Budget for 2020-21 too, may be seen as a negative for the American side, as the US is among the top three exporters of these categories of products to India.

Some successes so far, some promise ahead

- While the United States is among India’s top trading partners for goods, India is its eighth largest.
- India’s trade surplus with the US came down to \$16.9 billion in 2018-19, and the surplus could be reduced further through imports of products such as aircraft from American firms.
- Experts feel that India and the US could begin with some “low-hanging fruit” to indicate their willingness for a deeper economic commitment.
- This includes the US reinstating India’s benefits under the GSP programme, and India doing away with duties on motorcycles.

CRIMINALISATION OF POLITICS

CONTEXT

- A two-Judge Bench of Supreme Court delivered a Judgment on the contempt petitions regarding the criminalisation of politics in India.

◎ BACKGROUND:

- The criminalisation of politics was never an "unknown phenomenon" in Indian political system but its presence was seemingly felt in its "strongest form" during the 1993 Mumbai bomb blasts which were the result of a collaboration of a diffused network of criminal gangs, police and customs officials and their political patrons.
- The recent judgment is, more or less, an extension of the Supreme Court's 2018 judgment.
- In September 2018, the Supreme Court had refused to disqualify politicians against whom criminal charges were pending from contesting elections, and left it to Parliament to frame an appropriate law.
- It ordered political parties to publish a nominated candidate's pending criminal cases on their official websites within 48 hours of selection.
- However, the directions given by the apex court in 2018 have not succeeded.

◎ ANALYSIS:

The criminalisation of politics:

- In India, the Criminalisation of political system can be understood as rising participation of criminals in the electoral process and selection of the same as elected representatives of the people due to the nexus between the criminals and some of the politicians.
- **Components:** The criminalisation of our political system has various forms and components such as –
 - ▶ **Muscle Power:** In Indian politics, muscle power is not a new trend rather it has been a fact of life for a long time. Different political parties use muscle power to influence the attitude and conduct of sizable sections of the electorate.
 - ▶ **Gangsters:** In most cases, the voters are too reluctant to take measures that would curtail the criminal activities. Many politicians chose gangster to gain larger vote bank.
 - ▶ **Money Power:** It is a widely accepted fact that the elections to Parliament and State Legislatures are very expensive and this huge

election expenditure is the root cause for corruption in India. To gain vote bank, politician uses money power.

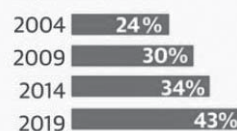
The Ruling:

- The Bench comprising of Justice RF Nariman and Justice Ravindra Bhat observed that over the last four general elections, there has been an alarming increase in the incidence of criminals in politics.
 - ▶ In 2004, 24% of the Members of Parliament had criminal cases pending against them.
 - ▶ In 2009, the number went up to 30%, in 2014 to 34% and in 2019, 43% of MPs had criminal cases pending against them.
- The SC has directed political parties to upload details of pending criminal cases against candidates contesting polls on their website.

Cause for concern

The Supreme Court on Thursday flagged the alarming increase in incidence of criminals in politics

MPs with pending criminal cases:



■ The 2018 Constitution Bench judgment that formed the basis for Thursday's verdict said: Rapid criminalisation of politics cannot be arrested by merely disqualifying tainted legislators but should begin by "cleansing" political parties

No political party offers an explanation as to why candidates with pending criminal cases are selected as candidates

JUSTICE NARIMAN, on February 13, 2020



- Parties will also publish the details of pending criminal cases against candidates on social media platforms and newspapers.
- Political parties will have to specify reasons for selecting candidates having pending criminal cases against them on their website.
- Political parties will have to submit a compliance report in this regard to the Election Commission within 72 hours of selecting candidates having pending criminal cases against them.
- It directed that the EC shall bring it to the notice of the apex court in case of failure of political parties to comply with its directions.

The present law:

- The Representation of Peoples (RP) Act, 1950 is an act to provide for the allocation of seats in, and the delimitation of constituencies for the purpose of elections too, the House of the People and the Legislatures of States, the qualifications of voters at such elections, the preparation of electoral rolls.
- According to the prevalent law, the lawmakers and candidates are barred under the Representation of Peoples (RP) Act from contesting elections only after their conviction in a criminal case.

Right to Information Act and Criminalization of Politics:

- The **Right to Information Act 2005** is a historical Act that makes Government officials liable for punishment if they fail to respond to people within a stipulated timeframe.
- As per the Supreme Court, the right to information - the right to know antecedents, including the criminal past, or assets of candidates - was a fundamental right under Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution and that the information was fundamental for the survival of democracy.
 - ▶ In its Judgement of 2002, it directed the Election Commission to call for information on an affidavit from each candidate seeking election to Parliament or the State Legislature as a necessary part of the nomination papers.

Should SC venture into the Legislative arena?

There are divergent views on this issue:

- **Centre:**
 - ▶ The Centre had contended that the judiciary should not venture into the legislative arena by creating a pre-condition which would adversely affect the right of the candidates to participate in polls as there was already the RP Act which deals with the issue of disqualification.
- **Election Commission of India:**
 - ▶ The Election Commission of India had taken a view which was apparently opposite to the Centre and said that the recommendations for decriminalising politics were made by the poll panel and the Law Commission back in 1997 and 1998, but no action was taken on them.
 - ▶ It exhorted the court to issue the direction in the matter besides asking Parliament to make the suitable law.
- **Supreme Court:**
 - ▶ At present, there is no law in the land that prevents criminally charged persons from standing for elections. In the absence of

such a law, the court could step in and put disqualification criteria.

- ▶ The right to stand for election is not a fundamental right. So, putting some restriction on who can and cannot stand in the election, is not a suppression of '**freedom of speech**' or '**right to livelihood**'.
- ▶ The solution to the criminalisation of politics has to come from the judiciary which has been the guardian angel of democracy. It has to be proactive. The current state of judicial paralysis is a reason why India scores only 0.57 out of 1 regarding 'judicial independence' in the Global State of Democracy Index. The country has also lost too much ground in the Democracy Index compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit and finds itself at 51st rank, the steepest decline since 2006.

Reasons for Criminalisation of Politics:

Following are the reasons for the criminalization of politics in the Indian political system:

- **Unholy nexus between politicians and bureaucracy:** The most important cause of criminalisation of politics is the unholy nexus between politicians and bureaucracy. This undesirable and dangerous relationship between bureaucracy and political leaders opened the door of criminalisation of politics.
- **Irrelevant interference:** The interference of politicians in the administration may be regarded as another reason for criminalisation of politics. It is increasing corruption and the net result is politics is, ultimately, criminalised.
- **Quota system:** Caste and religion both are equally responsible for the criminalisation of politics. Though there are certain fixed procedures and rules in the promotion, caste and religion both interfere in this process.
- **Political system:** The system of party government is also responsible for the criminalisation of politics. On the eve of the general election, the leaders of the party give promises to the electorate. The purpose is to win the election.
- **Economic issues:** Un-development, poverty, illiteracy and prismatic nature of Indian social system are collectively responsible for the criminalisation of politics.
- **Corruption:** Institutionalization of corruption is an ongoing process in our politico-administrative system because the corrupting of the institutions, in turn, has finally led to the institutionalization of corruption.
- **Loopholes in the functioning of ECI:** Election commission merely informs the people about the information related to the candidate.

- **Denial of Justice and Rule of Law:** Today, there is very little faith in India in the efficacy of the democratic process is actually delivering good governance.

Significance of the decision:

- **Wise decision & informed choice:** Complete information about criminal antecedents of the candidates forms the “bedrock of wise decision-making and informed choice by the citizenry” as the informed choice was the cornerstone to have a pure and strong democracy.

- The judgment signified the court’s alarm at the unimpeded rise of criminals, often facing heinous charges like rape and murder, encroaching into the country’s political and electoral scenes.
- If our executive, legislature and judiciary continue to downplay the threat that criminalisation poses to our democracy, it will not be surprising if the world’s largest democracy degenerates from ‘flawed’ to ‘hybrid.’



DECLINE OF HABEAS CORPUS LAW

CONTEXT

- It is increasingly being argued that Supreme Court orders in Kashmir petitions undermine the spirit of habeas corpus law. In light of this argument, we analyse different facets related to this law.

◎ BACKGROUND:

- Political background:** Amid revocation of **Article 370**, since August 5, 2019, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has been placed under a '**communications lockdown**' due to the suspension of mobile internet services.

- In addition, **political leaders** along with an unknown number of other individuals have been **detained without any legal charges**.

- A case of violation of fundamental rights:** Recently, Human right experts from the United Nations called the communication lockdown a form of '**collective punishment**'.

- Supreme Court of India also recently held the **right to use the internet for freedom of speech and expression and for trade or business** as **constitutionally protected**.

- On the other hand, **detention violates personal liberty**.

- Right to Constitutional Remedies:** There is a right in India which states that a person can move to Supreme Court (SC) if she/he wants to get their **fundamental rights (FR) protected**, as conferred under **Part III of Indian Constitution**. This right comes under **Article 32 for SC**, and **Article 226 for High Court (HC)**. It is known as the **right to constitutional remedies**.

- Right to Constitutional Remedies is a guarantor of all other FRs available to people of India.

- Dr B. R. Ambedkar** said that **Article 32** is the **heart and soul of the Constitution** of India.

- SC has included it in its **basic structure doctrine**.

- Right to move to the highest court **cannot be rejected by any court**, except provided by the constitution.

- Constitutional Philosophy of Writ Jurisdiction:** An individual whose privilege (FR) is encroached upon by an arbitrary administrative action may approach the Court for a suitable remedy.

- In this regard, SC has the capacity to **issue writs**, incorporating the idea of **habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, quo warranto, and certiorari**, whichever might be suitable.

- Current situation:** Many persons have filed **Habeas Corpus writ petition** to the Supreme Court to

seek information on persons apprehended to be under detention in J&K.

◎ ANALYSIS:

Digging deeper into the issue

- Pending cases:** Even with six months since the abrogation of Article 370, habeas corpus cases emerging from Kashmir are still pending.

- Delay in hearing the matter:** For example, when Rajya Sabha member Vaiko filed a habeas corpus petition on the detention of Farooq Abdullah on 11 September 2019, the court did not hear the matter immediately. **Notice was issued to the government after six days**, a very long delay for a habeas corpus case, **during which government charged Abdullah under PSA**.

- Delay in assigning a bench:** In case of many people detained, they were not even assigned to a bench.

- Not asking the right question:** It is increasingly being alleged that SC has failed to ask the government the right questions; i.e. **whether there is detention** as alleged, and **whether such detention is made on legal grounds**.

- Workload and overburden:** After weeks of delay in hearing the petitions, SC sent them back to Srinagar HC. The high court is swamped with the workload, with only two judges available to hear urgent habeas corpus matters. **9 of its 17 judgeships are vacant**.

- SC collegium had not appointed new judges to Srinagar HC.

- Arguments made:** According to arguments against the SC, caseload and pendency is a weak excuse because the onus of **prioritizing cases rest on the leadership of the court**. SC decides what cases to hear and which ones to dismiss.

- Research suggests that **constitutional matters comprised only 5.3%** of all matters heard by the apex court.

- From **2010 to 2015, only 0.2%** of cases were **habeas corpus cases**.

- So, sending habeas corpus cases back to HC doesn't free up much caseload.

Public Safety Act (PSA)

- **Detention law of J&K:** The Public Safety Act (PSA), 1978, of Jammu & Kashmir is an administrative detention law that allows detention of any individual for up to **two years without a trial or charge**.
 - ▶ The Act allows for arrest and detention of people **without a warrant, specific charges**, and often for an **unspecified period of time**.
 - ▶ This Act extends to the **whole of Jammu & Kashmir**.
- **Disclosure for reasons of detentions:** In some cases, the Act makes provisions for detained persons to be informed about the reason of custody, and also gives them an opportunity to **make a case against their detention** to the government.
 - ▶ However, detaining authority is **not required to reveal any facts** "which it considers being against the public interest to disclose".

Writ of Habeas Corpus

- **Habeas Corpus:** Habeas Corpus is a Latin term which literally means "**you may have the body**."
 - ▶ This writ is in the nature of an **order calling upon the person who has detained another to produce the latter before the Court**, in order to let the Court, know on what ground he has been confined, and to set him free if there is no legal justification for the confinement.
 - ▶ Habeas corpus writ is applicable to **preventive detention** also.
- **History:** Habeas corpus is well established as a foundational right against state coercion in India. It dates back to **1775**, when **Sir Elijah Impey**, chief justice of SC in Calcutta, **issued a writ to governor-general Warren Hastings**.
- **Legal entitlement to seek remedy:** The principle on which Habeas Corpus functions is that a person illegally detained in **confinement without legal proceedings** is entitled to seek the remedy of habeas corpus.
- **Nature of writ:** In deciding whether Habeas Corpus writs are **civil or criminal** in nature, the court would rely on the way of procedures **in which the locale has been executed**.
- **Few cases when a writ of Habeas Corpus can be issued:**
 - ▶ Testing the validity of detention under preventive detention laws.
 - ▶ Securing custody of a person alleged to be lunatic.
 - ▶ Securing custody of the minor.
 - ▶ Detention for breach of privileges by the house.

- ▶ Testing the validity of detention by the executive during an emergency, etc.
- **Bulwark of individual liberty:** Habeas corpus writ is called bulwark of individual liberty against arbitrary detention.
 - ▶ It has been described as "**a great constitutional privilege**" or "**first security of civil liberty**".
 - ▶ Its most quintessential element is a **speedy and effective remedy**.
 - ▶ This writ can be issued against both public authorities as well as individuals.
- **The rule for filing the petition:** A general rule for filing the petition is that a person whose right has been infringed must file a petition. But Habeas corpus is an **exception** and **anybody on behalf of the detainee can file a petition**.
- **Can be issued by local courts:** Parliament by law can extend power to issue writs to any other courts (including local courts) for local limits of the jurisdiction of such courts.
- **Damages:** When a person is arrested and imprisoned with mischievous or malicious intent his constitutional and legal rights are invaded, the mischief or malice and invasion may not be washed or wished away by his being set free.
 - ▶ In certain appropriate cases, courts have the jurisdiction to **compensate the victim** by awarding suitable **monetary compensation**.

Exceptions to Habeas Corpus

- Person against whom writ (or detained) is issued is **not within the jurisdiction of the Court**.
- **Court Martial** i.e. the tribunals established under military law.
- To save release of a person who has been **imprisoned by a court for a criminal charge**.
- To interfere with a proceeding for **contempt by a Court of record or by Parliament**.
- When a person is put into physical restraint under the law unless the **law is unconstitutional or the order is ultra-vires the statute**.

Habeas Corpus Case of 1975

- **Ms Indira Gandhi's election result declared void:** In June 1975, former PM Indira Gandhi was convicted of having indulged in wrong practices and her election was declared void, which meant that she couldn't contest any election or hold her office for next six years.
- **The emergency was declared:** Ms Gandhi appealed to SC, but SC only granted her a conditional stay. To rise above restraint on her political power by SC, Ms Gandhi requested the President to declare an emergency under **Article 352**, which he did on June 26, 1975.

- ▶ **FR suspended:** This meant that the right to approach the court to enforce Article 14 (right to equality), Article 21 and Article 22 (prevention against detention in certain cases) were suspended.
- ▶ Many leaders from the opposition were arrested under **MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act)**.
- **Habeas Corpus Case:** Challenging the detentions, petitions were filed in various HCs. Most HCs gave their judgement in favour of these petitions, i.e. writ of Habeas Corpus **cannot be suspended even during an emergency** (Article 359).
- **Additional District Magistrate Jabalpur V. Shivkant Shukla case (ADM Jabalpur case):** This compelled Indira Gandhi Government to approach SC. A constitutional bench of 5 judges applied the doctrine of **procedure established by law** and overturned the judgement by high courts, declaring that Article 32 – the right to approach the court to defend FRs – remains **suspended under emergency**.
 - ▶ The judgement thus closed doors of the judiciary for citizen during an emergency.
 - ▶ Hence it established that **personal liberties were not guaranteed in a state of Emergency**.
- ▶ **SC judgement:** SC held unanimously that the right to privacy was a constitutionally protected right.
- ▶ **Reasoning:** Court reasoned that **privacy is an incident of fundamental freedom or liberty guaranteed under Article 21** which provides that: "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law".
- **Wider implications of the judgement:** This is a landmark case which is likely to lead to constitutional challenges to a wide range of Indian legislations with associated implications on **matters of personal liberty, including matters related to detentions**.

Lacunae that still remain

Reversal on ADM Jabalpur case

- **Puttaswamy case:** In 2017, SC reversed itself on ADM Jabalpur case when Justice D.Y. Chandrachud in Puttaswamy case parted judicial ways from his father Y.V. Chandrachud, who was part of the majority ruling that failed to check the power of the executive in ADM Jabalpur.
 - ▶ **Case argument:** The case challenged the Government's proposed scheme for a uniform biometrics-based identity card which would be mandatory for access to government services and benefits.
 - ▶ **Government's defence:** Government, on the other hand, argued that the Constitution did not grant specific protection for the right to privacy.
- **Need for improved judicial capacity:** Structurally and procedurally, the court has still to create relevant judicial capacity to hear and dispose-off habeas corpus cases speedily, without which thousands of Indians can remain detained illegally.

◎ CONCLUSION

- Even those on different ends of the ideological spectrum would agree that there should be limits to arbitrary state power when it comes to detention. Matters of personal liberty should not get any little attention than others. Supreme Court ought to rethink its caseload and prioritize urgent habeas corpus writ petitions.

CSR: IS INDIA INCREASING SPENDING RESPONSIBLY?

CONTEXT

- Companies can bring meaningful changes in society through the huge Rs 13,624 crore corporate social responsibility funds.

BACKGROUND

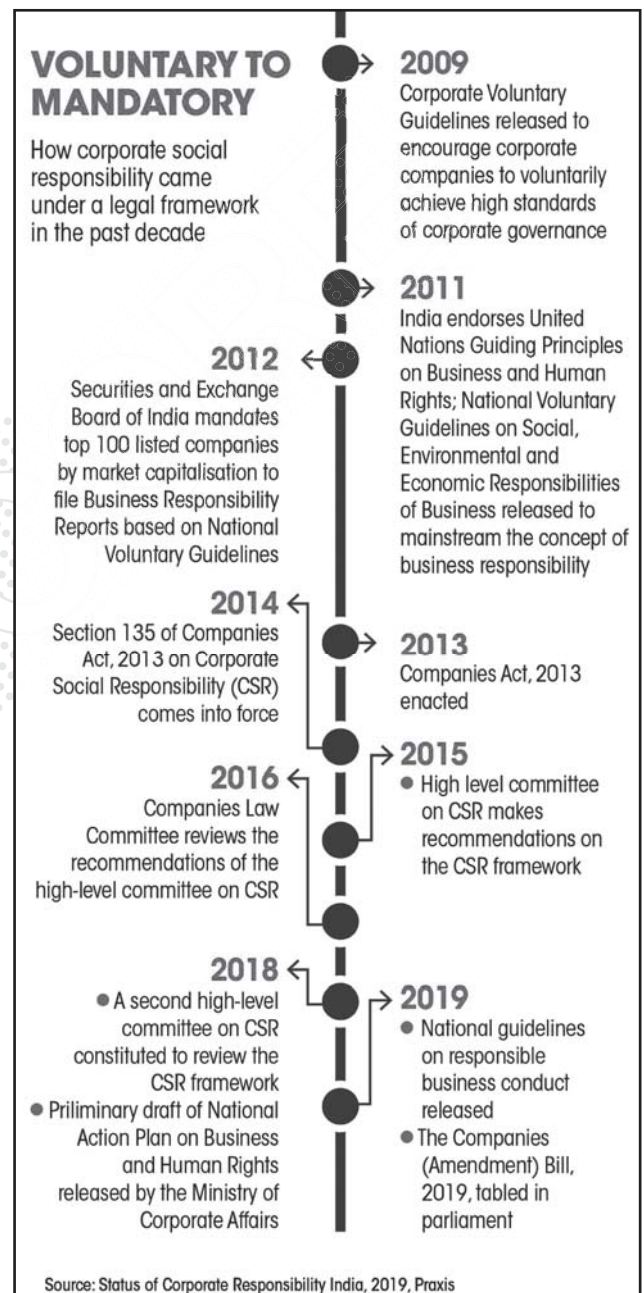
- The idea was brought into a legal framework in 2014 when CSR was introduced as a statutory obligation under Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013.
- Under this, every company with an annual net worth of over Rs 500 crore, turnover of over Rs 1,000 crore, or net profit of over Rs 5 crore, must spend at least 2 per cent of its net profit on CSR.
- Latest data with the Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) shows expenditure on CSR activities has increased from Rs 10,066 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 13,624 crore in 2017-18.
- These companies divert a major chunk of the CSR funds towards human development.
- A 2019 study by the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), a government think tank that provides holistic advice on issues related to corporate affairs, shows 55 per cent of the CSR funds in the country are spent on human development and social welfare.
- However, the focus on economic development and environment sustainable development is relatively poor, the report states. The reason for this is the nature of these sectors.
- "Traditionally, sectors such as health and education have a clear blueprint and are easy to undertake.
- Moreover, these activities are easily quantifiable which gives companies ready numbers.
- But companies have not focused much on environmental activities.

ANALYSIS

Corporate Social Responsibility in India

- India is the first country in the world to make corporate social responsibility (CSR) mandatory, following an amendment to the Companies Act, 2013.
- Businesses can invest their profits in areas such as education, poverty, gender equality, and hunger as part of any CSR compliance.
- Prior to that, the CSR clause was voluntary for companies, though it was mandatory to disclose their CSR spending to shareholders.

CSR amendments under the Companies (Amendment) Act, 2019



- Until now, if a company was unable to fully spend its CSR funds in a given year, it could carry the amount forward and spend it in the next fiscal, in addition to the money allotted for that year.

- The CSR amendments introduced under the Act now require companies to deposit the unspent CSR funds into a fund prescribed under Schedule VII of the Act within the end of the fiscal year.
- This amount must be utilized within three years from the date of transfer, failing which the fund must be deposited into one of the specified funds.
- The new law prescribes for a monetary penalty as well as imprisonment in case of non-compliance.

Philanthropy from a distance

- In the initial years of the CSR Act, the MCA observed that companies would execute projects far from their area of operations.
- According to the Act, companies should choose local areas for CSR activities, but 73 percent companies were found to be engaged in areas beyond their area of operations.
- Maximum expenditure was in industrialised areas, while the least-developed states received the least funds.
- The phrase "local area preference" in the Act may have been interpreted as mandatory and not a directory.
- Considering this, MCA issued a directive in 2018 for all companies to follow the law in letter and spirit.
- State-wise analysis of expenditure reveals the low concentration of CSR activities in poor states.
- Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh received only 9 per cent of the total expenditure from 2014-15 to 2017-18.
- These states account for more than 55 per cent of the 117 aspirational districts identified by NITI Aayog.
- However, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Delhi, which account for only 11 per cent of the aspirational districts, received 40 per cent of the total expenditure.
- "Companies usually undertake CSR activities in areas where work can be done without any hardship.
- This may be the reason that aspirational districts, with their poor infrastructure and development level, are not in the focus of companies.
- Further, aspirational districts are not aware of corporates' responsibility towards them.
- CSR activities are similarly scarce in the Northeast.
- An MCA assessment identifies infrastructural gaps here in basic minimum services such as rail, road, and water and air connectivity.

- However, data shows a tiny portion of the funds was spent in the North-East between 2014-15 and 2017-18.
- Among the states here, Assam spent the maximum with Rs 653.19 crore. While Manipur spent Rs 24.78 crore and Meghalaya Rs 24.11, Tripura, Nagaland and Mizoram spent as low as Rs 5.88 crore, Rs 3.35 crore and Rs 2.41 crore respectively.
- On the other hand, Maharashtra spent a huge Rs 8,468.28 crore during the period.
- Five years after the Act was enforced, 70 per cent of the companies still do not have a strategy to implement CSR activities.
- According to the law, companies should set up board-level committees, which draw plans for the effective implementation of their projects.
- According to the IICA study, if a firm has a CSR policy and committee in place, but does not have an implementation strategy, supports the conclusion that companies are more focused on complying with the law and spending CSR funds rather than making a serious initiative.
- Such behaviour could be due to lack of capacity or experience in the development sector.
- CSR has a huge potential to improve the lives of a large number of people in the country.
- Its Rs 13,624 crore corpus can bring change in a wide variety of sectors.
- Therefore, it is crucial that companies do not relegate it as a perfunctory exercise, but make a meaningful contribution to society.

How funds flow in chronological order?

- Human development, social welfare get a big bite from the CSR pie, the environment is left with a small share.
- Education, differently-abled, livelihood generation
- Health, eradicating hunger, poverty and malnutrition, safe drinking water, sanitation
- Rural development
- Environment, animal welfare, conservation of resources
- Nature of projects not mentioned
- Prime Minister's National Relief Fund, any other government fund
- Gender equality, women empowerment, old age homes, reducing inequalities
- Heritage art and culture
- Encouraging sports.

SECTION: B

(PRELIMS)

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ECONOMIC IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS

◎ CONTEXT

- Oxford Economics warned that the spread of Coronavirus to regions outside Asia could cost the global economy 1.3% off global growth in 2020, the equivalent of \$1.1tn in lost income.

◎ ABOUT

- **Coronavirus (CoV):** CoV also known as **CoVID-19** 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.
- **Means of transfer:** Coronaviruses are **zoonotic**, meaning they are **transmitted between animals and people**.
 - Several known Coronaviruses are circulating in animals that have not yet infected humans.
- **Originated in China:** On 31 December 2019, the WHO China Country Office was informed of cases of **pneumonia of unknown aetiology (unknown cause)** detected in **Wuhan City**, Hubei Province of China.
 - A **novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)** was identified as the causative virus by **Chinese authorities** on 7 January.
- **Symptoms:** Common signs of infection include **respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, and shortness of breath and breathing difficulties**.
 - In more severe cases, the infection can cause pneumonia, **severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death**.
- **Health impact:** As of 22nd February 2020, **77,816 cases** of Coronavirus have been registered around the world. It has resulted in **2,360 deaths**.
 - Currently, COVID-19 is affecting **32 countries** and territories around the world and 1 international conveyance (the "**Diamond Princess**" cruise ship harboured in Yokohama, Japan).
 - COVID-19 has already **reached Europe, USA and the Middle East**.
 - **Africa does not yet have** any confirmed cases.
 - Coronavirus has **reached India** and infected patients were reported from **Kerala**.
- **Economic consequences:** The disease has now turned into a pandemic and as it spreads to different countries, economic damages around the world are mounting. **The maximum impact will be on China**, but **other countries are not immune** to the effects because most economies are now **globally integrated**.
 - The outbreak has the potential to cause **severe economic and market dislocation**.

The economic impact of Coronavirus

- **Chinese economy:** China has become an indispensable **part of the global business**. Due to the spread of Coronavirus, various economic activities in China have taken a hit. Businesses are dealing with **lost revenue** and **disrupted supply chains** due to China's **factory shutdowns**. Travel to and from China has also been restricted.
 - According to a Reuter's poll of economists, **China's economic growth expected to slow to 4.5% in the first quarter of 2020** – the slowest pace since the financial crisis.
- **Countries most hit:** Based on the value of its exports to mainland China and Hong Kong relative to GDP, **Taiwan is likely to be the hardest hit**, followed by **Vietnam, Malaysia, and South Korea**.

- **Trade and commerce:** Chinese economy accounts for **16% of global output**. China has grown into the world's factory, churning out products such as **iPhone, cars, luxury products** and driving demand for commodities like oil and copper.
 - **Factory shutdowns** are **causing a shortage of products and parts from China**, affecting companies around the world, including **Apple and Nissan**.
 - **Unavailability of workers:** Factories delayed opening after the Lunar New Year as workers stayed home to help reduce the spread of the virus.
 - **Electronics, consumer goods, chemicals, auto components and pharmaceuticals** are seen as the most **vulnerable sectors**.
 - **Pharmaceuticals:** Prices of some bulk drugs have already risen.
- **Global supply chains:** There is a threat to global supply chains (GVCs). **Qualcomm (QCOM)**, the world's biggest maker of smartphone chips, warned of **uncertainty around demand for smart-phones**, and supplies needed to produce them.
- Auto parts shortages have **forced Hyundai (HYMTF) to close plants in South Korea** and caused **Fiat Chrysler (FCAU) to make contingency plans for plants in Europe**.
- **Automobile sector:** Car plants across China have been ordered to remain closed, preventing global automakers Volkswagen, Toyota (**TM**), Daimler (**DDAIF**), General Motors (**GM**), Renault (**RNLSY**), Honda (**HMC**) and Hyundai (**HYMTF**) from resuming operations in **world's largest car market**.
- **Oil industry:** The petrochemical sector serves as the **backbone for various other manufacturing and non-manufacturing sectors** such as infrastructure, automobile, textiles and consumer durables. **China is the world's biggest oil importer**. With Coronavirus hitting manufacturing and travel, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has predicted the first drop in global oil demand in a decade, **causing a drop in oil prices**.
- The oil market is currently facing a situation called '**contango**', wherein spot prices are lower than futures contracts.
- Industries are realigning their strategy amid energy demand forecasts.
- **Crude-dependent sectors:** Sectors such as **aviation, shipping, road and rail transportation** are likely to gain from a sudden drop in crude oil prices.
- **Benefit to oil-importing nations:** Major oil importers such as India will get a better bargain with reduced oil prices.
- **Case of India:** India is the world's **third-largest oil importer** and fourth-largest buyer of liquefied natural gas (LNG). New oil dynamics can help India **contain its current account deficit**; maintain a stable exchange regime; and consequently inflation. This could be a good time for Indian airlines to make up for losses.
 - **Travel industry:** Chinese tourist numbers are now falling sharply as **China bars its citizens from group tours abroad**, and many countries **refuse or restrict the entry of Chinese**.
- Many **trade shows and sporting events** in China and across Asia have been **cancelled or postponed**.
- **Popular Chinese destination to lose:** Judging by the size of Chinese visitors' expenditures relative to GDP, popular destinations such as **Thailand, Vietnam, and Singapore** will take the hardest hit. **Japan** will also be adversely affected especially with **Summer Olympic Games** being scheduled to start in **Tokyo** on July 24.
- **Case of India:** India recently announced the temporary **suspension of the e-visa facility** for Chinese travellers and foreigners residing in China. Since air travel between India and China had grown significantly owing to increased business activities, **business travel segment will take a hit**.
- **Financial sector:** As infections increase, especially in Asian **financial hubs** such as Hong Kong and Singapore, **financial deals could be disrupted**. It can disrupt economic activities due to **supply-side constraints**, which **will result in market volatility**.

- **Gold prices:** Due to fear and uncertainty in markets about the scale and impact of the virus outbreak, gold prices have risen as the **commodity is considered a safe haven**.
- **India's Trade:** India imports a bulk of its **raw materials from China**. Scarcity of some raw materials will lead to **higher prices**. India must leverage the lower oil prices and increase its exports amidst a shortage of Chinese exports to the world market.
- **Rupee value:** Exchange rate (rupee against the dollar) is rising, which is also leading to higher costs.

Economic measures initiated:

- **China:** People's Bank of China **cut a key interest rate and injected huge amounts of cash** into markets in order to help take the pressure off banks and borrowers. **New tax breaks and subsidies** have been announced to help consumers.
- Central banks in neighbouring countries including **Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines have cut interest rates** recently.

INDIA'S 'IMPORTED' FOOD INFLATION

◎ CONTEXT

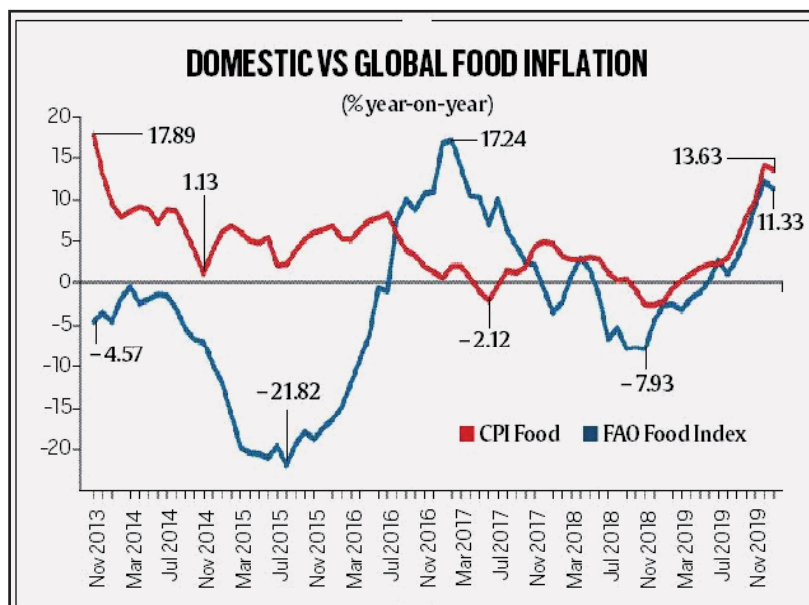
- **After a period of divergence, domestic and global food prices are rising in tandem. Coronavirus, global crude prices, and an expected bumper rabi harvest could determine the scenario in the coming months.**

◎ ABOUT

- The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO's) food price index — which is a measure of the change in international prices of a basket of major food commodities with reference to a base period touched 182.5 points in January 2020, the highest since the 185.8 level of December 2014.
- Also, the year-on-year inflation rate based on this index has risen steadily from 1.13% in August 2019 to 2.86% in September, 5.58% in October, 9.33% in November, 12.22% in December, and now, 11.33% for January 2020.
- This sharp surge in global food prices is reflected in trends in India as well.
- Annual consumer food price index (CFPI) inflation stood at just 2.99% in August 2019, before climbing to 5.11%, 7.89%, 10.01%, 14.19% and 13.63% in the succeeding five months.
- The year-on-year inflation in the wholesale price index for "food articles" began rising somewhat earlier — reaching 7.8% in August 2019 from 2.41% in January last year.
- Retail and wholesale food inflation rates for December 2019 were the highest since November 2013 and December 2013 respectively. Simply put, since October or so, food inflation has made a comeback, both in India and globally.

Local and 'foreign' factors

- While the recent rise in domestic food prices has been blamed largely on "local" factors — poor rainfall during the first half of the monsoon season and too much of it thereafter till about mid-November, leading to both reduced/delayed Kharif sowings and damage to the standing crop at maturity/harvesting stage — some of it is also "imported".
- While global prices can be transmitted to the domestic market too through exports — traders would sell abroad if realisations are better relative to the local market — the government has foreclosed that possibility by banning/restricting onion shipments.



The period of divergence

- The chart above shows that the domestic CFPI and FAO food price index inflation rates started moving in tandem only from around March 2018, while exhibiting significant divergence in the period prior to that.
- The FAO index peaked at 240.1 in February 2011 but remained at 200-plus levels until July 2014.

What can happen now?

- The first is, of course, the novel coronavirus epidemic that has reduced Chinese buying of everything from palm oil and soya bean to milk powder and meat.
- Palm oil prices in Malaysia have plunged over the last month.
- The second is crude oil. Brent crude prices had touched \$70 per barrel.
- The third is the prospect of a bumper rabi (winter-spring) crop in India.
- The Kharif harvest turned out to be not so good because of excess and unseasonal rain.
- That same rain, though, has helped boost rabi acreage by 9.5% compared to last year.
- If Brent crude too, were to rally again — making it attractive for sugarcane and corn to be diverted for ethanol production and also palm oil towards bio-diesel — there could be uncertainty ahead.

WHY IS RBI ALIGNING ACCOUNTING YEAR WITH A FISCAL YEAR?

◎ CONTEXT

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is aligning its July-June accounting year with the government's April-March fiscal year in order to ensure more effective management of the country's finances.

◎ ABOUT

- When it commenced operations on April 1, 1935, with Sir Osborne Smith as its first Governor, the RBI followed a January-December accounting year.
- On March 11, 1940, however, the bank changed its accounting year to July-June.

- Now, after nearly eight decades, the RBI is making another switch: the next accounting year will be a nine-month period from July 2020 to March 31, 2021, and thereafter, all financial years will start from April, as it happens with the central and state governments.

Why RBI's accounts are important?

- The RBI's balance sheet plays a critical role in the functioning of the country's economy — largely reflecting the activities carried out in pursuance of its currency issue function, as well as monetary policy and reserve management objectives.
- The RBI Act says the central bank "shall undertake to accept monies for the account of the Central Government and to make payments up to the amount standing to the credit of, and to carry out (its exchange), remittance and other banking operations, including the management of the public debt".
- The RBI is the country's monetary authority, regulator, and supervisor of the financial system, manager of foreign exchange, issuer of currency, regulator and supervisor of payment and settlement systems, banker to the central and the state governments, and also banker to banks.

But why is the system being changed?

- The **Bimal Jalan Committee on Economic Capital Framework (ECF)** of the RBI had proposed a more transparent presentation of the RBI's annual accounts, and a change in its accounting year to April-March from the financial year 2020-21.
- It said the RBI would be able to provide better estimates of projected surplus transfers to the government for the financial year for budgeting purposes.
- It is also expected to result in better management of the transfer of dividend or surplus to the government.
- Moreover, as governments, companies, and other institutions follow the April-March year, it will help with effective management of accounting.

What will be the impact of the change?

- The change in the fiscal year could reduce the need for interim dividend being paid by the RBI, and such payments may then be restricted to extraordinary circumstances.
- It will obviate any timing considerations that may enter into the selection of open market operations or Market Stabilization Scheme as monetary policy tools.
- It will also bring greater cohesiveness in monetary policy projections and reports published by the RBI, which mostly use the fiscal year as the base.
- In RBI's balance sheet, while capital and reserve fund is explicitly shown, other sources of financial resilience are grouped under 'Other Liabilities and Provisions' and enumerated via Schedules, making it difficult to arrive at total risk provisions.

OVER 1 LAKH DEATHS IN 29 CITIES DUE TO AIR POLLUTION: STUDY

◎ CONTEXT

- According to a latest Indian study published in a leading international journal, over one lakh deaths in 29 Indian cities may be attributed to the rising PM 2.5 levels.

◎ ABOUT

- The study titled **Cause and Age, Specific Premature Mortality Attributable to PM 2.5 Exposure: An Analysis for Million Plus Cities** is modelled on the basis of the 2015 Global Burden of Disease report.
- This paper has used the 2016 data for the 29 cities as that is the latest year for which the registered all-cause death data is available from the Civil Registration System.

Key-highlights of the Study:


- Delhi tops the list of 29 cities with a million-plus population.
- The study adds that **Ischemic Heart Disease (IHD)** is the leading cause of death accounting for 58% of the PM 2.5 related premature deaths.
- The most affected are children under the age of five and the 'productive age group' of 25-50 years.

Report Card

Maximum mean deaths reported in Delhi- 20,300

Minimum mean deaths are in Kota-850

'Productive age group' (25-50 yrs) is at higher risk of air pollution related mortality than old people



Pre-mature mortality rates due to lower respiratory infection in children and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in adults substantially higher in the Indo-gangetic plain where PM 2.5 levels are very high

- Exposure to an air pollutant or combination of air pollutants such as PM2.5, NO2 or ozone is associated with an increased incidence of diseases, including Ischaemic Heart Disease, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, lung cancer, lower respiratory infections, premature birth (preterm birth), type II diabetes, stroke and asthma.
- Pre-mature mortality rates due to Lower Respiratory Infection (LRI) in children and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) in adults is substantially higher in the Indo-Gangetic plain where PM 2.5 levels are very high.
- The study also observes that if action is taken rapidly to tackle air pollution, there could be 18% reduction in premature mortality if cities were to attain the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and a 70% reduction if the WHO standards of PM 2.5 are adhered to.

Pollutant	Impact of pollutant exposure
NO₂	Asthma
	Non-communicable diseases and lower respiratory infections
Ozone	Asthma
	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
PM_{2.5}	Asthma
	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
	Diabetes caused by chronic diseases
	Ischaemic heart disease
	Lung cancer
	Lower respiratory infections
	Stroke
	Non-communicable diseases and lower respiratory infections
Other non-communicable diseases and lower respiratory infection	

Current situation of pollution in India:

- According to the World Health Organisation, nine of the 10 most-polluted cities are in India.
- The status in rural areas is not any better as homes are sites of air pollution due to poor ventilation.
- Furthermore, surface and groundwater sources, and also the soil in many places are extensively contaminated, especially due to pesticide and fertiliser pollution.
- In India, air pollution is the third-highest cause of death among all health risks, ranking just above smoking.

Major Pollutant:• **PM 2.5:**

- PM 2.5, an atmospheric particulate matter of diameter of fewer than 2.5 micrometres, affects more people than any other pollutant.
- **Major components:** sulfate, nitrates, ammonia, sodium chloride, black carbon, mineral dust and water.
- WHO sets recommended limits for health-harmful concentrations of key air pollution both outdoors and inside buildings and homes, based on a global synthesis of scientific evidence.
- WHO Air Quality Guideline values:

Fine Particulate Matter (PM2.5)	Coarse Particulate Matter (PM10)
10 µg/m ³ annual mean	20 µg/m ³ annual mean
25 µg/m ³ 24-hour mean	50 µg/m ³ 24-hour mean

• **Ozone:**

- Ozone pollution is a kind of oxide.
- The rays of extremely hot sunlight by responding to the smoke from the vehicles make the ozone pollutant.
- In addition to the smoke coming out of the vehicles, ozone pollution is also produced from the burning of garbage or smoke from the industries.

• **NO₂:**

- Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), a byproduct of fossil fuel combustion in vehicles and power plants, and ozone, respectively, contribute to the formation of photochemical smog, which can have significant impacts on human health.

- In India, air pollution is a major environmental risk to health and a top risk factor responsible for the reduced longevity. The government should urgently form a plan to reduce emissions of the harmful gas. Such planning can lead to substantial gains in life expectancy, and reduction in other well-recognized threats to public health.

NORTHERN EUROPEAN ENCLOSURE DAM (NEED)© **CONTEXT**

- Scientists have proposed to protect 25 million people and important economic regions of 15 Northern European countries from rising seas. It is called Northern European Enclosure Dam (NEED) enclosing all of the North Sea.

© **ABOUT**

- The scientists have proposed the construction of two dams of a combined length of 637 km

- The first between northern Scotland and western Norway. It would be 476 km and with an average depth of 121 m and a maximum depth of 321 m.
- The second between France and southwestern England, of length 161 km, and an average depth of 85 m and a maximum depth of 102 m.



- According to scientists, separating the North and Baltic Seas from the Atlantic Ocean is considered to be the “most viable option” to protect Northern Europe against unstoppable sea-level rise (SLR).
- They have also identified other regions in the world where such mega-enclosures could potentially be considered, including the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean Sea, the Baltic Sea, the Irish Sea, and the Red Sea.

The rationale behind

- The concept of constructing NEED showcases the extent of protection efforts that are required if mitigation efforts fail to limit sea-level rise.
- While NEED may appear to be “overwhelming” and “unrealistic”, it could be “potentially favourable” financially and in scale when compared with alternative solutions to fight SLR, the research argues.
- The researchers classify the solutions to SLR into three categories of taking no action, protection, and managed retreat — and submit that NEED is in the second category.
- While managed retreat, which includes options such as managed migrations, may be less expensive than protection (NEED), it involves intangible costs such as national and international political instability, psychological difficulties, and loss of culture and heritage for migrants.
- NEED, the paper says, will have the least direct impact on people’s daily lives, can be built at a “reasonable cost”, and has the largest potential to be implemented with the required urgency to be effective.

Viability of NEED

- The researchers have estimated the total costs associated with NEED at between €250 billion and €550 billion.
- They referred to the costs of building the 33.9-km Saemangeum Seawall in South Korea and the Maasvlakte 2 extension of the Rotterdam harbour in the Netherlands as examples,

- If construction is spread over a 20-year period, this will work out to an annual expense of around 0.07%-0.16% of the GDP of the 15 Northern European countries that will be involved.
- Also, the construction will “heavily impact” marine and terrestrial ecosystems inside and outside the enclosure, will have social and cultural implications, and affect tourism and fisheries.

STATE OF INDIA'S BIRDS 2020

◎ CONTEXT

- Recently, a new scientific report, ‘State of India’s Birds 2020 was jointly released by 10 organisations.

◎ ABOUT

- State of India’s Birds 2020 (SoIB) was produced using a base of 867 species.
- It is analysed with the help of data uploaded by birdwatchers to the online platform, eBird.
- Adequate data on how birds fared over a period of over 25 years (long-term trend) are available only for 261 species.
- Current annual trends are calculated over a five-year period.
- The assessment says that
 - Over a fifth of India’s bird diversity has suffered strong long-term declines over a 25-year period.
 - More recent annual trends point to a drastic 80% loss among several common birds.

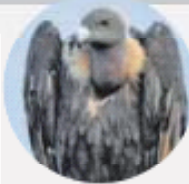
Key findings:

- The State of India’s Birds 2020 (SoIB) assessment raises the alarm that several spectacular birds, many of them endemic to the sub-continent, face a growing threat from loss of habitat due to:
 - Human activity.
 - The widespread presence of toxins, including pesticides.
 - Hunting and trapping for the pet trade.
- It is highlighted that, for every bird species that were found to be increasing in numbers over the long term, 11 have suffered losses, some catastrophically.
- 101 species have been categorised as being of High Conservation Concern.
 - 59 are based on range and abundance.
 - Rest are included from high-risk birds on the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red List.
- Endemics such as the **Rufous-fronted Prinia, Nilgiri Thrush, Nilgiri Pipit and Indian vulture** have been confirmed as suffering a current decline.
- All except 13 had a restricted or highly restricted range, indicating greater vulnerability to man-made threats.
- Among widely known species, the common sparrow, long seen as declining in urban spaces, has a stable population overall.
- The analysis concludes that raptors overall are in decline, with ‘open country’ species such as the Pallid and Montagu Harriers, White-bellied Sea Eagle and Red-necked Falcon suffering the most.

Bird watching

Over three-fourths of the 146 bird species whose populations were tracked over the Last five years declined in numbers, according to The State of India's Birds 2020 report. Interestingly, seven of the top 10 such species were Labelled as being of "least concern" (not a focus of species conservation) by the international Union for Conservation of Nature. One half of the 261 bird species whose populations were tracked over the last 25 years declined in numbers. By **The Hindu Data Team**

Long-term decrease I The table lists the top five species whose populations have declined the most in the last 2.5 years. For instance, for every 100 **white-rumped Vulture** spotted 25 years ago, only three could he spotted In 2020



Common name	Currently spotted
White-rumped vulture	3 for every 100
Richard's Pipit	7
Indian Vulture	10
Large-billed Leaf Warbler	11
Pacific Golden Plover	12

Short-term decrease I The table lists the five species whose populations have declined the most in the Last five years. For instance, for every 100 **Singing Bushlarks** that could be spotted five years ago, only 76 could be spotted in 2020



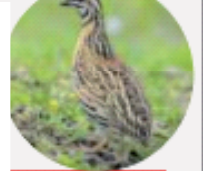
Common name	Current	Currently spotted
Singing Bushlark	76	Least concern
Nilgiri Pipit	77	Vulnerable
White-tailed Robin	80	Least concern
Lesser Cuckoo	82	Least concern
Red-headed Vulture	82	Critically endangered

Long-term increase I The table Lists the five species whose populations have increased the most in the Last 25 years. For instance, for every 100 **Rosy Starlings** that could he spotted 25 years ago, 271 could be spotted irk 2020



Common Name	Currently spotted
Rosy Starling	271 for every 100
Rock Pigeon	244
Glossy Ibis	240
Plain Prinia	221
Ashy Prinia	205

Short-term increase I The table lists the five species that have seen the maximum increase in their populations in the List five years. Fix instance, for every 100 **Rain Quails** that could be spotted five years ago, 133 could be spatped in 2020



Common Name	Currently spotted
Rain Quail	133 for every 100
Ferruginous Duck	133
Greater Crested Tern	124
Hume's Leaf Warbler	117
white-spotted Fantail	116

- The severe long-term decline of vultures is underscored by the report.
- Migratory shorebirds, along with gulls and terns, seem to have declined the most among waterbirds.

Suggestions by the report:

- An update to the Red List of endangered species published by IUCN using the SoIB.
- Collaborative research by scientists and citizens. Targeted research to pinpoint causes of decline.
- Urgent emphasis on habitats of species of high concern, notably grasslands, scrublands, wetlands and the Western Ghats.

THE FUTURE OF EARTH, 2020

◎ CONTEXT

- Five global risks that have the potential to impact and amplify one another in ways that may cascade to create a global systemic crisis, have been listed by "The Future of Earth, 2020".

◎ ABOUT

- "The Future of Earth, 2020" has been released by the **South Asia Future Earth Regional Office**, Divecha Centre for Climate Change, Indian Institute of Science.

- As many as 222 leading scientists from 52 countries conducted the survey by **Future Earth**, an international sustainability research network.
- The report was prepared with the aim of reducing carbon footprint and halting global warming below 2 degree Celsius by 2050.

South Asia Future Earth Regional Office is hosted by the **Divecha Centre for Climate Change**, Bengaluru, India.

The Divecha Centre for Climate Change was established at Indian Institute of Science in 2009 to understand climate variability and climate change and its impact on the environment.

Future Earth, established in 2015, is an international sustainability research network.

What are the Five Global Risks?

- The report lists the following as the five global risks:
 - failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation:
 - extreme weather events
 - major biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse
 - food crises
 - water crises
- Extreme heatwaves can accelerate global warming by releasing large amounts of stored carbon from affected ecosystems, and at the same time intensify water crises and/ or food scarcity.
- The loss of biodiversity also weakens the capacity of natural and agricultural systems to cope with climate extremes, increasing our vulnerability to food crises.

Other highlights of the Report:

- **Combination of problems:** Climate breakdown and extreme weather, species loss, water scarcity and a food production crisis are all serious in themselves, but the combination of all five together is amplifying the risks of each, creating a perfect storm that threatens to engulf humanity unless swift action is taken.
- **Changing nature of calamities:** The changing nature of bushfires and other calamities around the world is one of the tragic consequences of climate change.
- **Economic development:** The great acceleration of economic growth has put enormous pressure on earth systems. The rapid expansion of broad-scale agriculture and extensive mining in some regions has led to deforestation, biodiversity loss and land degradation.
- **Unfair use of technologies:** Much existing technology is being used to promote consumption in the pursuit of economic growth, rather than to safeguard ecosystems or to promote just and fair societies.
- **Social problems:** The report also warned of social problems that scientists identified as potential major risks for the future. These included the rise of populism and fake news, trends in migration and the rise of artificial intelligence.

The road ahead:

- There is a need to harness investments and financial instruments for sustainable development, including green bonds, sustainability-linked loans and more. The innovative digital sector has immense potential for reducing emissions and empowering people to monitor and protect ecosystems. The sector should be utilised for environment protection. The situation needs

a change in the way risks are getting handled. The world together needs to pay urgent attention to the identified global risks and to ensure they are treated as interacting systems, rather than addressed one at a time in isolation.

CHILD WITNESSES & INDIA'S LEGAL SYSTEM

◎ CONTEXT

- In the Bidar school sedition case, the spotlight has fallen on reports that police questioned children.

◎ ABOUT

- **The Issues:**
- The **Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights** has pulled up the district police for violations, including repeated questioning of the children.
- Additionally, a public interest petition has been filed in the Karnataka High Court seeking a departmental inquiry against the policemen who allegedly questioned the children of Shaheen School, aged between 9 and 12, without the consent of their parents or guardians, and also video-recorded them without consent.
- The PIL referred to a statement by the Shaheen Alumni Association to say that the children were questioned by policemen carrying guns, which created an "intimidating and fearful environment".
- The PIL has asked for guidelines to be issued to police regarding the interrogation of minors in criminal proceedings in accordance with the Juvenile Justice Act and United Nations resolutions.

Does Indian Law recognize Child Witnesses?

- Indian jurisprudence has accepted child witnesses as a part of the legal system.
- The interpretation of Section 118 of the Evidence Act allows for a child to be a witness.
- The Supreme Court has, on occasion affirmed that the test of competency, if satisfied by a child even as young as 5 years old, would allow him to be a witness.
- The view of the Supreme Court has been to discard age as a deciding factor in terms of disqualification.
- A child witness must understand the onus of truth and the magnitude of responsibility that is associated with the act of testifying.
- The responsibility to ensure the satisfaction of that onus rests with the Judge.

How do Indian laws address the issue of child witnesses?

- Under **Section 118 of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872**, there is no minimum age for a witness.
- Children as young as three years old have deposed before trial courts in cases of sexual abuse.
- Usually during a trial, the court, before recording the testimony of a child witness, determines his or her competence on the basis of their ability to give rational answers.

Type of cases:

- Trials involving children as witnesses have primarily been in cases of **child sexual abuse**.
- Other criminal cases where children are examined as witnesses have included those where a parent is the victim of violence at home, in the sole presence of the child.
- A child is usually asked questions like their name, the school they study in, and the names of their parents to determine their competency.

International conventions on children:

- **Convention on the Rights of the Child:** In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
 - India has been a signatory to the **Convention on the Rights of the Child** since 1992, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989.
- **United Nations: Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses in Crime: Model Law:** In 2009, the 'United Nations: Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses in Crime: Model Law' provided a more specific set of guidelines in the context of child witnesses.
 - These guidelines recommend that authorities treat children in a caring and sensitive manner, with interview techniques that "minimise distress or trauma to children".
 - They recommend specifically that an investigator specially trained in dealing with children be appointed to guide the interview of the child, using a child-sensitive approach.

1946 NAVAL MUTINY: WHEN INDIAN SAILORS ROSE IN REVOLT AGAINST THE RAJ

◎ CONTEXT

- Seventy-four years ago on this date, on February 18, 1946, some 1,100 Indian sailors or "ratings" of the HMIS Talwar and the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) Signal School in Bombay declared a hunger strike, triggered by the conditions and treatment of Indians in the Navy.

◎ ABOUT

- A "slow down" the strike was also called, which meant that the ratings would carry out their duties slowly.
- The commander of HMIS Talwar, F M King, reportedly addressed the naval ratings as "sons of coolies and bitches", which inflamed the situation further.

1946 naval mutiny: Strike and demands

- The morning after February 18, somewhere between 10,000-20,000 sailors joined the strike, as did shore establishments in Karachi, Madras, Calcutta, Mandapam, Visakhapatnam, and the Andaman Islands.
- While the immediate trigger was the demand for better food and working conditions, the agitation soon turned into a wider demand for independence from British rule.
- The protesting sailors demanded the following things
 - The release of all political prisoners including those from Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's Indian National Army (INA),
 - Action against the commander for ill-treatment and using insulting language,
 - Revision of pay and allowances to put RIN employees on a par with their counterparts in the Royal Navy,
 - The demobilisation of RIN personnel with provisions for peacetime employment,
 - Release of Indian forces stationed in Indonesia, and better treatment of subordinates by their officers.

1946 navy mutiny: Upsurge of nationalism

- The RIN strike came at a time when the Indian nationalist sentiment had reached fever pitch across the country.
- The winter of 1945-46 saw three violent upsurges: in Calcutta in November 1945 over the INA trials; in February 1946, also in Calcutta, over the sentencing of INA officer Rashid Ali; and, in that same month, the ratings' uprising in Bombay.
- In his short book, 'The Indian Naval Report of 1946', Percy S Gourgey, a former lieutenant of the Royal Indian Naval Volunteer Reserve, wrote that the chain of events led to the "mounting fever of excitement affecting the whole political climate".
- One of the triggers for the RIN strike was the arrest of a rating, BC Dutt, who had scrawled "Quit India" on the HMIS Talwar.
- The day after the strike began, the ratings went around Bombay in lorries, waving the Congress flag, and getting into scraps with Europeans and policemen who tried to confront them.
- Soon, ordinary people joined the ratings, and life came to a virtual standstill in both Bombay and Calcutta.
- There were meetings, processions, strikes, and hartals.
- In Bombay, labourers participated in a general strike called by the Communist Party of India and the Bombay Students' Union.
- In many cities across India, students boycotted classes in solidarity.
- The response of the state was brutal. It is estimated that over 220 people died in police firing, while roughly 1,000 were injured.

Significance of the events

- The RIN revolt remains a legend today.
- It was an event that strengthened further the determination among all sections of the Indian people to see the end of British rule.
- Deep solidarity and amity among religious groups were in evidence, which appeared to run counter to the rapidly spreading atmosphere of communal hatred and animosity.
- However, communal unity was more in the nature of organisational unity than unity among the two major communities.
- Within months, India was to be devoured by a terrible communal conflagration.

BATTLE OF ÇANAKKALE

◎ CONTEXT

- Recently, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan pledged to continue his unflinching support for Islamabad's stance on Kashmir. He compared the "struggle" of Kashmiris with that of Turkey in the Battle of Çanakkale.

◎ ABOUT

- **Battle of Çanakkale: Also known as Gallipoli campaign or Dardanelles campaign**, the Battle of Çanakkale is considered to be one of the bloodiest of World War I.
- During this battle, **the Ottoman army faced off against the Allied forces**, leading to the slaughter of many thousands of soldiers on both sides.
- **History:** In **March 1915**, Winston Churchill, then Britain's First Lord of Admiralty, devised a plan to **take control of the Dardanelles** (strategic strait connecting Sea of Marmara to the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea), and reach Constantinople (today's Istanbul) at the mouth of Bosphorus.
 - By taking Constantinople, Allied forces hoped to break the **Turks**, who had recently entered the war **on the side of Germany**.

- **Participants:** British and French troops as well as **divisions of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC)**. ANZAC Corps was created early in World War I (1914–18).

Gallipoli campaign



- The Allies carried out a **heavy naval bombardment** of Turkish forts along the shores of Dardanelles, and when that failed, they followed up with what was the **biggest amphibious landing in military history** at the time.
- However, what the British and their allies had hoped would be the turning point in the war **ended up as a catastrophe**.
- In the nine months up to **January 1916**, when the **Allies called off the campaign and evacuated**, more than **40,000 British soldiers** had been killed, along with **8,000 Australians**. On the **Turkish side**, **some 60,000** had perished.
- **Reason for failure: Lack of sufficient intelligence and knowledge of the terrain**, along with a **fierce Turkish resistance** (Ottoman army), hampered the success of the invasion.

Legacy of the Battle

- The campaign was considered a great **Ottoman victory**.
- In Turkey, it is regarded as a **defining moment in the history of the state**, a final surge in the defence of the motherland as the Ottoman Empire retreated.
- The struggle formed the **basis for the Turkish War of Independence** and declaration of the Republic of Turkey eight years later.
- The campaign is often considered to be the **beginning of Australian and New Zealand national consciousness**.
 - **April 25, the anniversary of the Gallipoli landings**, is observed as **ANZAC Day** – the day of national remembrance for dead of the war.

SYRI (SYSTEM RISK INDICATOR)

© CONTEXT

- In a first anywhere in the world, a court in the Netherlands recently stopped a digital identification scheme for reasons of exclusion. This has a context for similar artificial

intelligence systems worldwide, especially at a time when identity, citizenship and privacy are pertinent questions in India.

© ABOUT

What was the scheme?

- SyRI (System Risk Indicator) is an identification mechanism.
- The Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs developed SyRI in 2014 to weed out those who are most likely to commit fraud and receive government benefits.
- Legislation passed by the Dutch Parliament allowed government agencies to share 17 categories of data about welfare recipients such as taxes, land registries, employment records, and vehicle registrations with a private company.
- The company, called "The Intelligence Agency", used an algorithm to analyse data for four cities and calculate risk scores.
- The selective rollout was conducted in low-income and immigrant neighbourhoods, which have a higher number of beneficiaries.
- Elevated risk scores were sent to relevant government arms, which stores these on government databases for a maximum of two years.
- The government, in that time period, could open an investigation on the targeted person.

The issue:

- Recently, a Dutch district court ruled against SyRI (System Risk Indicator), because of data privacy and human rights concerns.
- While the Hague district court found using new technology to control fraud was acceptable, it held SyRI was too invasive and violative of the privacy guarantees given by European Human Rights Law as well as the EU's General Data Protection Regulation.
- Legal criticism alleged that the algorithm would begin associating poverty and immigrant statuses with fraud risk.
- The court found that opaque algorithmic decision-making puts citizens at a disadvantage to challenge the resulting risk scores. The Netherlands continuously ranks high on democracy indices.
- The court ruled that SyRI was violative of principles of transparency and data minimisation laid out in their General Data Protection Regulation.
- Other European tech initiatives have been stalled by the regulation, including a facial recognition system on students in Sweden and France.

How relevant is this for India?

- Similar to the Supreme Court's Aadhaar judgment setting limits on the ID's usage, the Hague Court attempted to balance social interest with personal privacy.
- However, the Aadhaar judgment was not regarding **algorithmic decision-making**; it was about data collection.
- The ruling is also an example of how a data protection regulation can be used against government surveillance.
- India's pending data protection regulation, being analysed by a Joint Select Committee in Parliament, would give broad exemptions to government data processing in its current form.
- **Similar regulations by the US:**
 - India's proposed regulation is similar to the US in the loopholes that could be potentially exploited.
 - Hence, attempts to ban facial recognition in cities such as San Francisco have not had the same success as attempts in Europe.
 - A system somewhat paralleling the Dutch **SyRI** system was a risk-scoring software being used by US court systems to establish bail times.

- The US Supreme Court declined to hear a related case in 2017.
- **Global countries taking note of the 'ruling':**
 - Digital ID systems are being rolled out at a fast pace in places like **Kenya, Philippines, Nigeria, Mexico**, and more.
 - Experts worldwide have been watching the Netherlands case throughout, and agree that the ruling will ripple beyond south Rotterdam.
 - The ruling sets a strong legal precedent for other nations to follow. This is one of the first times a court has stopped the use of digital technologies and abundant digital information on human rights grounds.

WHAT SUPREME COURT SAID ON WOMEN IN THE ARMY

◎ **CONTEXT**

- **The Supreme Court on Monday brought women officers in 10 streams of the Army on a par with their male counterparts in all respects, setting aside longstanding objections of the government.**

◎ **ABOUT**

- The induction of women officers in the Army started in 1992.
- They were commissioned for a period of five years in certain chosen streams such as Army Education Corps, Corps of Signals, Intelligence Corps, and Corps of Engineers.
- Recruits under the Women Special Entry Scheme (WSES) had a shorter pre-commission training period than their male counterparts who were commissioned under the Short Service Commission (SSC) scheme.
- In 2006, the WSES scheme was replaced with the SSC scheme, which was extended to women officers.
- They were commissioned for a period of 10 years, extendable up to 14 years.
- Serving WSES officers were given the option to move to the new SSC scheme or to continue under the erstwhile WSES.
- They were to be, however, restricted to roles in streams specified earlier — which excluded combat arms such as infantry and armoured corps.

Key arguments shot down

- The Supreme Court rejected arguments against a greater role for women officers, saying these violated equalities under the law.
- They were being kept out of command posts on the reasoning that the largely rural rank and the file will have problems with women as commanding officers.
- The biological argument was also rejected as disturbing.

The battle in the courts

- In 2003, a PIL was filed before the Delhi High Court for grant of permanent commission (PC) to women SSC officers in the Army.
- In September 2008, the Defence Ministry passed an order saying PC would be granted prospectively to SSC women officers in the Judge Advocate General (JAG) department and the Army Education Corps (AEC).
- The High Court heard 2003, 2006, and 2008 challenges together, and passed its judgment in 2010.
- Women officers of the Air Force and Army on SSC who had sought permanent commission but were not granted that status would be entitled to PC at par with male SSC officers, it ruled.

- However, this benefit was only available to women officers in service who had instituted proceedings before the High Court and had retired during the pendency of the writ petitions.
- Women officers who had not attained the age of superannuation for permanently commissioned officers would be reinstated with all consequential benefits.
- The government challenged the order in the Supreme Court, and even though the High Court judgment did not stay, the Defence Ministry did not implement those directions.
- While the proceedings were on, the government passed an order in February 2019 for the grant of PC to SSC women officers in eight streams of the Army, in addition to the JAG and AEC, which had been opened up in 2008.
- But they would not be offered any command appointments and would serve only in staff posts.
- During the hearing, the government came up with a proposal whereby women officers of up to 14 years of service would be granted permanent commission in line with the letter of February 2019.
- Women officers with more than 14 years of service would be permitted to serve for up to 20 years without being considered for PC but would retire with a pension, and those with more than 20 years of service would be released with pensionary benefits immediately.

Order and its implications

- The government put forth other arguments before the Supreme Court to justify the proposal on the grounds of permanent commission, grants of pensionary benefits, limitations of judicial review on policy issues, occupational hazards, reasons for discrimination against women, SSC as a support cadre, and rationalization on physiological limitations for employment in staff appointments.
- The apex court has rejected these arguments, saying they are "based on sex stereotypes premised on assumptions about socially ascribed roles of gender which discriminate against women".
- It has also said that it only shows the need "to emphasise the need for change in mindsets to bring about true equality in the Army".
- The SC has done away with all discrimination on the basis of years of service for grant of PC in 10 streams of combat support arms and services, bringing them on a par with male officers.
- It has also removed the restriction of women officers only being allowed to serve in staff appointments, which is the most significant and far-reaching aspect of the judgment.
- It means that women officers will be eligible to the tenant all the command appointments, at par with male officers, which would open avenues for further promotions to higher ranks for them: if women officers had served only in staff, they would not have gone beyond the rank of Colonel.
- It also means that in junior ranks and career courses, women officers would be attending the same training courses and tenancing critical appointments, which are necessary for higher promotions.

CENTRE BEGINS THE PROCESS OF DELIMITATION OF ASSEMBLY SEATS IN J&K

◎ CONTEXT

- The Central Government has begun the process of delimitation of Assembly constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir.

◎ ABOUT

- Delimitation is the act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and state Assembly seats to represent changes in population.

- The main objective of delimitation is to provide equal representation to equal segments of a population.
- Delimitation literally means the act or process of fixing limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies in a country or a province having a legislative body.
- The job of delimitation is assigned to a high power body.
- Such a body is known as Delimitation Commission or a Boundary Commission.
- In India, such Delimitation Commissions have been constituted 4 times – in 1952 under the Delimitation Commission Act, 1952, in 1963 under Delimitation Commission Act, 1962, in 1973 under Delimitation Act, 1972 and in 2002 under Delimitation Act, 2002.
- These orders come into force on a date to be specified by the President of India in this behalf.
- The copies of its orders are laid before the House of the People and the State Legislative Assembly concerned, but no modifications are permissible therein by them.

Process of Delimitation:

- Under Article 82 of the Constitution of India, the Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act after every Census.
- Once the Act is in force, the Union government sets up a Delimitation Commission.
- In 1976, the 42nd Constitutional Amendment was used to stop the delimitation process until 2001.
- In 2002, based on the 2001 Census delimitation commission was set up to readjust the boundaries of existing Lok Sabha and Assembly seats and reworking the number of reserved seats.
- Further, in 2002, the 84th Constitutional Amendment was used to freeze the delimitation process until at least 2026.

About Delimitation commission

- The Delimitation Commission is appointed by the President of India and works in collaboration with the Election Commission of India.
- The commission is made up of a retired Supreme Court judge, the Chief Election Commissioner and the respective State Election Commissioners.
- The commission is mandated to:
 - Determine the number and boundaries of constituencies to make the population of all constituencies nearly equal and
 - Identify seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, wherever their population is relatively large.
- The constitution mandates that the orders of commission are final and cannot be questioned before any court as it would hold up an election indefinitely.

WORLD MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY: WHICH IS MOST WIDELY SPOKEN?

◎ CONTEXT

- February 21 is International Mother Language Day. It has been observed since 1999 to promote “linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism”, according to the UN.

◎ ABOUT

- UNESCO declared International Mother Language Day in 1999, to commemorate a 1952 protest against West Pakistan’s imposition of Urdu as the official language of East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh).

- Of the world's 6,000 languages, 43% are estimated as endangered, according to the UN.
- On the other hand, just 10 languages account for as many as 4.8 billion speakers — over 60% of the world population.

INDIATRENDS, 1991-2011			
(Speaker of each as % of India population)			
Language	1991	2001	2011
Hindi	39.29	41.03	43.63
Bengali	8.30	8.11	8.03
Marathi	7.45	6.99	6.86
Telugu	7.87	7.19	6.70
Tamil	6.32	5.91	5.70
Gujarati	4.85	4.48	4.58
Urdu	5.18	5.01	4.19
Kannada	3.91	6.69	3.61
Odia	3.35	3.21	3.10
Malayalam	3.62	3.21	2.88
Punjabi	2.79	2.83	2.74
Assamese	1.56	1.28	1.26

Facts

- Globally, English remains the most widely spoken language with 1.13 billion speakers in 2019, followed by Mandarin with 1.17 billion.
- Hindi is third with 615 million speakers while Bengali is seventh with 265 million.
- In India, Hindi is the most spoken language with over 528 million speakers in 2011, as per the Census.
- Bengali had 97.2 million speakers in 2011, followed by Marathi (83 million), while other languages with over 50 million speakers are Telugu (81 million), Tamil (69 million), Gujarati (55.5 million) and Urdu (50.8 million).
- Percentage trends from 1991 to 2011 underline the growth of the most widely spoken language, Hindi, which was spoken by 39.29% of the Indian population in 1991, and whose share grew to 43.63% in 2011.
- For other languages in India's top 12, the 2011 percentage share has fallen when compared to that in 1991.

Why February 21?

- UNESCO declared International Mother Language Day in 1999, to commemorate a 1952 protest against West Pakistan's imposition of Urdu as the official language of East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh).
- Police opened fire on demonstrating Dhaka University students and "some people were killed".
- When thousands thronged the university the next day, police fired again, killing more people.
- In Bangladesh, since 1953, February 21 is observed as Ekushe Day, after the Bengali word for twenty-one.

WORLD TOP 10, 2019 (mn)	
English	1,132
Mandarin	1,117
Hindi	615
Spanish	534
French	280
Standard Arabic	274
Bengali	265
Russian	258
Portuguese	234
Indonesian	199

INDIA TOP 12, 2011 (mn)	
Hindi	528
Bengali	97
Marathi	83
Telugu	81
Tamil	69
Gujarati	55
Urdu	51
Kannada	44
Odia	37
Malayalam	35
Punjabi	33
Assamese	15

ADITYA – L1 MISSION

◎ CONTEXT

- The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) is preparing for its first scientific expedition to study the Sun, Aditya-L1.

◎ ABOUT

- **AstroSat**
- AstroSat was launched in September 2015, by **PSLV-C30** from Sriharikota (Andhra Pradesh).
- It is the first dedicated Indian astronomy mission aimed at studying **celestial sources in X-ray, optical and UV spectral bands simultaneously**.
- Aditya-L1 is planned to be launched by the end of 2020. It would be placed into a point in space known as the L1 Lagrange point.
- Aditya L1 will be ISRO's 2nd space-based astronomy mission after AstroSat, which was launched in 2015.
- Aditya 1 was renamed as Aditya-L1. The Aditya 1 was meant to observe only the solar corona.

Lagrange Point 1

- Lagrange Points, named after Italian-French mathematician **Joseph-Louis Lagrange**, are positioned in space where the gravitational forces of a two-body system (like the Sun and the Earth) produce enhanced regions of attraction and repulsion.
- The L1 point is about **1.5 million km from Earth or about 1/100th of the way to the Sun**.
- L1 refers to Lagrangian/Lagrange Point 1, one of 5 points in the orbital plane of the Earth-Sun system.
- These can be used by spacecraft to reduce fuel consumption needed to remain in position.
- A Satellite placed in the halo orbit around the Lagrangian point 1 (L1) has the major advantage of continuously viewing the Sun without any occultation/ eclipses.
- The L1 point is home to the Solar and Heliospheric Observatory Satellite (SOHO), an international collaboration project of National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the European Space Agency (ESA).

- **Launch Vehicle:** Aditya L1 will be launched using the **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle**

(PSLV) XL with 7 payloads (instruments) on board.

- **Objective:** Aditya L1 will study the:
 - Sun's corona (Visible and Near-infrared rays)
 - Sun's photosphere (soft and hard X-ray)
 - chromosphere (Ultra Violet)
 - solar emissions, solar winds and flares
 - Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs)
- Moreover, it will carry out round-the-clock imaging of the Sun.

Challenges:

- **Huge distance:** The distance of the Sun from Earth (approximately 15 crore km on average, compared to the only 3.84 lakh km to the Moon). This huge distance poses a scientific challenge.
- **Moving payloads:** Due to the risks involved, payloads in earlier ISRO missions have largely remained stationary in space; however, Aditya L1 will have some moving components which increase the risks of collision.
- **Others:** Other issues are the super-hot temperatures and radiation in the solar atmosphere. However, Aditya L1 will stay much farther away, and the heat is not expected to be a major concern for the instruments onboard.

Significance of the Mission

- Evolution of every planet, including Earth and the exoplanets beyond the Solar System, is governed by its parent star i.e the Sun in our case. **Solar weather and environment affect the weather of the entire system.** Therefore, it is important to study the Sun.
- **Effects of Variation in Solar Weather System:** Variations in this weather can change the orbits of satellites or shorten their lives, interfere with or damage onboard electronics, and cause power blackouts and other disturbances on Earth.
- Knowledge of solar events is key to understanding space weather.
- To learn about and track Earth-directed storms, and to predict their impact, continuous solar observations are needed.
- Many of the instruments and their components for this mission are being manufactured for the first time in the country.

Other Missions to the Sun

- NASA's **Parker Solar Probe**'s aim is to trace how energy and heat move through the Sun's corona and to study the source of the solar wind's acceleration.
- It is part of NASA's 'Living With a Star' programme that explores different aspects of the Sun-Earth system.
- The earlier Helios 2 solar probe, a joint venture between NASA and space agency of erstwhile West Germany, went within 43 million km of the Sun's surface in 1976.

BETELGEUSE SUPERNOVA

◎ CONTEXT

- Betelgeuse, the red supergiant star that marks the armpit of Orion the Hunter, has been dramatically and mysteriously dimming for the last six months.

◎ ABOUT

- Betelgeuse is a red supergiant star, located an estimated 642 light-years away.
- **Location:** It's usually the **11th brightest star** in the sky, taking its position as the right

shoulder of Orion. But in the last few months, it's dimmed down to 38% of its usual brightness, now the **24th brightest star** in the sky.

Orion constellation:

- Orion constellation is named after the hunter in Greek mythology.
- Orion, which is located on the celestial equator, is one of the most prominent and recognizable constellations in the sky and can be seen throughout the world.
- In total, Orion is home to 10% of the seventy brightest stars, despite covering only 1.4% of the sky.

- **Variable star:** Variations are normal for Betelgeuse, and it's known to get dimmer and brighter. It's literally growing and shrinking as the internal temperatures rise and fall pushing the star in and out like a beating heart.
- **Convective cells:** It has **enormous convective cells** on its surface that boil creating brighter and dimmer regions, and it's constantly blowing out dust that can obscure our view for a time.

What's the reason behind this?

- Astronomers have captured the unprecedented dimming of Betelgeuse Using ESO's Very Large Telescope (VLT).
- The stunning new images of the star's surface show not only the fading red supergiant but also how its apparent shape is changing.
- The red supergiant Betelgeuse has recently dimmed quite dramatically because those two periodic cycles are overlapping at minimal brightness.
- Beginning in October 2019, astronomers noticed that the brightness of Betelgeuse suddenly began to change. The star was dimming.
- Once one of the top 10 brightest stars in the sky, its brightness had fallen to 21st place by the end of December 2019.

Is it going to explode?

- Astronomers have long suspected that the star might explode sometime in the next million years.
- It's also possible that Betelgeuse has already exploded and we just haven't seen it happen; because the star is 600 light-years away, it takes 600 years after something happens on Betelgeuse for light from that event to reach Earth.
- But if and when astronomers do witness the star's explosion, it will be the most astonishing astronomy event of all time.
- When Betelgeuse explodes, turning into a supernova, it will briefly shine even brighter than the full moon. Then, the star will vanish forever.

What is The Very Large Telescope array (VLT)?

- The **Very Large Telescope array (VLT)** is the flagship facility for **European ground-based astronomy** at the beginning of the third Millennium.
- It is the **world's most advanced optical instrument**, consisting of four Unit Telescopes with main mirrors of 8.2m diameter and four movable 1.8m diameter Auxiliary Telescopes.
- The telescopes can work together, to form a giant 'interferometer', the ESO Very Large Telescope Interferometer, allowing astronomers to see details up to 25 times finer than with the individual telescopes.
- The light beams are combined in the VLTI using a complex system of mirrors in underground tunnels where the light paths must be kept equal to distances less than 1/1000 mm over a hundred metres.

- With this kind of precision, the VLTI can reconstruct images with an angular resolution of milliarcseconds, equivalent to distinguishing the two headlights of a car at the distance of the Moon.
- The 8.2m diameter Unit Telescopes can also be used individually.
- With one such telescope, images of celestial objects as faint as magnitude 30 can be obtained in a one-hour exposure.
- This corresponds to seeing objects that are four billion (four thousand million) times fainter than what can be seen with the unaided eye.
- Over their lifetimes, red supergiants (like Betelgeuse) create and eject vast amounts of material even before they explode as supernovae. Today's modern technology has enabled scientists to study these objects, hundreds of light-years away, in unprecedented detail. It gives the opportunity to unravel the mystery of what triggers their mass loss.

GISAT-1 MISSION

◎ CONTEXT

- **An ISRO GSLV-II rocket will launch the GISAT-1 mission.**

◎ ABOUT

- GISAT-1 is an Indian earth observation satellite to be launched in geostationary orbit. It is tasked with continuous observation of Indian sub-continent and quick monitoring of natural hazards and disaster.
- GISAT carries an imaging payload consisting of multi-spectral, multi-resolution from 50 m to 1.5 km.
- It will operate in geostationary orbit above the Southern India region after being launched from Sriharikota, India.
- The rocket consists of three stages and four liquid engine strap-on rocket motors that use UDMH and N₂O₄.
 - **First Stage:** The solid propellant first stage uses Hydroxyl-terminated polybutadiene (HTBP) and has a burn time of around 100 seconds.
 - It is important to keep in mind that once a solid motor is ignited, there is no shutting it off.
 - **Second Stage:** Also used by the second stage, Unsymmetrical dimethylhydrazine (UDMH) is the fuel of choice which has been used since the 1950s by many rocket companies, and Nitrogen tetroxide (N₂O₄) is the oxidizer of choice.
 - **Third Stage:** Finally, the third stage uses more familiar and frequently used propellants, Liquid Oxygen (LOX) as the oxidizer and Liquid Hydrogen (LH₂) as the fuel.
- Using all the energy from these stages combined, ISRO can launch up to 2500 kg to Geostationary Transfer Orbit (GTO).

Specification:

Height	49.13 m/161.2 ft
Diameter	2.8 m/9.2 ft
Rocket	GSLV Mk II
Manufacturer	Indian Space Research Organization

Destination orbit	Geostationary Transfer Orbit
Launching from	Satish Dhawan Space Center, Sriharikota

What is GSLV Mk II?

- Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark-II (GSLV Mk II) is the largest launch vehicle developed by India, which is currently in operation.
- This fourth-generation launch vehicle is a three-stage vehicle with four liquid strap-ons.
- The indigenously developed cryogenic Upper Stage (CUS), which is flight-proven, forms the third stage of GSLV Mk II.
- From January 2014, the vehicle has achieved four consecutive successes.

Significance of the mission:

- **Informative pictures:** It will provide pictures of the area of interest on a near real-time basis including border areas.
 - GISAT will provide near real-time pictures of large areas of the country, under cloud-free conditions, at frequent intervals.
 - That is, selected Sector-wise image every 5 minutes and entire Indian landmass image every 30 minutes at 50 m spatial resolution.
- **Security:** With GISAT-1, the government can keep a constant watch on borders.
- **Monitoring geographic changes:** Furthermore, it can monitor any change in the geographical condition of the country.

ISRO TO LAUNCH AN UNPRECEDENTED 10 EARTH IMAGING SATELLITES

◎ CONTEXT

- The country will send up an unusually large number of 10 earth observation (EO) satellites during 2020-21, according to the latest annual report of the Indian Space Research Organisation for 2019-20.

◎ ABOUT

- It includes new categories such as the first Geo Imaging Satellite, GISAT-1.
- In comparison, only three communication satellites — which is another major category in space infrastructure — and two navigation satellites are planned for the coming financial year starting April.
- The annual plan mentions 36 missions, another high for a year: these include both satellites and their launchers.
- The high number also stands out amidst the immediate two years before and after the plan.
- ISRO says 19 national EO satellites, 18 communication satellites and eight navigation satellites are in service, driving uses from broadcasting, telephony, Internet services, weather and agriculture-related forecasting, security, disaster-time rescue and relief and location-based services.
- Three of the communication satellites are dedicated to military communication and networking.
- The EO sats are ostensibly for benign uses such as land and agriculture watch.
- But their images also have a very important use for the military, for keeping an eye on the borders.

- The satellites such as RISATs, which carry synthetic aperture radar on them, provide all-weather, 24-hour information to security agencies.
- The upcoming EO satellites include radar imaging satellites RISAT-2BR2, RISAT- 1A and 2A; Oceansat-3 and Resourcesat-3/3S.

10 earth observation (EO) satellites

- **GISAT-1:** It is a Geo Imaging Satellite in Geostationary orbit with a high temporal resolution. is primarily meant for near real-time imaging of natural resources and disaster management.
- **RISAT-2BR2:** It is a high agility X-Band Synthetic Aperture Radar-based satellite. It will provide all-weather, day/night imaging services from space.
- **OCEANSAT-3:** It will provide continuity of ocean colour data with improvements to continue and enhance operational services like potential fishery zone and primary productivity.
- **RISAT-1A and 2A:** They will provide continuity of service for RISAT-1 and RISAT-2 respectively.
- **HRSAT:** It will have a constellation of three satellites. Applications include large scale and cadastral level mapping, urban and rural planning, infrastructure development & monitoring, précising agriculture, disaster management, etc.
- **RESOURCESAT-3/3A:** The mission is envisaged to provide continuity of data service on an operational basis in the area of Land and Water resources management.
- **RESOURCESAT-3S/3SA:** These are planned to provide data services for earth resource monitoring with improved resolution and a wide swath.
- **INSAT-3DS:** It is designed for enhanced meteorological observations, monitoring of land and ocean surfaces, generating a vertical profile of the atmosphere for weather forecasting and disaster warning.
- **Microsat-2A:** It will meet demands for cartographic applications at cadastral level, urban and rural management, coastal land use and regulation, utility mapping, development and various other GIS applications.
- **NISAR:** It is being jointly developed by NASA & ISRO. The primary mission goals are: Global coverage of the earth's biomass, cryosphere, for surface dynamics and coastal studies over a period of 3-5 years, Systematic coverage of global environment with 12 days repeat the cycle.

MISCELLANEOUS

CURRENT AFFAIRS

3rd HIGH-LEVEL GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON ROAD SAFETY

- The 3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety “Achieving Global Goals 2030” will take place on 19–20 February 2020 in Stockholm, Sweden.
- Hosted by the Government of Sweden and co-hosted by WHO, the Ministerial Conference will be an opportunity for delegates to share successes and lessons from implementation of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020, chart future strategic directions for global road safety, and define ways to accelerate action on proven strategies.
- The Ministerial Conference will also provide an opportunity to link road safety to other sustainability challenges.
- A scheduled pre-meeting, the 2nd World Youth Assembly for Road Safety “Claiming Our Space for Safer Mobility”, will be hosted by YOURS: Youth for Road Safety and co-hosted by WHO on 18 February 2020, bringing together around 200 youth road safety advocates from 80 countries.

ANTARCTICA RECORDED THE HOTTEST TEMPERATURE

- Antarctica has logged its hottest temperature on record, with an Argentinian research station thermometer reading 18.3C, beating the previous record by 0.8C.
- The reading, taken at Esperanza on the northern tip of the continent’s peninsula, beats Antarctica’s previous record of 17.5C, set in March 2015.
- Antarctica’s peninsula – the area that points towards South America – is one of the fastest-warming places on earth, heating by almost 3C over the past 50 years, according to the World Meteorological Organization.
- The lowest temperature ever recorded in Antarctica – and anywhere on Earth – was at the Russian Vostok station, when temperatures dropped to -89.2C on 21 July 1983.

ETHICS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE REGIONAL CONFERENCE

- The African Regional Conference of National Ethics and Bioethics Committees took place in Mombasa, Kenya, from 12 to 14 February 2020, under the theme “Ethics of Climate Change”, in preparation for the 13th Global Summit of National Ethics/Bioethics Committees, scheduled to take place in Lisbon, Portugal, from 18 to 20 March 2020.
- The meeting, hosted by the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), and supported by the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO (KNATCOM), will be organized jointly in partnership with UNESCO and the World Health Organization (WHO), two of the UN agencies institutionally affiliated with the Global Summit process. It is designed to consolidate and harmonize an Africa-wide position.
- The Global Summit on Bioethics brings together representatives of National Ethics/Bioethics Committee, and other experts in the field (Bioethicists, Philosophers, etc.), every two years, to reflect on the state of the field, and developments therein.

GEF INDIA ADOPTS “BHAROSA CENTRE” AT WARANGAL

- **Gemini Edibles & Fats India Pvt Ltd** (Freedom Healthy Cooking Oils) as a part of their CSR initiative, extend support for setting up of “**Bharosa- Support Centre for Women & Children**” at Warangal.
- This MOU represents the strong relationship between **GEF India and the Telangana Police**, who mutually strive to improve and provide outstanding service to the community. The Bharosa **Centre will be managed by an all-women team**.
- It will be equipped to **facilitate immediate, emergency and non-emergency access to a range of services** including medical, legal, psychological and counselling support under one roof to fight **against any forms of violence against women both in private and public spaces**.
- The Bharosa Centre **will be set up as per the guidelines from the Director-General of Police** to provide a **speedy redressal of grievances ensuring prompt justice to women** in distress.

NASA AWARDS CONTRACT TO LAUNCH CUBESAT TO MOON

- NASA has selected Rocket Lab of Huntington Beach, California, to provide launch services for the Cislunar Autonomous Positioning System Technology Operations and Navigation Experiment (CAPSTONE) CubeSat.
- Rocket Lab, a commercial launch provider licensed by the Federal Aviation Administration, will launch the 55-pound CubeSat aboard an Electron rocket from NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia.
- After launch, the company's Photon platform will deliver CAPSTONE to a trans-lunar injection.
- CAPSTONE will demonstrate the stability of that orbit, which has never been used by a spacecraft before, to support planning for the Gateway.
- Rocket Lab will use Photon, the satellite bus it is developing based on the Electron rocket's kick stage, to place CAPSTONE on a trajectory to the moon.
- CAPSTONE will use its own propulsion system to enter orbit around the moon and maneuver into that near-rectilinear halo orbit, a process that will take three months.
- The launch will not be Rocket Lab's first mission for NASA. In December 2018 it launched 13 CubeSats for NASA's CubeSat Launch Initiative.
- The launch will also be just the second mission to the moon launched from Wallops Flight Facility.

NORTHROP GRUMMAN MISSION

- A Northrop Grumman Cygnus resupply spacecraft is on its way to the International Space Station with about 7,500 pounds of science investigations and cargo after launching from NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia.
- The spacecraft launched on an Antares 230+ rocket from the Virginia Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport's Pad 0A at Wallops and is scheduled to arrive at the space station on Feb. 18.
- The spacecraft is scheduled to stay at the space station until May.
- This delivery, Northrop Grumman's 13th cargo flight to the space station, the second under its Commercial Resupply Services 2 contract with NASA and designated NG-13, will support dozens of new and existing investigations.

NORTH EAST SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS CONCLAVE 2020 IN ASSAM

- NITI Aayog is organising “**Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Conclave 2020: Partnerships, Cooperation and Development of North Eastern States**” in **Guwahati**, in association with the North Eastern Council, Government of Assam, Tata Trusts, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS).
- The **three-day event from 24th to 26th February 2020**, will take place in **Assam Administrative Staff College, Guwahati** and will see representations from the highest offices of all the State Governments of the North East, Central Ministries, academia, civil society and international development organizations.
- This inaugural session on the first day would be followed by technical sessions on the 25th and 26th. The valedictory address would be delivered by **Ms Shoko Noda, Resident Representative, UNDP India**.
- **NITI Aayog has the mandate of overseeing the adoption and monitoring of SDGs** at the national and sub-national level.

PRAVASI BHARTIYA KENDRA

- The Central government **renamed the Pravasi Bhartiya Kendra and Foreign Service Institute** in the national capital **after former External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj**.
- While the Pravasi Bhartiya Kendra has been renamed as **Sushma Swaraj Bhawan**, the Foreign Service Institute will be known as the **Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service**.
- The announcement is being made on the eve of her **birth anniversary falling on 14th February**.
- Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India **on October 2, 2016**.
- Sushma Swaraj, who was the External Affairs Minister in the previous BJP-led NDA government, **passed away in August last year**.

SAMPRITI-IX

- Over the past two weeks, with effect from 3 February to 16 February, the Armies of India and Bangladesh participated in joint military Exercise Sampriti IX at Umroi, Meghalaya. This was the 9th edition of the exercise.
- The exercise was aimed at strengthening the military relations between the two countries, which allowed the two armies to understand each other's tactical drills and operating techniques.
- The exercise provided a platform for the personnel of the two countries to share their experiences on counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism operations, and on providing aid to civil authorities for disaster management, especially in the jungle and semi-urban terrains.
- SAMPRITI series of the joint exercise is a very important military & diplomatic initiative between both the nations and the edifice of the trust and friendship between India & Bangladesh. The exercise is hosted alternately by both countries.

SC/ST AMENDMENT ACT, 2018

- The Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act 2018.
- A three-judge bench, headed by Justice Arun Mishra, upheld the amended Act, which said neither is a preliminary inquiry required before lodging an FIR under the Act nor is approval needed from higher authorities for arrests.

- The amendment also restores the unconditional ban on the grant of anticipatory bail put in place by the March 2018 judgement of the apex court.
- The Parliament had amended the Act to nullify a March 2018 apex court judgement that had diluted the provisions of the Act.

SOLAR ORBITER LAUNCH

- A rocket carrying Solar Orbiter, a probe that will take pictures of the top and bottom of the sun, launched on 9th February 2020.
- It was a successful beginning to a mission that is a collaboration between NASA and the European Space Agency.
- Solar Orbiter is a mission dedicated to solar and heliospheric physics.
- It was selected as the first medium-class mission of ESA's Cosmic Vision 2015-2025 Programme.
- With Solar Orbiter, scientists will for the first time get a good view of the top and bottom of the sun.
- The spacecraft - called Solar Orbiter - is a European Space Agency-led mission - and was assembled at Airbus in Stevenage, England.
- The mission is expected to complete 22 orbits of the sun in 10 years.
- Ulysses, an earlier collaboration between NASA and the European Space Agency launched in 1990, also passed over the sun's poles, but at much farther distances, and it did not carry a camera.
- Occasionally, the sun erupts giant amounts of particles known as coronal mass ejections. The largest one known to hit Earth was the Carrington event in 1859, named after one of the people who observed an intensely bright spot on the sun where the eruption occurred.

STATEHOOD DAY OF MIZORAM AND ARUNACHAL PRADESH

- Prime Minister greeted the people of **Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram** on their statehood day (**20th Feb 2020**).
- Mizoram was **previously part of Assam until 1972** when it was carved out as a Union Territory.
- It became the **23rd state of India**, a step above Union Territory, on **February 20, 1987**, with the **Fifty-Third Amendment** of the Indian Constitution.
- Arunachal Pradesh which literally means '**land of dawn-lit mountains**' is the Northeastern-most state of the country on the edge of the Himalayas.
- It is the **largest of the Seven Sister States of Northeast**. Statehood day was conferred on Arunachal Pradesh on **Feb 20, 1987**.

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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