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A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative

MONTHLY MAINSTORMING

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Shankar IAS Academy™

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MONTHLY MAINSTORMING MARCH 2019

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G.S PAPER I

1. ART AND CULTURE

Recently, Ramappa temple in Warangal has been nominated for UNESCO World Heritage tag. Explain its unique features which makes it very special for the nomination.

KEY POINTS

- The Ramappa Temple in Warangal, a Kakatiya era structure, has been nominated for the UNESCO World Heritage site selection process for 2019, it is India's only entry this year.
- Ramappa Temple, also known as the Ramalingeshwara Temple, dates back to 1213 AD and was built by General Recherla Rudra, during the period of the Kakatiya ruler Ganapati Deva.
- The temple, known for its beautiful intricate carvings, is the only temple in the country which has been named after its sculptor, Ramappa, who took 40 years to build the temple.

Unique features

- The roof (garbhalayam) of the temple is built with bricks which are so light that they can float on water.
- The sand box technology on which the Ramappa temple was built, which made it resistant to earthquakes and other natural calamities. Depending on the size and area of the construction, the earth was dug three meters deep for the foundation. It was then filled with sand and for the sand mixture to become strong, it was mixed with granite, jiggery.
- The temple is known for its intricate carvings, the most famous one being the flute at the entrance of the sanctum sanctorum, which when hit makes the sound of sa-ri-ga-ma.
- The temple was carved with dolomite rocks, which are so intricate that even a hair can pass through it. The pillars have 13 significant carvings, probably indicating the thirteenth century during which the temple was built.

The ancient stepwells of Gujarat (Vav) has cultural, social, architectural and environmental value.

Discuss

KEY POINTS

- Rani-ki-Vav, or the 'queen's stepwell', in Gujarat's Patan, this 11th century subterranean water storage system happens to also be a World Heritage Site. Gujarat's ancient stepwells are also centuries old, steeped in socio-cultural significance, and architecturally breathtaking.

Cultural significance

- The pillars on which the structure stands bear delicate designs, of deities, elephants, floral motifs which shows the culture of people lived.

Architectural significance

- Rudabai Vav in Adalaj near Gandhinagar has much ornamentation. The Bai Harir stepwell in Ahmedabad is octagonal and reflects the medieval Sultanate architecture. The step wells help archaeologists help in reconstructing the pasts of architectural marvel that has been existed in India.

Social Significance

- Around 25% were built by women – queens, royalty, wives of merchants, ordinary women, courtesans, servants – who hoped for religious recognition. Rani-ki-Vav, for instance, was built by a queen.
- Stepwells were considered as women's spaces, where women came not just to fill their pots, but also to talk with other women, away from the public eye.

**Environmental significance**

- Step wells are the source of drinking water especially in arid areas, they can still be catchment areas if properly conserved, helps in irrigating agricultural fields.

2. HISTORY

The Salt march, a protest against the coercive salt tax imposed by the British, was the most significant organised challenge to British authority. Explain.

KEY POINTS**Salient features of Salt March**

- Gandhiji's picking on the salt monopoly was another illustration of Gandhiji's tactical wisdom. For in every Indian household, salt was indispensable.
- Yet people were forbidden from making salt even for domestic use, compelling them to buy it from shops at a high price. The state monopoly over salt was deeply unpopular; by making it his target, Gandhiji hoped to mobilise a wider discontent against British rule.
- Rules and laws enforced by British were breached, resulting in production of salt along the coast through evaporation of salt water, almost directly challenging British authority.
- Parallel salt marches were being conducted in other parts of the country. Example: Salt March was conducted from Calicut to Payyanur in Kerala.
- This event that first brought Mahatma Gandhi to world attention. The march was widely covered by the European and American press.
- It was the first nationalist activity in which women participated in large numbers. The socialist activist Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay had persuaded Gandhiji not to restrict the protests to men alone.
- The Salt March which forced upon the British the realisation that their Raj would not last forever, and that they would have to devolve some power to the Indians.

Discuss the major causes and events that led to the Bengal famine of 1943.

KEY POINTS

Researchers have used old weather data and modern simulation methods to reach a conclusion long acknowledged by historians the Bengal famine of 1943-44 was not caused by an agricultural drought but was man-made.

Major events

- World war- 2 , increase in prices of food supplies, withdrawal of deposits from banks by people especially in U>P abd Bihar.
- In early 1943, military and political events adversely affected Bengal's economy, which was exacerbated by refugees from Burma.
- Asian threat of World War II, British reverses caused due to japans invasion.

Causes

- Market supplies and transport systems were disrupted, this is attributed to British policies, and prioritisation of distribution of supplies to the military and other select groups.
- Disease like malaria led to starvation, and malnutrition.
- Wartime grain import restrictions imposed by the British government played a major role in the famine.



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3. GEOGRAPHY

A 2017 study by the Wildlife Institute of India described the Haryana portion of the Aravali range as the country's most degraded forest. In this context, explain the significance of Aravalli mountains.

KEY POINTS

Reasons for forest degradation

- By throwing open a sizeable part of the Aravali hills for commercial activities by Haryana Government.
- Misuse of the Aravali forests for realty, mining and other commercial purposes.
- Lakhs of dwelling units, commercial buildings and industries have already come up in this fragile mountainous track.
- Around 30 per cent of the Aravali area falling in the Faridabad and Gurugram districts and notified as protected forests now stands privatised.

Significance of Aravalli range

- The 690-km Aravali range, spanning parts of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat, serves as the lungs for the highly polluted National Capital Region (NCR) besides acting as a natural shield against the creep of the Thar Desert.
- Apart from preventing the spread of desertification, it hinders the dust-laden winds from Rajasthan to enter the NCR where the air quality is already grievously poor.
- It also plays a critical role in recharging the groundwater of the region around it.
- Moreover, it is the source of origin of several rivers and rivulets, including Sabarmati, Luni, Chambal and Krishnavati, besides being the catchment of lakes like Damdama, Dhauj, Badkhal and Surajkund.



- More importantly, it harbours rich biodiversity, hosting numerous species of plants, birds and animals. It is the corridor between Asola Bhatti sanctuary in Delhi and Sariska in Rajasthan for several kinds of animals, including leopards, hyenas, jackals, mongoose and others.
- Considering that Haryana has the lowest forest cover in the country, barely 3%, any action that would further curtail the forested land is indefensible.

Measures to protect Aravalli forest

1. Take active measures to stop illegal mining in these areas.
2. Recognize entire extent of Haryana Aravallis deemed as forest are as recognized by Supreme Court.

What is meant by Day Light saving time? Discuss its various implications.

KEY POINTS

Daylight Saving Time (DST) is the practice of setting the clocks forward one hour from standard time during the summer months, and back again in the fall.

The rationale behind setting clocks ahead of standard time, usually by 1 hour during springtime, is to ensure that the clocks show a later sunrise and later sunset — in effect a longer evening daytime.

Implications

Positive

- Less than 40% of the countries in the world use DST to make better use of the natural daylight in the evenings.
- The difference in light is most noticeable in the areas at a certain distance from Earth's equator.
- Some studies show that DST could lead to fewer road accidents and injuries by supplying more daylight during the hours more people use the roads.
- DST is also used to reduce the amount of energy needed for artificial lighting during the evening hours.

Negative

- But, modern society uses so much energy-consuming appliances all day long that the amount of energy saved is negligible.
- Disruption of the body clock or circadian rhythm, disrupted sleep patterns might affect memory, learning, social interactions and overall cognitive performance.
- USA Today, cited a study that found DST increases the risk of heart attack by 25%, while a return to original times lowers the risk by 21%.

Do India need a separate time zone for northeastern states ? Critically examine

KEY POINTS

- The people, legislators and industrialists from the northeastern part of the country have been demanding a separate time zone for a long time as they genuinely face problems with the existing Indian Standard Time (IST).
- The existing IST is said to be badly affecting their lives as the sun rises and sets much earlier than the official working hours. An early sunrise leads to loss of many daylight hours by the time offices or educational institutions open.
- In winter, this problem gets even more severe as the Sun sets much early and, therefore, more consumption of electricity is required to keep life active.

Separate time zone for NE states

- Importance of sunrise and sunset timings on the biological activities of living beings;



- Simple analyses of synchronising the sunrise and sunset timings across the country to the usual office hours of 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM.
- Minimisation of the spatial extension at the proposed border of time demarcation so as to avoid any kind of railway accidents;
- The proposed time zones would be beneficial for electricity saving, and the technical implementation mechanisms of the proposed two new time zones in the country.

Preference to Single time zones

- Government cited strategic reasons for having single time zone.
- India has a huge population; if the country were divided into two time zones, there would be chaos at the border between the two zones. It would mean resetting clocks with each crossing of the time zone. Railway signals are not fully automated and many routes have single tracks.
- This banks, offices, industries and multinational companies which need to be constantly interconnected. This will be further detrimental to productivity and to the interests of the eastern region.
- Having a separate time zone for the eastern region will provide no energy or other benefits to the rest of the country.
- The people in the Northeast sense a distance from the mainland and a separateness in clock time may add it.

What is meant by Maden Jullian Oscillation? Discuss its various impacts in the Indian Ocean.

KEY POINTS

Maden-Jullian-Oscillation is an eastward moving disturbance of clouds, rainfall, winds and pressure, circles the planet along the tropical belt in 30-80 days.

During its global ride, it intensifies and transfers a part of its energy to the underlying ocean.

Impacts in Indian Ocean

- When the MJO winds reach eastern Indian ocean, particularly over northwest Australian basin, MJO's energy is transferred deep down to the ocean bottom leading to the oscillation of the entire column.
- The oscillation is amplified through interplay of underlying topography and non-uniform density of sea water across the water column.
- The oscillation is further radiated out through fast moving sea waters and eventually invade entire tropical Indian Ocean within some hours.
- These waves carry lot of energy and momentum, rise and fall of the Indian ocean leads to mass exchanges between Indian and Pacific Ocean.
- This further influences the polar motion of earth, length of the day of the earth, accuracy of Global positioning Systems.
- Moreover, MJOs being a low pressure system known to facilitate cyclone formation over Indian Ocean.

Discuss the influence of El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) on Northeast monsoon in India and its connection with rocks in Meghalaya.

KEY POINTS

- A new study led by researchers from a US university, on the rock formations in a cave near Cherrapunji in Meghalaya, has found new evidence to suggest that India's winter rainfall could be influenced by the state of the ocean waters in the faraway Pacific and the rocks provide evidence of it.

- This relationship is not so strongly established with the winter monsoon, also called as the northeastern monsoon, which occurs during the months of October, November and December and is vital for several regions in the Northeast and India's eastern coast.
- ENSO is known to have an impact on the winter monsoon as well but is weaker and opposite.
- The warming of sea-surface waters, for example, is seen to help winter rainfall rather than suppressing it. The impact varies in time and space.
- The influence is weaker in October and stronger in November and December. Similarly, the rainfall over southeastern peninsular India and Sri Lanka is strengthened with warming ocean, but is diminished over Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines.
- Their findings are based on more than three years of research on stalagmites (mineral deposits, mainly limestone, in caves) of the Mawmluh Cave, near Cherrapunji, in the East Khasi Hills district.
- These solid stalagmite structures, or mineral deposits, are the result of slow but steady water dripping in the caves, and contain several thin layers of different kinds of minerals that get picked up while the water is flowing.
- From a careful study of the composition of these stalagmites, scientists can deduce the amount of rainfall that could have happened over the caves in the past, or even whether the water was a result of local rainfall, or had flown in from a different place.
- The researchers in this case were able to estimate local variations in rainfall in the past, and then correlate it with old ocean records of the Pacific Ocean.
- Stalagmite records from monsoon regions, including India, are vital to understanding past variability in the global climate system and the underlying reasons for this variability.

G.S PAPER II

4. POLITY

Though the Official secrets act is an outcome British legacy, the relevance of the act still exists today. Analyse

KEY POINTS

Official Secrets act(O.S.A), British legacy

- The Indian Official Secrets Act, 1904 was enacted during the time of Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905.
- The Indian Official Secrets Act (1923) was extended to all matters of secrecy and confidentiality in governance in the country. It states clearly that actions which involve helping an enemy state against India are strongly condemned.
- The secrecy law broadly deals with two aspects — spying or espionage, which is dealt with in Section 3 of the Act, and disclosure of other secret information of the government, which is dealt with in Section 5.

Significance of the OSA

- Help prevent leakage of secret information to enemy state.
- Streamlining administration at all levels
- Curbing unofficial spying.

Criticisms of OSA



- Direct conflict with Right to Information act 2005, as OSA can be used to override RTI.
- Potential breaches of national security, is often misinterpreted.
- The Section comes in handy to book journalists when they publicise information that may cause embarrassment to the government or the armed forces.

Analyse the applicability of concept of Indian secularism with relevant illustrations.

KEY POINTS

- In keeping with this idea of religious freedom for all, India also adopted a strategy of separating the power of religion and the power of the State. Secularism, refers to this separation of religion from the State.
- The Indian Constitution mandates that the Indian State be secular. According to the Constitution, only a secular State can realise its objectives to ensure the following:
 - that one religious community does not dominate another;
 - that some members do not dominate other members of the same religious community;
 - that the State does not enforce any particular religion nor take away the religious freedom of individuals.

India uses a strategy of distancing itself from religion. The Indian State is not ruled by a religious group and nor does it support any one religion.

- Example - In India, government spaces like law courts, police stations, government schools and offices are not supposed to display or promote any one religion.
- Article 25 of the constitution of India emphasise on the propagation of ones' religious principles without impinging on the forcible conversions.

Indian secularism works to prevent the above domination is through a strategy of noninterference. This means that in order to respect the sentiments of all religions and not interfere with religious practices.

- Example- Undertaking religious processions with the permission of concerned authorities.

Indian secularism works to prevent the domination listed earlier is through a strategy of intervention.

- Example- State's stance against the honour killings.

The intervention of the State can also be in the form of support. The Indian Constitution grants the right to religious communities to set up their own schools and colleges. It also gives them financial aid on a non-preferential basis.

5. GOVERNANCE

What are the prime objectives of Competitive Commission of India (CCI) ? A knowledge gap at CCI in existing digital markets decreases the ability of its regulatory functions. Do you agree with this view? Analyse

KEY POINTS

Objectives of CCI

- Prevent policies and practices which have an adverse effect on constructive competition in the economy.
- Promote and help sustain healthy competition in the market.
- Look after the interest of the consumers.
- Create awareness and advocate for fair competition practices.

- And finally, ensure freedom of trade in the market.

Knowledge gap in CCI

- The principal reason is that the regulator has not concentrated on building up its internal capacity in digital markets is that it has traditionally packed with retired or about-to-retire bureaucrats who have shown no or little specialised knowledge of the domain of the anti-competitive body.
- The present composition of three members includes only one economist, selected after a long gap. There has been nobody from finance or from any technology sector.
- In the absence of specialists, CCI has examined competition issues on the basis of legalese rather than as economic issues.
- It perceives competition as essentially freedom from government policies and laws that circumscribe markets, excluding the digital market where global markets belong to this category.
- CCI lacked to foresee the digital markets are a great arena for the spread of what is called network economics (the ability of firms in these spaces to connect consumers on platforms), where firms dominating the digital market excluding the competitors.

6. GOVERNMENT POLICIES

How does the tokenisation of card transactions result in the enhancement of digital payment ecosystem in India ?

KEY POINTS

- **Tokenisation**, is a process in which sensitive card information is replaced with a randomly generated unique token or symbol.
- Tokenisation is a highly-secure method of protecting card credentials. It is a process in which sensitive card information is replaced with a randomly generated unique token or symbol.
- These tokens would ensure that sensitive card data is not transmitted or stored in an unsecure format.
- The data-centric security approach focuses on substituting the sensitive data with a non-sensitive equivalent that is meaningless or has no value to those who are trying to source the data.
- The primary advantage of tokenisation is security, and over time it can be integrated with other technologies.
- At no point does card data ever get stored within the retailer's environment.
- Further, tokenisation can be the answer to securing not just payments, but other aspects of commerce as well, including the transmission and storage of electronic health records and age verification identity checks, among others.
- Moreover this provides insulation to the cyber security attacks and prevents the leakage of information to the hackers, thereby earning the trust of users.
- This tend to increase the online transactions and improves the use digital mode of payments.

Does India need a comprehensive national policy on climate change for better mitigation and adaptation? Analyse

KEY POINTS

Yes, Indian needs a comprehensive policy on Climate change.

Reasons

- This brings issue of Global warming onto the legislative agenda (National Importance), enable executives to discuss debate about the issue evoking response among people.

- Ensures speedy implementation of programmes designed to mitigate and adapt to climate change, National action plan on Climate Change.
- Enables Co-operative federalism to play key role in mitigation and adaptation to climate change.
- Increase in sea level poses huge threat to Coastal areas and results in displacement of people towards hinterland. To accommodate them we need a legal frame work.
- Moreover rapid melting of Himalayan glaciers poses risk of floods in northern plains, landslides on hill slopes, glacial lake outburst flood.
- Increase desertification makes land infertile, climate resilient crops has to be developed according to the agroclimatic regions of India.

The launch of National Common Mobility Card is one of the huge leap towards urban development in India. Discuss its advantages and disadvantages.

KEY POINTS

- NCMC cards are bank-issued cards on debit/credit/pre-paid card product platform. A customer could use this single card for making payments across all segments including metro, bus, suburban railways, toll, parking, smart city and retail shopping.
- The stored value on card supports offline transaction across all travel needs with minimal financial risk to involved stake-holders.
- The indigenously-developed card will enable users to pay for multiple kinds of charges including transport, metro services, toll tax, parking charges, retail shopping as well as to withdraw money across the country.

Advantages

- It helps commuters to save time and efforts.
- It promotes smart travel as a card can be used in different modes of transport.
- It gives high degree convenience to people as they have no longer stand in a line for the ticket.
- It works as a debit card ensures proper customer support services.
- Time efficient, very easy and cashless.

Disadvantages

- It is very difficult for uneducated people as they unable to read and write.
- As the technology changes the whole process of a transaction even the upgrade affects the people .
- Sometimes delay leads to poor customer services.
- Due to large dependency on technology there will be large setting up cost and for solving the problem of the public more man power is needed.

Discuss the major initiatives and schemes taken by Government of India to empower women in the field of Science and Technology.

KEY POINTS

- Department of Science and Technology (DST) launched DISHA Programme for Women in Science to address these issues and made focused efforts to not only facilitate the re-entry of such women to mainstream science by offering them opportunities to pursue R&D, take up projects having distinct societal impact and explore a career in Intellectual Property domain.
- KIRAN (Knowledge Involvement in Research Advancement through Nurturing). DST is not only addressing various issues related to women scientists (unemployment, break-in career, relocation, etc.) but is also aimed



at providing opportunities in research, entrepreneurship, science communication, technology development/demonstration and self-employment.

- Consolidation of University Research for Innovation and Excellence in women universities (CURIE) is another component of KIRAN that has a focus to develop state-of-the-art infrastructure to help large number of women to enhance their S&T skills and knowledge in order to make a fulfilling career in this domain besides promoting research culture in such institutions.
- Further, KIRAN is providing budgetary support for creating Women Technology Park (WTP) where appropriate S&T packages for women are developed to improve livelihood and health & nutrition besides reducing drudgery in order to enhance their quality-of-life.
- The President of India Conferred Rani Lakshmbai Award (Nari Shakti Puraskar 2015) to Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC), which is an autonomous institution of my ministry, for its work for women empowerment in R&D through Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) training and today more than 10% of active patent professionals in the country are from this programme.
- To recognise outstanding women scientists, awards such as Janki Ammal Women Bio-scientist Award and SERB (Science Research and Engineering Board) Women Excellence Award, etc. are conferred and today women scientists are facilitated to visit prestigious foreign institutions for undertaking research and training.

Faster adoption and Manufacturing of Electric vehicles (FAME) phase-2 is an improvement over phase-1, but needs some alterations to improve the quality of life. Analyse

KEY POINTS

Improvement over Phase 1

- FAME II is an improvement on the earlier phase on a few counts. The scheme has been allotted Rs 10,000 crore, which is over a tenfold jump from Rs895 crore set aside for the first phase.
- With more than half the allocation going towards e-buses and e-three-wheelers, including e-rickshaws, the focus of FAME II is on creating green mass transport systems.
- FAME II essentially encourages only electric technology and in that, only lithium ion battery or other newer-technology, battery-based vehicles. The only exception is with respect to four-wheelers, where strong hybrids and plug-in hybrids are also eligible for incentives.
- FAME II's focus on electrification of public transport is in sync with the government's vision for 2030 put out by the NITI Aayog.

Flaws in Phase-2

- But with EV penetration in India currently at an abysmal 1 per cent, FAME alone is not enough to reach the 2030 target, be it for public transport or private vehicles.
- While the scheme encourages privately-owned e-two-wheelers, on the four-wheeler front, the emphasis is only on vehicles registered for commercial purposes.
- Given the huge ownership of privately-owned cars, excluding green personal cars from FAME incentives was a major flaw.

For better quality of Life

- To encourage faster adoption, State governments should chip in with fiscal and non-fiscal incentives for manufacture and sale of clean energy vehicles.
- Karnataka, Kerala and Delhi have come out with their EV policies. Supply chain incentives in the form of lower import duties or other local taxes for critical parts must be available and affordable.
- A robust charging infrastructure is absolutely crucial, inclusion of personal cars category is the need of the hour.



These measures will go a long way in making EVs popular by lowering ownership and running costs. For transport to go truly green, it must also be accompanied by a rising share of renewables in electricity output. Environmentally sustainable batteries too should gain ground.

The productivity of sugar industry can be improved by focusing on basic reforms like deregulation, rather than providing bailout packages. Examine.

KEY POINTS

Existing flaws in bail out packages

- The loans allocated for setting up new ethanol manufacturing plants, including standalone distilleries, to augment the overall ethanol production capacity.
- The objective is to encourage the use of B-heavy molasses (which still has some extractable sugar) and sugarcane juice to make ethanol, sacrificing the main product sugar.
- The long-term implications of direct conversion of cane juice into alcohol are truly worrisome. It would tend to encourage larger cultivation of this water-guzzling crop which can be ecologically disastrous. India, being short of both land and water, can ill-afford to devote its prime agricultural land with assured irrigation facilities for biofuel production.
- Existence glut situation in markets because of restrictions in exports.

Needed basic reforms

- The sustainable solution to the sugar sector's persistent troubles lies, indeed, in carrying out basic reforms leading to total deregulation and decontrol of this industry.
- These included a revenue sharing-based pricing formula to link cane prices with those of sugar. This would let the production of both sugarcane and sugar to respond effectively to market demand.
- This helps in moderating shortages and gluts without hurting the interests of any stakeholder in this sector, be it the cane grower, sugar producer or consumer.
- Ethanol, which is a plentiful product in the sugar manufacturing process and is blended with petrol, can be a vital revenue earner for the mills.
- Reducing the sugar output will increase the sugar prices, paying of cane areas.

The action plans designed for Smart cities needs to be more holistic for the development of small/developing cities of the country. Elaborate

KEY POINTS

- Most of the action plans are just replications of successful projects in large cities like Delhi, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, etc which may not be appropriate for small and/or developing cities of the country.
- In most of the smart cities, the development process is planned in some pockets of the cities. For instance, in Bhubaneswar, it is in and around the road—Janpath.
- For instance, Bhubaneswar primarily needs a frequent mode of public transportation to provide connectivity with nearby towns, but the action plan started with the non-motorised mode of transportation for last-mile travel.
- In Pune, for modal transport, there already exists CNG buses and a BRT system; a metro network is also in progress, and, yet, the city is procuring e-buses. The inclusion of the new transport mode may cause disruption in the transportation system as well as in the administrative process.

- Given that urbanisation is one of the prime developmental issues, most of our Indian states are not efficient enough to decide where and how to prioritise their public finance amongst core developmental issues including education, health or small- and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) or for the city development missions of the state. L
- Lack of synergy between the practical evidence, research and action plans are diverting resource allocation from the priority sectors, especially for the backward states of the country.

Comprehensive approach

- Incremental actions, like the use of the battery operated electric rickshaws, at least for last-mile and short distance travel, car-pooling, etc, could actually enhance the capability of the system.
- Transformational actions are already in the strategic plan to change the fundamental attributes of the system in response to actual or expected impacts of the mission.
- For a holistic policy like the smart city mission, experts from different fields realise that a comprehensive understanding of the mission across all stakeholders is an urgent need to arrive at a common framework for the cities.
- Building the capacity of individuals, communities and governance systems to adopt the social and economic transitions should be the topmost priority of the mission.

Provision of quality electricity supply needs to be integrated with Saubhagya yojana for better socio-economic development of the country. Examine

KEY POINTS

- It is highly likely that the Central government declares that all houses in India have electricity connections.
- As per the latest reports on the Saubhagya website, only around 20,000 households in Chhattisgarh remain to be connected.
- This is just a good beginning, but reliable power supply is crucial.

Challenges in providing quality electricity supply

- Supply is managed by cash-strapped distribution companies which have no financial incentive to supply to the rural poor.
- Metering, billing and payment complaints, inordinate delays in issuing bills, which small consumers find tough to pay for newly connected households, thus leading to disconnection.
- Half the households experience eight hours of power cut in a day and nearly half the rural enterprises use non-grid supply options (Power outages)
- The nationwide village survey by the Ministry of Rural Development in 2017, indicates that only half the villages get more than 12 hours of supply.
- Agriculture gets only seven to eight hours of supply in most States, mostly during the night, with frequent interruptions.

For better socio-economic development

- There is a need to track post connection parameters like issue of first bill, hours of supply, distribution transformer failure rate and growth of non-domestic consumer connections.
- The Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS), which is presently urban focussed, should be extended to rural areas.
- Power from stranded generation capacity, depreciated plants and unutilised capacity can be provided at concessional rates to distribution companies for reliable supply in designated rural areas.



- State distribution companies could improve metering and billing and deploy bill payment centres with support from panchayat offices, post offices or health centres. Complaint procedures can be simplified through mobile applications and public hearings.
- Distribution companies should be financially penalised by the regulatory commissions for poor quality of supply.
- For community facilities like health centres where reliable supply is crucial, schemes to deploy kilowatt size solar plants with battery backup could be planned.
- Technology-led initiatives like prepaid meters, smart meters and direct benefit transfer should be attempted as pilot projects before scaling up.

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- As per the latest reports on the Saubhagya website, only around 20,000 households in Chhattisgarh remain to be connected.
- This is just a good beginning, but reliable power supply is crucial.

Challenges in providing quality electricity supply

- Supply is managed by cash-strapped distribution companies which have no financial incentive to supply to the rural poor.
- Metering, billing and payment complaints, inordinate delays in issuing bills, which small consumers find tough to pay for newly connected households, thus leading to disconnection.
- Half the households experience eight hours of power cut in a day and nearly half the rural enterprises use non-grid supply options (Power outages)
- The nationwide village survey by the Ministry of Rural Development in 2017, indicates that only half the villages get more than 12 hours of supply.
- Agriculture gets only seven to eight hours of supply in most States, mostly during the night, with frequent interruptions.

For better socio-economic development

- There is a need to track post connection parameters like issue of first bill, hours of supply, distribution transformer failure rate and growth of non-domestic consumer connections.
- The Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS), which is presently urban focussed, should be extended to rural areas.
- Power from stranded generation capacity, depreciated plants and unutilised capacity can be provided at concessional rates to distribution companies for reliable supply in designated rural areas.
- State distribution companies could improve metering and billing and deploy bill payment centres with support from panchayat offices, post offices or health centres. Complaint procedures can be simplified through mobile applications and public hearings.
- Distribution companies should be financially penalised by the regulatory commissions for poor quality of supply.
- For community facilities like health centres where reliable supply is crucial, schemes to deploy kilowatt size solar plants with battery backup could be planned.



- Technology-led initiatives like prepaid meters, smart meters and direct benefit transfer should be attempted as pilot projects before scaling up.

7. SOCIAL JUSTICE

Implementation of complete ban on alcohol has been a challenging task and its outcomes have been inconsistent. Analyse with relevant illustrations.

KEY POINTS

- Despite heavy monitoring and regulation by the government, the illegal manufacture, sale and consumption of liquor continues to cripple the prohibition efforts of the Gujarat government.
- A more recent example is from Bihar, where bootlegging, illegal trade and consumption of alcohol is rampant since the government brought in prohibition in 2016.
- This resulted in steep increase of substance abuse and bootlegging in Bihar Kerala as well during the year following the liquor ban.
- The immediate effect of prohibition is a dent on states' revenue. State governments need to reflect on their perspective about prohibition of alcohol, especially because it is a significant loss to the interlinked industries, such as tourism, brewing industries.
- The tourist-friendly liquor ban policy prevalent in Gujarat clearly shows that the government takes cognisance of the relationship between the availability of alcoholic beverages and tourist influx.
- In the contemporary setting, the tourism sector has multiple inter-linkages with other industries such as food services, hospitality, retail and real estate.
- Therefore, to prevent spill-over on other sectors, over the years Gujarat has evolved its prohibition policy to allow consumption of alcohol under certain circumstances, with the provision of health permits, tourist permits and group permits for holding business meetings.
- The state also has authorised retail shops that are allowed to sell liquor to permit holders directly. The effect of this favourable approach towards the tourism sector is reflected in the high inflow of tourists, both domestic and international, despite it being a prohibition state.
- So a cautious regulated approach need to be taken by state governments in-line with their nature of state's economy, since alcohol is a state subject.

Improvements in the physical infrastructure, investments in social capital and social interventions can reduce the incidence of crime and violence in India. Explain with examples.

KEY POINTS

Improvements in physical infrastructure

Basic services like electricity, road and other connectivity infrastructure, sustainable waste management, etc, which, in turn, lends a degree of accountability, ownership and care over the society's members and its building blocks.

Examples

- Installation of CCTVS create fear in the minds of wrong doer.
- Provision of street lights reduces the intensity of crimes.
- Metro train facilities in cities has significantly reduced the crimes in the city.

Social interventions

Mediation training programmes that sensitise participants towards resolving conflicts before they escalate and other behavioural and sensitisation initiatives.

Examples

- Initiatives like trekking, cycling, Marathon not only improves the physical health but also increases the mental strength and capabilities.
- Self help groups help improve economic development of households.

Building social capital

The networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively.

Examples

- Associations formed in apartments, housing colonies help solve the complex problems in the surrounding area. This leads to reduction in crime and violence.

8. HEALTH

India's medical education system needs further reforms for better development of health care across country. Examine.

KEY POINTS

Need for Reforms in Medical education system

- An RTI query has revealed that only 920 government medical college seats were added in the last five years, against an approval of 10,000 seats.
- India today has just one government allopathic doctor for over 11,000 people, according to the findings of National Health Profile 2018; this is against the WHO norm of 1:1,000.
- But private care is both expensive (Ayushman Bharat is trying to fix this) and of uncertain quality, for which the state of medical education is in sub-standard conditions.
- Lack of dedicated doctors to practice in rural areas, freshly graduated students focus more on commercial aspects since the cost of medical seats are huge in private colleges, while Government medical colleges has less number of seats.
- Lack of Psychiatrists in India poses great challenges in addressing mental health issue, proportion of Psychiatrists is verless in India when compared to World Standards.
- Curriculum in colleges focus more on rote learning rather than clinical experience for Doctors, pressurising students to get more marks affects the quality of education system.

Needed Reforms

- Implementation of National Medical Commission Bill in a move to overhaul the MCI model and replace it with a governance system less controlled by doctors themselves. Roles such as framing curricula, setting standards, monitoring ethics and conducting examinations will be streamlined.
- The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test for all medical colleges will hopefully raise the quality of medical students. However, medical education itself needs to move beyond rote learning to a focus on clinical practice, with smart technologies playing a bigger role in the classroom.
- Major weightage for Medical ethics in Curriculum to produce unselfish, dedicated doctors for better development of health care in the country.
- Providing reasonable amount of seats in Government Medical colleges at PG and UG level.



Despite the National Family Health Survey-4 (NFHS-4) showing an encouraging improvement in child nutrition, India continues to fare poorly in world rankings on child nutrition. Examine

KEY POINTS**Improvement in Child nutrition**

- Effective implementation of Integrated child Development scheme.
- Dedication of ASHA , Anganwadi workers.
- Effective outreach of Jananai Shishu Suraksha Karayakram.

Existing gaps to tackle Child malnutrition

- Lack of Centralised data
- Lack of hygiene in rural areas, slum areas.
- Continuation open defecation practices till now.
- Lack diversity in nutrition.

Measures needed

- The focus must be on the pregnant, breastfeeding mother and the child, especially in the first two years of the child's life, which is the crucial phase for physical, mental and cognitive development.
- Given the size of the problem (38% of children under five years of age are stunted, according to UNICEF) and budgetary constraints, a targeted approach is needed.
- With the wealth of district-level data made available by NFHS-4, the focus districts can easily be identified. They are concentrated in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand.
- Pockets where child malnutrition is high should be identified, going down to the tehsil or taluka levels and further down to clusters of Anganwadis located in areas such as urban slums and those with high concentrations of disadvantaged populations.
- We need more public programmes with a direct or indirect impact on nutrition in the selected areas. These should cover important nutrition-specific areas such as maternal nutrition, especially in the nine months of pregnancy and the six months of breastfeeding.

A teacher's knowledge and pedagogical skill are critical factors that affect a child's learning outcomes. Discuss the challenges in teachers' education system in India and suggest measures for better teaching quality.

KEY POINTS**Challenges in teachers' education system**

- Most states train teachers for 7-10 days in a year, which doesn't even address the large capacity gap in teachers.
- Almost none of the teacher training is on basic content.
- Teacher training is usually delivered through a three-level cascade of a master trainer, trainer and then the teacher, the delivery to the end-user is an extremely diluted form of original content.
- Training content is not personalised to the needs of the teacher and rarely translates to change in strategies inside the classroom.

Remedial measures

- The first step is to conduct a rigorous and externally implemented Teacher Needs Assessment that can identify learning gaps and group teachers based on their abilities such that personalised learning pathways could be created for each.
- Need design a comprehensive curriculum for each group of teachers that is responsive to their specific needs and mapped to the wide gulf that exists in teacher knowledge.
- It has to cover grade-wise content for teachers who are themselves unfamiliar with basic concepts, and must include teaching strategies and pedagogy relevant to the realities of a government classroom, as well as tools to deal with challenges associated with teaching first-generation learners from underprivileged backgrounds.
- Training delivery should be through a blended learning model where on-site physical training is supplemented by high-quality, targeted, scalable digital content hosted on platforms like DIKSHA.
- Lecture-mode sessions must be augmented by peer learning groups at cluster level and in-classroom action research projects that can be implemented through NGO support.

Explain the measures taken by the government of India that enabled higher education to capitalise on 4th Industrial Revolution.

KEY POINTS

- Microsoft India said it plans to train five lakh youth in artificial intelligence across the country over the next three years and set up AI labs in 10 universities.
- The announcement is being seen as a potential game-changer for the fledging sector in India. It also indicates the direction higher education in the country should be taking in the next decade.

Measures taken

- The Graded Autonomy status granted by the University Grants Commission (UGC), has given the freedom to higher education institutions to launch new courses, off-campus centres, skill development courses, and foster other academic collaborations with industry.
- In simple terms, this means that new-age courses in emerging technologies can be easily launched by universities without being delayed by the regulator's approval.
- Even as the country is debating liberalising the education sector, with an emphasis on autonomy and quality, our academic institutes lack a performance-based public ranking system. The gap is set to be filled after the Ministry of Human Resource Development launched the Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation and Achievements (ARIIA).
- Under this initiative, by April 2019, over 800 higher education institutes will be ranked on parameters related to innovation and entrepreneurship development. For example, universities that create an ecosystem for students to launch market-ready products, launch start-ups etc., through new courses, will be highly rewarded under the rankings.
- The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), on the other hand, has reduced the minimum credits needed for a degree from 180 to 160, thus effectively reducing a full semester of academic load for students and faculty.
- Through the AICTE-formulated National Student Start-up Policy, India's engineering education regulator is enabling bright students to take up courses in emerging technologies and learn practical engineering skills by working on prototypes and gain a "minor degree".
- The interlinking of these measures will let institutes adopt new technology courses (elective and minor) with industry partnerships and, for example, introduce a degree in MBA in Technology Entrepreneurship through incubators, which stand a greater chance of going up in innovation rankings.



As per Global Hunger Index, India suffers from a level of hunger that is serious. Discuss the basic factors responsible for it, and suggests remedial measures in context of existing schemes to reduce the problem of malnutrition.

KEY POINTS

- Data on undernutrition for children under the age of five from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) of 2005-06 and 2015-16 illustrates that the incidence of undernutrition in children in India is high.

Basic factors

- According to UNICEF India, another significant cause of U5MR is acute undernutrition, accounting for 38% of the deaths.
- Other important factors like nutritional status of adolescent girls (future mothers) and prenatal nutrition have received scant attention.
- Nutritional status runs in a viscous intergenerational cycle with adolescent girls with poor nutritional status later becoming undernourished pregnant women, who, in turn, are likely to give birth to children who are stunted, wasted or underweight.
- As a result, the high number of undernourished mothers are likely to give birth to undernourished children. In fact, according to the NFHS-4 report, children born to women with low body mass index (BMI less than 18.5 kg/m²) have a higher likelihood of being stunted, wasted or underweight.

Remedial Measures

- Effective implementation of The Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan provides safe delivery and takes care of mothers' health and scheme for Adolescent girls.
- Increasing the number of ASHA workers at Primary health care centres to increase awareness about the health of both mother and child.
- Diversification of food grains under public distribution system will improve the intake of nutritive food thereby reducing hidden hunger. Eg: Millets can be provided at fair price shops.

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KEY POINTS**Improvements in physical infrastructure**

Basic services like electricity, road and other connectivity infrastructure, sustainable waste management, etc, which, in turn, lends a degree of accountability, ownership and care over the society's members and its building blocks.

Examples

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Building social capital

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Examples

Associations formed in apartments, housing colonies help solve the complex problems in the surrounding area. This leads to reduction in crime and violence.

9. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

What is meant by Generalized system of Preferences? Discuss about its impacts on India's trade and its bilateral relationship with USA.

KEY POINTS

- Generalized System of Preferences is the USA's largest and oldest trade preference programme, established by trade act of 1974, promotes economic development by eliminating duties on thousands of products when imported from designated beneficiary countries.
- The programme sought to expand and cement the country's trade relations with numerous nations across the global south including majority of African nations after independence.

Impact on India's trade

Positive

- India consistently remained the largest beneficiary nation under the scheme, enabled India to access the US market at zero duty costs for the thousands of goods.
- It acted as catalyst for boosting exports in multiple sectors such as organic and inorganic chemicals, agricultural, marine products.

Negative

- According to Ministry of Commerce and Industry, India managed to export around 2000 items through GSP, showing the inability of the nation to build up trade competitiveness.
- This outcome also impacts the cost effectiveness and price competitiveness of USA's downstream industry and many manufacturing sector in USA.

Bilateral relationship with USA

- India has trade surplus with USA and withdrawal of India from GSP will be heavily affects the trade surplus component.
- Tariff restrictions is also expected from India's side for the products getting imported from USA.
- Arising protectionism across nations will hurt the economic relationship between India and USA.
- India needs to push for the high level diplomatic engagement with USA to protect the economic interests of India.

OIC invitation to India is an opportunity to expand relationships with the conservative Arab monarchies. Discuss the benefits of it and the cautionary measures to be taken while engagement.

KEY POINTS

Benefits of OIC invitation to India

- Increased confidence building measures, diplomatic engagement at the ministerial level, boosts the level of trust among participating nations.
- A new diplomatic opening and long term sustained political engagement with Islamic World.

- This becomes one of the important outcome of India's Look West policy.
- Opportunity for India to settle the crisis, problems taking place in the west asia.
- Moving towards this new framework has allowed both sides to stop being defensive about engaging with each other.
- India has good reason to be pleased that Pakistan can no longer veto India's engagement with critical states of the Middle East.
- Strengthening India's Energy Security.

Cautionary measures to be taken

- China's dominance in west asia has to be taken into consideration during diplomatic engagement.
- Maintaining the crux of Non-Aligned Movement
- Avoiding interference in the political affairs of west asian nations.
- Co-opting with other major powers rather than competing with them.

Discuss the brief history and geostrategic importance of Golan heights of the middle east.

KEY POINTS

Brief history of Golan Heights

- The Golan Heights were part of Syria until 1967, when Israel captured most of the area in the Six Day War, occupying it and annexing it in 1981.
- That unilateral annexation was not recognised internationally, and Syria demands the return of the territory.
- Syria tried to regain the Heights in the 1973 Middle East war, but was thwarted. Israel and Syria signed an agreement in 1974 and the Golan had been relatively quiet since.
- In 2000, Israel and Syria held their highest-level talks over a possible return of the Golan and a peace agreement. But the negotiations collapsed and subsequent talks also failed.

Geo-strategic importance of Golan heights

- Israel says that the civil war in Syria demonstrates the need to keep the plateau as a buffer zone between Israeli towns and the instability of its neighbour.
- Israel's government says it also fears that Iran, an ally of Syria is seeking to establish itself permanently on the Syrian side of the border in order to launch attacks on Israel.
- Both sides covet the Golan's water resources and naturally fertile soil.
- There is one crossing point (Qneitra) between the Israeli and Syrian sides, which until the Syrian civil war broke out in 2011 was used mainly by United Nations forces, a limited number of Druze civilians and for the transportation of agricultural produce.
- A United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) is stationed in camps and observation posts along the Golan, supported by military observers of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).

Minimum alternate tax for Multinational corporations is the need of the hour to prevent the loss of revenues in the developing countries. Discuss

KEY POINTS

- Managing Director of IMF, has called upon the developing countries to impose heavier taxation on MNCs. As large MNCs pay little tax and avoid normal tax with ease, the current situation is harmful to low income countries.

- Developing countries are vulnerable to the phenomenon of Base Erosion and Profit-Shifting. Non-OECD countries collectively lose about \$200 billion per year in revenue, this is about 1% of their GDP.
- Principles governing the transfer pricing law and its concomitant arms-length guidance allowed profitable firms to pay little tax. There is a need for an alternative international tax architecture.

Measures for global tax architecture

- Create minimum tax schemes and reduce the scope for shifting profits to low tax locations.
- Apply principles governing inbound investment allowing low income countries to retain more revenue by imposing minimum withholding taxes on cross-border payments like fees for services charged by the parent companies to local subsidiaries.
- Create a system that fully taxes routine profits on basic activities in the country in which they take place, while splitting any remaining profits among all the relevant nations. This is the 'residual profit allocations' approach. This will call for multilateral agreement.
- Multinationals may lose profits nominally in India but they extract large sums through royalties and other fees which are all tax deductible. They accumulate losses in India in order to ward off competition in the future.
- The IMF points out that Double Tax Agreements impose revenue risks for developing countries by limiting the source taxing rights in order to attract FDI.

What is meant by special and differential treatment (S&DT) under WTO? What will happen to India's trade regime if this provision is withdrawn ?

KEY POINTS

- S&DT gives developing countries special rights and enables them to take commensurate trade commitments based on their economic capacity.
- S&DT was adopted by the WTO in recognition of the fact that developing countries don't always have the required capacity or resources or indeed the level of market reforms for them to fully compete in all trade arenas.
- But a reversal of S&DT will not only stall the progress under the WTO but will also actively discourage the participation of developing countries in the multilateral trade framework.

Consequence of Withdrawal of S&DT

- Under the circumstances, India is likely to be hurt further if the S&DT aspect is withdrawn from the WTO.
- For instance, it is feared that in the absence of the S&DT provision, India will not be able to secure the livelihood concerns of its fishermen in the new trade rules for fisheries subsidies.
- India will also lose its 10 per cent farm subsidy elbow-room, which will be reduced to 5 per cent.
- With reference to the S&DT revocation, however, India has made a more forceful attempt to fight it by raising an alarm on how it can cause lasting damage to the multilateral trading system.
- But Indian negotiators need to push harder, as the time is ticking fast for countries such as India to have a rule-based trading regime with S&DT built-in as an instrument of natural justice.



G.S PAPER III

10. ECONOMY

Discuss the impact of the recent actions taken by SEBI regarding commodity markets.

KEY POINTS

Impact of the actions taken by SEBI

Positive

- To permit mutual funds and portfolio managers to transact in commodity exchanges is yet another attempt to improve participation in this segment.
- Punishing the law breakers, SEBI order against those who involved in NSEL scam. SEBI has rejected their applications to offer commodity broking services.

Negative

- SEBI has rejected their applications to offer commodity broking services, didn't cause disruption in the commodity derivatives market.
- While volumes on commodity exchanges have not been impacted at all, other group companies belonging to these brokers have been issuing statements that they are not particularly affected.
- The SEBI's directive has been rendered not effective, because the commodity broking operations of the brokers carried out through other entities.
- Even as the regulator was investigating the malpractices of the commodity broking entities, allowing the commodity broking operations to continue in another garb seems meaningless.

The regulator needs to consider whether allowing investors to transact through such entities for other financial services is a sound idea.

How does the potential of small and medium business (SMBs) help in resolving the unemployment problem in India? Elaborate

KEY POINTS

- According to Ministry of Labour, SMBs—more accurately, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)—employ around 111 million people and contribute nearly 29% to India's GDP.
- India's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) base is the largest in the world after China.
- MSMEs largely confined to unorganized sector where significant amount of population gets employed, by addressing the needs of this sector employability potential can be increased exponentially.
- They are mostly established on personal savings or small borrowings from family and friends (reduce the burden on banks with respect to NPAs)
- They have suppliers and distributors based on trust and strong personal relationships; their manufacturing and service lines are reasonably well tested, establishing a strong foundation in business entity.
- They have an intimate knowledge of their markets and their customers and because they are small operations, they tend to have larger retention of employees. In most instances, they have mature businesses that already comply with regulatory norms.
- Moreover MSMEs preserve the not only cultural heritage of India and also act as lifeline to the Indian economy. Eg: Khadi Village Industries Commission helps in the export of cotton based products, handlooms in India etc.
- MSMEs further boosts the share of GDP in manufacturing sector, and boosts employment in non-farm sector thereby increase the incomes of the households (increasing percapita GDP).

- The fruits of demographic dividend can be reaped effectively by improving the employability in MSME sector.

What is meant by Foreign Exchange swap? Discuss its impact in the Indian Economy.

KEY POINTS

- Forex swap, refers to conduction of an auction by RBI that will see banks selling dollars to the RBI in exchange of rupees.
- An FX swap allows sums of a certain currency to be used to fund charges designated in another currency without acquiring foreign exchange risk.

Impact in the Indian Economy

- During the time of election which is known to pull out currency from the market, forex swap from the RBI may help partly bridge the liquidity deficit in market.
- If the auction is successful, it is expected to immediately release \$5 billion worth of rupee liquidity into the banking system, thus cooling short-term bond yields.
- The auction will immediately shore up RBI's foreign exchange reserves by \$5 billion.
- Banks which are currently short on SLR securities and cannot participate in OMOs, will receive liquidity infusions too.
- The swap deal may temporarily bring down hedging costs in the domestic market, helping local firms with foreign exchange exposures hedge their open trade or loan exposures.
- The forex swap, like OMOs, essentially puts more money in the hands of banks, who in turn have discretion to decide whether to step up credit to lower-rated borrowers.

Discuss the various factors that attributes to the increase in contract workers' intensity in the manufacturing sector.

KEY POINTS

- Data from the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI), which covers establishments registered under the Factories Act, shows a surge in contract worker usage in the organised manufacturing sector.
- The rise in the use of contract workers who are not employed directly by the employer, but by an intermediary or contractor on short-term contracts, indicates significant informalisation of the organised workforce.

Factors that drive the contractualisation of workforce

- Rigid employment protection legislations, in particular the Industrial Disputes Act (IDA,1947), which makes it necessary for firms employing more than 100 workers to obtain the permission of State governments to lay off workers (which takes more time for the employer to hire workers).
- A case in point is the amendments made by several State governments since 2015 to raise the threshold to which IDA applies to 300 workers.
- Bu still capital-intensive and not labour intensive industries, which have witnessed a sharper increase in contract worker usage, contract workers intensity.
- Because, contract workers receive roughly half the wages of those workers employed directly by firms. Also, firms make significant savings by hiring contract workers as they receive far fewer employee benefits compared to regular workers. This enables firms to reduce costs and improve competitiveness.
- The presence of contract workers in the firms' workforce acts as an alternative workforce to suppress the bargaining power of their regular unionised workers.
- Making labour regulations more flexible and increasing the size threshold to which Factories Act, Industrial Disputes Act are unlikely to arrest the trend of increasing contractualisation.



- Contract Labour Act prohibits the use of contract labour in “core” and “perennial” activities. However, in practice these rules are not diligently followed.

Tariff Rate Quotas can act as a basic economic tool for deal making in trade discussions at global levels by balancing the interests of domestic producers and consumers. Examine

KEY POINTS

- A Tariff Rate Quotas is a mechanism that allows a set quantity of specific products to be imported at a low or zero rate of duty. TRQs are established under trade agreements between countries.
- TRQ is a limit on the quantity eligible for lower or zero duty.

Reason for TRQ

- TRQs protect domestic producers from having to face competition from large quantities of imports. They also allow consumers and producers in the importing country to get enjoy a benefit, a limited one, of lower priced products.
- TRQs have now become a way of reaching a consensus with trading partners.
- Tariff quotas are used on a wide range of products. Most are in the agriculture sector: cereals, meat, fruit and vegetables, and dairy products are the most common. Sugar is protected in most producing countries with tariff quotas.

Criticism of TRQ

- TRQ unviable in the context of long term economic policy.
- It acts in opposition to the goals of Make In India.
- It partially restricts investments, especially FDI.

For better trade at global level

- The TRQ administration system must not ‘impair or nullify the market access commitments negotiated’.
- It should be transparent, minimising transactional costs for traders.
- Tariff arbitrage is an effective tool for inducing local manufacture or at least domestic value addition in the country.
- It has been a basic tool in the country’s Phased Manufacturing Programme policy.

Fixing the proportion of shareable taxes help address the inefficiency in allocating financial resources to states, thereby strengthening the fiscal federalism. Comment

KEY POINTS

- Fiscal federalism is the economic counterpart to political federalism. Fiscal federalism is concerned with the assignment on the one hand of functions to different levels of government, and with appropriate fiscal instruments for carrying out these functions on the other.
- The Indian Constitution lays down the functions as well as taxing powers of the Centre and States. Providing fiscal autonomy to states via tax devolution enhances its administrative functions.
- The Fourteenth Finance Commission has broken new ground in terms of allocation of resources. One of its major recommendations has been to increase the share of tax devolution to 42% of the divisible pool.
- The Planning Commission was replaced by the NITI Aayog, which was simply a think-tank with no powers of resource allocation. In this context perhaps what the Fourteenth Finance Commission did was justifiable.

Suggestions for tax devolution



- The time has come for the Constitution to be amended and the proportion of shareable taxes that should go to the States fixed at the desired level.
- The shareable tax pool must also include cesses and surcharges as these have sharply increased in recent years. Fixing the ratio at 42% of shareable taxes, including cesses and surcharges.
- Allowing the States to levy tax on personal income, with some limitations. The freedom given to the States must be limited. It is important to note that the levy by the Centre and States together should be reasonable.
- Once this power is given to the States, the transfers from the Centre need adjustment, the first adjustment of constitutionally fixing the ratio is the easiest.

11. ENERGY

Rooftop solar programme for urban residential consumers is crucial towards achieving rooftop solar targets by 2022. Examine

KEY POINTS

- India has set an ambitious target of achieving 40 GW of rooftop solar capacity by 2022.
- While there has been progress on rooftop solar installations among industries and commercial consumers, the uptake among residential consumers has been slow.
- Urban residential electricity consumers are still hesitant to consider rooftop solar power as they don't have enough information about it, according to a 2018 study by the World Resources Institute.
- Most of the technical information provided by various sources, including the government, tends to be Internet-based.
- High costs of installation hinder the efficiency of programme.
- Lacks affordability for people and free electricity connections by Government over shadows the importance of rooftop solar power.

For better access to solar power

- Devising simple, well-designed and creative ways to disseminate information is important to help consumers make informed decisions. Information must be made easily available to the consumers on the amount of shadow-free roof area needed for generating a unit of electricity and pricing; operating the system, after-sales maintenance and support; and reliable rooftop solar vendors.
- The local electricity linesmen, electricity inspectors, and other nodal officials in the electricity department also have key roles to play.
- Objective information must be put out through various avenues, so that it is accessible to all segments of the population and in local languages.
- A robust feedback mechanism can be put in place for consumers to share their experiences with others.
- Consumer rights groups, rooftop solar system vendors, and resident welfare associations (RWAs) in larger cities are beginning to organise campaigns and workshops to generate awareness and create a dialogue with consumers.

Rooftop solar energy by urban residential consumers increase the fair share installed capacity of solar power contrivuting towards achieving the goals mention in INDC submitted by India.



12. INFRASTRUCTURE

The comprehensive development of water ways by India is one of the crucial factor in integrating South Asian region. Discuss

KEY POINTS

India is a land of rivers, and its 7,500-km-long coastline gives it access to Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. The mighty Indus river should be inspiring enough to use our great water resources to increase our share of global trade and promote internal trade.

Significance of Water Ways

- The Sagarmala project, an ambitious attempt to link India's coastal regions to inland waterways can be expanded to public transportation.
- India has vital maritime assets such as the Andaman and Nicobar Islands that are a gateway to South East Asia, and the development of maritime infrastructure out there can increase our role in the area of global shipping.
- India shares inland waterways with many of its neighbours, and the extension of the Sagarmala Project in the SAARC and the BIMSTEC regions can resolve the supply chain woes of our largest trading partners, and also help give India trade leadership in South Asia, acting as a counter to China's Belt and Road Initiative.
- Effective implementation of Kaladan multi modal project help integrate northeast with Myanmar and reduce the travelling time to Mizoram (giving boost to Act east policy).
- Development of water ways help strengthening India's neighbourhood policy as it promotes economic integration effectively. Cargos, shipments can easily transported at low costs with little impact on environment with the help of Water Ways.

13. AGRICULTURE

Why the recent initiatives by the Government of India haven't been able to resolve the problems of land reforms comprehensively? Give an account on policy measures that are required for comprehensive land reforms.

KEY POINTS

- The land reform legislations in post-Independence India consisted of redistribution of surplus land from the rich to the poor, abolition of intermediaries, security of tenure to tenants (and tenancy regulations) and consolidation of landholdings.
- As per the Agriculture Census 2010-11, there are 138.35 million farm-holdings in India, of which 92.8 million are marginal (<1 ha) and 24.8 million are small (1-2 ha).

Flaws in Land reforms

- PM-KISAN (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi) is one of the largest income support schemes for small-holder farmers in the world, the initiative does not cover landless agricultural labourers and the sharecroppers/tenants, unavailability of credible records.
- The model Land Leasing Act doesn't specify the rent on leased land and the period of lease and has rightly left it to the concerned parties in the land lease market without any interference from the government.
- Restrictive land leasing legislations in many parts of the country have led to informal and concealed tenancies without security of tenure. This has ultimately resulted in impeding investments in the agriculture sector and, thus, impacted agri-productivity.
- The poor maintenance of land records and slow pace of digitisation of land revenue administration is negatively impacting agriculture.



Required policy measures

- Ensuring effective modernisation and digitisation of land records, the computerisation of land records, land-property transactions via Bhoomi Rashi portal is the need of the hour.
- High resolution satellite imagery coupled with ground truthing (information collected on location) has also been suggested for the survey operations.
- Aadhaar is uniquely positioned to assist the ongoing process of modernising land records to validate land assets.
- The titling of land would require a massive upgradation of land records and existing processes through computerisation, capacity building of stakeholders and amending the appropriate land laws.
- This can be carried out in the PPP mode, as already demonstrated in few states of India.
- An updated record of ownership would help farmers avoid land-related litigations.

Ensuring food and nutrition security and tackling the looming threat of climate change makes land reforms necessary. A land reforms agenda, particularly the land leasing legislations and updated land records, should receive the highest priority to increase incomes of smallholders, tenant farmers and sharecroppers.

What are the major functions of Farmer Producer Organisations? Discuss the various challenges faced by them along with the remedial measures.

KEY POINTS

Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) is an entity formed by primary producers, viz. farmers, milk producers, fishermen, weavers, rural artisans, craftsmen. An FPO can be a Producer Company, a Cooperative Society or any other legal form which provides for sharing of profits/benefits among the members.

Major Functions

- To establish a collection centre to aggregate various lots of farmers, FPOs act as a custodian and facilitators for the member farmers produce
- Farmers remain the owners of their produce, price risk & return
- FPOs should aggregate similar quality of produce to make one lot, Separate lots should be made for different qualities
- Basic cleaning should be done by farmers for better price realization, Farmers to deliver produce at FPO's collection centre.
- FPOs to organize transport from collection centre to nearest e- NAM mandi & sensitize farmers to bring bigger lot sizes for ease of operations

Challenges faced by FPOs

- The shares of FPOs are not traded on the stock markets to forestall any risk of hostile takeover by way of equity acquisition.
- Difficulties in securing institutional finance, inability to operate in the regular agricultural markets and the lack of legal recognition under the contract farming regulations.
- The banks are usually wary of granting loans to the FPOs as they do not have assets of their own to serve as collaterals.
- Consequently, the FPOs have to rely on loans from non-banking financial companies or micro-finance companies to raise working capital at very high interest rates.
- The facility of cheap bank loans with liberal subvention of interest by the government that is available to individual farmers is denied to the FPOs, though they are purely farmers' organisations.



- Many other kinds of concessions, tax exemptions, subsidies and benefits provided to cooperatives, startups or other grassroots farm bodies have not been extended to the FPOs.
- They also usually face resistance in operating at the regulated *mandis* because of the resistance offered by the licensed traders and their cartels who wield significant hold over these markets.

Remedial Measures

- Providing FPOs easy access, affordability with respect to institutional finance.
- Benefits enjoyed by cooperatives needs to be extended to FPOs gradually.
- FPOs to be brought under the scope of interest subvention scheme.

14. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Discuss the salient features of India Developer Champions programme, and its significance to the Indian software industry.

KEY POINTS

Salient features

- Software and technology firm IBM, in co-operation with the ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY) and Nasscom, has announced 'India Developer Champions'.
- It is a multi-year programme which recognises developer contributions to the open source community.
- The programme will create a single, unified platform to acknowledge developer work in open source (It refers to a software in which original source code is made freely available and may be redistributed and modified).

Significance of the programme

- The multi-year programme would promote open technology initiatives and highlight the importance of India's growing developer ecosystem.
- It would help shine a light on the significant contributions coming from open source developers in India, gives fillip to Digital India Programme.
- It would enhance the skill sets of Indians demanded by the software industry in the World.
- The programme helps in identifying the best programmers from India and recognizes open source talent in India.

Despite showcasing the technological advancement of Indian space industry, Mission Shakti has some major concerns. Explain

KEY POINTS

- Anti-satellite missile test ASAT in short, it is the technological capability to hit and destroy satellites in space through missiles launched from the ground.
- Scientists and engineers at Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) launched a missile from the Dr A P J Abdul Kalam Island launch complex near Balasore in Odisha that struck a predetermined target: a redundant Indian satellite that was orbiting at a distance of 300 km from the Earth's surface (MICROSAT-R).
- The technology is aimed at destroying, if necessary, satellites owned by enemy countries. The test, however, can be carried out only on one's own satellite.
- It requires very advanced capabilities in both space and missile technologies that not many countries possess.

**Major concerns**

- Issue of space debris, affecting other satellites efficiency.
- Possibility of using space arena for wars by destroying the satellites.
- Almost every country agrees that space must not be used for wars and has spoken against weaponisation of space, but the missile test goes against this consensus.
- Crucial applications are now satellite-based, these include navigation systems, communication networks, broadcasting, banking systems, stock markets, weather forecasting, disaster management, land and ocean mapping and monitoring tools, and military applications. Destroying a satellite would render these applications useless.

15. ENVIRONMENT

Shifting to BS-6 norms by 2020 will pose many challenges for India. Identify those challenges and suggest better alternatives to overcome it.

KEY POINTS**Challenges in shifting to BS-6 norms**

- Increase in manufacturing costs due to change in design of the engine.
- Existing vehicles those run on diesels will not be a reliable mode of transport.
- Manufacturers, especially those who have set up large diesel engine capacity. They will have to compensate for fall in domestic demand by pushing exports.
- Predominantly diesel car manufacturers will have to change their plan and their profit gets impacted heavily.
- The Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) norms, that came into force from April 2017, mandates that average corporate CO₂ emission be less than 130 gm per km till 2022 and below 113 gm per kilometre thereafter. Diesel cars help manufacturers meet these norms. This now stands violated.
- The shift to petrol would increase the CO₂ emission and the manufacturers can meet the CAFE norms only by producing more fuel efficient petrol cars or electric/hybrid vehicles.

Better alternatives

- The government should catalyse this shift to green vehicles by offering technology based incentives
- The government can speed up things by coming out with Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) – 2 norms which should incentivise the manufacturer rather than the buyer.
- Costlier diesel engines will also increase the cost of public and goods transportation.
- Policies therefore should push buses with urban applications (city buses and corporate fleet) to embrace electrification.
- As regards goods movement, the only option is to reduce the heavy share of road transportation by focussing on coastal shipping and use of inland waterways to move goods.

Climate change is a peril to India's nutrition and health insecurity and specific actions have to be taken to curb the adverse impacts of it. Elucidate

KEY POINTS

- The World Health Organisation estimated that approximately 250,000 deaths annually between 2030 and 2050 could be due to climate change, and the poorest people, already suffering from the highest rates of undernutrition,.



- India's food production, is highly vulnerable to climate change largely because of its high sensitivity to monsoon variability, besides, about 65% of India's cropped area is rain-fed.

Specific actions need to curb adverse effects of Climate change

- Funding needs to be earmarked for designing, rolling out modern climate change, to reduce nutrition risks along the entire value chain, early warning systems are needed. Polarimetric Doppler weather radar, by ISRO.
- Mitigation and adaptation strategies are needed to offset adverse impacts of climate change on food production. Development of PUSA vivek 9 qpm, nutrient rich hybrid maize variety, drought tolerant, short maturity.
- Increasing the number of healthcare facilities/staff can improve access to healthcare for vulnerable populations, especially the rural poor, special training to be imparted to ASHA, Anganwadi workers.
- Integrated curricula drawing upon best practices from agriculture, public health, nutrition, transport and environment to prepare qualified interdisciplinary workforce should be designed and adopted.
- India's recently launched National Nutrition Mission or the POSHAN Abhiyaan envisions to integrate and strengthen action around all three pillars of nutrition—nutrition specific, nutrition sensitive and the enabling environment—to attain SDGs.
- This integrated platform is an ideal way to start advocating for PHN in an environment-friendly manner, but co-operative federalism should play a key role for effective implementation of the programme.

Discuss the various consequences of bauxite ore mining in India and suggest remedial measures for safe and sustainable environment.

KEY POINTS

Consequences of Bauxite ore Mining

Positive

- Aluminium acts as most important raw material in many industries like defence, alloy manufacturing, aviation etc.
- Contributes reasonable share of export of aluminium metal from the country.
- Provides employment to tribal people.

Negative

- The dust generated in the process of excavating bauxite will affect the health of workers and people in surrounding areas.
- Then, the leaching of bauxite in streams and rivers will do considerable harm to soil fertility and aquatic life.
- The storage of highly alkaline red mud (RM) generated as a by-product in the Bayer process of extraction of alumina from bauxite by using a hot solution of caustic soda and lime.
- Because of its high alkalinity and traces of toxic heavy metals, the disposal and storage of RM remain a massive challenge for alumina producers.
- RM is disposed of in ponds, lakes and streams after building a lining wall. Even then, a certain amount of seepage takes place, damaging soil in surrounding areas and all life forms.

Remedial Measures

- Recycling Red alkaline mud to obtain iron, extract rare earth metals.
- RM too could be used for making a host of building and construction materials, including cement and bricks.
- Application of Nanotechnology to increase the efficiency of extraction.



- Land reclamation by mining companies.

The global and regional action is often essential to tackle the transboundary nature of many environmental problems. Explain with examples.

KEY POINTS

- According to the recently released Global Environmental Outlook by UN Environment Assembly, the grow now, clean up later approach in most parts of the world has not factored in climate change, pollution or degradation of natural systems.
- It recommends to establish links across nations and regions to resolve the effects of Climate change, degrading natural systems.

Regional actions

- Researchers at IIT Guwahati, IIT Mandi and IISc Bengaluru have developed a climate change vulnerability map for 12 Himalayan states in India that will help prioritise resource allocation to address these vulnerabilities.
- The exercise is unique because for the first time all the 12 Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) States have used a common framework resulting in the production of comparable state level and within state, district level vulnerability maps.
- South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) provides a platform for its member countries to cooperatively work together in the fight against the burgeoning wildlife crime.
- It focuses on harmonization of policies and laws; strengthening institutional capacity; sharing of knowledge, experiences and technologies among the member countries; and promoting collaboration with national, regional and international partners to enhance the wildlife law enforcement in the region.

Global actions

- The **Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer**, is an international treaty designed to protect the ozone layer by phasing out the production of numerous substances that are responsible for ozone depletion.
- It is the only treaty which all UN members acceded to the treaty, and decreased the depletion of ozone layer successfully.
- **Bonn Convention**, COP is known as Global Wildlife conference—aims to conserve terrestrial, marine and avian migratory species throughout their range.
- The CMS is the only global and UN-based intergovernmental organization established exclusively for the conservation and management of terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species throughout their range.
- Example: Indian Pangolin, Amur falcon, Olive ridley turtles etc are protected under this convention.

Indicator species plays pivotal role in identifying the threats occurring to the environment. Explain with relevant illustrations.

KEY POINTS

- Indicator species are plants and animals that, by their presence, abundance, or chemical composition, demonstrate some distinctive aspect of the character or quality of the environment.
- More recently, indicator species have begun being used as measures of habitat or ecosystem quality. For example, many species of lichens are very sensitive to toxic gases, such as sulfur dioxide and ozone.
- These organisms have been monitored in many places to study air pollution. Severe damage to lichens is especially common in cities with chronic air pollution and near large producers of toxic gases, such as metal smelters.



- A survey of urban beehives around Vancouver, showed that the hives' honey contained minute levels of lead. It suggests that honey can be a sensitive indicator of air quality, offers an inexpensive way to monitor.
- Almost certain indication that water quality has been degraded by sewage or other oxygen-consuming organic matter. In contrast with most of the animals that live in an unpolluted aquatic environment, tubificid worms can tolerate water almost totally lacking in oxygen.

Pollution control bodies in India need to treat noise pollution on par with other kinds of pollution. Discuss

KEY POINTS

By directing the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to prepare plans to curb noise pollution across the country, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has initiated combat against a critical pollutant that has till now received scant attention.

Impacts of Noise pollution

- Prolonged exposure to any sound louder than 80 decibels, even if it is music, can impair hearing, breathing and thinking processes besides affecting overall human health and productivity.
- Noise beyond 120 decibels can cause biochemical changes in human bodies, raising cholesterol and blood pressure with the attendant health risks.
- Huge noise levels affects not only human beings but also animals.

Initiatives taken by Government

- Legal provisions to prosecute the noisemakers already exist. Section 2 (a) of the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, includes noise in the definition of pollutants.
- Noise pollution control rules, framed way back in 2000 under the amended and updated Environment Protection Act, 1996, went to the extent of specifying ambient standards for different places.

Criticisms

- These rules have remained only on paper. Though noise monitoring mechanisms were established in a few cities, these were hardly ever put to any gainful use by way of follow-up action.
- Lack of strategies like awareness, situation specific rules and regulations, enforcement of these mechanisms.

Measures to be taken by Government

- The manufacturers of public address systems and sound amplification equipment to provide inbuilt noise meters and data loggers in their products.
- This would help regulators, the pollution control bodies or the police – to establish violation and fix responsibility.
- Making prior permission obligatory for setting up public sound systems and bars placement of loudspeakers beyond 300 metres from the venues of religious, social or political events.
- Religious bodies, in particular, would need to be sensitised about the ill-effects of the loud sound to get them to change the noise-generating customs.
- The youth, who face the greatest risk of irretrievable hearing damage from personal music systems, also need to be targeted specifically for this purpose.



Discuss the various possible global consequences of warming of arctic region.

KEY POINTS

One of the most dramatic effects of global warming is seen in the Arctic region. In recent years the ice in the Arctic Sea has been melting rapidly. In 2007, a large part of the Arctic Sea became ice free in summer months for the first time in living history.

Possible consequences

The melting of the ice in the Arctic Sea has had two major geopolitical impacts:

- One, **new shipping routes** between the Atlantic Ocean in the west and the Pacific Ocean in the East, linking Europe with Asia in the north, have opened up. These consist of the Northern Sea Route (NSR) and the North West passage.
- Second, opening of the Arctic Sea has given way for **resource mapping** in the Arctic region. The Arctic Sea is estimated to have as much 10 to 20% of the world's oil and nearly 30% of natural gas.

Importance of arctic region:

- The territories in the Arctic Circle regions of Russia, Norway, Sweden and Finland have large minerals, particularly, the iron ore. Mineral exploration and exploitation is expected to pick up as Arctic shipping develops further in the future.
- Apart from the minerals, the Arctic regions will emerge as a new source of fishing. The region is already being called the 'kitchen of Europe'. The releases of new lands as a result of melting of ice will lead to development of the agriculture in the region.
- Polar tourism is picking up too. The small Norwegian town of Kirkenes attracts nearly 200,000 tourists in the year.

Negative consequences

- Arctic warming weakens the temperature difference between the tropics and the poles, resulting in less precipitation, weaker cyclones and mid-latitude westerly wind flow — a recipe for prolonged droughts.
- When the Arctic is warmer, the jet stream and other wind patterns tend to be weaker; the temperature difference in the Arctic and the tropics is less steep. The change brings less precipitation to the mid-latitudes.
- Currently, the northern high latitudes are warming at rates that are double the global average. This will decrease the equator-to-pole temperature gradient to values, causing droughts.

16. INTERNAL SECURITY

Discuss the concept of conflict with respect preparedness of the country in terms of both internal and external security. Also, discuss various alternatives to prevent it effectively.

KEY POINTS

- Conflict could be external or internal to the country. Internal conflicts can be further classified into two different categories.
- The first category of internal conflict is a conflict against the state. Examples of this are separatist movements, and suicide bombings. Suicide bombings are an extreme manifestation of conflict, carried out by a relatively organised group of non-state actors, and their goal is the destabilisation of the state. These incidents are referred to as terrorism.
- The second category of internal conflict is people-to-people conflict between different ethnic, religious and social groups. This could include religious riots, homicides, domestic violence, common violence, and other crimes. Ethnic and religious violence stand out in people-to-people conflict.
- External Conflict is driven by geopolitical interests, especially with other states.



- Internal conflict has replaced external conflict. While people-to-people internal conflict has declined, internal conflict against the state has increased.

Conflict and Poverty

- It is easier for terrorists and rebels to recruit people to their cause in poorer areas because their opportunity cost is low. This opportunity cost could be low for ethnically-based or separatist conflict, because recruitment can be made on the basis of ethnicity or regional affiliation.
- Poorer regions also have poorer state capacity, and hence the government is not able to deal with the rebels effectively. Geographic conditions, such as the presence of forest cover, can also be associated with the incidence of conflict.
- In addition, there is a strong spatial dimension to conflict. It is concentrated in areas that have higher poverty rates, weak institutions and are poorly integrated.

Alternative measures

- Reducing conflict through collaboration has been at the heart of development efforts from the ancient times, with the formation of village communities to improve collaboration.
- The most common approach is to use police forces to establish law and order in the affected areas.
- A different approach to dealing with conflict is to conduct negotiations and sign peace agreements with the insurgents. To be effective, this approach needs two requirements: the government must conduct coordinated negotiations, and the insurgent group must be genuinely interested in joining the mainstream economy.
- This approach has been tried in India. For instance, the Indian government has signed peace deals with several separatist groups in the north-eastern states
- Increased cross-border regional cooperation between countries should also be an integral part of any strategy to reduce conflict. Many internal conflicts in South Asia have cross-border dimensions.
- A key lesson on reducing conflict is that armed forces are generally not effective in combating terrorism. Regional cooperation initiatives are much more effective in countering terrorism. The challenge is to form Regional Partnership Forums, with support of donors and national policymakers, and given the flexibility to work with the local communities.

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