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G.S PAPER I

1. SOCIETY

Considering the poor performance on the Global Gender Gap report card, India needs to take a cue from Nordic countries to narrow the gender gap. Explain

KEY POINTS

- India's rank at 140 among 156 countries on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap index.
- Women represent just 27% of all manager positions. The share of women in professional and technical roles declined further to 29.2%.

Nordic countries

- Iceland has been the most gender-equal country in the world, has a culture of political empowerment, and 39.7% of parliamentarians and 40% of ministers are women.
- It also became the first country in the world to make the gender pay gap illegal, highest proportion of GDP expanded on childcare.
- Finland closing 86.1% of the gender gap stands second due to the increased presence of women in senior and managerial roles.
- Norway due to its additional period of a woman head of state and marginal improvements in the share of women in Parliament follows the queue.

Learning

- India should learn to actively include women's participation in the labour force.
- In India, debate on gender equality has to convert into actions that set into motion a holistic, integrated design and implementation path in India.
- Learning from the Nordic region, noteworthy participation of women in politics, institutions and public life is the catalyst for transformational change.
- Women need to be equal participants in the labour force to pioneer the societal changes the world needs in this integral period of transition.
- Every effort must be directed towards achieving gender parallelism by facilitating women in leadership and decision-making positions.
- Social protection programmes should be gender-responsive and account for the differential needs of women and girls.



GS PAPER - II

2. POLITY

A just outcome of a legal process is far more important than expeditious disposal of cases in Indian judicial system. In the context of National Lok Adalats. Explain.

KEY POINTS

- Lok Adalats were established to make justice accessible and affordable to all. It was a forum to address the problems of crowded case dockets outside the formal adjudicatory system.
- National Lok Adalats (NLAs) organised under the aegis of NALSA settle a huge number of cases across the country in a single day.
- Lok Adalats offer parties speed of settlement, as cases are disposed of in a single day, there is no strict application of procedural laws such as the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.
- To overcome the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, e-Lok Adalats were organised at both national and State level.
- However, besides efficiency and speed, Lok Adalats both online and offline should focus on the quality of justice delivered.
- The Supreme Court, in State of Punjab vs Jalous Singh (2008), held that a Lok Adalat is purely conciliatory and it has no adjudicatory or judicial function.
- As compromise is its central idea, there is a concern, and perhaps a valid one, that in the endeavour for speedy disposal of cases, it undermines the idea of justice.
- In a majority of cases, litigants are pitted against entities with deep pockets, such as insurance companies, banks, electricity boards, among others.
- In many cases, compromises are imposed on the poor who often have no choice but to accept them.
- In most cases, such litigants have to accept discounted future values of their claims instead of their just entitlements, or small compensations, just to bring a long-pending legal process to an end.

The method of promulgation of ordinance by the executive without being ratified by the parliament infringes the system of checks and balances. Comment

KEY POINTS

- The central government has promulgated the ordinance that establishes a commission for air quality management Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Ordinance, 2020.
- This raises questions about the practice of re-issuing ordinances without getting them ratified by Parliament.
- The Constitution permits the central and State governments to make laws when Parliament (or the State Legislature) is not in session.

- As law making is a legislative function, this power is provided for urgent requirements.
- The Constitution states that the ordinance will lapse at the end of six weeks from the time Parliament (or the State Legislature) next meets.
- In the 1950s, central ordinances were issued at an average of 7.1 per year. The number peaked in the 1990s at 19.6 per year, and declined to 7.9 per year in the 2010s.
- In D.C. Wadhwa case Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court, in 1986, ruled that repromulgation of ordinances was contrary to the Constitutional scheme.
- It would be violating the constitutional scheme as it would enable the Executive to transgress its constitutional limitation in the matter of law.
- The Centre also started to follow the lead of Bihar. For example, in 2013 and 2014, the Securities Laws (Amendment) ordinance was promulgated three times.
- As governments, both at the Centre and States, are violating this principle, the legislatures and the courts should check the practice.

Cooperative federalism must be effectively applied for better vaccination strategy to mitigate the effects of pandemic. Elaborate.

KEY POINTS

- India's monthly COVID vaccine manufacturing capacity is about 60-65 million doses 60 million by Serum Institute of India (SII) and 1-5 million by Bharat Biotech (BB).
- With every state individually contacting the suppliers and bargaining price and supply, the discretion will be with the supplier.
- This will undoubtedly create interstate inequities, where the poorer states will stand to suffer due to poor bargaining power.
- The SII and BB announced their pricing policy Rs 400 and Rs 600 per dose for the state government and Rs 600 and Rs 1200 for private parties respectively.
- Pricing is dependent on actual cost of inputs, expenditure incurred on clinical trials, sales promotion and small profit.
- The Central government is legally obligated to control the "interstate spread of infectious diseases Concurrent List.
- Assistance to states to combat such diseases is its fundamental duty.
- The Centre has always procured vaccines and other consumables for states under all National Infectious Disease Control Programmes.
- Government has the power to cap prices of all essential drugs, based on the costing carried out by the NPPA.
- In the event of attempts at cartelisation, government can invoke compulsory licensing and expand production, boosting availability at an administered price to states.



3. GOVERNANCE

With livelihoods affected during pandemic, updated land records can revive the development of rural areas in the country. Discuss

KEY POINTS

- For a significant section of the rural poor, land is both an asset and a source of livelihood. Many informal jobs in the urban centres were lost as the economy was hit by the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.
- The government of India's Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DI-LRMP) scheme is the most recent effort in this regard.
- The dismal state of land records is due to the failure of the Indian administration to evolve from British-era land policies.
- Though DI-LRMP provides a common framework for reporting the progress of land record management by states/UTs, the heterogeneous nature of regulations/guidelines for land record management in India makes the progress non-uniform.
- NCAER made a pioneering effort in this direction by launching NCAER Land Records and Services Index (N-LRSI) in 2020.
- The index assesses states' performance on two broad dimensions digitisation and quality of land records.
- Despite the pandemic, states/UTs made rigorous efforts over the course of a year to make improvements in various parameters of the index.
- These improvements are clearly captured in the N-LRSI 2021 findings Bihar's jump from the 23rd to 8th position in the index by making substantial progress in the digitisation of maps, textual records and registration process.
- The N-LRSI design entails a sub-component of updating of ownership), which gauges the extent of integration between registration and textual records swiftness of the process of updating ownership known as mutation.
- The information obtained from all the state/UT sources in this regard revealed that no state/UT has the provision for online mutation on the same day as the registration.

Do you think that the efficiency of bureaucratic performance in the country can be promoted through high-powered financial incentives? Examine.

KEY POINTS

- Evidence supports the deployment of high-powered incentives for transforming the bureaucracy from an albatross around the public's neck into an engine of growth.
- Targets and performance measures can be changed as per the changing needs of the public/state. The incentives can also be tweaked and fine-tuned over time.
- For example, a bureaucrat in a more visible function may be more risk-averse (due to the higher cost of visible failures) than one in a less visible role.

- Financial incentives allow for heterogeneous risk preferences and targets. Various functions and departments can have incentives designed specially for their performance objectives.
- In a system with well designed financial incentives, 'good' bureaucrats will earn more, be more visible, and face high demand for their skills.

Challenges

- For this system of contracting to work in a government setting, performance will have to be objectively defined.
- A clear link between effort and performance metrics will have to be established, and bureaucrats will have to be given ex-ante knowledge of these metrics.
- Incentives will also have to account for the randomness of outcomes, the risk aversion of public servants, and the fact that results may depend on inter-departmental cooperation in several cases.
- The challenges of tracking and evaluating performance could be surmounted through a thoughtful application of technology.

States need to adopt a well-planned agenda to make urban local bodies to utilize the financial grants effectively. Elaborate

KEY POINTS

Agenda for Urban Local bodies

- Urban Local Bodies to utilise the grants as intended linking allocation with funds available from other sources.
- Enable ULBs to qualify entry-level benchmarking and performance assessment.
- Additional dispensation should be made by states for accounting and asset management reforms as per Article 243Z of the Constitution.
- Synchronise NCAP (National Clean Air Programme) funds and central government missions for air quality and water and sanitation which are interconnected (such as construction and demolition waste and drainage plants).
- The Jal Jeevan Mission also provides funds for water and sanitation covering rejuvenation of water bodies to augment transit supply, green spaces, reduce floods.
- The role of extra-budgetary resources at the ULB level should be duly recognised to enhance the availability of funds for all the components with a special focus on health emergencies, shared services and processing of waste.
- Local elasticity at the ULB level has a vast potential as is already being seen in several forward-looking cities such as Bengaluru, Pune and Nagpur (for waste processing) and Ahmedabad for C&D waste.



The Supreme Court must supervise on vaccine governance to protect right to life enshrined in the constitution of India. Do you agree with this view? Comment.

oKEY POINTS

- Universal vaccination is a glimmer of hope when a small country like Israel resumes normal life after the vaccination of almost its entire populace.
- The Supreme Court can provide an open and transparent platform by invitation to eminent individuals and institutions such as WHO, ICMR, AIIMS, IITs, major universities, hospitals from India and abroad.
- It can be done again under the Patents Act. The Court can also issue mandamus to undertake this exercise on an emergency basis.
- Thereafter, all pharmaceutical companies with Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) as per the Drugs and Cosmetics Act must be allowed to manufacture vaccines at a pre-approved price of cost + 6 per cent return on investment.
- The vaccines can be distributed to states on a pro-rata basis as per population and price adjusted as part of general revenue sharing in GST.
- For vaccine hesitancy, we need to incentivise the vaccination through a direct deposit of Rs 500 in Jan Dhan accounts for each vaccinated member of BPL families.
- This vaccination can be made compulsory for identifiable categories of persons from MGNREGA beneficiaries to Aadhaar Card holders to income-tax payers to bank account holders to driving-licence holders.

4. GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Do you think that the Government of India ensures reproductive rights to women via Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Amendment Bill 2020? Critically Analyse

KEY POINTS

- Rajya Sabha passed the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Amendment Bill 2020 despite much opposition and calls to send the Bill to a Select Committee.

Features

- The Bill was cleared by an Ethics Committee and a Group of Ministers.
- Consultations with the Law and Justice Ministry while passing the bill.

Provisions

- Abortion under the MTP Amendment Bill will not be allowed at the request of a pregnant person, but is conditional on authorisation by the doctor.
- The Bill will allow for abortions without any upper gestation limit only for foetuses with abnormalities.
- Mandatory setting up of Medical Boards in every state and Union Territory.

Criticisms



- Lack of consultation with stakeholders, lack of inclusion of transgender people within the MTP framework.
- Medical boards would constitute violations of privacy, delays in abortion access due to lack of specialists, lack of time limits for decision-making.
- People living in rural areas in large parts of the country could find these Boards inaccessible.
- In passing the MTP Amendment Bill, the State continues to control women's reproductive and sexual rights while wielding the argument of progress.

Jal Jeevan Mission has brought in a new dawn of accountability wherein the people can question their elected representatives. Explain

KEY POINTS

- Jal Jeevan Mission aims to provide each and every household in rural India safe and adequate drinking water and through tap connections by 2024.
- JJM has a mobile-friendly dashboard. It is a tool for voluntary public accountability for several reasons.
- It has details of the number of households in which are taps are installed, and assured potable water is available in a state, city, district, village or block. This data is collected and updated in real-time.
- The details of potable tap water connections in schools and anganwadis.
- JJM empowers the local government and is based on a community approach.
- The dashboard also has details of the water utility management team of the village.
- This includes Gram Panchayat, Pani Samiti members, the person responsible for operation and management, women identified for field test kit (FTK) testing. It has a working e-grievance redressal mechanism.
- Sensor-based Internet of Things (IoT) solutions are being deployed, which will be able to gauge the amount of water being discharged in each and every water tank
- Further, there are systems of checks and balances to ensure that data is not fudged.

The reforms in Minerals Mines Development and Regulation Act 2021 will boost ease of doing business in the mineral- mining sector and make it more competitive and productive. Explain

KEY POINTS

- The mining sector is next only to agriculture in terms of generating employment.
- The sector directly and indirectly employs about 1.1 crore people and sustains the livelihood of about 5.5 crore people in the country. .
- Auctioned mines not made operational within three years will be returned to the concerned states for reallocation through auction and Greenfield mines allocated to PSUs.



- One of the key reforms is transferring all valid rights, approvals, clearances and licences to the new lessee, valid until the mineral reserves last. This would facilitate lessees transfer mine to another entity.
- Removing the distinction between captive and non-captive mines was long-coming, existing captive mines have also been allowed to sell mineral over and above their requirements.
- This amendment Act is set to redefine the standard of exploration required for auctioning of partially explored mineral blocks for prospecting licence-cum-mining lease.
- This will boost seamless transition from exploration to production and encourage participation of private players
- Local Members of Parliament a member of the District Mineral Foundation (DMF) Governing Council to make the DMF more outcome-oriented.
- Arrangements have been made to keep a check on misuse of DMF funds so that inclusive development of those affected by mining can be ensured.

India requires a legal framework and institutional measures to address the issue of refugee protection. Do you agree with this view? Comment

KEY POINTS

- India has emphatically argued over time, particularly in the recent past, that illegal immigration from the neighbouring countries to India must come to an end.
- The main reason why our policies towards illegal immigrants and refugees is confused is because as per Indian law, both categories of people are viewed as one and are covered under the Foreigners Act, 1946.
- India is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, the key legal documents pertaining to refugee protection.
- The absence of such a legal framework also leads to policy ambiguity whereby India's refugee policy is guided primarily by ad hocism which, of course.
- New Delhi has been one of the largest recipients of refugees in the world in spite of not being a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.
- The Citizenship amendment act 2019 is not the answer to this problem primarily because of its deeply discriminatory nature.
- A domestic refugee law should allow for temporary shelter and work permit for refugees. The absence of a refugee law incentivises illegal immigration into the country.
- New Delhi must also make a distinction between temporary migrant workers, illegal immigrants and refugees and deal with each of them differently through proper legal and institutional mechanisms.



The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 could play a big role in providing robust protections to users and their personal data. Discuss

KEY POINTS

- The recent alleged data breach at MobiKwik could stand to be India's biggest breach with the data of 9.9 crore users at risk.
- Robust data protection regimes are necessary to prevent such events and protect users' interests.

No effective protection

- Collection and process users' personal data in India is mainly governed by the Information Technology Act, 2000, and various other sectoral regulations.
- While entities must employ technical measures to protect personal data, they have weaker obligations to respect users' preferences in how personal data can be processed.
- The data protection provisions under the IT Act also do not apply to government agencies.

The upcoming regime

- The Bill seeks to apply the data protection regime to both government and private entities across all sectors.
- The Bill seeks to emphasise data security and data privacy.
- While entities will have to maintain security safeguards to protect personal data, they will also have to fulfill a set of data protection obligations.
- The Bill seeks to create an independent and powerful regulator known as the Data Protection Authority (DPA).
- The DPA will monitor and regulate data processing activities to ensure their compliance with the regime.
- The Bill seeks to give users a set of rights over their personal data and means to exercise those rights. For instance, a user will be able to obtain information about the different kinds of personal data.
- The Bill threatens legal consequences for users who withdraw their consent for a data processing activity. In practice, this could discourage users from withdrawing consent for processing activities they want to opt out of.

In light of commerce and technology becoming increasingly integrated, there is a need for upgradation of technological aspects of Competition commission of India. Elaborate

KEY POINTS

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has been tasked with ensuring free and fair competition in markets as its mandate under the Competition Act, 2002.
- The CCI recently released a discussion paper on blockchain and the use thereof while complying with the rules of free and fair competition.
- Blockchain is a virtual chain of time-stamped information which contains an immutable record of data and is managed by a cluster of users of a blockchain application as opposed to a single authority.



- This provides benefits such as the potential to enhance efficiency in payments by removing the need for a centralised intermediary to bear the counterparty's risk, ensure transparent supply chains.
- CCI noted the potential uses of blockchain to give effect to anticompetitive conduct not only amongst competitors, such as sensitive information exchanges, but also by dominant entities using a position of strength to prejudice others.
- Some issues such as jurisdiction can be addressed within the current framework of competition laws in India.
- Other issues persist such as variance with standards of data privacy and enforcement against anonymous entities.
- Accordingly, the CCI has stated that blockchain applications should be developed such that they comply with rules of competition, in addition to being sufficiently flexible to incorporate changes.

Micro-credit has far reaching impact in providing financial inclusion and can play a key role in building resilient India. Substantiate

KEY POINTS

- Access to small, collateral-free loans for economically productive purposes has helped transform the lives of millions at the bottom-of-the-pyramid—especially women.
- It has helped free them from the clutches of informal moneylenders who would charge exorbitant rates of interest, usurp collateral in the form of land, gold.
- Over the past decade, India's microfinance industry has grown at a compound annual growth rate of 26% to reach ₹ 2.36 trillion.
- It has helped 50 million economically vulnerable Indians, 99% of them women, live a life of dignity and financial independence.
- Recommendations of the Malegam Committee constituted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), practices such as relying on credit bureau data to assess a borrower's creditworthiness have helped the industry immensely.
- Entities engaged in microfinance need to focus on a few specific tasks for the holistic development of the sector.
- One of them is to promote financial literacy through group meetings of borrowers.
- Organizations should complement their microcredit operations with social development projects and community-connect initiatives.
- Prospective borrowers' indebtedness and ability to repay dues should be assessed properly.
- Loans must be given only for income-generation purposes.
- Every microfinance organization should devote time and resources for capacity building at the grassroots.



Existing government programmes can provide gainful employment opportunities to migrants at their native places. Do you agree with this view? Analyse

KEY POINTS

- Inferential Survey Statistics and Research Foundation (ISS&RF) conducted the survey, of the migrants who left cities and industrial towns for their native villages and small towns, 35.4 per cent had no employment.
- 35.8 per cent were involved in agriculture as self-employed (SE) labour, on their joint family farms,
- 9.7 per cent worked as agriculture labour, 4.6 per cent in MNREGA and 12.2 per cent as casuals in other non-agriculture work.
- Phase-1 of our survey showed that less than 5 per cent of migrants availed of MGNREGA, which increased to 7.7 per cent in phase-2. Obviously, MGNREGA as a strategy to provide employment has not succeeded.
- The survey also revealed that only 1.75 per cent of migrants had Jan Dhan accounts and 28.37 per cent had some other bank account.
- These results indicate that existing government programmes cannot provide gainful employment opportunities to the migrants at their native places.
- Engaging returning migrants in building new agri-value chains has some potential to create productive employment and protect livelihoods.
- Government godowns are overflowing with excess grain stocks, and it may be useful to distribute at least a part of this to benefit migrant workers rather than incur high costs of maintaining these stocks.
- Garib Kalyan Yojana can also be extended to migrants to help them remain in their cities of their work.

Reorganizing existing schemes and providing universal social security is of utmost importance for overall development. Discuss

KEY POINTS

- India is one of the largest welfare states in the world and yet, with COVID-19 striking in 2020, the state failed to provide for its most vulnerable citizens.
- The country has over 500 direct benefit transfer schemes for which various Central, State, and Line departments are responsible.
- However, these schemes have not reached those in need. The pandemic has revealed that leveraging our existing schemes and providing universal social security is of utmost importance.
- Universal healthcare programme that India ran successfully – the Pulse Polio Universal Immunisation Programme. In 2014, India was declared polio-free. It took a dedicated effort over a number of years.
- Existing schemes cover a wide variety of social protections. However, they are fractionalised across various departments and sub-schemes.
- This causes problems beginning with data collection to last-mile delivery. Having a universal system would improve the ease of application by consolidating the data of all eligible beneficiaries under one database.



- The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) is one scheme that can be strengthened into universal social security.
- It already consolidates the public distribution system (PDS), the provision of gas cylinders, and wages for the MGNREGS.
- Having a universal scheme would take away this access/exclusion barrier. For example, PDS can be linked to a universal identification card such as the Aadhaar or voter card, in the absence of a ration card.

5. HEALTH

The density of health workforce in India needs to be improved to increase the efficiency of delivery of health care services at various levels. Analyse

KEY POINTS

- Health workers were globally applauded for their tireless and assiduous services during the Covid-19 for their role in dispensing healthcare and saving lives.

Shortage of workforce

- States like Kerala and Tamil Nadu having high health workforce population ratio also have high population health outcomes.
- The density of health workforce in India is not even half of the 44.5 health workers per 10,000 persons as recommended by the WHO for achieving universal health coverage.
- The density of qualified active health workforce in India is as low as 12-13 doctors (including AYUSH practitioners) and nurses/midwives per 10,000 persons.

Skewed distribution

- The distribution of these health workers is acutely skewed with the less developed states like Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh health worker population ratio of as low as 6-8 health workers per 10,000 persons.
- More than 60% of doctors and a little over 50% of nurses/midwives are employed in the private sector.

Need for workforce

- The central government announced setting up of new educational institutions 157 medical colleges and about 50 nursing institutions in different phases.
- These institutions are likely to produce about 22,500 doctors and 2,000 nurses every year.
- This implies that even if 100% of the new graduates join health workforce, it will take more than 10 years to add 2.5 lakh health professionals to the existing qualified active health workforce.
- India needs big investment to meet even the minimum threshold of 22.8 health workforce per 10,000 persons.
- It's needed to open new institutions for producing doctors and nurses, and create conducive environment and attractive pay packages.



In the context of vaccination, worsening antimicrobial resistance has to be handled effectively to handle the existing pandemic in the country. Examine

KEY POINTS

- The previous decade witnessed an unprecedented global political coordination for control of one of the top global health threats: antimicrobial resistance (AMR).
- AMR is a natural process that is accelerated by increasing levels of antibiotic use, shortening the time microbes including bacteria need to acquire resistance to new drugs.
- Such resistance threatens the existence of effective treatment options and our ability to control and prevent infections.
- Following the current trends, in the absence of stringent measures, antibiotic consumption by 2030 is expected to increase by 11.5% in animals, and by a staggering 200% in humans compared to 2015.
- Increased vaccination coverage, infection control and prevention, and clean water and sanitation can reduce the need for antibiotics in both animals and humans.
- AMR-relevant measures in the dashboards represented four categories: policy indicators; antimicrobial resistance indicators; antimicrobial use indicators; and public health indicators.
- Drug Resistance Index (DRI) scores, an aggregate measure of antibiotic effectiveness to treat bacterial infections, were presented for two groups of important bacterial pathogens.
- Combining antibiotic use and resistance in one metric, the DRI overcomes the challenge of conveying national AMR burden given the complexity surrounding the drugs' varying efficacy against different pathogens.
- Swachh Bharat Abhiyan for sanitation, and the Kayakalp Scheme for improved water, sanitation and hygiene services in health care facilities are also likely to impact AMR.

The problem of antimicrobial resistance is a threat to global health security and cut across various sectors in the country. Examine

KEY POINTS

- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR), the phenomenon by which bacteria and fungi evolve and become resistant to presently available medical treatment, is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century.
- World Health Organization, AMR is already responsible for up to 7,00,000 deaths a year.
- AMR represents an existential threat to modern medicine. Neonatal and maternal mortality will increase.

Reasons for Anti-microbial resistance

- These include the misuse of antimicrobials in medicine, inappropriate use in agriculture, and contamination around pharmaceutical manufacturing.

The way forward

- A multi-sectoral \$1 billion AMR Action Fund was launched in 2020 to support the development of new antibiotics, and the U.K. is trialling a subscription-based model for paying for new antimicrobials towards ensuring their commercial viability.
- Peru's efforts on patient education to reduce unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions.
- Australian regulatory reforms to influence prescriber behaviour, and initiatives to increase the use of point-of-care diagnostics.
- Denmark's reforms to prevent the use of antibiotics in livestock have not only led to a significant reduction in the prevalence of resistant microbes in animals, but also improved the efficiency of farming.
- Current initiatives largely target individual issues related to AMR and consequently, narrowly defined groups of stakeholders.
- This means that AMR must no longer be the remit solely of the health sector, but needs engagement from a wide range of stakeholders, representing agriculture, trade and the environment with solutions that balance their often-competing interests.

6. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

In various ways, India and Italy can act together to address the post-pandemic challenges effectively. Analyse

KEY POINTS

- Italy has held the G20 presidency, which will reach its climax with the Rome Leaders' Summit in 2021. Italy will also host the paramount Global Health Summit.
- From this perspective, Italy's aim is to work closely with our Indian partners on an economic recovery fully based on the principles of sustainability and respect for the environment.
- Established a strong partnership on energy transition, which is clearly stated in the Plan of Action.
- Furthermore, many Italian companies are contributing to India's leap toward a greener economy (Enel, among others, has been at the forefront of major investments for the production of clean energy).
- We are also keen in developing models that can help prevent and also tackle the health challenges that make our communities vulnerable.
- In this regard, our action with India is developing around the possibility of boosting our scientific research with projects that can help us further understand the evolution of pandemics and, perhaps, prevent future outbreaks.
- Bilateral cooperation has seen extraordinary improvements, thanks to the progressive digitalisation of our interactions. For example, a very efficient permanent digital platform with our partners from Invest India.
- Italy and India will face these challenges together by making the most of the global governance toolbox and our bilateral Plan of Action 2020-2024.



A pragmatic engagement with North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is an important part of India's new European orientation, amidst the search for a new role in the Indo-Pacific. Analyse.

KEY POINTS

- An India-NATO dialogue would simply mean having regular contact with a military alliance, most of whose members are well-established partners of India.
- India's real problem is not with NATO, but with Delhi's difficulty in thinking strategically about Europe.
- Delhi has begun to develop an independent European framework, but has some distance to go in consolidating it. Talking to NATO ought to be one important part of India's European strategy.
- The deepening maritime partnership with France since 2018 is an example. Joining the Franco-German Alliance for Multilateralism in 2019 is another.
- Modi's first summit with Nordic nations in 2018 was a recognition that Europe is not a monolith but a continent of sub-regions. So was the engagement with Central Europe's Visegrad Four.
- NATO is not offering membership to India; nor is Delhi interested. At issue is the question of exploring potential common ground.
- To play any role in the Indo-Pacific, Europe and NATO need partners like India, Australia and Japan. Delhi, in turn, knows that no single power can produce stability and security in the Indo-Pacific.
- A sustained dialogue between India and NATO could facilitate productive exchanges in a range of areas, including terrorism, changing geopolitics.

Europe is ready for the new engagement with Asia to handle the upcoming global challenges. Do you agree with this view? Comment

KEY POINTS

- While the global economy crashed in 2020, economies such as Vietnam and China grew.
- A number of Asia's open societies have shown us how to successfully contain the virus. And without the leading vaccine exporter, India, the world will not beat the pandemic.
- The strategy takes its lead from the Asia of business the EU and Germany are already well-positioned here.
- Europe is a key trading, technology and investment partner for many countries of the region.
- Germany alone now conducts one-fifth of its foreign trade with the countries of the Indo-Pacific, and millions of jobs depend on this.
- The EU recently concluded ground-breaking free trade agreements with Japan, Singapore and Vietnam that set environmental and social standards.
- Together with its Indo-Pacific partners, Europe can set standards for new technologies, human-centred digitisation and sustainable connectivity.
- The strategic partnership concluded between the EU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) last December connects us with like-minded middle powers.

- The EU is by far the biggest supporter of the international vaccine platform COVAX, and India as a leading producer of vaccines is the most important COVAX supplier.
- Europe will continue to stand up for human rights and democracy in the Indo-Pacific, the credibility and a commitment to principles remain important guideposts for us in global politics.

Peace with Pakistan is the need of the hour for India to transform the South Asian region. Analyse

KEY POINTS

- A fair peace between India and Pakistan is not just good for the two states but for all the nations constituting the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).
- Reports such as the World Bank publication titled 'A Glass Half Full' and others from the Asian Development Bank and the European Union conclude that there is explosive value to be derived from South Asian economic integration.
- Now the two countries have agreed to maintain ceasefire, it is time for India to engage with Pakistan.
- An economically transformed and integrated South Asian region could advantageously link up with China's Belt and Road Initiative.
- Join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the world's largest trading bloc of 15 countries, accounting for 30% of its GDP, as a much valued partner
- Collectively with a population of slightly over 1.9 billion, South Asia has a GDP (PPP) of \$12 trillion.
- This is the moment for India to think big and act big by ambitiously aiming to engineer a South Asian economic miracle in half the time China did.
- But for that to happen, India needs to view a peace with Pakistan not as a bilateral matter, to be arrived at leisurely, if at all, but as essential.

The grouping, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation needs to reorient itself to overcome several obstacles. Examine

KEY POINTS

- Established as a grouping of four nations India, Thailand, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka through the Bangkok Declaration of 1997 to promote rapid economic development, BIMSTEC was expanded later to include three more countries Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan.
- The fourth leaders' summit, held in Kathmandu in 2018, devised an ambitious plan for institutional reform and renewal that would encompass economic and security cooperation.

Obstacles

- A strong BIMSTEC presupposes cordial and tension-free bilateral relations, this has not been the case, given the trajectory of India-Nepal, India-Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh-Myanmar.
- China's decisive intrusion in the South-Southeast Asian space has cast dark shadows.



- BIMSTEC could not arrange its ministerial meeting as desired. This is due as much to contextual factors as the diplomatic environment prevailing today.
- The military coup in Myanmar, brutal crackdown of protesters and continuation of popular resistance resulting in a protracted impasse have produced a new set of challenges.
- It should consider holding regular annual summits. Only then will its leaders convince the region about their strong commitment to the new vision.

Measures

- People-people contact.
- Frequent engagements at diplomatic level.
- Completing unfinished infrastructural projects like Kaladan multimodal project.

Stabilization in balance of power and creation of multipolarity by middle powers shape the characteristics of emerging global order. Elaborate

KEY POINTS

- The “Indo-Pacific” as an area of strategic significance for the U.S. and the associated alignment that gives shape and substance to this geopolitical concept the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad for short.
- It is clear that the U.S. continues to view China as its principal adversary on the world stage.
- U.S. animosity has encouraged China and Russia to solidify their relations, the two countries have agreed to harmonise their visions under the Eurasian Economic Union.
- The final shape of this divide will be determined by four nations, namely Japan, Iran, Turkey and India, which, as “middle powers”, have the capacity to project power regionally, build alliances.
- Uncertainty exists because the four nations are not yet prepared to join immutable alliances.
- Japan has an ongoing territorial dispute with China relating to the Senkaku islands in the East China Sea. But there is more to Sino-Japanese relations: in 2019, 24% of Japanese imports came from China.
- \$200 billion ‘Partnership for Quality Infrastructure’ that funds infrastructure projects in Asia and Africa, though Japan is also willing to work on BRI projects on a selective basis.
- India’s ties with China, threats from China at the border and intrusions in its South Asian neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean became sharper, it moved closer to the U.S.

The guidelines issued by Ministry of health and family welfare should be re-written in the context of the current strains on the healthcare system. Explain

KEY POINTS

- The Health Ministry released its first COVID-19 management guidelines about a year ago.
- The initial treatment guidelines included hydroxychloroquine, which led to panic buying of the drug. Little was known in those initial months.



- While formulating national-level guidelines, the most important factors are strength of evidence, pricing, cost-effectiveness and social relevance.
- These guidelines not only disregard evidence, but also show the unawareness of policymakers about the struggles of the common populace and the importance of the aforementioned factors.
- The only benefit of convalescent plasma was shown in a small study from Argentina which demonstrated that plasma prevented progression to severe disease in mild cases when high-titre plasma was infused within three days of disease onset.
- Remdesivir, in shortage now, is being black-marketed across India, although it has no value in saving lives.
- With more than 80% of COVID-19 patients having only mild symptoms, patients with asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) may run out of inhalers.
- Absence of any mention of monoclonal antibodies from Regeneron or Eli Lilly in the guidelines, recommended by the National Institutes of Health.
- More treatment does not necessarily lead to better outcomes but will definitely lead to higher out-of-pocket expenditure and healthcare-related bankruptcies and debts.

GS PAPER - II

7. INDIAN ECONOMY

Government-Securities Acquisition Programme (G-SAP) is a rational attempt by Reserve Bank of India to revive the economy in a best possible way. Substantiate

• KEY POINTS

- The G-Sec Acquisition Programme (G-SAP) is basically an unconditional and a structured open market operation (OMO), of a much larger scale and size.
- The central bank Governor himself called the G-SAP as an OMO with a 'distinct character'.
- The word 'unconditional' here connotes that RBI has committed upfront that it will buy G-Secs irrespective of the market sentiment.
- This aspect is crucial as an altogether different literature on the subject emerges once the assumption of certainty/commitment is built in.
- In fact, RBI has already clarified that G-SAP 1.0 is not a substitute to other operations like open market operations, but will complement them as a simultaneous measure.
- In RBI's language, the positive externalities of G-SAP operations need to be seen in the context of those segments of the financial markets that rely on the G-Sec yield curve as a pricing benchmark.
- So, not only governments (both central and states) benefit, but a whole lot of institutions relying on financial markets for long-term supply of funds will also gain.



- The government is seized of the situation and its programmes like the expanded Production-Linked Scheme or the National Infrastructure Pipeline are steps in the right direction.
- The capital expenditure earmarked for these schemes is huge, and a structured programme like G-SAP could not have been announced at a more opportune time.

India's Small Medium Enterprises can be restructured to integrate technology into their business models for better outcomes. Explain

KEY POINTS

- Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in India contribute a third to the national GDP, comprise almost half of exports, and employ a fifth of the country's workforce.
- Many SMEs are unbanked and outside the realm of the formal economy, making distribution of monetary benefits and access to capital a challenge.
- The slow pace of digital adoption is a key reason why Indian SMEs have underperformed relative to their potential.
- Digitally-enabled SMEs can grow profits up to two times faster than offline SMEs, according to a study by KPMG and Google.
- They can also employ more people, grow their customer base, and expand into international markets with more ease.
- SMEs that go digital will be better prepared to deal with changing consumer behaviour triggered by events like the current pandemic and recession as they will be able to continue to service customers as well as ensure supply chain integrity and even expand their area of service.
- Day-to-day sales data can be analysed to determine a business owner's credit score in seconds, using big data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) algorithms.
- By collecting and analysing alternative data that is not typically used in credit decisioning, more loans can be offered, underwriting processes can be improved, and overall risk can be reduced.
- Based on the India Stack model of digital authentication and cashless payments, shared infrastructure could help SMEs leapfrog to newer technologies to access credit in emergencies.
- Digital solutions like these could help limit the exposure of last-mile farmers, traders and other microentrepreneurs across the country, to ever-increasing shocks to the global economy.
- There will be a culture of innovation in the country enabling more 'Made in India' solutions to be exported to the world and realising the vision of taking small business contribution to exports to a whopping 75%.

In the context of Reserve Bank of India's monetary policy, low bond yield regime could ensure better economic growth in the country. Do you agree with this view? Comment

KEY POINTS

- RBI, in new G-Sec Acquisition Programme (G-SAP) and 'unequivocally' stated that 'the Reserve Bank's endeavour is to ensure orderly evolution of the yield curve.'
- It was driven by the belief that lower yields would translate into higher investment and hence higher economic growth.
- At the same time, RBI has been conducting a series of 'Operation Twists' in a bid to reshape the GoI yield curve (plot of yields against maturity) in the hope that reshaping the yield curve would facilitate economic growth.
- GoI bonds are almost exclusively bought, held and traded by banks and other financial companies, mainly because of regulatory requirements like the statutory liquidity ratio (SLR).
- The secondary market in GoI bonds is huge, but it is still almost exclusively dominated by banks and financial companies.
- Given the much lower dependence on bonds, bond yields have little to do with the cost of debt capital for large companies and are unlikely to influence their investment decisions and economic growth. Hence the absence of a relationship between bond yields and economic growth.
- As regards yield curves, a study of the data shows that there no correlation between the shape of the yield curve (yields spread between one year and 10-year bonds) and GDP growth.

The International financial service centre in the country needs to transform as a hub for international transactions for better economic development. Elucidate

KEY POINTS

- International finance no longer depends on physical amenities, as people with expertise may already be working digitally from remote locations.
- In 2015, the financial sector provided 5 million jobs and 5% of India's gross domestic product (GDP).
- With the right plan and the right incentives, it is possible to increase the GDP contribution of financial services to 15% and employment to 11 million.
- A recent report published by the Global Financial Centres Index ranks GIFT City third among 15 centres that could grow in significance over the next few years.
- The base of this digital superstack has to be an Indian custodian bank that can provide global wealth management services in an investor's currency of choice.
- This would be possible if India's banking regulator, the Reserve bank of India, allows Indian custodian bank licences under a new differentiated bank licensing scheme.

- Businesses such as re-insurance, insurance, banking services, and investment in equities and commodities will be transacted through this digital superstack.
- Intermediaries (banks, custodians, brokers and fund managers) in India should be allowed to set up branches in GIFT City after applicable regulatory clearances.
- These branches will specifically cater only to foreign or overseas investors and work through the digital superstack.

How e-commerce platforms can help Micro small medium enterprise in easing the Goods and Services tax compliance issue? Discuss

KEY POINTS

- The government is taking steps to simplify the GST filing process to address compliance concerns of MSMEs.

Challenges MSMEs face

- To further ease compliances for MSMEs, the GST Council approved implementation of a new return filing system.
- Educating taxpayers on this relatively new law is one of the challenges due to its ever-evolving nature.
- Businesses that deal with multiple vendors have to ensure that every time they get an invoice, their GST number is accurately printed on it. When this does not happen, these invoices become non-compliant.
- Dealing with multiple vendors adds to the hassle of handling physical invoices and different formats.

e-commerce platforms

- E-commerce platforms carry lakhs of products with a GST-compliance badge and are equipped with filters that help MSME buyers connect with only registered GST vendors.
- Invoices on B2B platforms are digital and standardised, making it easier to file for ITC to save more on business purchases.
- E-commerce platforms are also integrated with data analytics to help understand spending and ITC details to plan budgets better.
- MSMEs can leverage the same e-commerce systems and have tax-compliant invoices generated and get access to periodic reports.

To which extent the Narasimhan committee on banking reforms have been implemented successfully in the country. Discuss

KEY POINTS

- M Narasimham reports were seminal because they brought in all the global wisdom at a time when the internet was non-existent in India.
- Concepts as propounded by the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) regarding income recognition, capital adequacy.



- It may be recollected that RBI took time to bring the 90-day concept for recognising non-performing assets (NPAs).
- The concept of having more private banks, getting in new private banks has brought about a technology revolution in the banking sector, which has now permeated all banks, making the system globally comparable.
- The extended frame provided to foreign banks to operate in India, besides a firm signal that there would be no further nationalisation.
- The committee argued for sharp reductions in the CRR (Cash Reserve Ratio) and the SLR (Statutory Liquidity Ratio) of banks.
- Narasimham had spoken about creating a four-tiered structure of banks.
- Exposing the concept of evergreening is something that was brought to the table by the committee.
- It was dodging this rule and classifying NPAs as restructured assets which brought the system to an embarrassing situation when the asset quality review was undertaken in 2015.
- The identification of weak banks and putting conditions was again a concept from this book and hence the PCA (Prompt Corrective Action) policy of RBI has drawn from this chapter.
- The committee recommended introduction of transparency in bank accounts, all annual reports include all disclosures and follow fixed formats.

In the context of pandemic, the capital expenditure can boost long-term growth within the Indian economy. Discuss

KEY POINTS

- A lack of capital expenditure has often been criticised as neglecting long-term targets of economic growth and employment.
- While creating direct consumer demand is an important lever for immediate boost to the economy, it may not sustain a high growth trajectory in the longer term.
- Capital expenditure is expected to achieve this through a multiplier effect (a change in rupee value of output with respect to a change in rupee value of expenditure).
- In India, the multiplier effect of capital expenditure made by the central government is estimated at 2.45, whereas for state governments it is around 2 (according to the RBI Bulletin, December 2020).
- The Asian Development Bank also noted that the project implementation costs in India's transport industry were substantially higher than in Sri Lanka and China.
- The maintenance, repair and operation (MRO) expenditure, which is part of revenue expenditure, will have to be monitored during project implementation.
- The government should also aim to cut down on inefficient revenue expenditure.



Do you think that intellectual property rules serve as an obstacle to the right to access healthcare at international level? Comment

KEY POINTS

- If anything, since the onset of COVID-19, we've only seen a reaffirmation of intellectual property rules that have served as a lethal barrier to the right to access healthcare over the last few decades.
- India and South Africa submitted a joint petition to the World Trade Organization (WTO), requesting a temporary suspension of rules under the 1995 Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).
- A waiver was sought to the extent that the protections offered by TRIPS impinged on the containment and treatment of COVID-19.
- The request for waiver has, since, found support from more than 100 nations. But a small group of states the U.S., the European Union, the U.K. and Canada among them continues to block the move.
- In India, the question of marrying the idea of promoting invention and offering exclusive rights over medicines on the one hand with the state's obligation of ensuring that every person has equal access to basic healthcare on the other has been a source of constant tension.
- This change in rule allowed generic manufacturers in India to grow. As a result, life-saving drugs were made available to people at more affordable prices.
- In the proposal's vision, countries which fail to subscribe to the common laws prescribed by the WTO would be barred from entry into the global trading circuit.
- We cannot continue to persist with rules granting monopolies which place the right to access basic healthcare in a position of constant peril.

8. ENERGY

While transitioning from coal energy, India needs to ensure better livelihood and opportunities for those who depend on it. Explain

KEY POINTS

- If India really intends to announce an ambition for net zero, then as a country which uses coal for more than 70 per cent of its energy, it will face daunting challenges.
- Most coal phaseout plans include a roadmap for workers and communities dependent on fossil fuels.
- In FY20, India consumed approximately 942 million tonnes (MT) of coal, 730 MT of which was produced domestically.
- This translates to about nine lakh people, based on a four-person household, who are dependent, at least partly, on coal mining.



- This does not include white-collar workers of CIL, discrepancies in mine-wise data, and the fact that not all mines are run for three shifts, underground mines are highly unproductive and older legacy mines have more workers than coal mines.
- The challenge in transitioning coal workers in India is also in factors like education, skill levels, willingness to migrate, and caste.
- Without adequate information on these parameters, it becomes difficult to decide how and where to finance the transition.
- Moreover, revenues from coal and allied activities form a significant portion of receipts in India's coal-bearing regions.
- A transition away from coal must account for the loss to the state and district exchequer. Further, a number of welfare services in key coal-bearing districts are provided by the coal company operating there.

9. INFRASTRUCTURE

Considering the success of state level infrastructural projects, National infrastructural pipeline project can be credibly implemented at the national level. Discuss

KEY POINTS

- It is generally believed that the Centre pioneers infrastructure policy initiatives and success stories. but to show that given India's enormous infrastructure deficit, there is space for everyone to contribute.

Noida International Airport Limited (NIAL), Jewar

- The Uttar Pradesh government awarded the Jewar Airport to the Swiss airport operator, Zurich AG, in December 2019.
- Phase I of the project is expected to be completed by 2023 at a cost of Rs 4,588 crore. This transaction is significant in that it involves 100% foreign equity in a greenfield infrastructure project.

Mumbai-Pune Expressway Asset Monetisation

- IRB Infrastructure achieved financial closure of the Mumbai-Pune Expressway in a major brownfield asset monetisation initiative.
- The project was re-bid by the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) on Toll-Operate-Transfer (TOT) basis for a 10-year concession period.

The Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam Limited (GUVNL)

- It auctioned 500 MW of solar projects and it has set a new record of Rs 1.99 per kWh with the NTPC getting 200 MW.
- This is the lowest discovered solar tariff in India to-date and comes on top of the already discovered low tariff of Rs 2 per kWh in 2020.



- The successful solar transaction is important in many ways and shows that the private sector, including foreign investors, would bid for well-developed projects.

Way forward

- As India looks to implement the National Infrastructure Pipeline, constituted by about 7,000 projects valued at over Rs 111 lakh crore (about \$1.5 trillion) over a six-year period ending in FY2024-25, one must keep in mind that the NIP envisages most investments coming from the states (40%) in comparison to the Centre (39%).

New Development Financial Institution could provide huge thrust to India's infrastructural development and its role in driving economic growth. Discuss**KEY POINTS**

- In the initial years of the country's development after Independence, DFIs played an important role, but the system got subsumed into the universalisation of banks.
- India's annual tax losses due to corporate tax abuse are estimated at over \$10 billion, according to the Tax Justice Network report.
- India would continue to require massive investment in infrastructure (roads, railways, ports, airports, rural connectivity, building mandis with state-of-the-art logistics, and so on).
- Banks alone would not cater to critical sectors' financing needs, and multipronged channels have to be tapped involving both public and private sectors.
- The first DFI, or the NBFID as it is called, will have borrowing options from the government, RBI, banks, mutual funds, and multilateral institutions like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.
- Given these options for raising resources, the NBFID should kick-start soon with a focus on making the best business out of infrastructure, which is the economy's critical need.
- Companies under stressed balance sheets would divest some assets bought by those willing to dive into opportunities in the brownfield. The good thing about the NBFID mandate is its scope into the brownfield as well.
- The success of the first DFI in the new format would pave the way for similar future entities. Returns in India would be far better than in the developed world.

India's rural healthcare infrastructure needs to be strengthened to handle the pandemic effectively.***Explain*****KEY POINTS**

- While the second surge has largely been an urban phenomenon, migrants moving back to their villages in lakhs risks carrying the spread to the rural districts in some of India's poorest states.
- Rural CHCs in West Bengal, similarly, serve populations 1.8 times larger than the national norm.



- Rural healthcare centres also suffer from a personnel crunch PHCs, against a sanctioned strength of 35,890 doctors, have just over 28,000 in position.
- A similar shortage of ANMs, radiographers and other healthcare personnel also grips the villages.
- With the second surge in some of India's largest cities including Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad and Bengaluru forcing state governments to announce temporary lockdowns and mobility restrictions, fears of another migrant exodus have arisen.
- While the second surge has largely been an urban phenomenon, migrants moving back to their villages in lakhs risks carrying the spread to the rural districts in some of India's poorest states that simply don't have the public healthcare infrastructure and human resources to handle this.

Measures

- Effective training to health care personnel.
- Roping in volunteers.
- Getting help from non-governmental organisations.
- Awareness about preventive measures in hinter-lands.

10.S & T

Amidst the anti-trust movements against the big technological firms, government of India needs to find solutions for better innovation in field of technology. Analyse

KEY POINTS

- Antitrust watchdog Competition Commission of India (CCI) recently launched an investigation into the new WhatsApp privacy policy, has urged the Delhi High Court to restrain WhatsApp from implementing this
- The combined market capitalisation of the five Big Tech companies Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft and Google (FAAMG) in 2020 was over \$6 trillion, more than double the GDP of India.
- Governments globally have questioned some of these investments alleging that their objective is to neutralise competition, leading to monopolisation and stifling of innovation.

Solutions

- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade introduced amendments to the FDI policy in 2018.
- It imposed embargoes on product exclusivity and prohibited inventory-based models for foreign e-commerce players.
- Stricter merger control, in addition to the financial thresholds, by a nation's antitrust watchdog prior to a merger or acquisition which will entail a detailed investigation including a comprehensive due diligence into a potential transaction by the regulator.



- The tech sector will benefit immensely if policymakers across ministries align and expedite policymaking—from the MeitY on data protection (personal and non-personal data) and AI, to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on e-commerce and FDI, to the Ministry of Home Affairs on national security concerns, to the CCI on antitrust and merger control.

11. INTERNAL SECURITY

Addressing the gender injustices that motivate many to join Maoist cadres can help the Indian state contain insurgency. Explain

KEY POINTS

- The Communist Party of India (Maoist) released a list of 22 martyred women cadres to applaud the contribution of women to its cause.
- This renewed the conversation around female Maoists composing a substantial 60% of their total cadres and occupying almost all operational and tactical positions.
- The umbrella grievance of women in the movement is that of gender inequality, which worsens problems of sexual assault, police brutality, atrocities against Scheduled Caste/Tribe (SC/ST) communities, and economic inequality.
- This commitment manifests in all-women squads such as the Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Sangathan (KAMS) leading extensive campaigns against forced marriage, abduction, outcasting menstruating women, bigamy, domestic violence, and police brutality.
- National Crime Records Bureau data shows that Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha alone registered 84,938 crimes against women in 2019.
- Women face sexual harassment from the state as well as insurgents, with no avenues to seek justice. Many find it nearly impossible to even register a first information report with the police.
- Marginalization from the rural economy renders women poorer than men of the same households, many women perceive Maoism as relief from poverty and unemployment.
- State schemes focus on hard-power security responses and not the welfare demands of the populace itself.
- The need of the hour is for the state to adequately address women's ground realities in the region that push them toward radicalization.



12. ENVIRONMENT

The non-profit Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU), 32 countries had proposed intention to achieve carbon neutral status by mid-century. Should India follow this trend of carbon neutrality declarations? Comment

KEY POINTS

- The impetus for such declarations arises from Article 4.1 of the Paris Agreement, Parties aim to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, peaking will take longer for developing country Parties, and to undertake rapid reductions thereafter in accordance with best available science.

India's stand

- India clearly should not join this game of carbon neutrality declarations, for a number of reasons.
- India has to stay focused on development both as its immediate need as well as its aspirational goal.
- While sustainability is desirable, the question of how low India's future low-carbon development can be is highly uncertain.
- India's current low carbon footprint is a consequence of the utter poverty and deprivation of a majority of its population, and not by virtue of sustainability.
- India does not owe a carbon debt to the world. India's emissions (non-LULUCF) are no more than 3.5% of global cumulative emissions prior to 1990 and about 5% since till 2018.
- Nor are India's current annual emissions such as to seriously dent the emissions gap between what the world needs and the current level of mitigation effort.
- India's twin burden of low-carbon development and adaptation to climate impacts, requires serious, concerted action.
- India's approach to eventual net-zero emissions is contingent on deep first world emissions reductions and an adequate and unambiguous global carbon budget.
- India must reject any attempt to restrict its options and be led into a low-development trap, based on pseudo-scientific narratives.

Developed countries have been committing towards the goal of net-zero emissions by 2050. In this context, Examine the objections raised by India against the concept of net-zero emissions goal.

KEY POINTS

- Net-zero, which is also referred to as carbon-neutrality, does not mean that a country would bring down its emissions to zero.
- It is a state in which a country's emissions are compensated by absorption and removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.
- Absorption of the emissions can be increased by creating more carbon sinks such as forests.

Objections

- Over the next two to three decades, India's emissions are likely to grow at the fastest pace in the world, to pull hundreds of millions of people out of poverty.
- Most of the carbon removal technologies right now are either unreliable or very expensive.
- The net-zero goal does not figure in the 2015 Paris Agreement, the new global architecture to fight climate change.
- India has been arguing that instead of opening up a parallel discussion on net-zero targets outside of the Paris Agreement framework, countries must focus on delivering on what they have already promised.
- Several studies have shown that India is the only G-20 country whose climate actions are compliant to the Paris Agreement goal of keeping global temperatures from rising beyond 2°C.
- Even the actions of the EU, which is seen as the most progressive on climate change, and the US are assessed as "insufficient".
- No major country achieved the emission-cut targets assigned to them under the Kyoto Protocol, the climate regime preceding the Paris Agreement.
- India has been arguing that the 2050 carbon-neutrality promise might meet a similar fate, although some countries are now binding themselves in law.

The potential of green bonds can be considered by the Union government as well the states to mitigate the impacts of climate change in the country. Elaborate

KEY POINTS

- Green bonds are debt instruments used by governments and their entities, international organisations, private sector to raise money for projects that contribute to climate mitigation.
- Government green bond issues are backed by public assets that are either contributing to low-carbon development or building capacity to cope with climate change.
- Such assets include investment in watersheds, early warning systems for disaster risk management, large renewable energy (RE) projects, clean transportation, etc.
- Issuance of green State Development Loans can contribute to addressing this issue while attracting investments into projects which are needed to build climate-resilience at the local level.
- Covid-19 has made their fiscal position extremely strained, increasing their reliance on market borrowing for discretionary spending on climate-related interventions.
- Green SDLs can help state governments attract diverse investors who are willing to support them in their efforts to reduce such vulnerabilities, and possibly offer better pricing.
- Green bond issues will also help raise their profile among climate-responsive investors.
- Public assets and expenditure made by state governments play a pivotal role in supporting national climate commitments and building resilience of communities directly impacted by climate change.



Green contracts can be a major milestone in the country's story of sustainable growth and economic development. Explain

KEY POINTS

- While the massive levels of production, consumption and disposal of goods and services have their own set of benefits in a post-industrial society, they have also slowed down the replenishment cycle of limited resources.

Green contracts

- 'Green contracts' refer to commercial contracts which mandate that contracting parties cut down greenhouse gas emissions at different stages of delivery of goods/services as applicable to the industry.
- A 'green tender' may prescribe necessary 'green qualifications', which can be considered when awarding the contract to a bidder.
- These green qualifications can range from using a pre-defined percentage of 'green energy' in service delivery to adequate on-site waste management, reducing carbon emissions by a certain level over period of time, etc.
- It is this obligatory nature of green contracts which sets the tone for the parties to cut down emissions.
- This can be achieved by contractual clauses providing for the use of good quality and energy-efficient infrastructure for production of goods/services, efforts in day-to-day operations such as reducing noise, air and water pollution.
- One effective way to make sure that the service providers adhere to these contractual obligations would be to provide for measurement criteria and audit of the performance of the contractor.
- An organisation may also choose to contractually highlight non-performance of such obligations as a ground of contractual breach, with penalty prescriptions.
- Another way to make sure that these obligations under the green contracts resonate far is to make sure that they flow down to all levels of the supply chain engaged in the delivery of goods and services.

A sector-led, action-based approach could provide the framework to drive low-carbon transformation in the country. Examine

KEY POINTS

- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 1.5°C report called for global carbon emissions to reach net-zero by 2050.
- Sectoral transformations through aggressive adoption of technologies that are within our reach, and an earnest effort to avoid high carbon lock-ins.

De-carbonise power sector

- To achieve net-zero emissions, a key piece of the puzzle is to decarbonise the electricity sector, which is the single largest source (about 40%) of India's greenhouse gas emissions.
- De-carbonised electricity would also allow India to undertake transformational changes in urbanisation and industrial development, for example by expanding the use of electricity for transport.



Ceiling for coal power

- Pledge that India will not grow its coal-fired power capacity beyond what is already announced, and reach peak coal electricity capacity by 2030, while striving to make coal-based generation.
- Create a multi-stakeholder Just Transition Commission representing all levels of government and the affected communities to ensure decent livelihood opportunities beyond coal in India's coal belt.

Improve energy services

- Growing urbanisation and uptake of electricity services offer a good opportunity to shape energy consumption.
- Cooling needs are expected to increase rapidly with rising incomes and temperatures.
- Such a sector-by-sector approach, which can and should be developed for other sectors.

Forming timelines

- India may even consider committing to submit plausible pathways and timelines to achieving net-zero emissions as part of its future pledges.

Discuss the measures that are required to overcome the several challenges that persist in launching the National Hydrogen Energy Mission (NHEM).

KEY POINTS

- India will soon join 15 other countries in the hydrogen club as it prepares to launch the National Hydrogen Energy Mission (NHEM). The global target is to produce 1.45 million tonnes of green hydrogen by 2023.
- In 2030, the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), green hydrogen demand could be up to 1 million tonnes in India.

Key measures

- Decentralised hydrogen production must be promoted through open access of renewable power to an electrolyser (which splits water to form H₂ and O₂ using electricity).
- Wheeling (wheeling is the transportation of electric energy from within an electrical grid) electricity from a solar plant in Kutch to a refinery in Vadodara could lower the transportation cost by 60%.
- Improving the reliability of hydrogen supply by augmenting green hydrogen with conventionally produced hydrogen will significantly improve the economics of the fuel.
- Policymakers must facilitate investments in early-stage piloting and the research and development needed to advance the technology for use in India.
- India must learn from the experience of the National Solar Mission and focus on domestic manufacturing.
- Establishing an end-to-end electrolyser manufacturing facility would require measures extending beyond the existing performance-linked incentive programme.
- There is a need for a manufacturing strategy that can leverage the existing strengths and mitigate threats by integrating with the global value chain.



GS PAPER - III

13. ETHICS

What is meant by bumping in business organization? How the process of bumping leads to ethical dilemma in administration? Explain

KEY POINTS

- Bumping is a practice employed by many companies to reserve talent pool during downsizing, wherein a senior-level employee whose position has been selected for removal is offered the option of accepting an alternative position of lesser seniority.
- Redundancy can set in due to various reasons, such as commercial, employee morale, HR policy, etc.
- Bumping is a point to be considered under corporate governance of what principles should employers follow while identifying the selection pool for redundant employees.
- Companies often warp their own ethical climate by pushing too much change from the top, too quickly and too frequently.
- Bumping results in a hurried process to implement staff reduction targets, dispose of big businesses in major markets, and lead mergers and acquisitions. Such actions create inherent conflicts of interest.
- When assessing if an organisation is being fair or reasonable in deciding on a selection pool of redundant employees, it is worth fixing a panel to decide parameters to term employees 'redundant'.
- A survey conducted by the non-profit Ethics & Compliance Initiative, the National Business Ethics Survey, has found that the pressure employees may experience to compromise their organisation's ethics standards.
- Every employee in an organisation is exposed to the risk of facing an ethical dilemma at some point in time, and some ethical decisions can be more challenging than others.