

Index	Page
1. ESSAY	2
2. Tips for Answer Writing	19
3. GS-1 Important Topics and Expected Question	19
4. GS-2 Important Topics and Expected Question	25
5. GS-3 Important Topics and Expected Question	29
6. GS-4 Important Topics and Expected Question	35
7. Burning Topics of India	48
8. 300+ Unsolved Questions	60



Go, change the world

ESSAY

1. The New Emerging Women-Power
2. The Focus of Healthcare is Increasingly Getting Skewed Towards the 'Haves' of our Society.
3. Technology as the silent factor in international relations
4. Should India shift being socialist economy to a capitalist economy? Why?
5. How can the global economy survive Corona?
6. Future of TV Channels with the advent of OT4T Platform.
7. India china border issues – how can India maintain balance between conflict & trade relations?
Is make in India a solution, even as raw materials are supplied by china
8. Is online education and work from home here to stay?
9. Arriving at the truth about Afghanistan through fiction
10. War in Afghanistan.
11. Weighing in on the public sector privatization.

1. The New Emerging Women-Power: Ground Realities

“I believe that the rights of women and girls are the unfinished business of the 21st century.” – Hillary Clinton

Gender issues and ‘women-empowerment’ has become the new buzzword across the globe in the last few decades. The increased familiarity with this term has resulted in the slow transformation of most of the ideologies that have justified inequalities in the social structures for the past so many years. The emerging debates that surround the concept of ‘empowerment’ have had considerable effects on the well-established roots of the institutions that provide support to the existing power structures such as family, state etc. Women have started to become aware of the limitations and confines of the territories within which they have been placed all these years. They have demanded control over their own bodies, equal spaces in the social institutions and an acknowledgment for their identity. Last few years have witnessed a sharp increase in the strategies of women’s development by the state in order to eliminate the gender gaps in the work opportunities, political participation, health facilities and distribution of resources.

India as a nation has taken significant steps to fill the gender gaps existing in the societies here. The constitution of India provides equality of employment opportunity, voting rights and equal pay for equal work. It lays great emphasis on the dignity of women and constitutes several pro-visions like maternity reliefs to maintain a gender-sensitive environment at the workplace. Government schemes like ‘Beti bachao-Beti padhao’, ‘janani suraksha’, intend to ensure the better health care and education facilities. Policies like ‘New National Policy for Women’ endeavour to follow the ‘so-cially inclusive rights-based approach’ for the women empowerment. Apart from this, the introduction of Gender Budget Statement promises a just distribution of resources in the country across gender divisions as well.

The past decade has also experienced an expansion of the definitions of terms like ‘rape’ and ‘violence’ in the legal context. Law has enlarged its frame in order to bring the exploitation of women in private and public sphere through the formulations of laws like Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005’ and ‘Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Prohibition & Redressal) Act, 2013’. Institutions like the National Commission for Women have been formed to identify and register the cases of oppression faced by women. Ministry of Women and Child Development is specifically dedicated to addressing the issues, policies and their implementations related to the women and children in the country.

India has observed immense changes in its socio-political and economic conditions by the introduction of these measures as well as under the impact of globalization and technological advancements. Census 2001-2011 has recorded a significant rise in the literacy rate of women. The expansion of the service sector has generated fresh work opportunities for women. To a large extent, equality in the wages and

participating roles among the women and men can be seen in the urban areas. It is in these areas that the phenomenon of ‘emerging women power’ is being most acutely observed.

Women are dominating the key positions in many fields that were earlier denied to them. The emergence of women to the strategic positions in the social structures has given way to a relatively better understanding and identification of the oppressive practices. However, these transformations seem to be insignificant when compared to the number of issues that continue to degenerate the conditions of women in the society. Also, new challenges have emerged that impede the holistic development of women.

Crime against women has been on the rampant rise in the country along with the growth in the number of career-oriented women in the professional space. Cybercrimes such as sexual harassment and molestation of women through the internet and mobile devices have gone up along with the technological development in the country. As the nation basks in the various scientific and economic achievements, half of its population writhes under the fear of rape, trafficking, domestic violence, honour killing, acid attacks, and sexual harassments. Child marriage, dowry demands, and female infanticide remain a harsh reality even after the strict attempts of their prohibition through the law. These practices are the major reasons behind the skewed sex ratio in the society.

While the country congratulates itself on the achieving the Millennium Development Goal of gender parity at the primary school level, it has done little to overcome the high dropout rates of female students. As the country boasts of women holding the significant chairs in governance like Head of the state, Speaker of Lok Sabha, eminent ministries and top-notch places in the corporate sectors and strategic positions in other arenas of productivity, a large number of women are struggling for their livelihoods as migrant labourers and low paid workers in the informal sector. According to a recently released Monster Salary Index, there exists a gender pay gap of 27% in the country. The overlapping of gender issues with several other issues like caste and poverty worsens the plight of women belonging to these categories. Women workforce in the rural areas that is more exposed to these tribulations comparatively experiences larger pay gaps. India records a High Maternal Mortality Rate and a large number of women suffer from anaemia in the face of the new schemes continuously launched by the government to improve the health conditions of women. The discrimination and violence faced by the women also have deep-rooted effects on their mental health which goes largely unnoticed by the government policies. The concept of ‘emerging women power’ seems to be eyewash in the context of these ground realities.

Most of the measures adopted by the state follow the top-down approach and essentially consider women as mere beneficiaries of the welfare schemes. Women are not empowered to understand and confront the structures of patriarchy. ‘Decision making’ which is emphasized upon in the process of empowering women, have to emerge out of knowledge and informed mediation to instill changes in the familial structures and social arrangements that would help in the evolution of gender roles.

Education plays an important role in the conditioning of the young minds towards the concept of gender. Schools become one of the initial stages where internalization of the performance of gender roles takes place. Gender sensitized pedagogy is needed for the subversion of these roles. Instilling sensitivity towards the dignity of women, emphasizing the development of ethical stand towards the equality in the boys can provide the society with responsible and sensitive individuals.

Encouraging the analytical understanding of exploitation and discrimination among girls shall result in more confident and aware women who can further help in the formation of a gender just society. Prohibitions, reservations and punitive measures can only be the immediate and temporary interventions to promote gender equality. Only a shift in the mindset can facilitate the progress of the society in the longer run. Stricter laws and their honest enforcements have to be followed up by a change in the attitude towards social evils like rape, female foeticide, acid attacks along with the better treatment of the victims. NGOs and SHGs need to be strengthened as part of the empowerment process. These bodies work at the ground level and encourage the victims to share their experiences. Punishing the convicts is just a small part of the justice provided to the victims of gender violence. The major challenge is to help her

rehabilitate and to develop a social environment that would preserve her sense of self-confidence and dignity. The role of community institutions like khap panchayats which dictate the social conduct of a community and promote inhuman practices like hon-our killing should be taken into account. These institutions have a strong hold on the psychology of a particular community. The fault lines of such structures have to be exposed in a manner that has a significant impact on the people of the community.

The major role played by women in the economic growth of a country is known throughout the world. Last year, IMF's chief Christine Lagarde stated that economic inclusion of more women workers in India would expand its GDP by 27% which is massive as compared to the similar impact on the U.S. and Japan which is 5% and 9% respectively. Progressing towards this, the first step would be to acknowledge the huge amount of unpaid care work done by women which hold back their possibilities of boosting the economy in a more productive manner. Moreover, discriminated approach towards the maternity process leaves women workers at a larger risk of being less favoured and losing job opportunities as compared to a male worker. These problems have their roots in the perception and performance of the gender roles assigned by patriarchy. Sharing of responsibilities and coexistence in an equitable manner is what should be of the larger concern in society. It is along these lines that vocational training and skill development should be focussed upon.

In conclusion, it may be said that probing the ground realities of the catchy headlines like 'the new emerging women power' adds more substance and nuance to the discourse on gender justice. These nuances do not refuse the accomplishments achieved so far by society but actually point towards the remaining distance which still needs to be covered. Identification of the problem areas and weaknesses is the first step towards their eradication. India has shown a dedicated will to bring changes by pledging to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals which include ideals of gender justice and women empowerment. Only with constructive planning and comprehensive changes at various levels in society the new emerging "women power" shall be soon able to realize its complete potential in India.

2. The Focus of Healthcare is Increasingly Getting Skewed Towards the 'Haves' of our Society.

Good health is one of the most fundamental and basic essential needs of all human beings. That is why, third of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the world leaders last year aims to ensure good health for all. Indian constitution also implicitly recognizes good health as one of the fundamental rights guaranteed under the right to life. In absence of good health all of man's endeavors will be deemed useless. For India to fulfill its dream of becoming a developed and prosperous nation it must take care of the most important of its resources i.e. its human capital. India is on the cusp of demographic dividend with the economically productive (15-59 years of age) portion of its population going above the 60% mark. But India can fully utilize this potential only if it is successful in providing for its population proper education, skills, nutrition and healthcare. Among all this, importance of healthcare is perhaps the highest as only a healthy person can be productive enough to fully utilize his skills. Therefore healthcare is of paramount importance for an individual to lead a fulfilling life and also for the whole nation to progress. However is the Indian healthcare system itself in a healthy state?

India has a disproportionately high share of health problems and diseases like child stunting, diabetes, tuberculosis, cancer etc. In the recent round of National Sample Survey (NSS) it was found that over 80% of Indians do not have health insurance cover and that a majority of people in the rural areas utilize private sector health services. Given the relatively lower levels of per capita income in rural areas of our country all these findings certainly raise a question over whether the healthcare system in India is increasingly getting skewed towards the population that has the means to afford it.

To analyze the nature of the health care sector, we can focus on the three major aspects i.e. accessibility, affordability and quality of the healthcare facilities. On all three fronts Indian health care system has had a

mixed record. Accessibility to healthcare facilities is high in urban areas as compared to rural areas. The private sector does not find it viable to increase its penetration in rural areas given the low purchasing power whereas the public sector lacks resources, efficiency and enterprise associated with private sector. This is the reason why as per the NSS survey over 70% of both rural and urban people had to resort to private healthcare facilities despite higher costs associated with them.

Private sector healthcare is more costly as compared to public sector for the obvious reason of absence of state subsidy and the guiding motive of profit and hence scores poorly on the affordability parameter. Even if we go by the stringent parameters of Tendulkar methodology for measuring poverty, over 21% of Indians fail to earn enough to spend more than Rs. 33 per day. In such a situation it would be unrealistic and cruel on the part of state to expect the market driven sector to cater to health care needs of even the marginalized sections of the Indian society. That is why, 'Financial Restriction' was the major reason chosen by respondents in the latest NSS survey for not being able to utilize the healthcare facilities, both in rural as well as urban areas.

On the quality parameter as well the Indian healthcare system falls short. India spends less than 1.5% of its GDP on health which is lower than many of the Sub-Saharan countries with GDP much below India. In such a situation public sector healthcare facilities suffer from resource crunch and poor infrastructure as seen in public hospitals, unhygienic conditions, lack of availability of medicines at public dispensaries etc. Doctor to patient ratio in India is below the minimum benchmark given by WHO of 1:1000. Even the quality of doctors available is rendered questionable given the poor status of medical education in India. Medical Council of India (MCI), the institution responsible for overall supervision and regulation of medical education in India, has itself been mired in serious allegations of corruption, nepotism, fraud etc. Private medical colleges with no infrastructure and ghost faculty that exists only on paper are very much prevalent in a number of states. The poor state of medical education and its governance can be gauged from the fact that honorable Supreme Court has had to intervene and ask the government for complete overhaul of MCI. In such a scenario the quality of healthcare, especially in public health facilities is indeed quite low. In private sector even though the quality of healthcare is relatively better, question marks are raised over the mushrooming of unregulated clinics and quacks practicing in semi-urban and rural areas.

Therefore, over all three parameters, Indian healthcare system fails to give satisfactory performance. This clearly affects the poor or the marginalized or the 'have-nots' section of the society more as those who can afford to spend on the expensive private health care and live in urban areas or nearby, do have access to good healthcare facilities. In fact medical tourism is an upcoming sector of the Indian economy as costs of the private Indian healthcare system are relatively lower when compared with the first world and without any compromise on quality. Hence it is the 'have-nots' that the government should prioritize its focus on for providing quality healthcare facilities on affordable rates.

The government has taken a number of steps to increase the accessibility and affordability of quality healthcare for the weaker sections of society. Infectious diseases which accounted for most of the disease burden 25 years ago have been substantially reduced through mass immunization and vaccination programs and use of other appropriate treatments. Huge strides have been taken in public health in India due to effectiveness of such quality programs. Small pox was eliminated in 2014 and India achieved polio-free status in 2014. Maternal and neo natal tetanus was eliminated by August 2015.

Even though massive vaccination programs in India have been successful, research says the immunization coverage has only been 65% again putting it out of reach of the ones who probably need it the most. With the introduction of new vaccines and programs like Mission Indradhanush, India rightly aims to increase the immunization coverage to 90% in next few years.

Tax deductions for research and development in the pharmaceutical industry and protective regime of favorable Intellectual Property (IP) laws have been instrumental in developing India as a major global player in the generic drugs industry. This has mainly helped in increasing access to low-cost life

saving drugs to poor patients, not only in India but many other developing and least developed countries of Asia and Africa as well. However, government needs to continuously safeguard against attempts by strong pharmaceutical lobbies in first world countries to arm twist us into changing our successful and WTO compliant IP regime.

Another way to ensure better health facilities for the 'have-nots' is by increasing penetration of health insurance in our country. Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) that provides for cashless health insurance at authorized private hospitals for below poverty line families and unorganized sector is one such scheme. Similarly other state run health insurance schemes for central and state government employees, tax incentives announced in Budget 2015-16 related to health insurance etc. are also right steps in this direction. Such schemes if properly implemented can go a long way in bringing quality healthcare within reach for all.

However one side effect of these schemes has been the medical overuse crisis in India. A media report shows that between 2009 and 2015, number of surgeries conducted under government health welfare schemes has shot up remarkably. Surgeries like C-sections, hysterectomies and other emergency surgeries are being performed with abandon and without caring about their side effects on patients. This can potentially lead to a situation in India where the poor have access to complex surgeries but not to basic primary health care. Therefore while the government needs to increase oversight over implementation of its health welfare schemes, at the same time there needs to be a realization that health insurance schemes can only supplement a robust public health setup and not be a substitute for it.

Therefore good health is not only a fundamental right but also a necessity for India in order to augment its human resources capability to emerge as a developed nation. Presently healthcare in India is lagging behind on accessibility, affordability as well as quality especially for the socio-economically marginalized sections of its society. India cannot merely rely on the private sector to provide healthcare to the 'have-nots' neither is merely relying on expanding penetration of health insurance a solution. India will need to learn from its own successes in public health intervention in the form of mass immunization programs and its success against a number of infectious diseases. If the poor are to be saved from the vicious circle of poverty and poor health feeding upon each other, focus needs to shift to preventive and curative treatments against non-communicable diseases in the public health sector. India needs to at least double its investment in public health facilities and in the overall health sector as a percentage of its GDP. The availability of medicines and doctors and accessibility to public health centers by opening up new hospitals in rural areas needs to be increased. Such investment will provide tremendous long term returns for India not only by increasing productivity of its workforce and hence that of the nation but also via savings in the healthcare expenses. Only with a world-class health setup that leaves no one behind, can India fulfill its constitutional obligation of ensuring Right to Life in a substantive manner as well as take a leap towards truly earning its place among the developed nations!

3. Technology as the silent factor in international relations.

Technology is derived from Greek word which means "science of art" and "art skill" "cunning of hand". It is the sum of techniques, skills, methods and processes used in the production of goods or services. Technology can be the knowledge of techniques, processes and can be embedded in machines to allow for operation without detail knowledge of their working. The simple form of technology is the development and use of basic tools. The prehistoric of invention of shaped stone tools followed by the discovery of how to control fire increased sources of food. The invention of the wheel helped the human to travel in and control their environment development in historic times including the printing press, the telephone and the internet have lessened physical barriers to communication.

Technology has many effects in the global world from invention among human being many technological processes produce unwanted by-products known as pollution what pollute the global world.

Technology can be viewed as an activity that forms or changes culture. Technology is the application of mathematics, science and the art for the benefit of life. A modern example is the rise of communication technology which has lessened barriers to human interaction and the rise of cyber culture has at its basis the development of the internet and the computer.

Technology is the branch of knowledge which takes measures concerning engineering or applied sciences. Technology is about developing machinery and equipment using the application of scientific knowledge. The first industrial Revolution with its technological offerings change the needs and aspirations of economic and social development radical and fundamentally. The needs arrows to develop the markets for this goods, for example Britain used many overseas colonies to promote these goods. Consequently, technology silently started transforming the ways in which people and things were connected across the sea.

The use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki compelled the Nations to think about what nuclear technology could do to the world. The nuclear which maintains nuclear arsenals can defend his or her country's sovereignty and can also help other nations. Nuclear deterrence as a strategic concept aims to prevent war.

Technology has its compulsive say in realism which views political power as the subject matter of politics. Western countries endeavor to see the nuclear weapons free middle East. The fourth Industrial Revolution which is about the convergence of physical , digital and biological spheres where technologies with the purpose of creating an inclusive growth and environment. Theses massive technological changes and inducements have already silently entered the dynamics of international relations.

4. Should India shift being socialist economy to a capitalist economy? Why?

On 15th August 1947, India woke to a new dawn of freedom. Finally, we were masters of our destiny after some 200 years of British rule; the job of nation-building was now in our hands. Lack of infrastructure, the prevalence of poverty, unemployment, low agricultural etc. was a kind of India that Nehru inherited. Under these conditions, he was posed with the mammoth task of creating an India where no individual died of hunger and did not struggle to meet both ends. Hence he had to decide on such an economic system that would ensure the welfare of all rather than a few. Therefore socialism appealed to him the most. But he was not inclined towards the extreme form of socialism which was present in the USSR where no private properties were allowed and the state owned the industries. Rather he wanted a socialist sector with a strong public sector but also with private property and democracy. Many industries were nationalized in the mid-1950s. The Industries Act of 1951 was a prerequisite for businesses to get a license from the government before they could develop, expand or change their product. Import tariffs were imposed to discourage foreign trade, and foreign investments were subjected to repressive constraints. But the planners were unsuccessful, manufacturing never took off and finally the economy crumbled. It was in 1991 that the country embarked upon the major reforms of liberalization, privatization and globalization that brought the government expenditure in line with revenue. It converted the Indian economy into a market economy by increasing the participation of private players, decreasing the role of the public sector, abolishing the industrial licensing, and free entry to foreign investment, hence finally led to the beginning of privatization in India. Slowly, different sectors of the Indian economy are moving towards a more privatized way of functioning that has sparked a new debate on whether India should shift to a capitalist economy?

Capitalism and Socialism are the economic systems that define the mechanism for production, distribution and allocation of goods and services. Both the systems at their extremes have their pros and cons.

In socialism, the production and distribution are taken by the government with individuals dependent on the state for everything. It encourages collective ownership as well as production based on their usefulness, thereby, discouraging accumulation that is the root cause of wealth imbalance hence promoting equality. But it has its shortcomings such as it weakens the engines of the economic growth as

it provides very few incentives to people for innovation. Communist countries like China, Cuba tend towards socialism in the past but now they have switched to a parallel financial system by operating their usual social programs in critical sectors while allowing a free market economy in tourism, export etc.

On the other hand, capitalism is an economic system where individuals and businesses, rather than government own and control the factors of production. Capitalism's success depends on a free market economy driven by supply and demand.

On the other hand capitalism leads to a higher growth rate, employment, enhanced infrastructure, productivity etc. as compared to the socialist counterpart. They are the chief agents in creating employment, generating wealth, building competitiveness and driving innovation- all essential instruments for growth.

1. Today India has one of the highest demographic dividends in the world which is expected to last till 2055. With about 11-12 million youths entering the labour force every year, jobs need to be created and effective skill initiatives need to be put in place. Government alone cannot create so many jobs. Hence the private sector plays a pivotal role in meeting this challenge. It has strong links to higher investment in educational and vocational training, facilitates training programmes and creates a partnership with educational institutes and experts thus creating a future-ready and talented workforce.
2. Investments by the corporate sector have a multiplier effect on the economy by creating direct and indirect jobs, boosting consumption, fostering development thus helping India to become Atmanirbhar. That is why the government is taking measures to attract investments especially in defence, airports etc.
3. The private sector has the power to harness and use cleaner, greener technology to ensure greater prosperity of the nation and promote environmental efficiency.
4. It plays a lead role in research and development spending, works with universities and institutes to convert new research into the market and craft innovative business models and strategies.

Capitalism's ability to improve economies is not in doubt but they conceal the poverty and suffering at the bottom of the economic pyramid. Inequity and individual's greed and aspirations in a capitalist economy are given. And as said by the renowned economist Dr Manmohan Singh that India is a rich country inhabited with very poor people, hence pure capitalism will further widen the gap between rich and the poor. The Government has to play a vital role in the upliftment of the poor thus ensuring equity and equality for all. Secondly, the collapse of many international banks and economies over the past years, massive bailouts required by the critical pillars of finance and the global economic recession has exposed the limitations of pure and unregulated capitalism. Hence there is a need to transform, redesign, regulated and root it in the Indian context and this work can only be done by the national government with the help of experts and state government.

As rightly said by Winston Churchill "the inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings; the inherent virtue of socialism is the equal sharing of miseries" hence economic structure in India should combine the efficiency of capitalism with socialistic ideals of equality and justice.

5. How can the global economy survive Corona?

The novel corona pandemic is surviving against the odds and bringing nightmare to the world where every sphere of our lives brought into grinding halt. It has given an worth full impression among the people that whether the world can survive in this tumultuous span or else whether the people can get rid of this pandemic. The governments of today are fully geared up to invigorate the economy by pursuing pragmatic approach to stimulate growth prospects.

The corona virus that was erupted in the Wuhan city of the China brought the whole world under its glitches where the gravity of the virus ransacked every walk in the world to a grinding halt by exuding its propensity. The epidemiologist all over world studied the genesis of the virus and advocated strict lockdown and social distance are the best ailment to ameliorate the virus transmission and flatten the curve in the world. The countries in view of this bitter truth raced against time one after the another in imposing strict lockdown in their respective countries due to this world was caught in standalone situation. The consequent to this the global economy is in dire straits where the production and supply was stagnated

due to the pandemic. The marginal and down trodden sections of the society bear the brunt of this virus where their livelihoods are deprived.

The governments noticed the ill-effects of the contemporary situation that was persisting in the world and had taken the pragmatic steps to contend the ongoing situation. In view of that it had a series of deliberations with the honchos of the various sector in the economy and take their views into consideration by incorporating their views in policy formulation. The wise approach is the need of the day for every government to survive in this desperate situation and there are plethora of measures that are in line of action for the government to subdue the virus in a dovetail manner without debilitating the economy much more and by spinning the vicious growth cycle of the economy . The government should categorize the places that have registered with highest infection rate in one zone and relax the public life in the remaining zones according to the hindsight.

The central banks of the myriad nations are planning to stimulate the economy by offering unconventional monetary policies such as the low interest rates to the industries that are confronting with the ready cash crunch in the economy, purchasing the long term bonds as proposed in the operation twist etc yields the growth to pick up. It should also re-schedule the loans that have been taken by the small-scale sector industries and companies so that the unease will weeded out among them. The government in tandem with the central banks should also lose its purse strings by relaxing their respective fiscal deficit targets in order to give impetus to the economy through capital expenditure. The government should relax the restrictions on the essential sectors that are in dire need of the medical masks, personal protection equipment, medicines etc to support the lives of the people those who are in dire need. The government should trickle down the monetary support to the most vulnerable sections of the people in the society by depositing the respectable amount in their bank accounts so that the lower rung strata of the society will start purchasing goods from the market and this in turn will pick up demand in the economy. The government should reopen the economy in a phased manner by providing and taking the security measures to the employees. The others initiatives of the governments to instill the vigor and vitality in the economy are by giving relaxation to the income tax payers by increasing the tax slab rate. The government should give monetary support to the rural sector especially to the farmers where they are going for sowing in the Kharif season due to the upfront monsoon climate and this leads to employment generation on one side and also avert the shortfall in the food grain production.

Lastly, hope the wisdom of knowledge will pervade among the people and the governments in the world to give knockout punch to the corona by joining hand-in-hand for bright prospects in the economy.

6. Future of TV Channels with the advent of OTT Platform

An over-the-top media service is a streaming media service offered directly to viewers via the Internet. *OTT bypasses cable, broadcast, and satellite television platforms, the companies that traditionally act as a controller or distributor of such content. Netflix, Amazon Prime, Zee5, Disney Hotstar, Hulu etc can be considered as examples of OTT Platforms.* Streaming on OTT Platforms has started with the advent of digital media giving tough competition to TV Channels. However in recent months, due to COVID – 19 pandemic, many new movies, web series have been directly released on to// OTT Platform – Penguin, Dil Bechara are few such examples – intensifying the competition.

Positive aspects of OTT compared to TV Channels:

Increasing accessibility: With nearly 500 million internet users, a figure that is growing at a rate of 8 percent, India's potential as a market for global media and the entertainment sector is unprecedented.

Any time-Anywhere content: Unlike TV Channels, which have to be watched mostly from home, sitting constantly at a place and at a particular time telecasted by the channel, OTT Platforms can be accessed according to our wish, we can pass in between – take a break and continue from where we left off.

Cost effective: Compared to TV Channels, OTT platforms are cheaper for the content they provide. The economic gap between the two will further be widened with increasing penetration of internet and

increasing browsing speed, from 3G-a couple of years back to 5G , will be achieved by next year mostly. Moreover, the credentials of single OTT Platform can be shared with multiple people which further widens the cost between both.

No need to watch advertisements: As most of the channels telecast advertisements for their revenue generation, we cannot skip through them unlike on OTT platforms (after few seconds)

Quality of video: is high on OTT platforms. On TV Channel one has to pay a higher price to get higher quality video through HD channels.

No extra installation costs: TV Channels require a cable connection; bad weather can disturb the telecasting. This is not the case with OTT with many optical fiber cables connected through underground network.

However following unique features of TV Channels which can never be replaced by any other media:

Content in regional language: About 93% of videos watched in India are in regional languages. But most of the content in OTT platforms in India presently is either in Hindi or English. Though few other languages videos are also present such as Tamil or Telugu, minority languages are not given much importance. This is not the case with TV Channels where local programs are made in regional languages.

Emotional Value of TV: Beginning from the 1980s, television was always something which could be found in almost every household, connecting families who gather around together to watch it.

Wide range of content: TV Channels broadcast different programs aimed at different age groups at different times (news, sports, kids etc), with varied intensity of knowledge. This might not be the case with OTT Platforms, where more or less uniform content is available.

Other issues with OTT compared to TV Channels:

Internet accessibility: Internet penetration is not universal in India. Even when people have accessibility, it mostly through mobiles – that too at low speeds. This leads to continuous buffering. This problem is not there with TV. Though our government is trying to increase digital connectivity through programs such as “Digital India”, it will take many years before we have 100% accessibility.

Even if one has access, Digital Literacy is not growing at faster pace compared to accessibility.

Cyber security: Chances of cyber threat is more with OTT Platforms. Kids might accidentally watch adult videos while accessing OTT Platforms.

Health issues: The negative effects of continuously watching mobile or laptop/tab far outweigh the negative effects of watching TV continuously. This is more so because TV is accessed from a farther distance compared to mobile/tab/computer. Smart TVs are a costly affair and only above middle class and rich people can afford them presently.

As per the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India’s (TRAI) Performance Indicator Report 2019, the Direct-to-Home (DTH) service sector had an active subscriptions base of around 72.44 million as of March 2019. This is a massive number which cannot be discounted and it will definitely take time for people to shift completely from conventional TV to OTT platforms. OTT platforms give a commendable competition to conventional television but they still face a number of hurdles which they have to overcome to completely take over the Indian entertainment market. Until then, it is safe to assume that television is here to stay for a while at least. TV channels might even modify themselves to sustain the competition from OTT Platforms for their survival.

7. India china border issues – how can India maintain balance between conflict & trade relations? Is make in India a solution, even as raw materials are supplied by china

Alibaba Group Jack ma once said, “**If trade stops, the war begins**”. In the current situation, it's the other way around “If war begins, trade stops”. India’s ancient friend, modern enemy “China” with its medieval mindset of expansionism, giving tough times amidst pandemic. How India going to stop the rising power is what the world is looking forward to. What challenges are ahead to realize the self-reliance dream?

After the terrible incident of 20 soldiers beaten to death in Galwan valley, India woke up to the consciousness that it’s time to retaliate not with guns, but by stripping china off the trade with India. The recent banning of 59 apps by china is supposed to be the first action of this kind. China hardly buys

anything in India, while India buys everything from China, which is 4 times the value of India's exports to China. It is attributed mostly to China's electronic sector with a huge market in India, whereas our country is still working on strengthening the electronic business.

While China is flexing its muscles, we should balance the conflict and trade? 18 Unicorn companies out of 30 companies have millions of dollars of Chinese investment. Paytm has been acquired outright. Chinese smartphones share 70% of the Indian smartphone market. More the 50% downloads of the app in India like TikTok, were developed by Chinese companies, Haewai was allowed to conduct 5g trials in India. The optic fiber sector, Electric vehicle sectors are dominated by Chinese presence. Is Made-in-India a solution?

After the launch of the Atma Nirbhar Bharat scheme and call for boycotting Chinese projects, swadeshi products are gaining popularity. From Reliance industries made in India 5g to mushrooming desi apps to PPE manufacturing, it is hoping for a swadeshi turn. Mukesh Ambani recently got investment worth 4.2 bn USD to its jio platform and is happy to introduce a slew of products in India. Desi apps are becoming popular after the ban. These apps were waiting for the opportunity to take a lead. PPE industry, which is almost not there in India, is booming in the wake of the Corona Crisis. This boycott of China and working on self-reliance may be a rhetoric move for time being. But, cutting down from China, is it plausible?

It needs to be acknowledged that China's exports to India account for only 2% of its total exports, so even if Indians boycott all the goods imported from China, it will not make as big an impact on China. The range of goods that we import from China is massive: consumer durables such as electronic goods, smartphones, industrial goods, vehicles, solar cells, and essential pharmaceutical products including tuberculosis and leprosy drugs and antibiotics, among many others.

In such a situation, finding an alternative to Chinese imports remains a herculean task for the Indian industry, especially in the face of the cost competitiveness of Chinese imports. In fact, China is our strategic partner, where we are getting our raw material in very less cost. A mechanism for import substitution needs to be worked out, by creating such product alternatives that can compete both in quality and cost against Chinese products. Low R&D expenditure, especially from the private sector, is a key challenge facing the innovation ecosystem in India. Mere rhetorical call will not take us anywhere, we need clear blueprint.

R&D expenditure in India tripled in the last 15 years, but its size as a percentage of GDP remained at 0.7%. This is very low compared to 2% and 1.2% spent by China and Brazil (for 2014), respectively. Countries like Israel spend as much as 4.3% of their GDP on R&D. This makes it imperative to think about resource allocation and invest in research and development, which in turn will equip our industries with the requisite technology and skill to fight this trade battle. Secondly, the government must lower the rates at which loans are issued to Indian companies, just like China.

Moreover, the foreign direct investment (FDI) regime also needs to be further liberalized. India receives only 25% of the FDI that China gets and only 10% of what the US receives. An increase in the levels of FDI may provide the necessary nudge to our industrial sector to surge towards better productivity and efficiency. FDIs in food processing, Tourism has good potential where investors are happy to invest.

Lastly, it would be extremely beneficial if we diversify our import basket, by importing our necessities from a host of other countries and lessening our dependence on China. All these steps, collectively, could take us closer to self-reliance.

After World War 2, like Russia, China did not stick to an ideology to gain power, nor it did invest in military, whereas it worked on its economy for past few decades to become a rising super power. India should work on its economy, before getting into eye for an eye fight with its neighbours.

8. Is online education and work from home here to stay?

The lockdown situation currently prevailing all over the world because of an unexpected deadly guest Coronavirus also known as COVID-19, took a toll on man's life because of which neither his regular duties cannot be performed like before nor can he stay directly connected to his work and other necessities. Then came the concept of everything going online to rescue.

PROS OF ONLINE LEARNING AND WORK FROM HOME DURING THE LOCKDOWN:

Online education encourages flexible electronic means of learning that relies on internet for interaction between a tutor and a tutee or a teacher and his/her students. Then comes work from home which involves the interaction between the employer and the employee and having access to work from one's home itself. It is quite an effective solution for everyone involved in this, ensuring the safety of the public and at the same time encouraging usage of technology in a fruitful manner. This avoids any knowledge gap that can occur if not being able to access education by the students for a long time because of the lockdown, if the situation doesn't get settled soon though India is putting in its best efforts to flatten the curve. Students also get to learn vivid things from various online courses that may not be available for them in their locality. Work from home is a feasible thing to do that can benefit both the employee and his company, as it does not let any work get piled up which cannot be resolved if not done on time. At the same time the employee gets paid his monthly wages which prevents his financial situation to get unstable. Learning online and working from home is not at all a new concept all over the world, especially after internet became quite affordable and accessible to most of the people. Even in the rural areas internet connectivity has improved over the years granting them all the benefits one living the urban and metropolitan cities enjoy. Almost every working professional and student can benefit from this at their own pace and convenience.

CONS OF ONLINE MODE OF DOING THINGS:

Though consisting many advantages, online mode of learning or working does hold some major disadvantages. In online education, the direct interaction between the teachers and the students is not possible and that can have an impact on some students who grasp better if taught face to face and teachers who cannot teach as effectively as they do teach in their classrooms. Internet connection though nowadays is easily accessed, cannot be a perfect alternative to un interruptive teaching as it is not something completely reliable. Power failures, technical issues etc:- can disturb the learning process of a student and make teaching difficult for the tutor. Some students might not have smartphones or computers at their homes and most importantly, in the remotest areas where there might not even be a facility provided by the school for online education, deters the performance of a student in his academics as he obviously lags behind.

In work from home, there could be a possibility of slow communication and almost no interaction with one's co-employees which might be detrimental to his work. Risk regarding the security is also a generally debated topic when it comes to working from home, as recently some video calling apps like ZOOM which were usually used by the companies to connect with their employees, have been accused of stealing personal information and misappropriating them. Productivity of the worker might also get reduced to an extent as the environment of an office pushed him to do be more productive which work from home might not allow, be it because of personal distractions or any other trivial reasons.

THE FUTURE OF WORK FROM HOME AND ONLINE LEARNING:

There is definitely a high chance of work from home getting continued in many parts of the world even after the lockdown, as its pros overweigh the cons. Not only the mentioned reasons but also there are many benefits such as reduced operating costs for the companies, no travel expenses, balance between work and family life, less exhaustive both physically and mentally and it is also indirectly environmental friendly as it reduces pollution along with less usage of automobiles and public transport for daily commute to the offices.

Online education may not replace the traditional way of learning completely but does definitely provide the students with more opportunities to learn something out of their comfort zone because of the easy access to various courses apart from their academics. But at least till the situation gets better for good, online mode of learning is going to play a vital role, if not, a mandatory role in the field of education.

CONCLUSION:

Technology if used in a way which it is supposed to be used, that in the sense in a positive and productive manner by an individual or a group of people, can transform the current conventional methods of things happening to make the best usage of it for everything to go much more smoothly and effectively. We can soon expect the online mode of learning and work getting popular and becoming very pivotal in near future.

9. Arriving at the truth about Afghanistan through fiction

As I look at images of Afghans desperate to flee a country captured by the Taliban, I remember the unfailing kindness that I received when I visited Kabul in 2017 for the South Asian Youth Conference. It hurts to think of the immense suffering that the Afghans are going through right now. Wishes for their well-being arise spontaneously in my heart at all times of day and I find myself seeking refuge in prayer. May they be safe and free.

This essay is a gesture of solidarity with the indomitable spirit of the Afghan people. Fiction can help us cut through the obsession with realpolitik and ground ourselves in something much subtler: empathy. Our day-to-day realities might be different from the people we read about but these stories teach us to bear witness to their hardships and grace. Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner* (2003) was the first book that gave me insights into the Afghans and their culture. Set in Kabul, it is the story of two close friends — Amir and Hassan — against the backdrop of the Soviet invasion, a violent transfer of power from the hands of the Afghan monarchy, a huge exodus of refugees to Pakistan in the neighbourhood and the United States, and the rise of the fearsome Taliban.

Though the plot revolves around Hassan's loyalty, Amir's betrayal, and the promise of a belated repentance, one of its most striking moments puts Baba — Amir's father — in the spotlight. He is a businessman who has little respect for the Soviet invaders and the religious extremists of Afghanistan, so he prepares to leave for the United States with Amir. On their way out, they have to travel in a crowded truck with several other Afghans.

Among them is a family — a woman, her husband, and their child. This truck is stopped by a Russian soldier, who wants "a half hour with the lady in the back of the truck" before he allows the vehicle to pass. Baba is aghast. He says, "War doesn't negate decency. It demands it, even more than in times of peace." When the Russian soldier threatens to shoot him, Baba says that he would take a thousand of his bullets before he'd let **"this indecency take place."**

The courage to put his own life at risk to protect a person he does not even know is closely linked to the Pashtun code of honour — Pashtunwali — which requires tribesmen to stand up against injustice, and safeguard women. Afraid that Baba might get killed by the soldier for this impertinence, Amir begs him to sit down. Baba is in no mood to listen. Rather, ashamed of his son's cowardice, he says, "Haven't I taught you anything?"

This episode from Hosseini's novel gives me gooseflesh. It stands as an example of the compassion and fortitude that human beings are capable of. Baba is a fictional character but there are many such heroes in real life. If you are looking for evidence, read Rajmohan Gandhi's book *Punjab: A History from Aurangzeb to Mountbatten* (2013). He has recorded stories of people who displayed "*insaniyat* amidst insanity" during India's Partition in 1947. When the state abdicates its responsibility to look after its people, help comes from unexpected quarters. Canadian novelist Deborah Ellis tells the story of a girl named Parvana in her novel *The Breadwinner* (2000). Parvana's family lives in Kabul. Under Taliban rule, her mother is forced to discontinue her job as a writer with a radio station. Her father, a history teacher, is abducted and imprisoned by the Taliban because he was educated in England.

Ellis writes, "Everybody had come to Afghanistan. The Persians came 4000 years ago. Alexander the Great came, too, followed by the Greeks, Arabs, Turks, British, and finally the Soviets... All these people had come to Parvana's beautiful country to try to take it over, and the Afghans had kicked them all out again!" This pattern has repeated itself most recently with the United States pulling out troops, paving the way for a Taliban takeover.

One day, while escaping a Talib soldier who wants to beat her with a stick for not wearing a burqa, Parvana runs into her former school teacher Mrs Weera. The thoughtful lady brings her home, and finds

that Parvana's mother is falling apart. She needs someone to take charge. Without wasting a minute, Mrs Weera gets a grip on what needs to be done and delegates tasks. She also helps with tidying up the house, and eventually moves in with them.

The adults convince Parvana to disguise herself as a boy so that she can be safe in public, and be a breadwinner for the family until her father returns. She gets a haircut, and wears the clothes that once belonged to her elder brother Hossain who was killed by a land mine when he was 14 years old. After the transformation is complete, Parvana is given a new name and identity. She becomes Kaseem, a cousin from Jalalabad who is supposedly visiting Kabul.

People are forced to innovate when their survival is at stake. This practice of *bacha posh* is common in some parts of Afghanistan. Parents who do not have sons are known to disguise one of their daughters as a boy so she can move freely in public, attend school, play sports, take up jobs, and serve as an escort for the other sisters since women and girls are not supposed to be out on the streets without a male companion from their family.

In 2013, I met former Afghan parliamentarian Azita Rafaat as part of a conflict transformation and peace-building course in Kathmandu. She used to be a *bacha posh* (meaning 'dressed up as a boy' in the Dari language) when she was a child. When she grew up and had four daughters of her own, an endless stream of taunts from her in-laws made her transform one of her daughters — Mehrangis — into a boy named Mehran. Disguises last only until puberty.

Fiction from Afghanistan will reveal to you that being a boy might offer some advantages but there is no perpetual immunity from the machinery of war. Atiq Rahimi's novel *Earth and Ashes* (2002) — which was first published as *Khâkestar-o-khâk* (1999) in Dari and then translated into English by Erdağ Göknar—tells the story of Dastaguir and his grandson Yassin. The five-year-old loses his hearing when his village, Abqul, is bombed by Russian soldiers. Yassin also loses his mother, grandmother, uncle, aunt and cousins during this bomb attack. His father, Murad, is alive because he does not live with them. Murad works at a coal mine, and comes home to visit them occasionally. Yassin does not know that he cannot hear.

He tells Dastaguir, "Grandfather, have the Russians come and taken away everyone's voice? What do they do with all the voices? Why did you let them take away your voice? If you hadn't, would they've killed you? Grandma didn't give them her voice and she's dead." Dastaguir is heartbroken, and has no clue how to comfort the little one. He tries to find some relief in *naswar* — powdered tobacco mixed with other substances — and is unsuccessful.

Author Nemat Sadat shows that life in Afghanistan is even more brutal for boys if they are gay. His novel, *The Carpet Weaver* (2019), set in the 1970s and 1980s, revolves around the character of Kanishka Nurzada who is in love with his childhood friend Maihan. They are bullied and sexually abused when their peers learn about this forbidden relationship. Instead of punishing the bullies, the teacher shames Kanishka and Maihan for not being "real men."

This harassment is not unlike what happened in India before Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code was read down by the Supreme Court to decriminalize "carnal intercourse against the order of nature." Even after the verdict, many queer people continue to be threatened and harmed. When Kanishka and his family enter Balochistan as refugees, they are forced to weave carpets at a camp where he is later raped by Tor Gul, the man in charge of the camp.

Kanishka develops a strange relationship with this tyrant. On the one hand, he hates Tor Gul for all the cruelty he unleashes upon people who are no match for him. On the other, Kanishka also craves the sexual pleasure that he can receive only from another man in the absence of Maihan. He begins to view Tor Gul as both his rapist and his lover. He does not want to antagonize him, and put his own family in danger before they reach the US.

In Sadat's book, the US represents freedom rather than occupation. Kanishka knows that his own people might execute him for his desires because they are viewed as un-Islamic. Zaki jaan, a character in the novel says, "The one thing I know is that Allah never forgives sodomy. It's immoral, impure, unpardonable. And if we let them get their way, then others will find the courage to continue down the path. We can't let any of our boys become a *kuni*."

Jasbir Puar's book *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007) provides a useful framework to think about how the US and other Western countries have used the language of queer rights to disguise their Islamophobia and justify their interference in the affairs of other countries. It is no secret that, in the days after 9/11, the US War on Terror was sold to American voters using images of Afghan women who needed to be liberated.

Nicolas Wild's graphic novels *Kabul Disco Vol1: How I Managed Not to Be Abducted in Afghanistan* (2018) and *Kabul Disco Vol2: How I Managed Not to Get Addicted to Opium in Afghanistan* (2018) are woven around the story of a French comic artist who is hired by a communications agency in Kabul. They want him to produce comics to explain the Afghan constitution to children. The agency is run by people from France and Argentina. Wild offers a satirical take on expats who treat Afghanistan as a "land of contracts" and spend much of their time going to parties with other expats. These serve as spaces to network and negotiate newer contracts. Diego, one of the founders of this agency, projects himself as a specialist in "war-torn countries." He has worked in Kosovo and East Timor. The agency also hires guards, drivers, cleaning ladies and cooks to make expat life comfortable.

Read together, these books can help you piece together what has led Afghanistan to its present situation. Asylum in the US or any Western country is no guarantee of safety as Nadia Hashimi explores in her novel *The Sky at Our Feet* (2018). Jason D, the protagonist, has an American name but that does nothing to hide his Afghan heritage or assuage his fear when his mother, "an illegal immigrant from Afghanistan", faces the threat of deportation. The narrator writes, "My mother is standing in front of the television, listening to the news anchor. He's talking about a rally against people who are in this country illegally. I see a picture of people shouting and waving signs around. The signs say things like America for Americans and Go Home."

Where will the Afghans go? When will they know peace? These questions unsettle my heart, and I seek refuge, yet again, in prayer.

10. War in Afghanistan

Recent Developments

In April 2021, President Joe Biden announced that U.S. military forces would leave Afghanistan by September 2021. The Taliban, which had continued to capture and contest territory across the country despite ongoing peace talks with the Afghan government, ramped up attacks on Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) bases and outposts and began to rapidly seize more territory. In May 2021, the U.S. military accelerated the pace of its troop withdrawal. By the end of July 2021, the United States had completed nearly 95 percent of its withdrawal, leaving just 650 troops to protect the U.S. embassy in Kabul.

In the summer of 2021, the Taliban continued its offensive, threatening government-controlled urban areas and seizing several border crossings. In early August, the Taliban began direct assaults on multiple urban areas, including Kandahar in the south and Herat in the west. On August 6, 2021, the Taliban captured the capital of southern Nimruz Province, the first provincial capital to fall. After that, provincial capitals began to fall in rapid succession. Within days, the Taliban captured more than ten other capitals, including Mazar-i-Sharif in the north and Jalalabad in the east, leaving Kabul the only major urban area under government control. On August 15, 2021, Taliban fighters entered the capital, leading Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to flee the country and the Afghan government to collapse. Later that day, the Taliban announced they had entered the presidential palace, taken control of the city, and were establishing checkpoints to maintain security.

The speed of the Taliban's territorial gains and collapse of both the ANDSF and Afghan government surprised U.S. officials and allies—as well as, reportedly, the Taliban itself—despite earlier intelligence assessments of the situation on the ground. The Biden administration authorized the deployment of an additional six thousand troops to assist with the evacuation of U.S. and allied personnel, as well as thousands of Afghans who worked with the United States and were attempting to flee. The speed of the Afghan government's collapse threatens a mass exodus of refugees from Afghanistan and has exacerbated an already dire humanitarian crisis.

Background

After the Taliban government refused to hand over terrorist leader Osama bin Laden in the wake of al-Qaeda's September 11, 2001, attacks, the United States invaded Afghanistan. The Taliban leadership quickly lost control of the country and relocated to southern Afghanistan and across the border to Pakistan. From there, they waged an insurgency against the Western-backed government in Kabul, Afghan national security forces, and international coalition troops.

When the U.S.-led coalition formally ended its combat mission in 2014, the ANDSF was put in charge of Afghanistan's security. The ANDSF, however, faced significant challenges in holding territory and defending population centers, while the Taliban continued to attack rural districts and carry out suicide attacks in major cities. The war remained largely a stalemate for nearly six years, despite a small U.S. troop increase in 2017, continuing combat missions, and a shift in U.S. military strategy to target Taliban revenue sources, which involved air strikes against drug labs and opium production sites.

The Taliban continued to contest territory, including provincial capitals, across the country. The group briefly seized the capital of Farah Province in May 2018, and in August 2018 it captured the capital of Ghazni Province, holding the city for nearly a week before U.S. and Afghan troops regained control. The ANDSF suffered heavy casualties in recent years.

In February 2020, after more than a year of direct negotiations, the U.S. government and the Taliban signed a peace agreement that set a timeline for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. Under the agreement, the United States pledged to draw down U.S. troops to approximately 8,500 within 135 days and complete a full withdrawal within fourteen months. In return, the Taliban pledged to prevent territory under its control from being used by terrorist groups and enter into negotiations with the Afghan government. However, no official cease-fire was put into place. After a brief reduction in violence, the Taliban quickly resumed attacks on Afghan security forces and civilians. Direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban began months after the agreed upon start of March 2020, faced multiple delays, and ultimately made little progress. Violence across Afghanistan continued in 2020 and 2021 as the United States increased air strikes and raids targeting the Taliban. Meanwhile, the Taliban attacked Afghan government and Afghan security forces targets and made territorial gains.

Civilian casualties across Afghanistan have remained high over the past several years. The United Nations documented a then-record high of 10,993 civilian casualties in 2018. Although 2019 saw a slight decline, civilian casualties exceeded 10,000 for the sixth year in a row and brought the total UN-documented civilian casualties since 2009 to more than 100,000. Despite another decline in 2020, the first half of 2021 saw a record high number of civilian casualties as the Taliban ramped up their military offensive amid the withdrawal of international troops.

In addition to the Taliban's offensive, Afghanistan faces a threat from the Islamic State in Khorasan, which has also expanded its presence in several eastern provinces, attacked Kabul, and targeted civilians with suicide attacks.

Uncertainty surrounding the future of international assistance has strained the Afghan economy. Although the United States and its allies pledged in late 2020 to continue providing support to the Afghan government, they could reduce aid following the Taliban takeover. Such a move could compound Afghanistan's deteriorating economic situation.

Concerns

The United States has an interest in attempting to preserve the many political, human rights, and security gains that have been achieved in Afghanistan since 2001. The Taliban takeover of the country could once again turn Afghanistan into a terrorist safe haven, as the group is believed to maintain ties with al-Qaeda. The takeover also threatens to reverse advances made in securing the rights of women and girls. Moreover, increasing internal instability, a mass exodus of refugees, and a growing humanitarian crisis could have regional ramifications as neighboring countries respond. In addition, Pakistan, India, Iran, and Russia are all likely to compete for influence in Kabul and with subnational actors.

11. Weighing in on the public sector privatisation

While there is justification in selling loss-making units, the situation is more nuanced in the case of profit-making entities

There seem to be broadly three positions with respect to the privatisation of public sector undertakings (PSUs). The left position is “PSU is family silver and should not be sold irrespective of its performance”. The divergent stand is that “business is not the business of government”, which found resonance in the United Kingdom, and, of late, in India. There is also the third position: Why privatise profit-making PSUs? Why do you sell the family silver? Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) which is making handsome profits, comes under this category.

Case of loss-making units

Loss-making PSUs certainly merit privatisation — but no one would buy them with their huge debt and employee liabilities. The government may even have to pay the buyer, as it happened in the case of the Delhi Discom privatisation. Even then it may be worth it, since privatisation will stop fiscal flows to these PSUs. Alternatively, there is the exit route through the new Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.

Some of the major loss-making PSUs, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited and Air India should go under the block as their losses are greater than their revenue. The Economist has a term for such entities — value subtracting enterprises. Restructuring them and even ensuring an additional infusion of funds and other resources have not produced results. Their chairmen cum managing directors are bureaucrats who may not have domain knowledge or technical service people bereft of business acumen. Justifying their existence — in the case of BSNL/MTNL which ran telecom at one time as a government monopoly, with a teledensity of 0.01% — by citing national security is strange. At one time the argument was that BSNL alone maintains the military telecom network. It was for the same reason that the private sector was not allowed to operate in the defence sector; we have paid a heavy price for only entrusting it to the public sector in this area. The present government has by and large done well in opening up defence to the private sector.

Privatisation is not a default option; rather, it is resorted to only out of extreme necessity. As World Bank consultants said on the Delhi Discom privatisation: “Privatization is resorted to not just when the firm makes losses, but only when the physical performance is so bad that the PSU becomes a political embarrassment to the Government.” This may explain the hesitation to privatise some of the largest loss-making PSUs — Air India, the BSNL and MTNL — as the embarrassment threshold may not have been reached as yet.

Meeting fiscal targets

But why privatise a profit-making PSU. What comes into play here is not the lofty “business is not the business of government” argument, but a more mundane fiscal imperative. The Finance Minister’s disinvestment target of a little over a lakh of crores for the current fiscal has to be met. It is this fiscal requirement that now drives privatisation. Let us revisit the question: Should profit-making PSUs be privatised? It is good to remember what former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh once said on the issue. He made the assurance that the government would not “privatise profit making PSUs working in

competitive environments”. That is, if the output price is a competitive price and you still make a profit, then you are efficient and the need to privatise does not arise.

But if the output price is set in a monopoly background — the case now being the monopoly cartel of the oil majors, BPCL, Indian Oil Corporation Limited and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited — with the autonomy given being used for monopoly pricing, then your profit is no longer an index of your efficiency. In that case, privatisation will still bring in benefits of the efficient operation of private sector through reduced costs. Examples of PSUs that made monopoly profits and still inefficient were Coal India and Indian Airlines (IA). For IA, there was poor punctuality, high staff-to-plane ratio, high operating costs and overall customer indifference.

The BPCL is not inefficient but its privatisation still offers scope for improvement. When a company such as this has never faced any serious competition, it is impossible to even discuss the issue of efficiency or inefficiency. There is no comparable firm in the private sector to benchmark it with.

However if one looks at just about any public sector company in India, it is impossible to argue that the BPCL can be an exception. Over the years, the financial performance of oil marketing companies has undergone a bureaucratic process called “administrative price mechanism”. All one can say is that the oil PSUs have been allowed to make profit; if one can use The Economist’s phrase again, they can be called “allotted millionaires”. On the non-financial performance side, it would be difficult for the BPCL to show what innovations it has implemented over the years either in marketing or refinery operations.

Accompanied by competition

There is no point in converting a public monopoly to a private monopoly; it will only result in inefficiency being replaced by private profits. Privatisation must be accompanied by competition in the post-privatised scenario.

However, the government will face a dilemma. If you want a high price, you must allow a monopoly situation post-privatisation, and if you want competition and low price for consumers, you must be content with a modest sale price, as the post-privatisation valuation of the firm critically depends on the market structure post-privatisation. If that is to be competitive, other PSU national oil companies such as the IOC and HPCL should also be privatised. There is

also no issue of national security for downstream oil firms. Oil marketing companies, even if they are not in the public sector, can be made to own strategic petroleum reserves as in most of Europe and by the government itself as in the U.S. Thus privatising the BPCL does not compromise India’s national security.

Similarly, LPG and kerosene subsidies can be handled by direct benefit transfer, which is already in vogue in the case of LPG.

Finally, there is an argument advanced in the case of the BPCL: that the government paid about ₹622 crore in today’s money to acquire it, while it now has a market value of around ₹85,000-1,15,000 crore. How did ₹622 crore balloon into this amount even after the time value of money adjustment? Is it a bargain one cannot refuse? Not quite. After all, in the interim period of many years, the firm would have invested, out of retained profits, and also generated further monopoly profits for dividends which explains its increased value. This is not by its virtue of being a PSU. The BPCL is not a golden goose. It may be an ATM.

Tips for Answer Writing

1. STRUCTURE

- a) INTRODUCTION
- b) BODY
- c) CONCLUSION.

2. CONTENT

- a) CLARITY IN EXPLAINING CONCEPTS
- b) UNDERSTANDING THE QUESTION, INCLUDING THE DIRECTIVE AND KEY WORDS.
- c)

3. PRESENTATION OF IDEAS

- a) INTRODUCTION – STRAIGHT TO THE POINT
- b) RELEVANT TO THE QUESTION, LOGICAL FLOW
- c) ADDRESSING THE DIRECTIVE (COMMAND) WORDS, QUESTION TAGS
- d) USING THE KEYWORDS IN BODY
- e) CONCLUSION – SUMMARISING THE IDEAS, GIVING SUGGESTIONS, IS FUTURISTIC.

4. INNOVATION

USAGE OF FLOWCHARTS, RELEVANT STATS, EXAMPLES, ILLUSTRATIONS (WHERE APPROPRIATE).

5. LANGUAGE

- a) SIMPLE, ERROR FREE, CLEAR
- b) WORD COUNT - + /- 10% OF THE WORD LIMIT.

6. HAND WRITING

- a) LEGIBLE

GS- I

PROBABLE QUESTIONS

1. **“Is the formation of dead zones due to natural or man-made causes?” Discuss. How far the formation of dead zones can be attributed to the declining share of marine fisheries in the overall fisheries sector in India? (250 Words)**

A GOOD BEGINNING

The Dead Zones are low oxygen or hypoxic areas in oceans and lakes. It affects the marine life. Most of the Dead Zones are located near inhabited coastlines. Nitrogen and phosphorous from agricultural runoff / industries are the primary culprits. Most infamous US Dead zone is Gulf of Mexico and the nutrient ridden Mississippi river joins the Gulf.

SOME NATURAL REASONS	PREDOMINANTLY MAN-MADE!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Upwelling occurs in the open ocean and along the coastlines due to ocean currents and surface winds and sometimes it may be affected.Black sea is anoxic in its deepest parts because the shallow sea prevents mixing and oxygen replenishment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Particularly Phosphorous and Nitrogen due to agriculture run off / sewage output / storm water.Industrial effluents.Doubling of Nitrogen and

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atmospheric sources of Nitrogen and sediments laden with phosphorous are other reasons. • There are also oxygen minimum zones in northern Indian Ocean and tropical Pacific. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tripling of Phosphorous in recent times. • Resulted in massive algal blooms.
---	---

EFFECT OF DEAD ZONES	IMPACT ON FISHERIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth of Phytoplankton, algae and seaweeds • Prevent light from penetration • Toxins are absorbed by marine life • Low oxygen areas affect fisheries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine fisheries from 36 to 37 LT in three years/inland 72 to 97 – can be one of the reasons. • Arabian Sea – algal blooms – fish mortality. • Other reasons – lack of proper equipment, Government restrictions, seasonal nature, focus on inland fisheries etc.

2. What are Ravines? How were they formed in India? Assess the impact of climate change on further ravination. (150 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

Ravines are water eroded, arid landforms. It is estimated that India is losing about 80,000 hectares of land to ravines every year.

WHAT ARE RAVINES?	RAVINES FORMATION IN INDIA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are fluvial, erosional geological features. • They are formed as a result of constant vertical erosion by streams and rivers flowing over arid and semi-arid regions. • Here the bed rock is poorly cemented and surface material along with little available vegetation swept off from the slopes during intense storms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In India, Chambal region is the most prominent for Ravines and probably originated from tectonic activity, which were formed millions of years ago, when the peninsular plate pressed against the Himalayas. • They are mostly formed in the vicinity of Vindhya with over 60% in UP, Gujarat, MP and Rajasthan and these are getting aggravated due to soil erosion. • Ravines are also found along Kali Sindh, Banas rivers in Rajasthan and along Beas in Punjab among others.

IMPACT OF RAVINES	IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces agricultural productivity • Enhances soil erosion • Decreases fertile land • Loss of tree and forest cover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More frequent extreme rainfall events and flood conditions. • Continued deforestation exacerbates. • Increasing droughts enhances vulnerability • Heavier day temperatures enhances the susceptibility to storms

APT CONCLUSION

Eco-restoration of ravines as part of Green India Mission was not successful. Rainwater management within the watersheds, linking land reclamation to MGNREGA are some solutions.

3. “Highly decentralized Textile industry in India is facing serious headwinds”. Comment. (150 Words).

A GOOD BEGINNING

Textile is one of the oldest with huge export potential, high employment generation capability – 35 million – second highest after agriculture – 4% of country’s GDP – 14% to industrial production.

Historically, it was concentrated in regions like Mumbai, Bengal and later decentralized. The textile value chain includes yarn, fabric and apparels.

REASONS FOR DECENTRALIZATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of transportation with railways. • Availability of cheap skilled labour. • Reliable power supply. • Proximity to cotton growing areas. • Huge market in the hinterland. • Development of infrastructure. • Subsidies to the handloom sector. • Historical reasons – Coimbatore • Availability of weaving, knitting, cutting and final processing across the country.

SERIOUS HEADWINDS FACED BY THE TEXTILE SECTOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost effectiveness of markets like Bangladesh, Vietnam • As it is decentralized, competitiveness is missing • Cluster-based approach is missing • Outdated machinery and technology • Lack of product diversification • Now a days, the focus is on blended apparels and India missed this change. Man-made fibers/blend synthetics may have advantage because of lower cost • Lack of bargaining power due to decentralization • Decline in demand for cotton yarn exports in China • Sometimes, currency appreciation • Subdued demand from USA/EU

APT CONCLUSION

Upgradation of the machinery/technology, development of clusters, focus by the Government and concentration on synthetic / blended fabrics is the need of the hour.

4. Examine how PM Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PM-FME) Scheme transforms the ecosystem from “local to global”. How will the dovetailing of One District One Product (ODOP) benefit PM-FME? (250 Words).

A GOOD BEGINNING

Recently, Government launched PM-FME Scheme to look at food processing in unorganized sector. More than 60% are in rural areas and 80% are family based enterprises.

PRESENT PROBLEMS	LOCAL TO GLOBAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to access institutional credit • High interest costs • Lack of access to technology • Inability to integrate with food supply chains • Lack of branding and marketing skills • Lack of quality control • Restricted themselves to local 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to information, training and formalization • Reaping the benefits of scale with common services and marketing / branding • Handholding for technical upgradation and onsite skill training • Credit linked subsidy at 35% of the project cost • Support from research institutions for product development / appropriate packaging etc. • Focus on One District, One Product approach (ODOP)

BENEFITS OF ODOP APPROACH

- Scaling up indigenous and specialized products of each district
- Improving quality with the development of innate and inherited skills with sharp focus
- Popularizing through brand building / marketing
- Cluster based development
- Linking with global food chains and e-commerce platforms
- Improved incomes

APT CONCLUSION

PM-FME is a great, much needed step in reducing food wastages, creating employment opportunities, taking local brands global, towards achieving the goal of doubling farmer's income by 2022 and also pushing investments in food processing sector.

World Geography

1. Pristine Arctic Ecosystem is facing twin challenges of “resource extraction” and “climate change”. Elaborate the statement with specific examples. (250 Words)

ELABORATE : to add more information to support the given statement

A GOOD BEGINNING

With increasing population and demand for energy resources Arctic resource extraction is on increase and parallelly, it is facing the double whammy of climate change. Huge undiscovered oil and gas reserves – 22% of world total – as per US Geological Survey. Vast deposits of gold, phosphate, bauxite, diamonds, rare earth minerals etc.

RESOURCE EXTRACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melting of sea ice – resources – Russia, Alaska (USA), Greenland – REM. • More sea lines of communication – Northwest passage/Northern Sea route. • China declared – near Arctic State –significant investments in gas and oil. • Russia – huge military buildup – investments – Akademik Lomonosov. • Complexities in offshore. • Use of ice breakers ➤ Offshore drilling for oil started.

REPERCUSSIONS	CLIMATE CHANGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oil spills • Huge waste dumping • Destruction of ice shields • Problems of black carbon • Effect on the sea bed • Loss of livelihoods of natives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average temperatures almost twice. • Retreating ice – more extraction – environmental concerns. • Effect on the Jet Stream – western Disturbances – change in rainfall patterns. • Positive feedback loop. • Melting of permafrost – release of methane.

APT CONCLUSION

Changes in Arctic will have huge global impact – last resort for resources – Arctic Council should work proactively in addressing resource race, climate change for sustainable preservation of Arctic region and the World.

2. Critically analyze the impact of global warming on the marine ecosystems. (250 Words)

ANALYZE : to separate into the constituent parts, for the purpose of an examination of each separately.

A GOOD BEGINNING

Marine ecosystems occupy 70% of earth's surface and contribute \$ 3 to \$ 6 trillion to global economy every year. They are the most vulnerable among all for environmental changes like global warming, pollution etc.

OCEAN ACIDIFICATION	LESSER OXYGEN LEVELS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It increased by 26% since pre-industrial levels and by 2100 – expected to increase by 100-150%. • It may benefit photosynthetic algae and seagrasses because of higher CO₂. • Reduces the availability of carbonate –critical for shell building – corrosive – shells will dissolve. • Calcifying species like Oysters, Clams, Sea urchins, Corals will be effected. • Difficult for the Corals to produce their skeletons. • Affects the ability of Coral reefs to recover from disturbance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising temperature decreases solubility of oxygen in water – declined 2% since mid-20th century – 3–4% by 2100 – concentrated in the upper 1000m. • It effects oxygen availability for respiration of marine animals. • Eutrophication – increased the problem – coastal areas – scant oxygen areas increasing. • Decline of fish species – imbalance in marine life – jellyfish – tuna / shark.

BLEACHING OF CORALS	OTHER ASPECTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corals is the key stone species of the oceans. • They expel the algae and turn white. • More than 50% of the corals bleached in Australia by 2017. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass extinction of certain marine species – polar bears. • Gender imbalances among Olive Ridley turtles.

APT CONCLUSION

SDG 14 – Life Below Water hinges on the objective of conservation and sustainable use of ocean's maritime resources.

3. “Though the menace of desert locusts is a perennial problem, the cause of concern is its intensity and spatial expansion”. Elucidate. How far can this be attributed to climate change? (250 Words).

ELUCIDATE : to explain something or make something clear

HOW FAR : to what extent / to what degree?

A GOOD BEGINNING

Locusts are the oldest migratory pests in the World. When they destroy the agriculture economy, it is called Locust Plague/Locust Invasion. They belong to Grasshopper family – multiply rapidly – migrate longer distances (150 kms per day) and when in group, they become gregarious and threaten food security.

IT IS A PERENNIAL PROBLEM	SOLITARY TO SWARMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locust outbreaks has a millennia-long history in Africa and Asia. • Normally, confined to certain parts of Africa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During dry spells, Solitary locusts are forced together in the patchy areas with vegetation.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Horn of Africa – Middle East – certain parts of India, Pakistan. • India witnessed 13 locusts upsurges between 1964 and 1997. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When moist soil and abundant vegetation with rain – locusts reproduce rapidly – solitary to gregarious.
INTENSITY AND SPATIAL EXPANSION	HOW FAR TO CLIMATE CHANGE?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per Locust Watch by FAO – the recent locust outbreak was the worst in 7 decades in Kenya and in 25 years in Ethiopia – extremely alarming in the Horn of Africa. India's LWO says, it is the worst in decades. • It expanded beyond north-western States to interior States in India. India has not witnessed full blown locust attacks since 1993. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong positive Indian Ocean dipole – extended monsoon • Unseasonal rains – favourable breeding conditions. • Cyclonic storms Mekunu and Luban – Yemen, Oman – tracts with vegetation. • Changes in the Western disturbances – weather patterns.

APT CONCLUSION

The severity appears to be due to climate change. Surveillance, monitoring and rapid targeting is the need of the hour.

5. Why the land degradation and desertification is a serious cause of concern in Africa? Discuss. (150 Words).

DISCUSS: to write about a subject in detail, especially considering different ideas and opinions related to it.

A GOOD BEGINNING

Since 1950, 65% of Africa's crop land is affected by land degradation. Economic and social conditions reflect the seriousness. As per FAO, large areas North of Equator suffer from serious desertification and the desert is moving 5 kms annually in semi-arid areas of West Africa.

PRIME REASONS	SERIOUS CAUSE OF CONCERN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsustainable farming practices. • Lack of awareness. • Climate extremes. • Population pressure. • Deforestation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already suffers from geologically induced and inherently low soil fertility. • Impediment to the food security. • Technologically backward and depends on agriculture. • Nomadic herders – highly vulnerable to droughts. • More and more desertification. • Water and food scarcity. • Increase in cultivation in marginal lands. • Increase in hunger. • Ethnic clashes and instability.

NEED OF THE HOUR!

- A paradigm shift is required in the citizen awareness and participation, sustainable agricultural practices.
- Rise of the global community to tackle the desertification of Africa.
- Sustainability, Stability, Security (3S) is the key which aims to address migration and instability caused by desertification and degradation across African continent.

GS – II ... SOCIAL JUSTICE & GOVERNANCE

PROBABLE QUESTIONS

1

“Increase in GDP growth may not lead to improvement in the human development indicators, but improving the human development indicators will invariably improve productivity and prosperity of the Nation”. Discuss. (250 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- GDP growth should be inclusive and broad based for the growth to transform to human development. Inclusive growth calls for participation of empowered citizen in growth process. Citizens are empowered by improving human development indicators.

INCREASE IN GDP - NOT LEADING TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

- Growth may be driven by high end products and services.
- Disempowered citizens have no capacity to participate in the growth process.
- Benefits of growth are shared by few.

IMPROVING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS – IMPROVEMENT IN GROWTH

- Growth becomes participatory.
- Generate productive workforce.
- Breeding ground for innovations.
- Empowered citizens deepen democracy and strengthen local governance.
- Makes growth sustainable.
- People are pulled out of poverty
- Work for capability realisation.
- Benefits of GDP growth shared by all sections of society.

IMPROVING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS- IMPROVEMENT IN GROWTH		
PARAMETERS	GUJARAT (INVESTED IN ECONOMIC GROWTH)	KERALA (INVESTED IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT)
INCOME	High GDP and investment driven growth	Relatively low GDP and remittances driven growth
HDI	Poor human development index	Human development on par with developed countries
HEALTH	Poor health indicators and high inequalities	Good Health indicators and low inequalities
SUSTAINABILITY & CONVERGENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GDP is not sustainable. Inclusive No convergence in human development with Kerala 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GDP growth Converging with that of Gujarat's GDP Sustainable and inclusive GDP growth

APT CONCLUSION

- Nation should put use of its resources to human development by investing in education, health, nutrition and skill development to engender inclusive and sustainable participatory growth. Nations should pursue GDP growth not as an end in itself but as a means to holistic human development.

2

Reservations are meant to counter “forced exclusions”, but not meant for alleviating poverty. How do you justify the 10% quota for the poor, when one looks at the basic rationale for reservations? (150 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- Reservation aims to undo the historical injustice suffered by socially and educationally backward lower castes who were deprived of access to education and jobs. On contrary to this established tradition, 103rd constitutional amendment was enacted adding articles 15(6), 16(6) to give 10% reservations based on economic backwardness.

JUSTIFICATION FOR 10% QUOTA

1. Reservation quota is as per the economic justice enshrined in the Preamble and DPSP.
2. Poverty is essentially a part of social backwardness as it denies equality of opportunity.
3. Land is no more a livelihood option due to changing needs and circumstances.
4. Social justice being a dynamic concept must consider this new marginalised section.
5. Greater political consensus and lack of protest shows the support of people.
6. The income criteria bring majority (95%) of population under reservation net.
7. Constitutional backing through Article 15(6), 16(6) further justified the claim (absent during Indra Sawhney judgment).

ARGUMENTS AGAINST 10% RESERVATION

- Breaching 50% ceiling would collapse the structure of equality of opportunity.
- Detracts attention from ground realities – like poor quality primary education and health.
- Intentions of political mileage than social concern.
- Increase in social stress as increase in reservation quota was not supplemented by increase in government jobs.
- Demand may raise to increase OBC quota from present 27%.
- Reservations is not an appropriate tool for poverty elimination.
- Goes against Indra Sawhney and other judgments which specifically emphasised on 50% limit and rejected economic criteria.
- Economic backwardness of poor among higher castes cannot be equated with social backwardness.

APT CONCLUSION

- Reservations can't be the panacea for social and economic sufferings of society. Policy focus should shift from reservation to increasing number of universities, ensuring learning outcomes, and generating more jobs etc. to accommodate rising demand for reservation.

3

Conditions in Indian prisons are badly commented upon by the Human Rights Organisations. What can be the probable reasons? Examine the case for prison reforms. (150 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- 7th Schedule of Indian Constitution placed management of prisons under State domain. Prisons are governed by century old rules with marginal changes. Supreme Court has issued instructions to all State governments to make changes in prison rules.

CRITICAL STATE OF INDIAN PRISONS

1. Over-crowded -- few are overcrowded by 500%.
2. Under-staffing
3. Under-funded
4. Unhygienic conditions - Prisoners contracting skin diseases, HIV, TB etc.
5. Frequent violation of prisoners' rights and human rights
6. Violent clashes among inmates
7. Unnatural deaths and mental health concerns.
8. No mention of visits by official and non-official visitors.
9. 68% of prisoners are undertrials in 2016.
10. Lack of access to legal aid.
11. Poor condition of women inmates and their children.
12. Very few open jails, where rules are less stringent.

MEASURES NEEDED FOR PRISON REFORMS

Social justice bench of Supreme Court recommended following prison reforms:

1. Quarterly undertrial review committee for release of undertrial prisoners.
2. Adequate competent lawyers empaneled to assist under trial prisoners and convicts, particularly the poor.
3. DGP in charge of prisons to ensure effective utilization of available funds for better living conditions.
4. Home Affairs Ministry to ensure management information system is in place at central and district jails.
5. Review of implementation of Model Prison Manual 2016.
6. Women and Child Development Ministry to prepare a prison manual to address issues of Juveniles.
7. Psychological training for people entering prisons.
8. Revise provisions for handling white collar crimes.

APT CONCLUSION

- Prison reforms should be based on “principle of restorative justice” i.e., punish only to redress or restore, and not retributive justice which we are following today. There is an urgent need to repair century old system of prisons and bring in new concepts like open prison.

4

During past four decades, Government policies centered around “bringing people out of poverty”. With COVID-19, strategies should be reoriented towards preventing people fall back into poverty. (250 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- Poverty alleviation has been the focus area of policy makers in India since independence. However, recent COVID-19 crisis appears to bring a reverse phenomenon of “poverty deepening”. As per PEW Report, COVID-19 crisis has pushed 32 million into poverty increasing poverty rate & reduced middle class.

VARIOUS EFFORTS AT ALLEVIATING POVERTY WERE TAKEN UP AT CENTRE AS WELL AS STATE LEVELS

- Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-1979) mainly focused on the removal of poverty (Garibi Hatao)
- Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)
- To raise the families of identified target groups living below the poverty line through opportunities for self-employment in rural sector.
- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)
- National Food Security Mission
- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana
- Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY)
- Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan (PM-SYM)

- **COVID IMPACT - FALLING BACK INTO POVERTY**

- Between 2005-15, as many as 271 million people were lifted out of poverty as per UN Multidimensional Poverty Index.
- Poverty rate also has fallen from a highest of 61% in 1954-55 to 29.5% by 2011-12.
- However, COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated a strategic reorientation of poverty alleviation policies.
- A phenomenon of falling back into poverty has risen due to following reasons:
 - Suspension of economic activity due to lockdown.
 - Job issues in formal and informal sector
 - Migrant crisis
- Income shocks causing poor households to take loans from private lenders at high interest rates.
- High out-of-pocket expenditure on health services – COVID treatment.

- Closure of schools and stoppage of nutrition schemes of children and pregnant women.
- All these has posed threat of huge percentage of population falling back into poverty.
- However, reoriented strategy can be seen from Government's policies like Atma Nirbhar Bharat to boost economic activity, PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, expansion of MGNREGA.

APT CONCLUSION

- More efforts like creation of urban livelihood programme like MGNREGA in cities, strengthening health services to reduce OOP and specific schemes to covid orphans and those suffered downward mobility is needed to prevent falling into poverty during crisis period.

5

India's systemic governance failures come to forefront as several bottlenecks were felt in receiving urgent foreign aid in the context of COVID-19. Elaborate. Give a critical thought on systemic changes in Governance required to reduce precious loss of time under such circumstances. (150 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- India has recently decided to accept foreign aid after a period of 17 years to tackle second wave COVID-19 crisis in the country.
- While it not only marks the huge policy shift, but also systemic governance failures:
 - a) India confirming that it has no conceptual problem in procuring oxygen related equipment from its rival China, signifies the huge crunch of health resources
 - b) Dilemma whether to let State governments receive aid from foreign agencies.
 - c) Receiving of foreign donations into PM-CARES while declining to State CM Relief Funds.
 - d) Delay by Health Ministry to work on standard operation procedures of foreign aid received.
 - e) Delay in disbursement of aid by Centre to States.

STRATEGIC CHANGES REQUIRED TO REDUCE LOSS

- Framing a clear Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), protocol of receiving foreign aid during unforeseen situation.
- Pre-designation of an agency for consignment of foreign aid to reduce delay.
- Ensuring coordination between Centre and States for clear picture of demand and supply.
- End-to-end tracking to ensure transparency
- Distribution of relief material directly to required States, rather than distribution by Centre could fasten the process.

APT CONCLUSION

- Not just aid, but aid received in time could help in alleviating the crisis situation caused due to COVID-19. Timely disbursement of aid requires coordination among various agencies, transparency and accountability, robust planning.

6

How COVID exposed limitations in public health infrastructure. How far PM-JAY is expected to overcome these limitations? (250 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented threat to public health as well as exposed the flaws in India's public health infrastructure and also an opportunity to address them

LIMITATIONS OF PUBLIC HEALTH INFRA THAT WERE EXPOSED BY COVID-19

- a) Overburdened primary health care
 - ✓ centre's shortage of equipment, medicine and vaccine supplies, deficient workforce, unmanageable caseload.
- b) Domination of private hospitals: Possess 62% hospital beds, 56% ventilators, denial of healthcare, overcharging patients.
- c) Negligence for mental healthcare.

- d) Poor infrastructure – hospital beds (5 per 1000 people)
- e) Neglect of wellness like contraceptive services, palliative, child, Neonatal, pregnant health services.
- f) Regular immunization programs are halted making children vulnerable.
- g) Ayushman Bharat Scheme with sub-components of PM-Jan Arogya Yojana, Health and wellness centres, which was launched central government provides solutions to few public health lacunae:
 - 1. Free COVID-19 testing to beneficiaries in empaneled private hospitals.
 - 2. Many State governments have extended ambit of scheme from oxygen supply to meeting cost of essential medicines for treatment of COVID-19.
 - 3. Health and Wellness Centres helped in continuation of provision of non-COVID health services.
 - 4. Portability feature facilitating access of health services by migrants.

HOWEVER, CERTAIN ISSUES STILL COULDN'T BE ADDRESSED BY PM-JAY

- 9. Improving health infrastructure, doctor-population ratio.
- 10. Rural-Urban parity
- 11. Only in-patients who were infected by COVID could avail PM-JAY benefits, but not out patients.
- 12. Frauds, profit motivated supplier induced demand by healthcare providers.
- 13. Issues of equity in access.
- 14. Coverage of medicines post-discharge only up to 15 days.
- 15. Other challenges like reduced registrations due to COVID, disinterest among States also persist in PM-JAY implementation.

APT CONCLUSION

- 1. Streamlining existing State health insurance schemes, focusing on upgradation of health infra, increasing accountability of private sector can help in successful implementation of PM-JAY in tackling COVID-19 pandemic. As health is a state subject, strengthening cooperative federalism is needed for efficient use of health infrastructure.

GS – III : DISASTER MANAGEMENT

PROBABLE QUESTIONS

1

What are the major drawbacks of the Disaster Management Act, 2005? Experts say that it needs urgent review from the dual perspectives of “dominant Centre and subservient States paradigm” and “lack of focus on long-term recovery after the disasters”. Justify. (250 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- What are the major drawbacks of the Disaster Management Act, 2005? Experts say that it needs urgent review from the dual perspectives of “dominant Centre and subservient States paradigm” and “lack of focus on long-term recovery after the disasters”. Justify. (250 Words)

MAJOR DRAWBACKS OF THE DMA, 2005

- Disaster nowhere appears in any of the lists. Centre brought this act depending on other entries in the concurrent list and based on the residuary powers.
- Absence for provision of declaration of disaster prone zones – if exists, they help in determining extent of damage, and states can play pro-active role, if an area is declared disaster prone.
- It fails to consider disasters that can be progressive in nature and focusses only on sudden occurrence disasters like COVID-19.
- Establishment of multiple national level bodies makes the complexity of overlapping.

- Local authorities, who act as first responders in any disaster, barely find a mention at all.
- Delayed response, inappropriate implementation of plans and procedural delays continue to plague the disaster management.
- It failed in recommending provision of funds for mitigation, relief through disbursement of loans or grant of fresh ones.

DOMINANT CENTRE AND SUBSERVIENT STATES

- States are only allowed to increase and not dilute the restrictions imposed by Centre under the Act. States feel that it is impinging on their powers as several responsibilities are given to the states and COVID-19 exposed the gaps.
- With doctrine of repugnancy, Centre naturally has supremacy in legislation.
- States are facing the fund crunch as there is no mechanism for States, as the Centre has PM CARES.

LACK OF FOCUS ON LONG TERM RECOVERY

- It largely focusses on improving the preparedness, providing immediate relief and protecting infrastructure.
- Steps for recovery under rehabilitation of disaster affected people are hardly discussed.
- Post-disaster recovery is left to respective Ministries, which is marred by poor implementation.

WAY FORWARD!

- Local bodies should be made the stakeholders and the Act should be amended suitably by considering the role of the States as they have more responsibilities and by giving thrust to the aspects of long term recovery.

2

“Sea Level Rise (SLR) is going to be a major threat in 21st century”. Justify. How far India is geared up to protect the communities and the ecosystems? (250 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- As per IPCC, globally Sea Level Rise (SLR) has increased from around 1.4 mm a year from 1901 to 1990 to 3.6 mm a year between 2006 and 2015. The primary causes are ... thermal expansion – as the water heats up, it expands, melting glaciers due to high temperatures and increased run-off and the loss of Greenland / Antarctica’s ice sheets.

HOW SEA LEVEL RISE IS A MAJOR THREAT?

- Globally, 68% of area is prone to coastal flooding.
- 12-20% of global GDP worth of assets may be exposed to coastal flooding.
- IPCC special report on “Oceans and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate” has expected oceans to rise between 10-30 inches by 2100 with temperatures warming up to 1.5⁰C.
- The ecosystems and human habitations will be affected badly as several metropolitan cities are on the coastline.

INDIA’S READINESS TO PROTECT THE COMMUNITIES & THE ECOSYSTEM

- National Coastal Mission as part of National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) exists.
- India has Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project with the help of the World Bank.
- India is strengthening natural shields against extreme weather conditions to protect shore lines.
- Coastal Regulation Zone specifications for Sustainable Development of coastal areas.

BUT, THESE MEASURES ARE NOT ENOUGH!

- More adaptation strategies need to be taken up for relocating coastal cities / habitations.
- There should be a strategy to build sea walls like Indonesia’s Giant Sea Wall / Great Garuda projects.

- We have to take examples from European Cities, like Rotterdam.

WAY FORWARD!

- The best way is to plan further growth strategies by amalgamating the imminent threat of the Sea Level Rise by the turn of the 21st century.

3

Define the terms “disaster” and “notified disaster”. Examine the differences in the constitution and the operation of State Disaster Relief Fund (SDRF) and National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF). (150 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- Declaration of Covid-19 as a “notified disaster” by the Ministry of Home Affairs has brought into the forefront the existence of various subgroups under the disasters category as identified by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

DISASTER

- It is defined in the Disaster Management Act, 2005.
- It is a catastrophe, mishap or grave occurrence in an area due to natural or man-made causes, which results in loss of life, destruction of property, degradation of environment, which is beyond the coping capacity of the community.

NOTIFIED DISASTER

- Ministry of Home Affairs declares a few disasters as notified disasters, the recent one is Covid-19.
- These are distinct from State-specific disasters, like coastal erosion, heat waves etc.
- Once the disaster is notified by the Home Ministry, states can use funds under SDRF.

NDRF

- It is created under Section 46 of the Disaster Management Act.
- It is managed by Central Govt. for emergency response relief and rehabilitation.
- It supplements the funds of SDRF of states for immediate relief.
- National Calamity Contingency Duty (NCCD) is created to finance NDRF and additional budgetary support is also given.
- This is exclusively for the purpose of mitigation i.e., measures aimed at reducing the risk/impact of disaster.

SDRF

- It is created under Section 48 of the Disaster Management Act.
- It is primary fund available with States for disaster response.
- Centre provides 75% for general category and 90% for special category states.
- It is used for providing immediate relief, but not as compensation for loss or damage.

4

“Odisha’s preparedness and effectiveness in mitigating the cyclones elicited wider acclaim across the country”. Elucidate. (150 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- Post the super cyclone of 1999, Odisha emerged as a role model in disaster preparedness. With decades of positive interventions by the Government, Civil Society Groups and NGOs, the State received high acclaim from national and international organizations.

WHY ODISHA GOVERNMENT RECEIVED SUCH GLOBAL ACCLAIM?

- **Super cyclone was the origin** – after the super cyclone of 1999, Odisha established State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA), much earlier than the Disaster Management Act passed by Parliament in 2005 and this is perhaps the first in India.

- **Resilient infrastructure** – designed around 800 multi-purpose cyclone and flood shelters in coastal districts in association with IIT, Kharagpur.
- **Community empowerment** – cyclone management centres are with local Sarpanch as the President and the community as the first point of contact for rescue/preparedness.
- **Technology** – SMS messages by location based alert system and group based alert system. ‘SATARK’ won IT Excellence Award, 2019 for innovation in disaster management.
- **Preparedness** – Early warning dissemination system with sirens across the coastline.
- **To tackle the eventualities** – 20 units of Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force and network of weather forecasting Doppler radars across the state.
- **Own infrastructure** – Odisha’s State Disaster Management Authority is one of the active SDMAs in the country with own office, management, staff and is an autonomous body with no dependence on the Centre.

5

What do you understand by the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)? How does it benefit India in the long run? (150 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure is a platform where knowledge is generated and exchanged on different aspects of disaster and climate resilience of the infrastructure. The Secretariat is situated in India, and it started functioning with UK as the first co-chair of the Governing Council.

NEED FOR CDRI

- Whenever, any disaster happens, only immediate relief is given priority.
- Subsequently, two aspects are normally forgotten: one pertains to the long term recovery of the affected communities and the second aspect is building disaster resilient infrastructure so as to reduce the risk.
- Hence, CDRI is proposed with the objectives of pooling the best practices and resources from around the World for reshaping the infrastructure to remain resilient to natural catastrophes.
- It also fills the gap of funds and technology and helps developing countries to build disaster resilient infrastructure.

BENEFITS TO INDIA IN THE LONG-RUN

- The Sendai Framework says that for every \$ 1 spent on disaster risk reduction, there will be a gain for \$ 7. Hence, India could save significant amount by investing in DRI.
- India is good at preventing human deaths but not so adept in protecting infra. Hence, India can embrace the best practices of countries, like Japan.
- It can enhance India’s status by serving the needs of the rest of the world, especially, the developing countries.
- It can also help India in complementing the efforts to bring together a coalition of countries harnessing solar power under ISA framework.
- Region specific and inclusive disaster resilient infrastructure can be built as coastal areas are prone for cyclones and tsunamis, whereas central Indian region is prone for droughts.

NEED OF THE HOUR

- Despite robust disaster management practices evolved over the years, the economic costs of disaster remain huge, mainly due to the damage to the infrastructure. Hence, for India, the CDRI will pave the way towards risk reduction and hence, communities will be benefited a lot.

6

“In the context of tackling COVID-19, Disaster Management Act, 2005 exposed the fault lines in Centre-State relations”. Justify. (150 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- COVID-19 is the first pan India biological disaster and it exposed various limitations in our existing framework of disaster management. For the first time, a pandemic has been recognized as a notified disaster. It is also the first time, Disaster Management Act has been invoked to impose lockdown across the country.

SERIOUS FAULT LINES WHICH CAME TO THE FOREFRONT

- A top-down approach by the Centre has left states with no maneuvering space that could be used to design a lockdown keeping local conditions in mind.
- Major responsibility of taking care of the vulnerable sections of the population during the lockdowns rests with the State governments, but their hands are tied from the perspective of financial resources.
- A National Plan is supposed to be prepared in consultation with the states, but in the context of COVID-19, earlier plan prepared in 2019 was used.
- All the rules were ad hoc, reactive and the plight of migrants clearly indicated lack of coordination between Centre and the States.
- In some cases, Centre's guidelines on lockdown, states directions under the Epidemic Diseases Act have led to confusion among the masses, especially, migrants.
- Zonal classification into red/orange was done without states' involvement and states are better equipped to decide about the zones classification.
- Donations to PM Cares Fund can avail CSR exemptions, but no such facility to CM's Relief Fund. Hence, huge dependence of States on the Centre.

NEED OF THE HOUR

- The centralized structure of Disaster Management Act needs urgent review in true spirit of federalism.

7

“In spite of massive disaster in the form of Bhopal Gas Tragedy in 1984, India has not learnt much in controlling industrial disasters”. Critically argue with special focus on India's preparedness. (150 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- India has witnessed one of the worst industrial disasters in 2020 in the form of Vizag Styrene gas leak. The first and the severest industrial disaster in the Union Carbide Factory in Bhopal city occurred in 1984. During the past 36 years, industrial disasters are occurring quite often.

EFFORTS MADE BY THE GOVT AFTER THE BHOPAL GAS TRAGEDY

- Judiciary evolved the doctrine of “absolute liability principle” in the Oleum gas leak case of Delhi.
- Factories Act, 1948 was amended to extend the scope of risk to include public in residential areas around.
- Number of laws were passed which include
- Environmental Protection Act, 1986, based on which Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) order was given.
- Hazardous waste (Management, Handling and Transboundary Movement) Rules, 1989.
- Chemical Accidents Rules, 1996, where Centre is required to constitute a Central Crisis Group for management of chemical disasters and also crisis alert system to set up quick response mechanism.
- Civil Nuclear Liability Act, 2010 was brought

GAPS STILL REMAIN!

- Quite often, fatal accidents are taking place across the country, but still only 20% of the working population were covered under Occupational Safety Regulations.
- Field of occupational and environmental medicine, toxicology, which studies adverse effects of chemical substances on living organisms, has not been developed in our country adequately.
- Regular maintenance, inspections are a misnomer in Indian context.
- Laxity in enforcement, frequent flouting of the rules, corruption to secure industrial licencing, approach of post-disaster crisis management and lack of say of the local bodies are some of the issues.

NEED OF THE HOUR

- It is not right to completely ignore the efforts of the Government, but more efforts are needed, especially in the domains of strict enforcement of regulations. Regular maintenance schedules at specified intervals, proper employee training are urgently needed.

8

“Urban floods and major landslides in Western Ghats became the new normal in 21st century”. Elucidate with valid reasons. Is our Disaster Response Mechanism sufficient to tackle such disasters? Discuss. (250 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- Urban flooding has become a common sight in recent years. Hyderabad in 2020, Mumbai in 2019, Chennai in 2018 are some of the major urban floods, which comes to our mind. Similarly, Western Ghats are facing increasing number of land slides and Kerala is worst affected. Geological Survey of India showed that Kerala had experienced 67 major landslide events and several minor ones during 1961 to 2013.

REASONS FOR INCREASING LAND SLIDES IN WESTERN GHATS

- Population pressure and subsequent destruction to the natural ecosystems.
- Climate change, due to which heavy downpour is occurring within few hours.
- Deforestation as well as various development activities like construction of roads, building construction etc.
- Over grazing by the animals.
- Quarrying and unscientific cutting of slopes of the hills aggravated soil erosion and frequency of landslides.

REASONS FOR INCREASED URBAN FLOODS

- Climate change and extreme weather events.
- Several wetlands / tanks vanished due to population pressure.
- Poor drainage infrastructure and the storm water drains could not cater to the inflows because of heavy rains.
- Poor maintenance of the drainage.
- Increasing land use changes.

SUFFICIENCY OF EXISTING MECHANISMS

- NDMA guidelines to prevent urban floods like
 - Desilting storm water drains
 - Creating shock absorbers
 - Designing infra without blocking the drains etc., are normally not being followed.
- To address the land slides, National Landslide Risk Management Strategy is yet to be framed.
- Focus on post-disaster crisis management approach than pre-disaster preparedness is causing huge damage.
- Lack of funds availability to States for preparedness is another issue.

NEED OF THE HOUR

- Strict implementation of NDMA guidelines. Shailesh Nayak Committee recommendations like flood plane zoning, preparing landslide risk management strategy can help in reducing loss of lives, property due to recurring urban floods / landslides.

GS – III : ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT**1**

Why the issue of stubble burning continue to pester, in spite of the best efforts by the Government? Critically examine why none of the options put forth by the Government are acceptable to the farmers? (250 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- For the past several years, harvesting of paddy has been done with Combine Harvesters. This leaves the stubble up to a height of around 1 1/2 to 2 feet above the ground level. Farmers resort to burning this stubble, which creates huge problem pertaining to pollution. National Capital Region (NCR) is in the news every winter due to the spike in pollution levels due to stubble burning coupled with climatic conditions.

VARIOUS ALTERNATIVES TRIED BY THE GOVERNMENT

- Promoting machinery like Mulchers, Rotavators, Happy Seeders and Straw Management Systems by giving huge subsidies ranging from 50% to 80% to manage and utilize stubble in the field.
- Burning of crop residue was notified as an offence under Air Act, 1981 and CrPC, 1973.
- Instructions issued by EPCA from time to time as the pollution is monitored in NCR under Graded Response Action Plan.
- Use of satellite imagery, deployment of local officials to monitor incidences of crop burning.
- Efforts have been made to educate the farmers about the consequences of stubble burning.

WHY NONE OF THESE ARE ACCEPTABLE TO FARMERS?

- In States like Punjab and Haryana, they cannot sow paddy crop before certain date in Summer, due to which there will be a gap of just around 15 days left between harvesting paddy and sowing wheat, and for the farmers, this is the best and the easiest option.
- Subsidized equipment is not seen as viable. Moreover, increase in diesel cost makes it further unviable.
- Farmers are also skeptical about the efficiency of the machines. They fear that machines affect soil productivity and fertility.
- Imposing fines is becoming counter-productive as farmers are taking it in an offensive way.
- Stubble is not preferred by cattle for fodder.
- Lack of other options for monetizing the stubble like conversion to bioenergy etc.

WHAT IS THE WAY FORWARD?

- Monetizing the stubble for conversion to bioenergy.
- Aggressive media campaign.
- Kisan camps to educate the farmers.
- Mahatma Gandhi NREGA workers should be allowed to take out the stubble from the fields.
- Innovative and acceptable solutions with a view to monetize the stubble is the right way forward.

2

“The recent desert locust menace is primarily linked to climate change”. Do you agree? Give reasoned arguments. “Global cooperation is inevitable for controlling the locust menace”. Justify the statement. (150 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- As per UN FAO, locust breeding happens in three main hotspots i.e., Horn of Africa, The Red Sea Region and South-West Asia. Now, locust menace affected 12 countries spread across Asia and Africa. In India, 12 States were affected and the recent locust attack is said to be the worst in around two decades.

IS IT LINKED TO CLIMATE CHANGE?

- Yes, Climate change is considered to be one of the primary reasons for the increase in the menace of desert locusts in recent times.
- Human induced global warming has intensified.
- The regional variability in Indian Ocean Dipole led to frequent tropical storms and heavy rains.
- These rains have created favourable conditions for breeding of the locusts.
- The primary areas are the Horn of Africa, Empty Quarter in Arabian Peninsula.
- Increased number of cyclones like Mekunu and Luban, that struck Oman and Yemen, also increased the favourable conditions for locust breeding by transforming desert tracts into damp soils.
- In addition to the above reasons, westerlies and wind movement are also responsible for proliferation of locusts.

PROBLEMS WITH LOCUST ATTACKS

- Crop damage
- Allergies in humans
- Destroys forest and urban vegetation
- Threat to air travel

GLOBAL COOPERATION IS INEVITABLE

- International organizations like
- UNEP – To disseminate latest info on emerging climatic trends.
- WMO – To forecast immediate weather changes.
- WHO – To classify potential risks of different chemical agents.
- FAO – To lay an SoP to deal with locust menace.

Should coordinate the activities.

- Origin and progress of the locust problem is across the boundaries. Hence prior caution and warning signals from one nation to the other for early preparedness is needed.
- Through the global cooperation, we can reduce the loss, just like what we do for disaster preparedness.

NEED OF THE HOUR

- With the global cooperation and use of bio-pesticides, with aerial spraying, we can reduce the damage due to the locust attacks.

3

Why the Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) attracted support and criticism, almost on equal measure? Critically examine the issue surrounding ZBNF. (250 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- Amid increasing agri distress, low productivity, loss of soil organic carbon, salinization of land, Zero Budget Natural Farming is viewed as a sustainable alternative in Indian agriculture.

BENEFITS OF ZBNF ... REASONS FOR EVINCING INTEREST

- Preserving soil fertility
- Reduced input costs, as farmers are not required to buy any inputs, hence, helps them from getting out of debt traps.
- Increased productivity.
- Efficient resource utilization – only around 10% water, 10% electricity is required under ZBNF in comparison to conventional agriculture.
- Restoring ecosystem health.
- Government is also supporting ZBNF in a big way.
- Success of some of the model farms adopting ZBNF.
- Healthier food produce, as it will be devoid of pesticide residue.

FEATURES OF ZBNF

- Beejamrutha – Seed treatment
- Jeevamrutha – Treatment with fermented mixture
- Waaphasa – Soil microclimate
- Mulching – Soil aeration

WHY IT ATTRACTED HUGE CRITICISM?

- Not supported by scientific study so far.
- The cultivation revolves around desi cow, but now-a-days, the population of exotic cows are increasing.
- The available knowledge is not sufficient to grow multiple crops.
- News reports emerge that under ZBNF, the production got reduced substantially in some of the areas.
- Labour costs are also substantial for collection of dung/urine, various preparations etc.
- Issues of scalability.
- Viability for farmers in various agro-climatic regions.
- It may also take some more time to get positive results, hence too premature to judge the efficacy.

WAY FORWARD!

- Promote successful ZBNF farmers to persuade fellow farming communities. Develop model ZBNF farms in every village to give confidence. Encourage cooperative farming. Income support to motivate farmers in the initial years. Invest in building the seed banks in each village to supply desi seeds. The ZBNF holds promise, but the apprehensions in the minds of the farmers must be removed.

4

Discuss various innovative measures employed by the Communities / Governments, in recent times, to prevent man-animal conflicts. (150 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- Man-Animal conflict refers to interaction between wild animals and humans, which results in negative impact on people, animals, resources, habitats etc. Rapid industrialization, land use changes, expansion of road and rail network through forest ranges have led to increased human-wildlife interactions, thereby creating conflicts.

INNOVATIVE MEASURES EMPLOYED IN RECENT YEARS

- LED strip lights were used by the farmers to scare off nocturnal destructive animals.
- In Amangarh Tiger Reserve, phytochemicals (chemical compounds produced by plants) are used to ward off the Elephants entering the sugarcane fields in Uttar Pradesh.
- In Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, certain type of aromatic and medicinal plants were planted and due to the bad taste and smell of these plants, wild herbivores and Tigers that depend on these herbivores, are prevented from entering these settlements.

- In Uttarakhand plains, bio-fencing with lemon grass and some species of chilly plants were planted, which prevents wild animals entering the plains.
- Immunocontraception was done by Environment Ministry. Here, non-hormonal form of contraception is given, which causes production of antibodies, which prevent pregnancy of the animals.
- In Western Ghats Region, Elephant tracking collars were embedded with SMS chips.
- Construction of all solar powered fencing was done in some of the areas.

WAY FORWARD

- In addition to the above mentioned protections, reducing habitat fragmentation, ensuring sufficient food to animals, promoting eco-tourism will help in mitigating the human-animal conflicts.

GS – III ... ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT ... CONSERVATION, ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AND DEGRADATION, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

PROBABLE QUESTIONS

1. **“Wetlands are natural solution to climate change”. Elaborate. With specific examples, discuss the diversity of wildlife species in Indian Wetlands. (250 Words)**

A GOOD BEGINNING

Wetlands are the transitional areas between terrestrial and aquatic eco-systems and play a significant role in addressing the impacts of climate change. They are neither totally dry nor under water. They are the most biologically diverse of all the eco-systems. Recognizing their importance, UNESCO in 1970s established Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

HOW THEY BECAME NATURAL SOLUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE?

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They represent the largest global terrestrial carbon pool. • They cover just 8-10% of the Planet, but hold 10-20% of the terrestrial carbon stocks. • Peatlands and bogs sequester huge carbon. • Mangroves, sea grasses and tidal marshes are adept at sequestering atmospheric carbon. • Mangrove swamps sequester 34 million tonnes of carbon annually equivalent to the carbon emitted by 26 million passenger cars in a year. • They also regulate local climatic conditions by creating a micro-climate. • They are genetic reservoirs of various plant species. • They carry out water purification/ filtration processes. • High level of nutrients resulted in habitat to animals and plants. • Acts as buffer against shore lines preventing sea water intrusion. |
|--|

DIVERSITY OF WILDLIFE

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loktak lake is the only refuge of endangered Sangai Deer, 75 species of Phytoplankton, supports over 20,000 water birds, which include threatened spot-billed pelican and greater spotted Eagle. • Bhitarkanika Wetlands are home to salt water Crocodile and has the World's largest known nesting beach for Olive Ridley sea turtles and also houses 5 species of marine Dolphins. • Chandra Taal in Himachal Pradesh is home to snow leopards, Himalayan Ibex and blue sheep. • Bhoj wetlands in Madhya Pradesh supports white storks, black-necked storks, Sarus Crane. |
|--|

APT CONCLUSION

When the wetlands are disturbed by way of land conversion, they release huge stocks of Carbon dioxide, Nitrous Oxide, Methane etc. Hence all out efforts must be made to protect the wetlands.

2. **Explain the concepts “Carbon Budget” and “Net Zero”. Experts say that India, like other developing countries, is facing the problem of “unfair past” and “unequal present” in carbon emissions. What does this mean? (250 Words)**

A GOOD BEGINNING

Carbon Budget, Net Zero are the terms which are frequently in the news as part of climate change negotiations by countries across the World. There is an increase of around 1.10C in the World temperature from 1750 to the present.

CARBON BUDGET

- 1st mentioned in IPCC Report, 2013.
- It is the tolerable quantity of the greenhouse gas emissions that can be emitted in totality over a specified time.
- It is emphasized now-a-days with regard to permissible quantity of GHG emissions that can be released in total by 2100 to stay under 1.50C.
- The World has already exhausted over 80% of the budget since 1850 and as per various reports, there will be 3.20C raise by 2100, if the World only relies on Paris Agreement commitments.

NET ZERO

- It means that the amount of carbon we emit has to cancel out or be less than the amount we remove from the atmosphere.
- It gained momentum after IPCC published a special report on global warming of 1.50C in 2018.
- The report said for a 66% chance of keeping warming under 1.50C, only 420-570 GT of Carbon can be emitted between 2018 and 2100.
- If emissions stay at 37 GT CO₂e, the World would exhaust its carbon budget in 12 years.
- To avoid this, the World should become a Net zero carbon emitter latest by 2050 and then move to a carbon negative trajectory.

UNFAIR PAST	UNEQUAL PRESENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed countries were responsible for bulk of CO₂ emissions since 1750. • US is responsible for over 25% and EU accounted for 22% of historical emissions. • India emitted just 3%, despite having around 18% of the World's people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are deeply inequitable. Americans and Canadians are emitting over 16T CO₂ per capita annually. India is emitting just less than 2T CO₂ and has been one of the lowest per capita emitter.

APT CONCLUSION

As per IPCC report, the World must completely stop using coal and must focus on ways to remove large amounts of carbon.

3. **Explain the term “Tipping Point” in climate change discussions. Why the environmentalists fear that the World is moving much closer to the “Tipping Point”? (150 Words)**

A GOOD BEGINNING

As per a report published in Nature Magazine in 2019, Climate scientists said that 9 climate tipping points as defined by IPCC are more likely to be crossed sooner than previously thought. IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (SROCC) said that tipping points might be exceeded even with warming of 1.5 Degree Celsius to 2 Degree Celsius.

TIPPING POINT	SOME OF THE TIPPING POINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are the thresholds beyond which Earth's systems are no longer able to stabilize and these are widely used in Ecology. • These are interconnected both biologically and physically in complex ways and the World may go into a state of irreversible change, if they happen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of Amazon rainforest • Loss of Boreal forest • Loss of Permafrost • Loss of Arctic sea ice • Loss of Coral reefs • Loss of Greenland ice sheet • Loss of Antarctica ice sheets etc.

WHY DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO THE TIPPING POINT?

- Amundsen Sea Embayment in West Antarctica is withdrawing irreversibly. Its collapse would destabilize the rest of the ice sheet like toppling dominos.
- Greenland ice sheet is likely to pass the tipping point, if the temperature exceeds 1.5 Degree Celsius.
- Parts of Boreal forest in North America transformed from carbon sink to carbon source.
- Arctic permafrost is thawing at a record rate and releasing vast amounts of Methane.
- In Amazon, just 20-40% loss could lead to the tipping point being crossed. As per Nature, during the past 50 years, 17% has been lost.
- Human activities are responsible for up to 84-90% of the marine heat waves that occurred in the previous decade, as per SROCC report. By 2081, the frequency of marine heat waves could increase 20-50 times.
- Weakening of Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) already happened.

APT CONCLUSION

The more decisively and earlier we act, the more able we will be to address unavoidable changes, manage risks and achieve sustainability for eco-systems.

6. “Wildfires in the Arctic Region have disastrous consequences on climate change”. Discuss. (250 Words)**A GOOD BEGINNING**

Although wildfires are common in Northern Hemisphere, in recent times the latitude and intensity of the fires and the duration of the fires are particularly unusual. It is also incidental to note that the Arctic region is warming twice as fast as the rest of the planet. In Siberia, where wild fires raged, the average June temperature was almost 10°C higher than 1981-2010 long term average in 2019.

WHY THE WILDFIRES IN ARCTIC HAVE DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compared with Amazon rain forest, which stores about 320 tonnes of Carbon per hectare, Tundra grasslands store 218-890 tonnes per hectare carbon. • Along with permafrost soils of Tundra, the Boreal forest, also known as snow forest, holds 1,700 GT of Carbon. • Boreal forest encircles the Earth just below the Arctic and it is the biggest terrestrial carbon store in the World, as per 2015 research published in Global and Planetary Change. • Moreover, 95% of carbon in Boreal forest is stored in the ground – in permafrost soil and

Peatlands.

- Also, 80% of the World's peatlands are found in the Boreal region.
- In case of Wildfire, in addition to trees and grasslands, peat also burns, which releases much more CO₂.
- Wildfires in pristine Arctic can have a domino effect, particles of smoke can land on snow and ice causing the ice to absorb the sunlight that it would otherwise reflect. It accelerates the warming in the Arctic.
- Fires in Arctic also increase the risk of further permafrost thawing that releases Methane, which is also a greenhouse gas.
- Melting of the permafrost is leading to oil spills, power plant fuel leaks, subsidence of North Russian cities which are located on the permafrost.

WAY FORWARD

- Arctic wildfires is not a new phenomenon. However, frequency and intensity increase in recent times can adversely affect humanity and climate change. Stringent implementation of global climate treaties and enhancing the commitments under the Paris Climate Pact along with the coordination among the Arctic Council Countries is the need of the hour.

FURTHER PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAINS 2021

5. "Heat waves combined with the urban heat island effect makes our cities unliveable". Elucidate. (150 Words)
6. Examine how India's rainfall patterns are being impacted due to climate change. (150 Words)

5. How do you define a "river floodplain"? Why do we need to protect them? Explain the concept of "Conserve and Use" with an example. (150 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

The importance of floodplains can be understood from the fact that most of the ancient civilizations in the World began in and adjacent to the river floodplains. Important floodplains in India are Ganga flood plain, Yamuna floodplain, Brahmaputra floodplain etc.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE?

- It is the area on either side of the river that becomes part of the extended river bed when the river floods.
- It stretches from the banks of the river to the outer edges of the valley.
- Aggradation or alluviation takes place through the deposition of earthen material as the flood way deposits sediments.

NEED TO PROTECT THE FLOODPLAINS

- Act as buffer zone between river and mainland.
- Due to rich nutrients, they support huge diversity of plants, animals, and migratory fauna.
- They recharge groundwater and make water available for cultivation / domestic use.
- Act as natural filter of toxic minerals and heavy sediments.
- Deposits sediment brought from the catchment.
- They act as heat sinks.
- Provide fertile land for seasonal cultivation of farmers.

PALLA FLOODPLAINS ... EXAMPLE OF CONSERVE AND USE

- It runs over 20 to 25 kms of river length near Delhi.
- It is ecological, non-invasive and perennial water project.
- It has replenishable yield between 80 to 100 million cubic meters per year.
- Delhi Government is using less than replenishable yield and hence, it is an example of conserve and use.

APT CONCLUSION

However, the cultivation of wheat, vegetables and flowers on the floodplains is depleting the waters in the aquifer and hence, there is a need to go for food forests or fruit forests on the floodplains to protect Palla's conserve and use character.

6. What do you understand by the concept of “Go and No Go” zones for coal mining sector? How do you view the serious criticism faced by the Government for its alleged dilution of “Go and No-Go” in recent times? (250 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

Go and No-Go classification of coal blocks was jointly made by Environment and Coal Ministries in 2009-10. As per this classification, 70% of the coal blocks fell in Go areas, remaining 30% in No-Go areas. The recent auction notification by the Government created controversy, as some of the blocks are in No-Go areas.

GO AND NO-GO ZONES

- Go zones are the areas, where coal mining is allowed.
- No-Go zones are the areas, where mining is banned and these are the areas having either more than 10% Weighted Forest Cover or more than 30% Gross Forest Cover (GFC).
- The concept of zoning has no legal basis, but, it is seen as an important strategy in prioritizing forest areas as No-Go prevents diversion of rich flora and fauna for coal mining.

WHAT HAPPENED RECENTLY?

- Auction process of 41 coal blocks by Government allowed mining in certain No-Go areas.
- As per CSE, out of 41 blocks put up for auction, 21 are in No-Go areas.
- Finally, the Coal Ministry has withdrawn Bander mine in Maharashtra from the list of 41 as it lies in the eco-sensitive zone of Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve.

ENVIRONMENTALISTS VIEW

- Coal mining in very dense forest areas would be a triple disaster.
 - ✓ Heavy environmental cost
 - ✓ Public health crisis
 - ✓ Loss of carbon sink
- For example, coal block near TATR needs diversion of around 1,200 hectares of forest area.

GOVERNMENT VIEW POINT

- We have strategies to deal with diversion of forest land through CAF.
- Forest Advisory Committee will look at clearances.
- We can incorporate coal gasification. Extra resources will be generated.
- District Mineral Funds will be utilized for developing essential facilities.

APT CONCLUSION

India has to implement Compensatory Afforestation norms in true letter and spirit and issue can be dealt with on case to case basis.

7. What do you understand by “non-attainment cities” under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)? How far do you justify the recent intervention of the NGT in NCAP? (150 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

National Clean Air Programme was launched by MoEFCC in 2019 as a pollution control initiative with an intention to reduce Particulate Matter pollution of PM10 and PM2.5. It is also to provide Centre and States a framework to combat air pollution and it is the step in the right direction.

TARGETS OF NCAP	NON-ATTAINMENT CITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The target is to reduce PM10 and PM2.5 levels by 20-30% by 2024 with 2017 as the base year for non-attainment cities. • It is with collaboration of Government, industry and academia. • First ever effort to frame a national framework for air quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are the Cities, if over a 5 year period, they consistently do not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). • NAAQS lists 12 major pollutants, but India monitors only few. • NCAP has taken the mandate of reducing PM10 and PM2.5.

DIRECTIONS BY NGT

- Reduce the timeline given for reduction in the air pollution.
- Increase the target of reduction from 20-30%.
- SPCBs to ensure assessment and installation of requisite number of real time ambient air quality monitoring systems within 6 months.
- CPCB to design a model for source apportionment and carrying capacity assessment within 2 months.

RATIONALE FOR INTERVENTION

- Right to Clean Air is part of Right to Life under Article 21.
- To enforce a sustainable development principle and public trust doctrine.
- Public welfare is the main priority in a welfare state.
- India has most number of World’s polluted cities.
- By the end of 2019, non-attainment cities gone up to 122 from 102.

APT CONCLUSION

NGT’s directions are in the right direction to ensure robust implementation of NCAP, keeping in mind Article 21.

8. Explain the National Strategy towards meeting the targets of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under UNFCCC? How far is India geared up to achieve the targets? (250 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

We are already facing the repercussions of climate change in the form of increased devastation due to floods, intensive rainfall, more number of dry days etc. This was aptly recognized by both developed and developing countries, when they assembled in 2015 in Paris under COP21 to UNFCCC.

INDIA's NDCs	INDIA's STRATEGY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing emission intensity as percentage of GDP by 33 to 35% by 2030 of 2005 levels. Increasing share of non-fossil fuel based electricity to 40% by 2030. Creating additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). Launch of International Solar Alliance. India joining Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC). India launched NCAP in January 2019. 175 GW renewable energy target by 2022. National Electric Vehicle Mission Promotion of Organic Farming and ZBNF. Green India Mission to increase forest cover. National Policy on Biofuels 2018. Bharat Stage VI emission norms. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana.

CHALLENGES

- Balancing development and environment.
- Institutional finance.
- Growing urbanization and transportation emissions.
- Green India Mission is underfunded.
- Coal is still a major polluter.
- Poor selection of species for agro-forestry.
- Ineffective CAMPA utilization.
- Dilution of EIA processes.
- Dilution of CRZ processes

APT CONCLUSION

In spite of challenges, as per Climate Action Tracker (CAT), India is on track to achieve the targets of NDCs much earlier than 2030. The need of the hour is prioritization of strategies, strong implementation, improved capacity and funds.

FURTHER PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR MAINS 2020/2021

- What is the intended role of Biodiversity Management Committees being formulated under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002? Why so much importance is given to Peoples' Biodiversity Registers? (250 Words)
- What are the recent measures by the Government in reducing the emission of pollutants from the Coal based power plants? (150 Words)

GS – III ... SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY...

PROBABLE QUESTIONS

1

What is CRISPR-Cas9? From Indian perspective, what could be the probable applications of this technology in the near term? Discuss the ethical dilemma in dealing with humans using this technology. (250 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- The 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry was awarded to two scientists “for the development of a method for genome editing”. The two scientists are associated with discovering CRISPR/Cas9 Genetic scissors in 2012 and subsequently, their use has been exploding.

WHAT IS CRISPR/Cas9?

- CRISPR stands for Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats. Cas9 is a protein which works as molecular scissors to snip through the DNA. In fact, it is a system used by bacterial cells to recognize and destroy viral DNA as a form of adaptive immunity.
- Overall, it is a gene editing technology which makes specific changes to the DNA of a cell or organism.
- CRISPR scans the genome looking for right location and Cas9 protein works as molecular scissors.
- The advantages are it is cheap, quick, relatively safer, accurate to use and easy.

PROBABLE APPLICATIONS FROM INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

- In agriculture sector, it can be used for developing new seed varieties that are drought and disease resistant to enhance plant yields / qualities.
- Domestication of certain wild species, which can improve agronomic performance.
- In the healthcare, it can be used for preventing inheritable diseases and treating complex incurable diseases like HIV, Cancer, Sickle cell anemia.
- The technique can also be used in research, drug screening and therapy development etc.
- It can also be used for the conservation of endangered species.

ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN DEALING WITH HUMANS

- Germline editing is considered unethical, which involves deliberate insertion of genes, which are passed down to the future generations.
- If germline modification is allowed, it leads to new forms of social inequality, discrimination and conflict. It distorts the family relations by treating humans as biologically perfectible artefacts.
- Designer children concept triggers competitive dynamics within and between the societies.
- GM crops may have long term health consequences, which are difficult to anticipate.
- Response to genetic engineering vary among the species and hence quite complex.

NEED OF THE HOUR

There is a need for stringent international guidelines and national legislations with strict oversight over gene editing technologies, like CRISPR/Cas9. Ensuring practice of ethical framework by scientific community and practitioners is the need of the hour.

2

Critically examine India’s progress in meeting the goals stipulated under Aichi Biodiversity Targets. What could be the probable reasons for the failure of specific targets? (250 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- Aichi biodiversity targets were agreed upon by 170 countries at the UNCBD Conference, Nagoya as part of Conservation of Biodiversity, which were to be achieved by 2020. Recent UN Global Biodiversity Outlook Report 5 has highlighted performance of India on Aichi targets. India has identified 12 National Biodiversity Targets, which are in line with the 20 global Aichi biodiversity targets.

TWO NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS AND CERTAIN MISSING ASPECTS!

- With well over 20% of its total geographical area under biodiversity conservation, India has exceeded the terrestrial component of 17% of Aichi target 11.
- India has also made noteworthy achievement towards NBT relating to Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS). This was made possible through a network of 0.25 million Biodiversity Management Committees across the country involving local people.
- India is one of the few countries, which enhanced the combined forest and tree cover to 24.56% of the total geographical area.
- On the other hand, India could not phase out the subsidies that erode biodiversity and it could not take steps for resource use within the safe ecological limits.

REASONS FOR FAILURE OF SOME TARGETS!

- Absence of scientific data base of genetic diversity and natural habitats in India.
- Unbridled encroachment of wetlands with no action from the states.
- Poor compilation of vast traditional knowledge across the ethnic communities and non-operationalization of People's Biodiversity Registers.
- Decreasing public focus on indigenous breeds due to economic reasons.
- Conflict of laws like Forest Rights Act and Indian Forest Act.
- Failure in preventing industrial fisheries from destroying threatened species and vulnerable ecosystems.
- Flouting / dilution of EIA norms.

NEED OF THE HOUR

India has the opportunity to plan for a trajectory of green growth after COVID-19 and this should be integrated with 2030 action plan of UNCBD.

3

What are Directed Energy Weapons (DEWs)? How could it benefit India, if these weapons are designed and operationalized? (150 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- Recently, DRDO has announced that, it is working on developing Directed Energy Weapons (DEWs) as part of its strategy of modernization of defence technology. With this, India has the opportunity to join the league of counties – US, China and Russia – the only countries, which are developing DEWs.

WHAT DO YOU UNDERSTAND BY DIRECTED ENERGY WEAPONS?

- These are emerging technologies with highly focused energy including laser, microwave and particle beams, which hits the target.
- They do not involve any projectile.
- They transfer energy to a target and introduces heat stress, leading to failure of structural disintegration of the target.

ADVANTAGES OF DEWs

- Travels at the speed of light.
- Not affected by gravity.
- Can be invisible and silent.

- The time taken for deployment is very less and hence, enemy countries may not be able to identify the threat.
- Operation range larger than conventional weapons.
- No recoil, as there is no momentum, as equipment mountings need not be large.

BENEFITS WHICH MAY ACCRUE TO INDIA!

- This aids in protecting our space equipment as well as protecting our national security.
- It counters China's growing military stature including in space, cyber and electronic warfare.
- It will act as a significant deterrent to enemy nations, like Pakistan.
- Operationalizing DEWs enhances image of India in the international arena.
- DEWs can temporarily or permanently disable enemy country's drones or missiles, without leaving any physical debris.

FINAL WORD

DRDO's 'Aditya' project and 'KALI' project are the attempts in this direction. But, despite decades of R&D, DEWs are still at an experimental stage.

4

What do you understand by Space Situational Awareness (SSA)? Up to what extent, ISRO's Network for Space Objects, Tracking, and Analysis (NETRA) Project ensures SSA? (150 Words)

A GOOD BEGINNING

- ISRO has recently setup a Directorate of Space Situational Awareness and Management with the objective of protecting India's Space assets. With increase in space debris in Low Earth Orbit, increased collision threats with operational space crafts, there is a need for our own Space Situational Awareness (SSA).

SPACE SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

- It refers to keeping track of objects in space and predicting where they will be at any given point of time.
- It is to protect India's space assets from inactive satellites, pieces of orbiting objects, near Earth asteroids etc.
- It also includes tracking data of inactive satellites and generating useful information through analysis.

NEED FOR SSA

- To protect nation's space assets and act as force multiplier.
- It gives huge impetus to military intelligence.
- It also help understand motives behind any suspicious orbit changes of enemy satellites.
- Satellites are required to undergo avoidance maneuvers and for this we require data on space debris and for this data about space debris, at present, we are dependent on USA.
- As a global emerging power, India should have SSA as part of its capability, just like USA.

ABOUT NETRA PROJECT

- When it is operationalized, it will give India, its own capability in Space Situational Awareness.
- It would make India a part of international efforts towards tracking, warning about mitigating space debris.
- First, it will be for Low Earth Orbits, gradually it will be enhanced for Geo-Stationary Orbits, where communication satellites operate.
- Moreover, it leads to many observational facilities that are connected radars, telescopes, data processing and control centre. As part of NETRA, a high precision long range telescope will be installed in Leh and a radar in the North-East.

FINAL WORD

The NETRA Project would make India a part of international efforts towards tracking, warning about and mitigating space debris. India should focus further on advancing and indigenization of infrastructure relating to SSA.

GS – IV ... ETHICS, INTEGRITY & APTITUDE

PROBABLE QUESTIONS
1 “Capital punishment can be legally justified, but not morally.” Comment.
A GOOD BEGINNING

- Capital punishment is the practice of executing someone as punishment after a proper legal trial (i.e., following due process).

JUSTIFICATION OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

- Retribution:
 - ✓ Capital punishment is justified when it is proportionate to the severity of their crime.
- It sets an example and so acts as deterrence.
- It upholds Rule of Law.

**ARGUMENTS AGAINST CAPITAL PUNISHMENT**

- Reformatory Justice – As held by Mahatma Gandhi, we need to eliminate the crime and not the criminal. An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind.
- With India facing huge problem of undertrials, convicts on death row have to undergo anticipatory suffering. This makes punishment more severe than just deprivation of life.
- Capital punishment serves as a deterrent only when there is higher conviction rate and no delay in the criminal justice system.
- With loopholes and gaps in the system, many innocent people may get killed.

CONCLUSION

- As held by the SC, death penalty should be awarded only in the rarest of the rare cases (Bachchan Singh case). It said that life imprisonment is the rule and death penalty only the exception.
- Thus, Capital punishment is awarded only when the crime-fear ratio is so high that it shocks the collective conscience of the society.

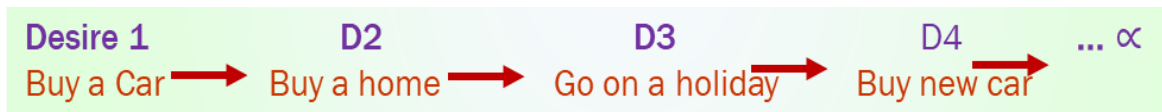
2 I count him braver who overcomes his desires than him who overcomes his enemies – Aristotle. Elaborate.
A GOOD BEGINNING

- The above statement reflects the importance of overcoming desires to lead a happy life. While enemies are external, desires are internal and mental products. Aristotle, the Greek Philosopher, while continuing with the Socratic tradition gives this quote in the light of deeper examination of life.

BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

Even in the Buddhist philosophy, overcoming desires is considered as a path to a happy life. This is because:

1. Nature of desires and man is insatiable. Our monkey brain goes on creating desire after desire and thus pain after pain.



2. Thus, man is trapped

in a never-ending cycle of desires. As held by the Buddha, Desire is the cause of sorrow.

3. Overcoming of enemies involves the following:

- ✓ Becoming more efficient and prosperous or
- ✓ Getting better education or
- ✓ Winning a tough fight.

PERSONAL WELLBEING	SOCIETAL WELLBEING
1. Individuals migrate to developed nations like US, as it is seen to give equality.	1. India as a society is not one whole. It gets divided.
2. Minorities live in fear	2. Crime culture and discrimination get normalized. This prevents social change.
3. Women restrict themselves to household.	3. Law of the land is regularly violated. Thus this is lawlessness.
4. Individual does not want to engage with the government as he does not see any hope. ✓ This leads to absence of accountability.	

All of these happen with the help of mind.

4. But overcoming desires is to get detached from mind. It is to depersonalise it. Thus, this effort is braver.

CONCLUSION

- This detachment comes when we treat our desires as impermanent. That is, we understand that our desires vanish as time passes, that they are transitory.

3

The current society is plagued with widespread trust-deficit. What are the consequences of this situation for personal well-being and for societal well-being? What can you do at the personal level to make yourself trustworthy?

A GOOD BEGINNING

- Trust deficit in society leads to polarisation, intolerance. This can harm the social fabric and harmony. Society comes into picture only when there is an interwoven community.

WIDESPREAD TRUST-DEFICIT

1. Communal politics and riots creates insecurity among communities. For example, in 2020 Delhi riots, there was high level of physical violence.
2. Society and State has developed gap. Citizens are disillusioned due to corrupt politics – electoral malpractices, surveillance, sedition.
3. Women of the country do not trust the police, judiciary. They feel rapists have the upper hand. This is because the conviction rate in sexual violence is <1%.

CONSEQUENCES

EFFORTS TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

- Cultivate good values, morals in individuals through education, family, socialization.
- Public servants must uphold the constitutional principles of equality, justice, liberty.
- Media should follow media ethics to avoid social manufacture of news and create social tensions.

4

What are the elements of success? Is it in personal or in professional aspects?

A GOOD BEGINNING

- Success and happiness are achieved when there is a balance between personal life and professional life. Achievements in professional life at the cost of physical health, mental peace, stress is not meaningful.

MODEL OF HOLISTIC SUCCESS

1. Work Life balance.
2. Healthy social relationships to cherish.
 - Ex: Friends who help in any situation are hard to find. Such friendships must be maintained well.
3. Healthy body (fitness).
 - In a healthy body rests healthy mind.
 - Most software employees work in odd hours, result in dysfunctional eating habits and diseases like obesity, diabetes etc.
4. Mental peace and calmness
 - Fast paced lives in urban metros result in stress, anxiety and sleeplessness.
 - This takes a toll on mental health and in extreme cases, it can drive to depression, suicide.
 - ✓ Ex: Suicide by the owner of Café Coffee Day
5. Money driven vs. values driven
 - In the race to become rich, competition overtakes cooperation. This results in unhappiness

SUCCESS FAILURE DICHOTOMY = FALSE DICHOTOMY

- Success and failures should be seen as tides. Neither success nor failure is permanent. Thus, having emotional intelligence to accept failure and to be detached from success ensures that we stay positive.

Personal Life		Professional Life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loving family • Respecting parents • Visiting village and developing it. 	SUCCESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotions that can be handled sustainably. • Building strong and ethical bonds with co-workers Ex. Narayana Murthy, Ratan Tata

5

What is the importance of the character of civil servants? What are the challenges faced by them in cultivating good character?

A GOOD BEGINNING

- Character is the sum-total of values possessed by an individual. It reflects his attitude and behaviour
 - ✓ Ex: His Holiness, The Dalai lama is known for peace loving character.
- Aristotle in his virtue ethics, gives four principles for a good character –
 1. Courage
 2. Temperance

3. Justice and
4. Wisdom.

CIVIL SERVANTS CHARACTER

- The motto of LBSNAA is – Sheelam Param Bhushanam (character is the highest virtue). This emphasis on civil servants' character is because:
 1. Civil servants hold positions of authority and power. Their decisions have multifold implication.
 - ✓ Ex: Lincoln said “if you want to test a man's integrity, give him power”
 2. Civil servants are leaders: Their character motivate subordinates and creates a healthy work culture.
 - ✓ Ex: When an SP stands against custodial deaths, police stations in his jurisdiction become more people friendly.
 3. Change agents of society: A good character radiates like sunshine and brings out the best in rest of the people. People's trust in administration is a result of good character of the civil servant.
 - ✓ Ex: Divya Devarajan IAS of Adilabad in Telangana upheld the trust of tribals by fulfilling promise to build roads, houses (rehabilitation)
 4. Upholding the values of constitution.

CHALLENGES FACED BY CIVIL SERVANTS IN CULTIVATING GOOD CHARACTER

1. Continuation of colonial legacy – an attitude of superiority, elitism.
2. Not adaptive to social change.
3. Lack of human values like compassion, empathy.

CONCLUSION

- Sardar Vallabhai Patel, in his speech to the first batch of IAS (1947), held that the character of civil servants should include fortitude, probity and uncorruptiveness. Civil servants should take measures to cultivate them.

6

Why did Mahatma Gandhiji consider Sanitation as Morality? What efforts are being undertaken in this regard?

A GOOD BEGINNING

- Mahatma Gandhi held that “sanitation is more important than independence”. Though India gained independence under the leadership of the Mahatma, it is yet to fulfil his dream of a clean India.

SANITATION AS MORALITY

- According to Gandhiji, sanitation and cleanliness are an integral part of the way of life.
- This is because sanitation is most important for physical well-being and a healthy environment. It effects public and personal hygiene.
- The morality here pertains to the link between sanitation and the caste system. Dalits have been engaged for maintaining sanitation traditionally. Just as India was under a colonial rule, Dalits were similarly placed in a discriminatory system where they lacked independence. Thus, he believed the welfare of Harijans could not wait.

PRESENT SITUATION

- Though the practice of manual scavenging is not permitted, it is still in practice. Indian railways is the largest employer of manual scavengers. Even among them, 90% are Dalit women. This is extremely disturbing.

GOVERNMENT EFFORTS

- Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan, which focuses on behavioural change is adopting Gandhiji's mantra of everyone must be his own scavenger.

CONCLUSION

- Sanitation is not just the work of safai karamchahi or the local government. It is the responsibility of all of us to ensure a healthy future

AGRICULTURE

1. How far is Integrated Farming System (IFS) helpful in sustaining agricultural production. 2019

The Integrated Farming System (IFS) is a combined approach aimed at efficient sustainable resource management for increased productivity in the cropping system. The IFS approach has multiple objectives of sustainability, food security, farmer's security and poverty reduction by involving livestock, vermicomposting, organic farming etc.

Indian farm sector needs to address the twin challenges of productivity and sustainability along with augmentation of farmer's income. For this, IFS emerges as one of the most viable options, as it ensures:

Productivity: IFS provides an opportunity to increase economic yield per unit area by virtue of intensification of crop and allied enterprises especially for small and marginal farmers.

Profitability: It has the capability to make the sector profitable by reducing the use of chemical fertilizer and recycling nutrients.

Sustainability: In IFS, subsystem of one byproduct works as an input for the other subsystem, making it environmentally sustainable. Moreover, IFS components are known to control the weed and regarded as an important element of integrated pest management and thus minimize the use of weed killers as well as pesticides and thereby protect the environment.

Recycling: Effective recycling of products, by-products and waste material in IFS is the cornerstone behind the sustainability of farming system under resource poor condition in rural areas.

Income round the year: Due to interaction of enterprises with crops, eggs, meat and milk, IFS provides flow of money round the year amongst the farming community.

Best utilization of small landholdings: Indian farmers in many regions such as in north-eastern part, practice subsistence agriculture. They also have a rich traditional base in water harvesting, soil management etc. which could be efficiently utilized under IFS.

Meeting fodder crisis: Byproduct and waste material of crop are effectively utilized as fodder for livestock (Ruminants) and products like grain, maize are used as feed for monogastric animals (pigs and poultry).

Employment generation: Combining crop with livestock enterprises would increase the labour requirement significantly and would help in reducing the problems of underemployment and unemployment to a great extent. IFS provides enough scope to employ family labour round the year.

IFS provides multiple benefits that are sustainable and can pave the way for climate-smart agriculture. India needs to adopt a "well designed" Integrated Farming System (IFS) to realise the vision of doubling farmers' income by 2022 and having sustainable agricultural practices.

2. Elaborate the impact of National Watershed Project in increasing agricultural production from waterstressed areas. 2019

Watershed project involves conservation, regeneration and judicious use of all the resources like land, water, plants, animals and humans within the watershed area.

The National Watershed Project also known as Neeranchal National Watershed Project is a World Bank assisted watershed management project. The objective of this project is to support Integrated Watershed Management Program (IWMP) through technical assistance to improve incremental conservation

outcomes for the natural resources including water, soil and forests while enhancing agricultural yields in a sustainable manner for farming communities.

Water-stressed regions of India such as Northwest India, Vidarbha region of Maharashtra etc. are prone to drought and water scarcity thus affecting the agricultural production in the regions. The National Watershed Project has the potential in increasing agricultural production in these regions:

The project has led in reduction of surface runoff thus increasing groundwater recharge, soil moisture and better availability of water in water-stressed areas. It also helps farmers to better manage surface and groundwater resources.

This has resulted in incremental agriculture productivity and increased cropping intensity through optimum utilization of natural resources like land, water, vegetation etc.

For example, a watershed project in Bangaru, Telangana has increased crop yields and cropping intensity significantly. This is also accompanied by a shift towards higher-value crops especially horticultural crops.

It will also help to mitigate the adverse effects of drought and prevent further ecological degradation and support farmers in water-stressed areas to adapt to climatic change and ensuring improved livelihoods for people.

It helps in the restoration of ecological balance in the degraded and fragile water-stressed areas by increasing vegetative cover and decrease soil erosion through afforestation and crop plantation.

People's involvement including the farmers and tribal is the key to the success of any watershed management program, particularly the soil and water conservation. Successful watershed management has been done at Sukhomajri, Panchkula and Haryana through active participation of the local people.

However, watershed project faces certain challenges such as very little community participation, lack of coordination between implementing departments and ministries, etc. Properly educating the people about the project and its benefits or sometimes paying certain incentives to them can help in effective people's participation. Watershed Development on a large scale is the best solution to overcome water-stressed problems.

3. Examine the role of supermarkets in supply chain management of fruits, vegetables, and food items. How do they eliminate number of intermediaries? 2018

India is one of the leading producers of vegetables, fresh fruits and a number of food items. Marketing of fruits and vegetables especially is more challenging than many industrial products because of their perishability, seasonality and bulkiness. A supermarket is a self-service shop offering a wide variety of food and household products.

The roles of supermarkets in supply chain management are as follows:

Transportation: The perishability of fruits, vegetables and other food items require swift transportation facility so that their freshness remain intact. Supermarkets are equipped with such swift transportation facilities.

Better Storage Facilities: The better refrigeration facilities provided by supermarkets increases the shelf-life of these products so that consumers can purchase them fresh.

Price Discovery: Most of the supermarkets purchase these products directly from the farmers, helping in the better discovery of prices for them.

In this way, supermarkets help in elimination of intermediaries such as agents and auctioneers. Normally in traditional markets, these agents and auctioneers purchase produce from the farmers and sell it to the wholesalers from where the produce goes to the retailers and then to consumers. The supermarkets eliminate this entire chain, as they procure directly from farmers and sell directly to the consumers. Reliance Fresh and Reliance trends, Foodworld, and Easyday an example of supermarket in India.

4. Explain various types of revolutions, took place in Agriculture after Independence in India. How these revolutions have helped in poverty alleviation and food security in India? 2017

India is primarily an agricultural economy and majority of people are still dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. After independence, development of agriculture has been assured by various revolutions supported by government.

Green Revolution – This revolution led to tremendous rise in production of food grains, especially wheat, by use of high-yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers and pesticide.

White Revolution – Operation Flood (1970), an initiative of National Dairy Development Board has led to revolution in milk production in India. The world's largest dairy development programme transformed India from a milk deficient nation to world's largest milk producer.

Blue Revolution – This revolution focussed on management of fisheries sector and has led to phenomenal increase in both fish production and productivity from aquaculture and fisheries resources of the inland and marine fisheries.

Other revolutions which are no less significant includes yellow revolution(oil seed production), golden fibre revolution (jute), golden revolution (horticulture), silver fibre revolution (Cotton) and red revolution (meat production).

Significance of these revolutions

These innovations in agriculture have lifted millions of people out of poverty by generating rural income opportunities for farmers, farm labourers, and also reduced prices for consumers. India has become self sufficient in food grain production with the help of green revolution.

The exponential rise in milk production has led to nutritional security among the masses. Per capita availability of milk has reached all time high of 337gms/day.

These steps have provided avenues for income diversification for farmers.

To further carry on the momentum of these programmes and assure food security in long run in face of ever increasing population, there is an urgent need for an 'evergreen revolution' that should focus on all round development of the agriculture sector.

5.What is water-use efficiency? Describe the role of micro-irrigation in increasing the water-use efficiency. (2016)

Water-use efficiency refers to the ratio of water used in plant metabolism to water lost by the plant through transpiration. Water use efficiency is also about careful management of water supply sources, use of water saving technologies, reduction of excessive demand and other actions.

In context of Indian agriculture, recognizing the fast declining irrigation water potential and increasing demand for water from different sectors, a number of demand management strategies and programmes have been introduced.

One such method is micro-irrigation that includes drip irrigation and sprinkler irrigation.

Under micro-irrigation, unlike flood method of irrigation, water is supplied at a required interval and quantity using pipe network, emitters and nozzles.

The on-farm irrigation efficiency of properly designed and managed drip irrigation system is estimated to be about 90 percent, while the same is only about 35 to 40 percent for surface method of irrigation.

While increasing the productivity of crops significantly, it also reduces weed problems, soil erosion and cost of cultivation substantially.

The reduction in water consumption in micro irrigation also reduces the energy use that is required to lift water from irrigation wells.

Drip-irrigation technique can replace the hand watering system in hilly areas with minimum water losses and labour.

Government of India has also accorded high priority to water conservation and its management. Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) has been formulated with the vision of extending the coverage of irrigation 'Har Khet Ko Pani' and improving water use efficiency 'More crop per drop' in focused manner using sprinkler & drip method of irrigation.

Burning Topics Sample

1. India's Gold Quest

How can the country become a sports power ?

With overall 7 medals comprising 1 gold, 2 silver and 4 bronze, India produced its richest ever medal haul and finest performance of all times at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, held belatedly from July 23 to August 8, 2021 due to covid-19 pandemic. India broke into the top 50 on the medals tally to finish at 48th, its highest ranking in over four decades (India had finished much higher in the era in which it used to win gold medals in hockey. The country, for instance, finished at 23rd rank in 1980 Moscow Olympics with just a solitary medal- the hockey gold. But those were different times since the number of countries participated, games played and medals offered were much less.) if one goes by the total number of medals, India would have actually finished 33rd.

Shining Seven

While Neeraj Chopra's hugely historic gold in javelin throw—the first-ever Indian track & field as well as only the second Indian individual Olympic gold—made big difference and helped India jump 18 places in the medals tally, every other medal at Tokyo came with their own big positives. Indian men's hockey team under the captaincy of Manpreet Singh ended 41-year drought of Olympic medal in hockey after winning a bronze, reflecting a much-needed revival in Indian hockey. Meerabai Chanu clinched silver in women's 49 kg category, ending India's 21-year wait for an Olympic medal in weightlifting. Ravi Kumar Dahiya brought home silver in the men's 57 kg freestyle wrestling and became only the second Indian wrestler to win Olympic silver. He also became overall fifth Indian wrestler to finish on the Olympic podium. Lovlina Borgohain clinched the first boxing medal for India in 9 years and became only the third Indian boxer to win a medal at the Olympics. Bajrang Punia won bronze in men's 65 kg freestyle play-off and became sixth Indian wrestler to win an Olympic medal. With a bronze in badminton, P.V. Sindhu became the only Indian woman and only the second Indian to win two individual Olympic medals.

Just Missed

What made India's 2020 Tokyo Olympics story more promising was the fact that a number of Indian participants pulled off a valiant effort and missed their medals just at narrow gap. Indian women's hockey team demonstrated great self-belief after they defeated three-time Olympic medal winner Australia in quarters, though they narrowly missed out on a medal, losing 3-4 to limit Britain in bronze play-off. Aditi Ashok missed a podium finish by a single heart-breaking stroke but forced everyone including global golf expert to sit up and take she matched the world's best. Deepak Punia played his class and commitment in the 86 kg men's wrest but was unlucky to go down in the dying seconds of his bronze medal bout. Kamalpreet Kaur showed tremendous self-confidence to claim sixth spot in women's discus throw with her world-class performance.

TOPS Role

While the athletes deserve all possible praise, some credit can be given to the role played by the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) launched by the Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in 2014 with the goal of providing and facilitating specialised training and all sorts of assistance to select athletes with a focus on an Olympic medal. To achieve this objective, an elite athlete identification committee was

constituted to identify athletes from 'high-priority' sports, like archer); badminton, boxing, hockey and wrestling, etc., who could achieve the Olympic podium. The first committee had some eminent athletes like Pulella Gopichand, Rahul Dravid, Abhinav Bindra and Manisha Malhotra to give it an aura of excellence and transparency. The TOPS provides not only direct financial support of Rs. 50,000 per month to select athletes, but also arranges for foreign training, sports psychologists, physiotherapists, international competition, equipment and coaching camps. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, TOPS provided the necessary mechanism to support the athletes in their extended training sessions overseas in nations like Hungary, Sweden and the United States. So, earlier the lament used to be that we had the talent but they fail to compete since they did not have necessary monetary support. That is not the case now Substantial money has been spent by the Union Government through the Sports Authority of India (SAI) plus NGOs and foundations, by virtue of which elite athletes have become stars and their financial well-being is well looked after.

More Than The Money

But India's Tokyo experience shows that in its Olympic gold quest the country needs much more than the wherewithal. Ample money, foreign coach, etc. do play a certain role but they may not be a guarantee to win gold. You must know that how that money can best be used to hone your skills and reach your goals. Neeraj Chopra and Vinesh Phogat, both selected and trained under the TOPS, are a case in point. In 2018, Neeraj went to Germany to train with Uwe Hohn, only athlete to throw a javelin 100m or more with his "eternal" world record of 104.8m. But soon he found that his technique did not match Hohn's training. He soon switched over to Klaus Bartonietz, another German coach, who "arranged my training to suit my body type," as Neeraj said. Apart from finessing the biomechanics of his throw and prepare his body for strength, speed and endurance, Klaus ensured that Neeraj peaked at the right time. So it is not always about the world's best coach or the best known coach. It is about finding a coach who understands the athlete and is able to craft a training regimen that suits him or her.

What Not To Do

Yet another serious medal prospect, Vinesh, committed the mistake of blindly following a foreign coach and paid a big price with the prospective medal. She decided to train in Hungary with her personal coach, a decision that bosses at Wrestling Federation of India (INFI) think cost her medal. Temporarily suspending Vinesh for alleged indiscipline, the WFI claimed that she trained in Hungary for two years with her coach Waller Akos who trained his wife Mariana Sustin and Vinesh together there. His wife also qualified but lost in the first round while Vinesh was knocked out in the quarter-finals. The WFI suspects that Akos used the part of Rs. 1.3 crore TOPS grant money during 2016-21, on his wife's training.

Get Bigger Talent Pool

One of the world's most renowned distance running coaches, Hugo van den Broek, tellingly brings out some of the ailments that Indian sports suffer_ The 44-year-old marathoner from Netherlands, who lives and coaches in Kenya, was the head coach of the Elite Distance Running Programme in SAL Bhopal from December 2014 to July 2020. He finds India's obsession with winning gold funny and says that the country must stop thinking about winning gold medals in running events and first focus to get a bigger talent pool. In a newspaper article, he writes, "India is miles behind countries such as USA and Japan when it comes to the number of sub-elite level athletes. For example, in 2019 a total of 28 Indian men ran the 5,000m in a time faster than 14.45 minutes, which is about two minutes slower than the world record, while an astonishing 707 Americans and 812 Japanese did the same. How do we expect to compete for a gold medal when other countries have almost thirty times as many sub-elite runners?"

Lacking The Sport Culture

Citing his experiences after his interactions with many Indian athletes and coaches as well as with officials and administrators, Broek says that the most important reason for India not being a sports powerhouse in any sport other than cricket comes down to sporting culture and mentality. While sports federations do not trust their athletes, most of the athletes have a perception that the federations are working against them. Truth lies somewhere in between, Broek says. For the athletes, facilities and incentives provided to them often become ends rather than means to excel in their sports. "Most of them have two important

motivations," he writes, "to stay at the SAI centre and to get a job through their sport. Once they have reached that, they get into comfort zone and lose their focus." He also underlines strong need to develop athlete-centred approach for the sports federations. His recipe for building a sports culture: Create a talent pool; create more facilities like good food, air-conditioned accommodations for athletes; organise sports events in large numbers so that they could learn more, as he says, "While British athletes can run a race every week, often led by pacemakers to make sure they get a fast time, Indian athletes tend to have four races per year, all of them championships."

What Hockey's Revival Teaches

Indian hockey is a shining example of how a spirit of playing like a champion can be created in Indian sports. At Tokyo, the country's men's hockey team battled a bronze medal against Germany and its women's hockey team fought Great Britain valiantly and missed out on a bronze. This turnaround does not come out of a particular reason but has been a result of cumulative improvements on various fronts. First of all, the Government of Odisha under Chief Minister Mr. Naveen Patnaik took entire responsibility for both the men's and women's hockey teams on its shoulders, showing the way to other state governments.

Odisha A Shining Example

In 2018, Odisha drew up an agreement under which it agreed to pay Rs. 120 crore over five years, with the money going toward building infrastructure and logistical support. Apart from this, all the expenses of both teams—for boarding, training, education and nurturing talent—are borne by the state exchequer. Moreover, it has undertaken the task of ramping up hockey infrastructure in the state like never before. In 2021-22, it plans to spend Rs. 190 crore to build 17 astroturf pitches in 17 blocks of Sundargarh district in North Odisha, about 370 km from the capital, considered the cradle of the game. Synthetic turf pitches are essential for professional coaching. The government is prioritising developing this infrastructure to ensure that budding hockey players have an opportunity to familiarise themselves with it and to learn the tricks of the trade on a pitch similar to those they will play on in international tournaments. Not to be surprised, the hockey has become a favourite sport in the state where it is so popular that children learn to walk with a hockey stick in hand and hockey tournaments are celebrated like festivals. The vice-captains of both the men's and women's national hockey teams are from Odisha, and over the years, the state had produced stalwarts like Dilip Tirkey, Ignace Tirkey, Lazarus Barla and Sunita Lakra.

Coaches & Scientific Support

Former captain of Indian men's hockey team and CEO, Olympic Gold Quest, Viren Rasquinha, points out that the quality of coaches and the quality of scientific support staff who work behind the scenes also played significant role in Indian hockey's turnaround. "Men's team coach Graham Reid is one of the top-5 coaches in the world," he writes. The same goes for Sjoerd Marijne who coached women's team till the Tokyo Olympics. "Fitness level for both the teams has been absolutely world class thanks to the quality of sports science staff—Robin Arkell for the men's team and Wayne Lombard for the women's team". The coaches and scientific advisors also ensured that the rule of rolling substitution was used quite intelligently at Tokyo where India did almost 80 free substitutions in a match, unheard of before for India. (Free substitution or rolling substitution is a rule that allows players to enter and leave the game for other players many times during the course of the game and for coaches to bring in and take out players an unlimited number of times.) That was the reason Indian teams could maintain high tempo and intensity throughout the tournament. Moreover, Indian players are now much better looked after in national camps. Also, the Coach Development Programme has played its part, providing a lot of qualified coaches who are better equipped to conduct training modules.

Getting Better Day By Day

Coming back to Broek's sage advice, he believes that many Indian kids and youth have fire within them to become champions but it has to be lit and nurtured. "True champions do not focus on winning medals, beating others or any other form of reward (such as getting a job). Sport for them is first of all a quest to better themselves. The way to create winners is to not focus on winning, but rather on the process of getting better day by day," he sums up. His words echo in the attitude that Neeraj Chopra has shown to the world after winning the monumental Olympic gold for India.

2. Thirty years of economic reforms

Thirty years ago India decided to change its course of history. The year 1991 was a path-breaking year in India's economic destiny. This was the year when in a quirk of fate the country broke free from its own brand of socialism and adopted a new, untested path of economic liberalisation. Paths were paved for the Indian economy to become globalised. The immediate trigger was, of course, a severe balance of payment crisis when the country defaulted on its debts. Yet, the fact that India chose to massively reform the regulation framework has had lasting positive effects. The most significant reform was scrapping the licence-quota raj which let bureaucrats decide who can produce what and in how much quantity. The results of this system were disastrous in terms of perpetual shortage, higher cost, inefficiency and what not. Thirty years is a long time and today's youth may not be able to even think of the almost stranglehold-like regulatory restraints under which Indian businesses operated before 1991.

What Was Changed?

The Union Budget that the then Finance Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh presented in the Lok Sabha on July 24, 1991, changed many things in a single brush of stroke. Here are some other major changes India moved to more flexible exchange rate policy. It also liberalised the financial sector and freed up capital markets. It allowed global investors to invest in India. The new industrial policy was a significant change from the past. The restrictions under Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1970 were removed and businesses were given freedom to grow big. Many import tariffs were also removed to make the domestic economy more competitive.

What Has Been Achieved?

Many things have changed since then. India's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) has grown almost 10 times from \$266 billion in 1991. The country has become world's fifth largest economy. Poverty rates have halved from 45.3% to 21.9% and the number of poor people fell from 630 million to 360 million, that too when population rose from 88 crore to 135 crore. Per capita income has risen from Rs. 538 in 1991 to Rs. 12,140 in 2021, which has brought most essentials and some luxuries within the reach of many more Indian households. Key infrastructure has improved beyond recognition. We now have world-class expressways, airports and ports which nobody could have thought of then. Indian industries, businesses and services have seen unprecedented growth both in and out of the country. Indian markets are flooded with international brands. Even middle class families are able to own their private cars. They have access to loans for houses, private vehicles and higher education.

In fact, the country has changed so much that it would be very difficult for any young Indian born around 1991 to believe that at one time when people had to wait for years to get landline telephone (mobile phones were not there at that time), gas connection, a two-wheeler and many more things like that. Even businesses had to seek government's permission to buy a computer.

More Could Have Been Done

We are today discernibly better off. But we could have done much more. India's history of last thirty years could have been more glistering. We could have taken more advantages of the 1991 reforms to make country a lot more developed. But only if the pace of the reforms would have been even. There were regimes during these thirty years, whose heart was not fully with reforms. They went ahead with the reforms only up to the point where they were not painful. They never dared to take up painful reforms and take them to their logical ends. Hence, the reforms were piecemeal and not pushed through to take their full advantage. A lot of things are still in the hands of bureaucrats and every political dispensation preferred to depend on them, more than the vast potential of people of India. That is why we still have antiquated BSNL amongst us and so are many other redundant public sector enterprises. Air India is neither reformed nor divested. The list is very long.

In Contrast To China

In contrast, look at what China has achieved in first thirty years of its economic reforms. It opened up its economy only in late 1970s, a bit earlier than India. The country celebrated the 40th anniversary of its economic reforms in December 2018. In first thirty years of its economic opening up, its inflation-adjusted GDP has grown 17-fold whereas India saw just a five-fold growth. Its GDP growth has averaged almost 10% a year after the economic reforms and more than 80 crore people have been lifted out of poverty. It is already a \$14 trillion economy while India is still at less than \$3 trillion and struggling to fulfil its dream of becoming a \$5 trillion economy by 2025.

There have also been significant improvements in access to health, education and other services in China. It is now largely an upper-middle-income economy which based its high growth on resource-intensive manufacturing, exports and low-paid labour—which helped the country emerge as world's factory. It is an understatement to say that its infrastructure is world-class. Rather it is setting standards for what the world-class infrastructure should and could be. It has largest dams, highest bridges and longest network of rails and roads. It has very recently launched its maglev train, dubbed to be the world's fastest. Moreover, China is a growing influence on other developing economies through trade, investment and ideas. China, no doubt, has its own problems at this juncture of its economic growth, but the point here is that it is miles ahead in contrast to India during almost the same period after their economic reforms began.

Democracy No Excuse

And do not think that China could achieve all this because it is an iron-hand one-party rule while the burden of democracy forced India to lag behind. People are supposed to be supreme in a democracy and they in India never supported dogmas of socialism that keep them poor in the garb of equity. Every annual Budget that focussed on new set of economic reforms has been applauded by people of India. Moreover, they always rewarded the governments that brought about a material change in their byes. As an editorial in The Times of India suggests, "There is some evidence that incumbents retain power when they seek re-election at times of relative high growth." But the political class never took these lessons to heart.

Dream For Next 30 Years

However, this is not the time to rue about what has not been achieved in the past. Rather, we should focus on what we can achieve in next 30 years through taking the reforms to their logical end. Surprisingly, the most assuring words have come from someone who is the most authentic and respectable voice on matters of economy. On the occasion of 30th anniversary of Indian economic reforms, the richest Indian and Chairman of the India's largest company Reliance Industries Ltd., Mr. Mukesh Ambani, wrote a rare newspaper article in which he said that India transformed from an "economy of scarcity" in 1991 into an "economy of sufficiency" in 2021. Now, India has to transform into an "economy of sustainable abundance and equitable prosperity" by 2051, he notes. Exuding confidence that the country can be at par with the US and China by 2047, he said, "With our accomplishments over the past three decades, we have earned the right to dream big. What can be a greater dream than to be able to celebrate the centenary of our independence in 2047 by making India one of the world's three wealthiest nations, on par with America and China." Is it too tall an ambition to pursue? No, he emphatically said. He recalled his father, late Dhirubhai Ambani's words to him—"To think small is unbecoming of an Indian". The road ahead, he said, is not easy. "But let us not be deterred by unexpected and temporary problems, such as the pandemic, or distracted by unimportant issues that dissipate our energies. We have the opportunity, also a responsibility towards our children and youth, to make the next 30 years the best ever in independent India's history." To realise this, the model of self-reliant India cooperative with the rest of the world may be the answer, he added.

Five Mantras Of Mukesh Ambani

Mr. Ambani puts forward his five ideas to fulfil the dream. First, so far economic reforms have benefitted Indians unevenly. This disparity is neither acceptable nor sustainable. Therefore, the Indian model of development should focus on creating wealth for the people at the bottom of the economic pyramid. Second, this is the age of technological disruption and acceleration. The world will witness more changes over the next 30 years than seen in previous 300 years. After losing out in the first two industrial revolutions, and catching up on the third, India now has an opportunity to lead the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Third, to turn these exciting possibilities into reality, India should become a nation of Innovators. Fourth, we need to change our understanding of wealth and the ways to pursue it and bring them in alignment with India's ancient wisdom rooted in the primacy of empathy. Fifth, the Indian model of wealth creation requires reconceptualisation of entrepreneurship itself. Tomorrow's successful businesses will be partnerships and platforms which promote both healthy competition and fruitful collaboration.

Road Ahead Is Tougher

A word of advice from former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, who led the entire roadmap of the historic economic reforms, is also worth following when he says that the road ahead is even more daunting than 1991. In a statement on the 30th anniversary of economic liberalisation, he said that "it is not a time to rejoice and exult but to introspect and ponder." Dr. Singh admitted that the social sectors of health and education "have lagged, behind and not kept pace with our economic reforms". Therefore, "Our priorities as a nation need to be recalibrated to foremost ensure a healthy and dignified life for every single Indian," he said. Thirty years is too long a time. The reforms of 1991 were designed for a different technological requirement than what India faces in 2021. The focus that time was on increasing the size of the formal industrial sector. However, India's economy took an unexpected turn in the decades after the liberalisation. Beginning late 1990s and early 2000s, the share of industry in GDP declined and the services sector became the engine of growth.

Fourth Industrial Revolution

India now finds itself standing at the cusp of Fourth Industrial Revolution, as Mr. Ambani, too, has pointed out. It is also an economy where sectors from all four industrial revolutions exist at once. From the first revolution, it has vast number of small factories that use basic technology. It has world-class companies in steel, automobiles and petrochemicals, a gift from the second industrial revolution. The third revolution made India a global leader in software and telecommunications, which are the backbone of recent growth. Now, it has to prepare for automation and digitalisation, which are the harbingers of the fourth industrial revolution. So, India needs to energise all these revolutions at once.

Tasks At Hand

The tasks at hand include first to complete the reforms of 1991. Direct taxes must be overhauled. More effective social security net and more flexible labour market must be the priority. Land reforms should also be taken up so that land could be bought and sold freely and the domination by the middlemen and bureaucrats on land markets could be broken. The stranglehold of public sector banks on capital must also end. Secondly, the skilling of India's population is not only a prerequisite for taking advantage of the fourth industrial revolution, but many sectors relevant to both the second and third revolution are facing an acute shortage of skills. Skilling is all about the ability to support individuals who need to shift careers, shift locations, shift education levels. Finally, the reforms related to the fourth industrial revolution must address the Indian state. Administrative reforms are long overdue. Despite all the focus on ease of doing business during last several years, strangleholds of bureaucracy are still very strong. It has retained its self-serving capacity and it does not allow the vast potential of people of India to play out freely. Pragmatic and futuristic administrative reforms to limit the nuisance value of the bureaucracy are a must for the fourth industrial revolution to take root in the fertile soil of the Indian economy.

Mains 2021 Most Probable

Questions GS -1

1. Highlight the reasons behind the rise of several religious sects in the Northern India in post-Vedic society. Also discuss the reasons behind spread of Buddhism in the ancient India. (250 words)
2. The Harappan Culture was distinguished by its system of town Planning. Elucidate with suitable illustrations. (150 Words)
3. It was during the reign of Vijay Nagar Kingdom that architecture reached its zenith. Do you agree? Give reasons in support of your answer. (150 Words)
4. Discuss in brief about the major temple architecture styles of India. Highlight the difference between Nagara and Dravida Temple architecture style. (250 words)
5. The revolt of 1857 was the culmination of a century long tradition of fierce popular resistance to British domination. Comment. (150 Words)
6. Trace the nature of peasants' movement in India after the revolt of 1857. Also discuss the change in nature of peasants' movement in colonial India in the 20th Century. (250 words)
7. Critically discuss about the objectives of the land reform movements taken in Independent India. Had these movements helped in giving land to the landless? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
8. A country which has itself fought colonialism at one time, began to colonise others with the use of Monroe Doctrine and Dollar Diplomacy. Discuss. (250 words)
9. Give a brief account for the 'geomorphological' effects of an earthquake. (150 Words)
10. The Wilson Cycle has proved enormously important to the theory and practice of geology and underlies much of what we know about the geological evolution of the Earth and its lithosphere. Discuss. (250 words)
11. The Indian obsession for white skin needs to change, not by altering names of the brand but opening minds. Discuss. (150 Words)
12. Within the so-called backward class, the Intra-caste differences have become more pronounced than the inter-caste differences. Analyse. (150 Words)
13. Discuss in brief about the social order of the Later Vedic Period. How was it different from the Rig Vedic Period? (250 words)
14. Discuss in brief about the cultural contributions of Satavahana Kingdom. (150 Words)
15. Discuss the differentiation factors of Suri administration with the Mughals. (150 Words)
16. How far have the Nayannars and Alvars been successful in altering the social scenario prevalent in the medieval times? (150 Words)
17. For individuals, even great ones, are made by history even as they make history. In light of the statement, discuss the influence of Indian National Movement on Mahatma Gandhi. (150 Words)
18. Separate electorates created by the colonial government of India in the early 20th century crucially shaped the nature of communal politics which ultimately led to Partition. Critically examine. (250 words)
19. Discuss importance of ocean salinity on circulation of ocean currents and distribution of marine resources. (150 Words)
20. What do you understand by re-curling cyclones? What are the challenges posed by it in terms of hazard preparedness and disaster management? (250 words)
21. What do you understand by re-curling cyclones? What are the challenges posed by it in terms of hazard preparedness and disaster management? (250 words)
22. Discuss the impact of globalization on Indian family system. (150 Words)
23. Cultural preservation must go hand in hand with modernity. Comment. (150 Words)
24. Discuss the formation of the Ring of Fire and its associated geomorphic activities. (250 words)
25. Despite major changes and upheavals, significant threads of continuity can be traced throughout the course of Indian history right upto the present day in context of Indian culture. Elucidate. (150 Words)
26. Discuss in brief about the literary achievements of Gupta Period. (150 Words)
27. Discuss in brief about the agriculture during the Mughal Period in India. Mention some of the new crops introduced in India during the Mughal period. (150 Words)
28. Discuss in brief about the contributions of Sufi and Bhakti saints towards the development of literature in India. (150 Words)

29. It was the efforts of 19th century social reformers which laid the foundation and spirit of a modern nation state in India. Analyse. (250 words)
30. The revolt of 1857 was no sudden occurrence, it was the culmination of a century long tradition of fierce popular resistance to British domination. Elucidate. (150 Words)
31. How does Ocean Currents impact the climate along the coast of continents? Discuss the economic significance of Ocean Current. (250 words)
32. What are Jet Streams? Discuss the effect of Jet Streams on Indian Monsoon. (250 words)
33. Account for the change in location of the global steel industry. (150 Words)
34. What do you mean by South Atlantic Anomaly? Enumerate some of its implications and significance. (250 words)
35. What do you understand by cultural globalization? Discuss the impact of internet on cultural globalization in Indian context. (250 words)
36. What were the events that led to the Korean war in the 1950s? India played a “much-overlooked but significant role” in bringing the Korean conflict to an end. Elaborate. (150 Words)
37. Although the legal response is a useful deterrent against heinous crimes, women in India continued to be vulnerable to violence and discrimination in society. In the light of this statement analyse the reasons responsible of the increasing crimes against women. What can be the possible solutions to prevent these crimes? (250 words)
38. The 'Me too' movement is only a symptom of the problem, not a cure. Critically Examine. (250 words)
39. The problems of Dalit women are distinct and unique in many ways, and they suffer from the ‘triple burden’ of gender bias, caste discrimination, and economic deprivation. Discuss. (250 words)
40. Even after so much noise and stringent rules, the safety of women still haunts the country. Discuss the reasons behind the limited success of stringent legal provisions in the country. (250 words)
41. What is the impact of La Nina on Southwest monsoon? Suggest measures to reduce dependency of Indian agriculture on vagaries of monsoon. (250 words)
42. What do you understand by “Singularity” in context of space science? Black holes provide an important tool for probing and testing the fundamental laws of the universe. Elaborate. (250 words)
43. Indian elderly have already been facing many problems and the pandemic has just accentuated their misery. In the light of this statement, discuss the various problems faced by the elderly people in India. Mention any two schemes which have been particularly designed to provide relief to the elderly. (250 words)
44. How the urban areas are defined in India? Why there are voices suggesting changes in the existing definitions? (150 Words)
45. Merely categorizing transgender as third sex won't help unless they are provided with equal rights and opportunities. Discuss. (250 words)
46. Secularism has been a cherished constitutional value for India. There have been distortions in the practice of secularism but this does not take away the importance of the principle. Discuss. (250 words)
47. Gender and caste inequality not only affects socially but also economically. Discuss. (250 words)
48. While extreme rainfall events lead to urban floodings, it is the poor urban planning which amplifies the damage done. Discuss. Suggest long term measures to mitigate effects of flooding due to deluges in urban centers.
49. The burden of pandemics like Covid is greater on women than men and yet they are mostly excluded from the decision making process across the globe. Discuss.
50. In event of any disaster, it is the poor who is hit hardest. In the light of the statements, discuss the challenges faced by Urban poor in India? What policy measures should be adopted to mitigate the plight of urban poor? (250 words)
51. What makes the Western Ghats a biodiversity hotspot? Discuss the challenges to ecology of Western Ghats. (250 words)
52. Examine the factors responsible for increased rate of melting of arctic ice. What can be the possible impact of melting of arctic ice? (250 words)
53. Describe in brief about El Nino and La Nina. Discuss their impact on Indian Monsoon. (250 words)
54. Recurring urban floods have put a question mark on the idea of Smart cities in India. In the light of statement, discuss the common reasons behind urban floods becoming a critical disaster. Suggest measures to make cities more resilient and sustainable. (250 words).
55. Examine the importance of Mangroves for Coastal Ecosystem. What are the threats to Mangroves in India? What measures could be taken to safeguard the mangrove vegetation? (250 words)
56. What are the reasons behind high fluoride content in groundwater in the Eastern Ghat region? Discuss in brief about its consequences and suggest measures to address the same. (150 Words)

57. Highlight the reasons behind limited mobility in urban centres of India. What steps have been taken so far by the government to enhance urban mobility? (250 words)
58. There is a need to reinvent the cities in the era of unprecedented climate change followed by extreme events and pandemics. Analyse.
59. Discuss in brief about Madden-Julian Oscillation. Discuss its impact on cyclones in Indian Ocean along the Eastern coast of India. (150 Words)
60. What do you understand about the Peatland ecosystem? Discuss in brief about the need for sustainable management of the Peatland Ecosystem with special reference to preventing future Pandemics.

GS – II

1. The separation of power is imitable for the administration of federal and democratic state. Discuss. Briefly discuss provisions related to doctrine of separation of power in Indian Constitution. (250 words)
2. The Supreme Court of India made revolutionary changes in the manner in which the Indian State looks at privacy and individuality in India. In the light of this statement critically discuss about the need for considering privacy as a fundamental right. (250 words)
3. The federal structure of India needs strengthening of institutional frameworks for Centre-State ties. Discuss. (250 words)
4. The inter-state water disputes in India have become a never ending tussle. Comment. Also discuss about the important reasons for the rise of these disputes. (250 words)
5. Discuss the financial powers available in the hands of local bodies? Do you think to address the challenges provided by pandemic; the local bodies warrant more autonomy in financial powers? (250 words)
6. Do you think tribunals have proved to be beneficial in reducing cases in higher judiciary? Give reasons in support of answer. (250 words)
7. The Constitution has envisioned a more proactive and all-encompassing role for Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). Discuss. (150 Words)
8. What are the reasons which necessitated the formation of National Commission for Backward Classes? To what extent, it has been successful in serving its purpose? (250 words)
9. The relationship between India and USA is more robust than ever before but not devoid of challenges. Elucidate. (250 words)
10. Though it is too early to assert this with any certitude, it seems increasingly likely that Covid-19 will inaugurate an era of de-globalisation. Critically Analyse. (250 words)
11. India's strategic orientation has been inclined towards South East Asian countries and even more towards its partner states in the South Pacific. Comment
12. India's regional diplomacy is often shaped by domestic politics. Do you agree? Give reasons in support of your answer.
13. The preamble to Indian Constitution acts as a guide to the Nation in challenging times. Elucidate with suitable illustrations. (250 words)
14. Several judges and experts have raised concerns regarding the collegium system for appointment of judges in Higher Judiciary. Examine the reasons behind such concerns. Suggest measures to address the concerns. (250 words)
15. The Fundamental duties are nothing but the reflection of the Indian ethos. Comment (150 Words)
16. The appointment process of the Governor goes against the norms of Federalism. Critically examine. (250 words)
17. Despite several schemes for upliftment of the backward section of society, the ideals of social and economic justice remain a distant dream. Discuss. Mention some recent initiatives by the government for upliftment of the downtrodden section of the society. (250 words)
18. Inter state water disputes posits a humongous federal challenge to river water governance in India. Examine the reasons behind frequent disputes of such nature. What is the constitutional mandate for resolution of these disputes? (250 words)
19. In the ever evolving world, do you think that the idealism in foreign policy set at the time of Indian Independence is relevant in the present times? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
20. With Indo-Pacific becoming the buzz word in the present times, examine the significance of India's relation with littoral states of Indian Ocean. (250 words)

21. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is yet another platform for India marred by the same challenges which India faces in other Asian groups. Critically discuss. (150 Words)
22. Africa offers the best hope for India to realise its ambition of emerging as a responsible global power. Elucidate. What steps have been taken by the Indian Government in the recent past to increase its engagement with Africa? (250 words)
23. India's diplomatic relation with Latin American countries seems even more distant than their geographical distance. Critically comment. (150 Words)
24. India's Act East Policy has met the similar fate as Look East Policy. Discuss. (150 Words)
25. Preamble is the soul of our constitution which lays down the pattern of our political society. Elucidate. (150 Words)
26. Fundamental Rights are just the natural extension of basic human rights. Comment. (150 Words)
27. An independent judiciary is central to any democracy and the preservation of public trust in the rule of law. Explain the statement in context of various provisions of Indian Constitution which ensures the independent and impartial functioning of the judiciary. (250 words)
28. Enumerate the powers and functions of the Election Commission of India. Despite various constitutional provisions to ensure the independent and impartial functioning of the Election Commission it has some flaws which hinders its impartial functioning. Discuss. (250 words)
29. Compare and contrast Parliamentary and Presidential Systems of government. Why the constitutional makers preferred for the Parliamentary system of government? Give reasons. (250 words)
30. Indian constitution has federal features with some unitary biases. Elucidate. (150 Words)
31. In a federal country like India along with co-operative federalism there are areas which require competitive federalism. Discuss the importance of competitive federalism in the development of the nation by citing suitable example. (250 words)
32. Why was FRBM act enacted? Assess the role played by FRBM act in shaping government's fiscal policy. How far it has been successful? (250 words)
33. With the end of Trump's era of uncertainty it will be an opportunity for India to recalibrate its geopolitical interest. Discuss. (150 Words)
34. Despite geopolitical divergence in recent times, India Nepal relations hinges on people to people contacts. Discuss how India can address the trust deficit and forge a stronger bond with Nepal. (150 Words)
35. Success of South Asian integration depends on the success of SAARC. BIMSTEC can complement SAARC but is no substitute for it. Comment. (150 Words)
36. India pulling out of The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a major blow to not only its economy but also to its Act East Policy. Critically analyze. (150 Words)
37. Discuss the reasons which have denied equitable space to women in scientific institutions. What are the government initiatives to bring gender parity in science and innovation in India? (250 words)
38. The challenges posed by Pakistan and China in collusion are different than they pose individually. Comment. Amid these challenges, what are the steps does India need to take to strengthen its position in the region? (250 words)
39. National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) will not only empower patients but will also bring a change in products and delivery models. In the light of this statement, discuss the features of NDHM. (150 Words)
40. Other than the laws made by the parliament increasing gender sensitivity is crucial to enhancing women's safety. Comment (150 Words)
41. Discuss some of the provisions specifically mentioned in our Constitution to ensure healthy development of our Children. Analyze powers and duties given to The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights to meet our constitutional vision. (250 words)
42. It is Beijing's overweening strategic ambition that is driving the consolidation of the Quad. Discuss. (150 Words)
43. Passing of three farm acts by the Parliament has re-started the debate on weakening of federalism in India. Do you think developments in recent past shows centralizing tendencies in Indian polity? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
44. Discuss strategic importance of Afghanistan for India. Do you think India have reasons to worry about the peace deal concluded between the United States (US) and the Taliban? Justify your position. (250 words)
45. Social media platforms are being used to manipulate elections and spread misinformation. Do you think social media platforms should be strictly regulated by the government to insure spread of fake news? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)

46. What reforms are needed in the education sector to make India a knowledge economy by the time Independent India celebrates her birth centenary? Do you think National Education Policy 2020 has provisions which will lead to the introduction of these reforms? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
47. For the rule of law to prevail, the legal system must equip itself to meet the expectations of the law. In the light of this statement, discuss the importance of judicial system in controlling the arbitrary power of state machinery. (150 Words)
48. Democracy is best served when citizens freely express their views, mobilise and protest. In the light of the statement critically examine the provisions of 'reasonable' restrictions on the enjoyment of fundamental rights mentioned in Article 19 of Indian constitution. (250 words)
49. Discuss about the evolution of Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) from a security grouping to an important geopolitical arrangement. Do you think Quad will be sufficient to counter the Chinese influence in the region? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
50. Enumerate the reasons for the leakages in public delivery of welfare and development goals of India. How can technology help in preventing these leakages and improve the governance system in India? (250 words)
51. What are the reasons for the booming of medical industry in India? Critically discuss about the implications of medical tourism in India. (250 words)
52. There is a growing need to make mental health and suicide prevention a priority. In the light of this statement, discuss the reasons for the rising number of suicides in India, especially among the youths. Suggest solutions to improve the prevailing condition. (150 Words)
53. When the world is facing problems of climate change, regular conflicts etc., the role of institutions like World Food Programme become more significant. Discuss. (150 Words)
54. In 15 years, Right To Information (RTI) has gone from Indian citizens' most powerful tool to an Act on life support. Critically examine. How can it be strengthened to bring change in the governance structure? (250 words)
55. Even after years has passed to the Prakash Singh Case, police reforms is still a dream. In the light of this statement, discuss about the challenges related to police reforms in India. Also suggest some solutions in this regard. (250 words)
56. Enumerate the reasons for human trafficking in India. Critically discuss about the steps taken up by the government in this regard. (250 words)
57. Discuss the various features of the Right to Information (RTI) Act. Enumerate the various challenges which have been weakening its spirit. (250 words)
58. High cut-offs in admissions are no reflection of standards, but a case of rote learning and hyper-competitiveness. Critically Examine. (250 words)
59. While the United Nations is a pale shadow of the vision with which it was invested at its founding, nevertheless it has kept alive the notion of international solidarity and cooperation. In light of this statement, discuss some of the successes and failures of the UN since its inception.
60. For a peaceful and prosperous world in present times, there is no substitute to multilateralism backed by a strong multipolarity. Comment. (150 Words)
61. There is a perception that the controversies related to gubernatorial over-reach have increased manifold. Do you think there is a need to abolish the office of governor? Give reasons in support of your answer.
62. School education in India has created a hierarchy of education. Comment. Do you think that the National Education Policy can ensure equity in education at school level? Give reasons in support of your answer.
63. India suffers from the double burden of malnutrition. Elucidate. Discuss the challenges emerging out of the plight of malnutrition in India with special reference to women and children. (250 words)
64. Describe in brief about Tele-health services. How can Tele-health assure universal healthcare? Discuss the associated challenges. (250 words)
65. Explain in brief about some of the ideals mentioned in the Preamble to the constitution of India. Discuss the significance of the word Fraternity in the present times. (250 words)
66. What are the factors responsible for large pendency of cases in our courts? Do you think that virtual courts can play a significant role in providing justice to people in a timely manner? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
67. The Indo Pacific is an inclusive and representative term that reflects the contemporary interconnectedness of trade, technology and supply chains in a wider region. Comment. (150 Words)

68. In spite of some of its failures, the United Nation still has the potential to make the world more inclusive and cooperative. Discuss. (150 Words)
69. Several experts argue that lockdown has not been a very successful tool in controlling the spread of coronavirus. In light of the statement, critically examine the efficacy of nationwide lockdown in India due to Corona Pandemic. (250 words)
70. Describe in brief about the Journey of India at the United Nation. Discuss the role India can play in collaboration with the United Nations to ensure global peace and prosperity. (250 words)
71. Several experts argue that the idea behind limiting the expenditure by a candidate in election is not very effective in Indian political system. Do you agree? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
72. Examine the significance of civil society organisations (CSO) in developing and democratic countries like India. In the light of recent amendment in foreign contribution regulation act, 2010, discuss the challenges faced by CSOs in India. (250 words)
73. Proper Sanitation in India is still a distant reality, having huge consequences for economy and demography. Discuss. (150 Words)
74. The present era offers the apt opportunity for India and US to realize the true potential of being a natural ally. Comment. (150 Words)
75. Despite having legal backing and presence of several schemes, the menace of hidden hunger is far from over in India. Discuss the factors responsible for persistence of hidden hunger in India. Suggest suitable measures to fight the same. (250 words)
76. The learning outcome in Indian primary school system is grossly inadequate. Elucidate. How does the National Education policy aim to overcome these issues? (250 words)
77. The constitutional mandate of social justice seems a distant dream in India where social stratification is rampant in society. What are the reasons behind increased vulnerability of so called lower section of society to crime? Discuss the steps taken by government to ensure social justice. (250 words)
78. Describe in brief about the functions of United Nation Security Council. Examine its efficiency since its inception. Do you think reforms at UNSC will bring remarkable change in functioning of United Nations? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
79. Myanmar is key in linking South Asia to Southeast Asia. In light of the statement discuss the recent steps taken by India to strengthen its relation with Myanmar. (150 Words)
80. Describe in brief the structure and functions of GST council. How does the GST council strengthen federalism in India? (250 words)
81. Do you think that the presence of separate family laws for different communities is against the fundamental rights to equality before law and equal protection of the laws? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
82. While Indo Pacific seems to be a grand vision, in reality it's just a distant dream. Critically comment. (150 Words)
83. A bipartisan consensus in both New Delhi and Washington has been a critical supporting factor in deepening defence partnership between India and USA. Substantiate. (150 Words)
84. The ongoing pandemic along with the already existing digital divide has adversely affected school education in rural areas. Comment. Suggest some steps to make our education system more resilient to such unannounced disruptions. (250 words)
85. What are zoonotic diseases? What are the reasons behind the alarming increase in the number, frequency and diversity of zoonotic disease outbreaks? (150 Words)
86. Do you think that India has given up its stand of neutrality on foreign policy in recent times? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
87. Discuss in brief about the importance of Civil Society Organisations in India. What are the challenges faced by civil societies organisations in India? (250 words)
88. Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) is an antidote to a persistent problem of social welfare and subsidy schemes in the country. Critically analyze this statement in the light of allegations of corruption in centrally funded scholarship in Jharkhand. (250 words)
89. Critically examine the provisions of National Education Policy (NEP) which foster critical thinking and creative abilities. (250 words)
90. Discuss geopolitical and economic significance of Western Indian Ocean for India. What are some of the steps taken by India to counter the increasing presence of China in this region? (250 words)
91. Discuss in brief about the powers and functions of the Election Commission of India with respect to ensuring a clean campaign during the elections. What are the challenges faced in ensuring a clean electoral campaign in the present times? (250 words)

92. It's high time that the judiciary must bridge the gender gap in its functioning to ensure social justice. Critically examine. (250 words)
93. In the 21st Century, Indo Pacific is not just a theatre of security concern and political competition but also a hub of growth and development, technology incubation and innovation. Discuss. (250 words)
94. Discuss in brief about Union State executive relations in India. Also discuss what are the issues related to Union State executive relations? (250 words)
95. Civil society activism is steel and concrete of democracy. In the light of the statement, discuss in brief about the contribution of civil society in strengthening Indian democracy. Also highlight the challenges faced by Civil Society organisations in India. (250 words)
96. Bureaucracy has often been accused of delay and inefficiency in the completion of projects. In the light of the statement, what reforms are necessary for making the bureaucracy more dynamic and efficient? (150 Words)
97. Judicial review of central bank actions appears to have become commonplace in India. In the light of the statement, do you think that there is a need to recognise the logical limits of judicial review of central bank actions? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
98. The National Education Policy misses quite a few points in order to become inclusive and adapt to existing realities. Comment. What measures do you suggest to address the same? (250 words)
99. It is the extraordinary circumstances when the constitutional principles are tested. In the light of the statement, examine the relevance of the Finance Commission in ensuring fiscal federalism in India. (150 Words)
100. Healthcare in India is skewed not just along the lines of economy but also along the lines of Gender. Examine. Suggest measures to make healthcare more inclusive and equitable.
101. There is a very fine line between regulation and censorship. Do you think that bringing digital media under the purview of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting crosses the line? Give reasons in support of your answer? (250 words)
102. The elitism of the judiciary and law makes justice less inclusive in nature. Critically Comment in the light of the complex legal and Judicial system in India. (150 Words)
103. Discuss in brief about the common area of interest between India and Canada.(150 Words)
104. India's decision to stay out of Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership has wider implications rather than just economic or trade arguments. Analyse. (150 Words)
105. Several experts have argued that bureaucratic inefficiencies are responsible for limited success of various landmark policies adopted by the government. In the light of the statement, discuss the reasons behind poor performance of bureaucracy. Suggest measures to make the bureaucracy adapt to the demand of New India. (250 words)
106. India has been going down on the World Press Freedom Index during the last few years. In the light of the statement, discuss in brief about the challenges faced by the media in the present times. What steps should be taken to provide suitable safeguards to mediapersons? (250 words)
107. Discuss in brief about the discretionary powers of the governor. Critically examine whether the power of pardon is a discretionary power of the governor?
108. In extraordinary circumstances, the general trend of roll back of state ought to be reversed. Discuss.
109. Even after 70 Years of Independence, the Inter state river water dispute is yet to be resolved. Discuss the common reasons behind a large number of Inter State River water Dispute with special emphasis on emerging challenges. Also highlight the need for cooperative federalism in resolving these disputes in the present times.
110. Indian Constitution protects "free speech", not "hate speech". In light of this statement, discuss the need and potential pitfalls of media regulation by the government. (250 words)
111. What are the points of convergences and divergences in India's relationship with ASEAN? Do you think the East Asia Summit is an effective platform to strengthen this relationship? Give arguments to support your view. (250 words)
112. Not only building infrastructure and tagging a district as "open-defecation free" is needed but also maintenance of those infrastructure are equally important and interlinked in order to eradicate open defecation. Explain. Also suggest some holistic measures for maintenance of infrastructure for making India truly open defecation free. (250 words)
113. India has decided not to join Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a mega trade bloc led by China. Critically analyse India's decision to boycott RCEP. (250 words)

114. Without effective global governance, the world faces the real danger of lurching towards more disorder, divisions and even wars. Explain. Also suggest some innovative ways to avert that danger. (250 words)
115. Assess the situation of hunger prevailing among vulnerable groups especially after imposition of lockdown, in the aftermath of covid-19 pandemic. What supports are required to prevent hunger and resulting starvation among vulnerable groups? (250 words)
116. “Criticism is the hallmark of a thriving democracy, but unfounded and unrestrained armchair criticism is detrimental rather than contributive.” In the light of the statement, do you think that criticism of the judiciary undermines its efficiency and credibility. Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
117. Discuss in brief about the changes in India’s policy towards the gulf region in the recent past. Also highlight the significance of India’s close relationship with gulf countries. (250 words)
118. Discuss in brief about the challenges involved in One Nation One Ration Card. Suggest measures to address the same. (250 words)
119. Discuss the significance of Right to Constitutional remedies provided in the Indian Constitution. (150 Words)
120. In a democracy, public morality and unelected institutions are necessary checks, not inimical to elected government. Critically analyze. (250 words)
121. Constitution is under threat from the very institutions that are expected to safeguard it. Critically Analyse the statement in context of recent controversy on Article 32. (250 words)
122. Discuss in brief about the legal arrangements for preventing online abuse in India. Do you think that there is a need for stringent laws for prevention of online abuse? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
123. The grim situation of malnutrition in India warrants immediate concrete steps. In the light of the statement, do you think that there is a need for universalization of the Public Distribution System in India? Justify with suitable arguments. (250 words)
124. The social safety nets often face the issues of exclusion errors which hurts those who are among the most vulnerable groups. Comment. What measures could be taken to make sure that the social safety nets are universal in nature? (250 words)
125. Discuss in brief about the principle of separation of power as envisaged by the Indian Constitution. Critically examine the violation of these principles in context of judicial overreach. (250 words)
126. With changing global power order and the rising significance of Indo-Pacific, India’s relationship with its neighbours are of utmost importance. Comment. (150 Words)
-

GS – III

1. The Indian Banking sector has been under stress for a long period of time. Discuss some of the challenges faced by Indian banks. What steps have been taken by the Reserve Bank of India so far to address these issues? (250 words)
2. Describe in brief about Digital Currency. Do you think that Digital currency is feasible in India in the present times? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
3. What do you understand by feminization of agriculture? Discuss the challenges involved with feminization of agriculture. Highlight some steps taken by the government to support women farmers. (250 words)
4. Describe in brief the features of Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management act. Critically examine the efficiency of this act since its inception. (250 words)
5. Highlight the role of quasi judicial bodies in maintenance of the pristine beauty of the environment. What policy changes are required so that the development also remains environment oriented.
6. Discuss the significance of Mangroves for the coastal areas. Describe in brief about some major international efforts to safeguard mangroves. (250 words)
7. Describe in brief about the threats to coral reefs. Examine the impact of depleting coral reefs on coastal communities. (150 Words)
8. Discuss the significance of Gaganyaan mission for India. Do you think that India should pursue such missions in present times? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
9. Do you think there is a need to pursue nuclear energy in India, when a plethora of other renewable sources of energy are available? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
10. Discuss objectives and provisions of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019. What are the grounds on which the amendments have been criticised by a section of society? (250 words)

11. Technology plays an important role in ensuring efficient and responsive disaster management. Discuss the statement with examples from Indian experiences. (150 Words)
12. Highlight the significance of the Service Sector for Indian Economy. Discuss in brief about the challenges faced by the service sector in India. (250 words)
13. What do you understand by Gig Economy? Discuss in brief about the potential and challenges of Gig Jobs in India. (250 words)
14. Discuss in brief about the potential and challenges of Organic Farming in India. What steps have been taken by the government to promote organic farming in India? (250 words)
15. Discuss the impact of globalisation on Small and medium industries of India. How can Indian MSME sector compete in the present times? (250 words)
16. Discuss in brief about the potential of recycling of e-waste in India. Also highlight the associated issues with recycling of e-waste. (150 Words)
17. Examine the significance of wetlands in India. Highlight the key provisions of the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2019 aimed at regulating the activities in wetlands. (250 words)
18. Discuss the impact of liberalisation of economy on agriculture sector in India. What measures could be taken to make Indian farmers globally competitive? (250 words)
19. What do you understand by the Integrated Farming system? Discuss its significance for Indian rural economy. (250 words)
20. Discuss in brief about Three Parent Baby. Critically discuss the concerns related with three-parent babies. (250 words)
21. Discuss the potential of Artificial Intelligence in providing universal and affordable healthcare in India. (150 Words)
22. The security challenge posed by social media is immense but so is the opportunity. Critically analyse. (250 words)
23. Border Management in India is quite complex due to geographical and historical reasons. In the light of the statement, discuss in brief about India's technological preparedness for border management. (250 words)
24. Crop Diversification holds the key for sustainable development of the agriculture sector in India. In the light of the statement, do you think regulated cultivation can ease the stress in the agriculture sector? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
25. Critically discuss the effectiveness of agricultural subsidy provided in India to boost farmer's income. (150 Words)
26. Government has a vision of doubling farmers' income by 2022. Do you feel it is practically achievable? Analyse its various challenges, hence provide some measures to realize the goal. (250 words)
27. Food processing and food safety should go hand in hand. In this context, examine the necessity of ensuring a delicate balance between promoting the food processing industry and governmental regulations therein. (250 words)
28. Goods and Services Taxes (GST) is expected to streamline the complex tax structure in India. However, its implementation can have far-reaching implications for states and local governments. What are the issues involved in GST implementation in respect of vertical tax relation of union-state-local governments? (250 words)
29. In order to provide adequate and timely facilities to farmers, there is a need to augment the banking system in the rural areas and make them more responsive to farmer's needs. Discuss with examples. (250 words)
30. With the rise of NPAs in Indian banking sector, bank recapitalisation is suggested as a quick and effective solution. Critically analyse. (250 words)
31. What are Bioplastics? What are the advantages of Bioplastics? Discuss the various impacts of bioplastics on the environment? (250 words)
32. India's growing renewable energy sector can serve the dual purpose of making India energy efficient as well as empowering women. Examine. Discuss the scope of renewable energy as a champion sector in Make in India 2.0. (250 words)
33. Briefly discuss the important role played by Wetlands. What measures have been taken in India and world over for the conservation of wetlands? (150 Words)
34. The biggest threat for the protection of Western Ghats seems to be the notion of economic development. In the light of this statement briefly discuss about the problems faced by the Western Ghats. Do you think 'Eco-sensitive Zones' are the only solution left to protect enriched natural heritage of Indian? (250 words)

35. Which are the different types of instruments available for government borrowing? How does the government borrowing effects the market and impact private borrowing? (250 words)
36. Discuss about the roles and responsibilities of civil society organisations in strengthening democratic governance. Enumerate the challenges faced by civil society organisations in India. (250 words)
37. Highlight the role of MSME sector in Indian Economy. What are the challenges faced by MSME in transitioning towards a green sector? Suggest suitable measures to integrate MSME sector in the dream of green development. (250 words)
38. The burden of Non Communicable diseases has been rising in India in the recent decades. In the light of the statement, do you think that indigenous medical devices manufacturing industries are adequately prepared to provide robust healthcare in India? Give reasons in support of your answer. (150 Words)
39. Individuals don't live in isolation, they live in a society and hence privacy is a public good and it should be guarded accordingly. In the light of the statement examine the significance of community data rights. (150 Words)
40. Insolvency and Bankruptcy code 2016 would help propel India on a high growth trajectory. Do you agree? Give arguments in support of your view. Suggest other legislative measures which will further improve investment climate in India. (250 words)
41. Do you think social media is spreading more misinformation than information? Discuss about the various checks and balances which are required to control the flow of information at social media platforms. (250 words)
42. Indian elderly have already been facing many problems and the pandemic has just accentuated their misery. In the light of this statement, discuss the various problems faced by the elderly people in India. Mention any two schemes which have been particularly designed to provide relief to the elderly. (250 words)
43. The farmer's problem is not only about the Minimum Support Price (MSP) guarantee but also the guarantee of procurement. Discuss. (150 Words)
44. There is a need to synergise science, technology and innovation (STI) to position India amongst the top global scientific powers. In the light of this statement critically discuss about the challenges faced by STI in India? What are the government steps to improve India's position in STI? (250 words)
45. Discuss the issues faced by Indian start-ups in competing with the large companies like Google. What are the initiatives that Indian government should take in providing them a platform for competition? (250 words)
46. The Cyberwarfare's broad, cheap, and anonymous nature makes it hard to combat. In the light of this statement, discuss the issues faced by India in controlling cyber warfare. What are the preventive measures India needs to take to ensure cyber security? (250 words)
47. MGNREGA was started to provide guaranteed employment to rural population but is facing the issue of wage discrimination. Discuss the reasons for the same and also enumerate other challenges faced by MGNREGA. What can be the possible solutions for preventing these limitations? (250 words)
48. Shifting rainfall patterns and greater variability in precipitation poses a risk to 70 per cent of global agriculture. Comment. Discuss the various steps taken by Indian government in this regard. (250 words)
49. What is 'gene editing'? Critically discuss about the advantages and disadvantages of gene editing in various fields. (250 words)
50. Discuss about the role of exports in India's economic growth. What are the recent steps taken by the government in promoting exports? (250 words)
51. What is 'Phased Manufacturing Policy'? Discussing about its features, enumerate the issues faced by this policy? (250 words)
52. Critically discuss the need of formalisation of Medium Small and Micro Enterprises (MSMEs) in India. (250 words)
53. What do you understand by the concept of "Unpaid labour" by women? What are the factors responsible for its prevalence in India?
54. With changing global dynamics, the present decade provides the most opportune moment for India's Manufacturing sector to play a decisive role in boosting the economy. In the light of the statement, what are the challenges faced by Indian manufacturing industry? Suggest suitable measures to overcome these challenges. (250 words)
55. Artificial Intelligence promises a new world altogether, but a world at present is also threatened by it. Do you think Artificial Intelligence will make the world more inclusive in nature? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
56. What is the National Green Tribunal? Highlight its power and functions. Also examine the functioning of this institution in the last decade.

57. Innovation has the potential to build a New India. In the light of this statement, discuss the challenges with the innovation regime in India. What steps have been taken by the government in the recent past to make the innovation environment more conducive? (250 words)
58. When the digital space is influencing decision making in polity, economy and society, there is a need of transparency in its functioning. In the light of the statement, discuss the need for reforming cyber laws in India. (250 words)
59. 2020 Nobel Prize in Physics has been awarded for work in the field of Black hole exploration. Discuss contributions of Indian scientists in expanding our understanding of Black hole. (250 words)
60. Even after years of debates and discussions, there seems to be no end to the menace of winter pollution in Delhi NCR region. Discuss what steps have been taken by the government to curb the menace of pollution in the NCR region. Suggest long term remedy for the same. (250 words)
61. Do you think that the Farm Trade and Commerce Act will help to ensure that agriculture remains adequately remunerative for farmers? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
62. In the post pandemic period, what are the major sectors that can play a significant role in boosting the Indian economy? Do you think the policy of credit creation through banks can play a substantive role in it? Justify your opinion. (250 words)
63. MGNREGA is perhaps the apt solution for ensuring sustainable development and mass employment. Do you agree? Give reasons in support of your view. (150 Words)
64. What are the factors responsible for lower participation of women in workforce in India? Discuss some of the steps taken by the government in recent past to reverse this trend. (250 words)
65. Describe in brief about food fortification. How can food fortification help in combating the menace of malnutrition in India? (150 Words)
66. What do you understand by Minimum Support Price? Do you think that Minimum Support Price is effective in ensuring the dual objective of providing remunerative price to farmers and food security in India? Give reasons in support of your answer.
67. What are deep fakes? List some of the threats posed by Deep Fakes. Suggest some measures to counter these threats. (250 words)
68. How can technology help India realise the dream of Vision 2020 by addressing the critical challenges faced in the present times? What steps have been taken by the government so far to make technological advancements inclusive in nature? (250 words)
69. "Social media platforms are emerging as a threat to democracy. Critically analyze. Mention some of the self regulating steps taken by these platforms to ensure authenticity, safety, privacy and dignity of individuals. (250 words)
70. Any endorsement of liberalization must be accompanied by unbiased reflections on the cost of such 'reforms. In light of the statement, discuss recently passed legislation to liberalize the farming sector. Substantiate your view with international experiences. (250 words)
71. What are the factors responsible for prevalence of stubble burning by farmers in the northwestern states of India? Discuss the impact of stubble burning on agriculture and environment. (250 words).
72. What are Biodiversity Hotspots? Discuss the common threats to Biodiversity and its consequences. (250 words)
73. Describe in brief the composition and function of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC). Discuss successes and limitations of MPC since its inception. (250 words)
74. Discuss the problems faced by street vendors in India. How can Pradhan Mantri Street Vendors Atmanirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) help street vendors overcome the trap of poverty and vulnerability? (250 words)
75. Discuss in brief about the social security provisions under the new labour code. Do you think that the newly codified labour laws can provide adequate social security to unorganized workers in India? Give reasons in support of your answer. (250 words)
76. India has transformed from an agrarian society to a service based economy. In light of the statement, discuss the factors responsible for limited success of the manufacturing sector in India. Suggest measures to make India a global manufacturing hub. (250 words)
77. Diversity has proved to be a strength in India. In light of the statement, discuss the need for greater involvement of women in the STEM field. (150 Words)
78. The fuel which powers the economy at present is not apt for sustainable economic development. In the light of the statement, do you think that India needs to take strong measures in the present times to move right

- away from the fossil fuels based economy? Give reasons in support of your answer. Suggest other suitable solutions. (250 words)
79. A survey by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) has shown that timely delivery of weather advisories to farmers had a significant impact on their income. In the light of the statement, discuss in brief about some of the weather forecasting mechanisms institutionalized by the Union Government.
80. Discuss key provisions of the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020. Critically examine whether the dispute settlement mechanism under this law is farmer friendly or not. (250 words)
81. What are Carbon Tarballs? Discuss their impact on global warming. (150 Words)
82. Discuss the factors responsible for lower participation of women in the Workforce. Suggest measures for increasing the same. (150 Words)
83. The forest sector in India has a huge potential to mitigate climate change. However, achieving this would require serious efforts towards conservation, restoration and regeneration of the country's forests. Discuss. (250 words)
84. What is the status of food fortification in India? Discuss in brief about the advantages and disadvantages of food fortification. (150 Words)
85. Issues related to Direct and Indirect Farm Subsidies and Minimum Support Prices; Public Distribution System - Objectives, Functioning, Limitations, Revamping; Issues of Buffer Stocks and Food Security; Technology Missions; Economics of Animal-Rearing.
86. Agriculture Productivity and Nutrition security should go hand in hand. Comment. Discuss some of the steps taken by the government to make sure that the crops grown are nutritious as well. (250 words)
87. How does Access and Benefit sharing arrangements protects the rights of the Farmers? Discuss in brief about the challenges faced by farmers under this mechanism. (250 words)
88. Discuss in brief about the recent measures taken by the government to promote innovation in India. Discuss the significance of Innovation in making India the manufacturing hub of the world. (250 words)
89. Discuss in brief about some of the major policies announced by Government of India for promoting StartUps in India. List the challenges faced by Startups in India. (250 words)
90. Discuss in brief about plastic pollution in India with special reference to coastal areas. What are the existing legal frameworks in India for proper disposal of solid waste in India?
91. Despite having a plethora of laws and policies for combating pollution, there has been limited success in this arena. Examine the reasons behind poor implementation of pollution laws. Suggest measures to improve the same. (150 Words)
92. Digital divide in India sharpens across spatial and gender lines. Elucidate. What measures ought to be taken to harness the benefits of the digital revolution in India? (150 Words)
93. In the light of soaring unemployment in India, do you think that there is a need to provide strong legal backing to Universal Right to Work in India? Give reasons in support of your answer. What alternatives could be adopted to generate mass employment in India? (250 words)
94. "Even after so many years of trouble and chaos, the approach for tackling air pollution in India has been reactionary rather than any substantive planned approach. Comment. What measures do you suggest to combat the air pollution in India?
95. What steps have been taken by the government for reforms in the fertiliser sector? Do you think that there is a need to abolish fertiliser subsidy in India? Justify your answer by giving suitable arguments. (250 words)
96. Several experts have argued that the recently passed legislations for labour reforms have little or no benefits for majority sections of labours. In the light of the statement critically analyse the provisions of the new labour code. (250 words)
97. Discuss in brief about the steps taken by the Indian government in the recent past to boost indigenous manufacturing in the country. Do you think that these measures are anti-globalisation? Justify your answer by giving suitable arguments. (250 words)
98. Information technology has become the nerve of economy and often transcends conventional compartmentalisation of different sectors of economy. Elucidate. Discuss in brief about the need for holistic policies to suit the dynamic ecosystem. (250 words)
99. Not only women have very few participation in the labour force but also they disproportionately populate India's informal economy. Comment. Critically discuss whether the new labour code follows gender sensitive approach. (250 words)

100. With major overhaul going on in the post pandemic world, the race for becoming a large investment destination is on in Asian Continent. In the light of the statement, discuss the challenges which could hinder India's prospect as being the most sought investment destination. (250 words)
101. Transforming agriculture and its allied sectors and creating synergy with the non-farm rural economy would energise growth and invigorate rural communities and can double farmer's income. Discuss. (250 words)
102. India is one of the leading GreenHouse Gas emitter nations. In the light of this statement, do you think that there is a need for greater reduction in carbon emissions intensity and adoption of carbon neutrality at the earliest. Justify your answer with suitable arguments. (250 words)
103. Discuss in brief about Circular Carbon Economy. What steps can be taken by India to achieve a carbon neutral economic growth?
104. What do you understand by antimicrobial resistance? List factors responsible for increasing antimicrobial resistance in India. Discuss its impact on health and economy. (250 words)
105. While it is important to incentivise the private sector to establish data centers in India, it is equally important to ensure that they do not pose potential risk to climate sustainability. Elaborate. Suggest measures to reduce carbon footprint of data centers. (250 words)
106. Dams have been at the centre of Indian life for several decades and a part of the faith since eons, however nowadays dam infrastructure needed resilience against hazards and emergency action planning around the country. Discuss the statement in context of the recently unveiled Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Programme. (250 words)
107. Alongwith major economies of the world the covid-19 pandemic has also put Indian economy in shambles. Examine. Also, mention steps undertaken by the government with the sole objective of reviving India's economy. (250 words)
108. Agriculture is a victim of pollution as well as a perpetrator of pollution and it has been found that agriculture subsidies just augment this pollution menace. Examine. Suggest some innovative measures to rationalize agri subsidies to curb agri-pollution. (250 words)
109. Chinese dam project on the Brahmaputra poses a threat not only for the biodiversity but also lives and livelihoods of lower riparian states. Explain (150 Words)
110. Critically examine the idea of corporate owned banks in India. Is it going to be a major reform for Indian Banking sector? (250 words)
111. Discuss the significance of Independent Directors in ensuring the corporate governance. What are the challenges involved with the office of Independent Directors in India? (250 words)
112. Artificial Intelligence can play a catalytic role in improving farm productivity, removing supply chain constraints and increasing market access. Discuss. (250 words)
113. Land inequality measured in terms of ownership of land represents the half picture, the situation is rather more complex. Comment. (150 Words)
114. As per many reports, Asia is going to suffer the brunt of climate change. In the light of the statement, Highlight the challenges for India due to climate change. What measures ought to be taken for adaptation and mitigation in India? (250 words)

GS – IV

1. Leadership is one of the heavily tested skills throughout the coronavirus pandemic. Discuss importance of emotional intelligence as a leadership trait in dealing with such emergency situations. (250 words)
2. According to Napoleon Bonaparte- 'The effectiveness of the army depends on its size, training, experience and morale, and morale is worth more than all the other factors together.' In this context, discuss how the organisation's success is dependent on the satisfaction of the employees. (250 words)
3. Behavioural change is the most profound way to eliminate social evils. What are some of the methods that can be employed to positively change the behaviour of people and guide them towards ethical conduct? (250 words)
4. What is Emotional Intelligence? Why emotional intelligence is considered crucial for a public servant? Discuss. (150 Words)
5. What does the following statement mean to you in contemporary times? "Truth can be stated in a thousand different ways, yet each one can be true." (150 Words)

6. What do you mean by code of conduct? Examine the relevance of code of conduct in civil services. (150 Words)
7. What do you understand by the term Constitutional Morality? What is the significance of upholding constitutional morality? (150 Words)
8. Good corporate governance is about 'intellectual honesty' and not just sticking to rules and regulations. Analyse. (150 Words)
9. What does the term probity mean to you? What is the role of probity in civil services? (150 Words)
10. Discuss the ethical issues involved in surrogacy. (150 Words)
11. Democracy, good governance and modernity cannot be imported or imposed from outside a country. Discuss (150 Words)
12. Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for a democratic society. Discuss. (150 Words)
13. Are moral judgments relative to individuals or particular societies and not universally applicable? Discuss. (150 Words)
14. What do you understand by the principle of double effect? Explain it by narrating an event from your life. (150 Words)
15. "Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, but knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful." What do you understand by this statement? Explain your stand with examples in the modern context. (150 Words)
16. "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." Do you agree with it? Discuss with the relevant examples. (150 Words)
17. Honesty is the Best policy, so goes the adage. What benefits could this policy bring about in business? What is the relationship between Honesty and Leadership? Elucidate with an example. (150 Words)
18. Explain the term "professional competence". Which one do you prefer, a person with low knowledge and high integrity or a person with high knowledge and low integrity? Give reasons. (150 Words)
19. "The law condemns and punishes only actions within certain definite and narrow limits; it thereby justifies, in a way, all similar actions that lie outside those limits." Comment. (150 Words)
20. "Corruption is a problem of faulty morality. Legal solutions for it are bound to fail". Critically analyze. (150 Words)
21. "Compassion is the basis of morality." Analyse this statement in the context of public administration. (150 Words)
22. What is the doctrine of Nishkama Karma and how it can help an administrator in public life? (150 Words)
23. 'No amount of compliance and governance can substitute for sound moral fibre.' Examine this statement in the context of rising number of corruption cases in India and world over. (150 Words)
24. Transparency and financial accountability in political funding ensures that democracy works for everyone. What are the ethical issues involved in state funding of elections? Substantiate. (150 Words)
25. What do the following quotations mean to you? "Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony". – Gandhi (150 Words)
26. "The National Food Security Act makes right to food a legal entitlement for more than 60% of the population, through Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS). But this PDS suffers from misclassification errors as more than 60% poor have been excluded while more than 25% non- beneficiaries have been added as the beneficiaries. Suppose you are a newly appointed SDM of a district where this misclassification has been happening because of the nexus at local level between MLA, Gram Pradhan, BDO and other related government officials. A bribe of Rs. 500 is enough for exclusion and inclusion from the list.
 - (a) In the above scenario what would be your strategy to tackle the nexus and threats?
 - (b) Discuss your course of action with reasons for addressing the problems of misclassification of beneficiaries. (250 words)"
27. The responsibility for the registration of property and imposition of stamp duty falls on you as the tehsildar of an area. Both are determined in accordance with the valuation of the property done by you. There is a disabled lady for whom it is very difficult to go through all the lengthy and tedious process of registration. You have directed one of your junior staff to help her out in this situation. It was found that she had some documents missing which are necessary for the property registration. These certificates have to be procured from some other departments of the government. The disabled lady requests you to help her out in this situation. Will it be possible for you to accept her request? What are the possible options

available to you? Evaluate each of the options. Which will be the best option according to you, give reasons? (250 words)

28. "You are posted as the Medical Superintendent of a District level Government Hospital which caters to the need of poor patients from surrounding rural areas along with the local people from the district town. The hospital has very good infrastructure and adequate equipment to cater to this need. It also receives sufficient funds to meet the

recurring expenditure. In spite of this, repeated complaints have been received particularly from the patients.

Nature of complains include the following:

- a) Very poor maintenance and un-hygienic conditions in hospital premises.
- b) The hospital staff frequently demands bribe from the patients for the services rendered.
- c) The negligent attitude of the Doctors resulting in casualties and other health related complications.
- d) Siphoning of a substantial stock of medicine by the staff and selling it outside the hospital.
- e) There also exist a notorious employee union which puts undue pressure and resents any reformative step by the administration.

Suggest effective ways to tackle each of the above mentioned problems. (250 words)

29. "You are a newly recruited government teacher in a primary school. The state government has allowed opening up of schools after a lockdown of 7 months due to covid pandemic. Less than 40% of students are coming to the school for physical classes. The principal of your school is not very much concerned about sanitization of the classrooms and enforcing physical distancing. You recently discovered that the principal has asked the school staff to sanitize the school premises once in a week. When you went to confront the principal, he asked you to mind your business and threatened to take disciplinary action. As you are a newly recruited teacher, you didn't get any support from colleagues as well. In this situation:

1. What are the ethical dilemmas involved in this case?
2. What are the options available to you? Write the merit and demerit associated with each of them.
3. What would be your course of action and why so? (250 words)

30. "You have been appointed as a District Magistrate (DM) of a district. One of the main challenges of the district is poor health of children. Upon enquiry you came to know that a large number of children are not getting vaccinated. The reason being spread of fake news and rumors due to which the parents are not allowing their children to get vaccinated even in schools.

- (a) What are the challenges involved here?
- (b) What would be your course of action? (250 words)

31. "You have been appointed as the District Magistrate (DM) of a district where agriculture is the chief occupation of people. You received numerous complaints from the farmers that they are not getting minimum support price for their paddy at the procurement centers. On investigation, you found that the officers in charge of procurement were not procuring paddy on the false pretext of excess moisture in paddy. Another reason given by officers was that most of the farmers were not registered with the government mandis and hence their produce can't be procured in the mandis. Several farmers have reached in the mandi with their produce which is lying there in open.

- (a) Who are the stakeholders in this case?
- (b) What are the issues involved here?
- (c) What would be your course of action? (250 words)

32. You have been appointed as the DM of a district. In one of the areas of your district, there are illegal slums. The area was designated as space for creating multilevel parking to decrease the congestion in the city. You have been asked to clear the slums for construction of this parking structure which can significantly decrease the traffic congestion. However the slum dwellers are protesting aggressively against demolition of slums and are adopting violent means to oppose the demolition. What would be your response in this circumstance? Examine the quality of a civil servant which will be required to manage the situations. (250 words)

33. The lacuna in Indian corporate governance is arguably not what is missing in the letter of the law, but what is missing in the internalisation and implementation of it. Discuss. (250 words)

34. "You have been appointed as an editor in a reputed News Channel. While choosing journalism as your career you were highly motivated to uphold the virtue and ethics of journalism. You recently observed that there was a bias in the News Agency in favour of the ruling party of the state. The producers of your news channel while not explicitly directing you to cover any particular news have always favoured the pro government news to be aired. Very often those reports/investigation which goes against the ruling party is given little or no airtime. Your team recently came up with a report highlighting the huge neglect of healthcare in primary hospitals. In this situation,

(a) What are the ethics dilemmas involved here?

(b) What are the options available to you?

(c) What would be your course of action? (250 words)

35. "You have been appointed as the quality supervision officer in a construction company. This job is a must for you in order to pay off Your study loan. Your company has got the contract for construction of an embankment across the Kosi river which is infamous for frequent floods and huge human and capital loss. This project is being executed by one of the most senior officials of your company. You recently came to know that the quality of materials used for construction of embankment is below standards. Your colleagues are asking you to ignore the standards otherwise it may offend the official in charge of executing this project.

(a) Who are the stakeholders in this case?

(b) What are the ethical dilemmas involved in this case?

(c) What are the options available to you? Evaluate the merit and demerit of each

(d) What would be your course of action? (250 words)

36. "You are a student of a reputed medical college. The board of directors of the college consists of many powerful people including many businessmen, politicians among others. For some time there have been few incidences of suicides of undergraduate

students in your college. There is a news in the media claiming that these suicides are because of the ragging going on in the campus of the college. But college authorities have denied the allegation of ragging incidents in the campus time and again. You, being a student of the college, are aware of the fact that ragging is quite rampant in the college campus and even faculty is silent on the issue. All students, faculty etc are afraid that disclosing the reality to the media or police might cause harm to their career.

(a) What are the options available to you in such a scenario?

(b) Which option among the above, will you opt? Justify.

(c) If you yourself are facing ragging, how will you deal with it? (250 words)

37. "You are the principal of a school where your only Son, Ankit also studies. Off late you have found certain changes in Ankit's behaviour. Although Ankit was good at studies, but for the last few months he has been performing averagely. In the half yearly examination he has even failed. The report card is to be distributed on Wednesday and those who have failed, their parents are to be counseled. Suddenly on Monday you from secret sources come to know that Ankit has attempted to kill a fellow student. At the scene of crime an old bus conductor was also present.

(a) What possible steps are available to you? Which step will you prefer?

(b) What values are clashing here? How do you think the attitude of such students can be changed? (250 words)