



# CURRENT AFFAIRS

## April 2020

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**PROJECT ARUNANK:**

- Under Project Arunank, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) personnel are working to completely replace Daporijo bridge (located over Subansiri River), the only lifeline of Upper Subansiri district, Arunachal Pradesh.
- Project Arunank is responsible for the construction and maintenance of approximately 1113 kms of roads in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.
- It is being implemented by the Border Roads Organisation, an important arm of the Ministry of Defence.
- Project Arunank is named after the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

**PM-CARES FUND:**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the constitution of the PM's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM-CARES) fund.
- This will be a dedicated national fund with the primary objective of dealing with any kind of emergency or distress situation, like posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Prime Minister is the Chairman of this trust and its Members include Defence Minister, Home Minister and Finance Minister.
- Citizens and organisations can go to the website [pmindia.gov.in](http://pmindia.gov.in) and donate to PM CARES Fund. This fund will enable micro-donations allowing a large number of people will be able to contribute with smallest of denominations.
- Donations to this fund will be exempted from income tax under section 80(G).

**SEROLOGICAL TESTS:**

- The Indian Council of Medical Research invited bids for an estimated 10 lakh antibody kits (for serological tests) for the diagnosis of COVID-19.
- Viral infections are mainly identified by two kinds of tests– genetic and serological. Genetic tests can identify infections that are active, but cannot be used to detect past infections. This is what serological tests seek to determine.
- Unlike genetic tests, which look for RNA in swab samples, serological tests work on antibodies in blood samples. Hence, they are also called 'antibody tests'.
- To disable a pathogen, the antibody latches to a unique protein molecule on pathogen's surface, called an antigen.
- Serological tests use antigen molecules to detect the presence of antibodies relevant to the infection.
- Such tests are relatively inexpensive, and can display results within a few minutes.

**ARR-RINAM:**

- A tribal lockdown ritual has staged a comeback in Arunachal Pradesh, the State geographically closest to
- China's Hubei province where the COVID-19 outbreak began.

- Arunachal Pradesh's West Siang district ceremonially entered the Arr-Rinam phase on March 26, 2020. Arr-Rinam is the Galo equivalent of lockdown imposed by consensus for 48 hours whenever an epidemic strikes.
- The Galos, one of the 26 major tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, dominate West Siang district.
- Arr-Rinam, which follows the AliTernam ritual to ward off an epidemic, has been a part of their culture.
- Ali-Ternam — Ali means epidemic and Ternam forestall — and Arr-Rinam were last performed almost four decades ago when a water-borne disease had affected many members of the community.

#### **NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:**

- The Disaster Management Act, 2005, under Section 8 enjoins the Central Government to Constitute a National Executive Committee (NEC) to assist the National Disaster Management Authority.
- The Home secretary serving as the Chairperson, ex officio. The Chief of the Integrated Defence Staff of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, is an ex officio member.
- NEC under section of the Act is responsible for the preparation of the National Disaster Management Plan for the whole country and to ensure that it is "reviewed and updated annually"

#### **INDIA VIX:**

- In the current calendar year, the India VIX index has jumped fivefold, from around 12 levels to the current 67 levels, which clearly hints that the market perceives that volatility will only increase in the coming days.
- India VIX is an index that serves as a measure of market expectation of volatility in the near term.
- While volatility signifies the rate and magnitude of change in the stock price or index value, the movement in the VIX index reflects the overall market volatility expectations over the next 30 days.
- So, a spike in the VIX value means the market is expecting higher volatility in the near future.
- Given the nature of the index, it is also known as 'fear gauge' or 'fear index'.
- The VIX index was first created by the Chicago Board Options Exchange (CBOE) and introduced in 1993 based on the prices of S&P 500 index.
- The India VIX was launched in 2010 and is based on the computation methodology of CBOE though amended to align with the Indian markets.

#### **BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION:**

- March 26 marked the 45th anniversary of the entry into force of the Biological Weapons Convention.
- The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction is usually referred to as the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) or Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC).
- The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) is a legally binding treaty that outlaws biological arms.

- The BWC is the first multilateral disarmament treaty to ban an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.
- The BWC opened for signature in 1972, and entered into force in 1975.
- It currently has 183 states-parties, including Palestine, and four signatories. Ten states have neither signed nor ratified the BWC.
- The BWC bans the development, stockpiling, acquisition, retention, and production of: Biological agents and toxins "of types and in quantities that have no justification for prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes;"
- Weapons, equipment, and delivery vehicles "designed to use such agents or toxins for hostile purposes or in armed conflict."
- The transfer of or assistance with acquiring the agents, toxins, weapons, equipment, and delivery vehicles described above.
- The BWC does not ban the use of biological and toxin weapons but reaffirms the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which prohibits such use.
- It also does not ban biodefense programs.

#### **PROJECT PRAANA:**

- The Scientists and Students in Indian Institute of Science (IISc Bengaluru) have developed a prototype of an indigenous ventilator under project Praana. The project is a voluntary effort to help the nation at the time of crisis.
- The prototype has mass flow sensors and controllers which accurately tell how much oxygen is flowing and what volume the patient is inhaling in one breath.
- Pneumatics is built around mass produced water filter hardware. The control system is built around open source industrial controller.

#### **WAYS AND MEANS ADVANCE (WMA):**

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reviewed the Limits of Way and Means Advances for Center and States/UTs. Under Section 17(5) of RBI Act, 1934, the RBI provides Ways and Means Advances (WMA) to the central and State/UT governments.
- WMA is a temporary liquidity arrangement with the central bank, which enables the centre and the states to borrow money up to 90 days from the RBI to tide over their liquidity mismatch between its inflow of revenues and outflow of expenditure.
- A higher limit provides the government flexibility to raise funds from RBI without borrowing them from the market.
- Recently, The Government of India increased the ceiling on WMA with RBI by 60 per cent to Rs 1.20 lakh crore (from Rs 75,000 crore last year) to tide over the cash flow mismatch in FY21 expected from higher spending to combat the spread of COVID-19.
- For States/UTs, RBI had constituted an Advisory Committee (Chairman: Shri Sudhir Shrivastava) to review the WMA limits for States/UTs. Pending submission of the final recommendations by the Committee, it has been decided to increase their WMA limit by 30 %.

#### **NATUNA ISLANDS:**

- In recent months, China has sparked a major maritime confrontation with Indonesia near the South China Sea with dozens of Chinese fishing vessels, along with a coast guard escort, entering

waters off the Natuna Islands, which are within Indonesia's exclusive economic zone but are also claimed by China.

- Administratively, the islands constitute a regency within the Riau Islands Province of Indonesia.
- Indonesia's EEZ extends 200 nautical miles (370 km) from its shores, which around Natuna means it is slightly intersected by China's Nine-Dash Line, defining its widely disputed claim to most of the South China Sea.

#### **OPERATION SANJEEVANI:**

- An Indian Air Force (IAF) C-130J transport aircraft delivered 6.2 tonne of essential medicines and hospital consumables to Maldives under Operation Sanjeevani.
- These medicines and consumables were procured from eight suppliers in India but couldn't be transported through any other means due to the 21-day lockdown imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19.
- At the request of the government of Maldives, the IAF aircraft activated Operation Sanjeevani and lifted these medicines from airports in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Madurai before flying to the Maldives.

#### **E-NAM:**

- Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar launched new features of National Agriculture Market (e- NAM) Platform.
- It will help strengthen agriculture marketing by farmers which will reduce their need to come to wholesale mandis for selling their harvested produce, at a time when there is critical need to decongest mandis to effectively fight against COVID-19.
- These software modules are namely, Warehouse based trading module in e-NAM software to facilitate trade from warehouses based on e-NWR,
- FPO trading module in e-NAM whereby FPOs can trade their produce from their collection center without bringing the produce to APMC.
- Enhanced version of logistic module has been released to facilitate inter-mandi and inter-state trade at this juncture.
- These software are warehouse based trading module in e-NAM software and Farmer Producer Organisation trading module in e-NAM.
- e-NAM was launched in 2016 as a pan-India electronic trade portal linking Agricultural Produce Market Committee - APMCs across the States. Already 585 mandis in 16 States and two Union Territories have been integrated on e-NAM portal.
- eNAM provides for contactless remote bidding and mobile-based any time payment for which traders do not need to either visit mandis or banks for the same.

#### **AAROGYA SETU:**

- The Government of India launched a mobile app developed in public-private partnership to bring the people of India together in a resolute fight against COVID19. The App, called 'AarogyaSetu' joins Digital India for the health and well-being of every Indian.

- The App, available in 11 languages, will enable people to assess themselves the risk for their catching the Coronavirus infection. It will calculate this based on their interaction with others, using cutting edge Bluetooth technology, algorithms and artificial intelligence.
- Once installed in a smartphone through an easy and user-friendly process, the app detects other devices with Aarogya Setu installed that come in the proximity of that phone.
- The app can then calculate the risk of infection based on sophisticated parameters if any of these contacts is tested positive.
- The App will help the Government take necessary timely steps for assessing risk of spread of COVID-19 infection, and ensuring isolation where required.

#### **COUNTER CYCLICAL CAPITAL BUFFER (CCyB) FOR BANKS:**

- Reserve Bank has deferred implementation of countercyclical capital buffers (CCyB) and extended the realisation period for export proceeds.
- RBI had put in place the framework on counter-cyclical capital buffer (CCyB) on February 5, 2015, wherein it was advised that the CCyB would be activated as and when the circumstances warranted.
- It is intended to protect the banking sector against losses that could be caused by cyclical systemic risks increasing in the economy.
- Require banks to hold capital at times when credit is growing rapidly so that the buffer can be reduced if the financial cycle turns down or the economic and financial environment becomes substantially worse.
- Banks can use the capital buffers they have built up during the growth phase of the financial cycle to cover losses that may arise during periods of stress and to continue supplying credit to the real economy.
- Rule was first introduced in Basel III as an extension of another buffer (called the capital conservation buffer). Basel III is a voluntary set of measures agreed upon by central banks all around the world.

#### **DISINFECTION BY ULTRAVIOLET LIGHT:**

- Scientists have designed and developed a disinfected barrier-examination booth for examining COVID-19 patients.
- Installed UV light in the booth disinfects the chamber after each patient leaves.
- For the past 100 years science has recognized the bactericide effects of the ultraviolet area of the electromagnetic spectrum.
- The specific wavelengths responsible for this reaction are situated between 240 - 280 nanometers (referred to as nm) with a peak wavelength at 265 nm. They are known as UV-C.
- When a micro-organism's (most viruses, bacteria, spores, cysts etc.) genetic material (DNA and RNA) is exposed to UV-C, the nuclei of the cells are modified, due to photolytic processes. In result, cell division and, by extension, reproduction is prevented.
- It can be used to disinfect liquids, surfaces and even gases/air.
- UV disinfection is a physical process rather than a chemical disinfectant.
- UV disinfection has a shorter contact time when compared with other disinfectants.
- However, there is at least one disadvantage. Organisms can sometimes repair and reverse destructive effects of UV through a "repair mechanism," known as photoreactivation, or in the absence of light known as "dark repair."

**MADHUBAN GAJAR:**

- Madhuban Gajar, a biofortified carrot variety with high  $\beta$ -carotene and iron content has been developed by Shri Vallabhhai Vasrambhai Marvaniya, a farmer scientist from Junagadh district, Gujarat.
- Fortification is the practice of deliberately increasing the content of an essential micronutrient, i.e. vitamins and minerals (including trace elements) in a food, so as to improve the nutritional quality of the food supply.
- Biofortification is the process by which the nutritional quality of food crops is improved through agronomic practices, conventional plant breeding, or modern biotechnology. Crops can be biofortified through selective breeding or genetic engineering.
- Biofortification differs from conventional fortification in that biofortification aims to increase nutrient levels in crops during plant growth rather than through manual means during processing of the crops.
- Biofortification may therefore present a way to reach populations where supplementation and conventional fortification activities may be difficult to implement and/or limited.
- 'Hidden Hunger' is a term used to describe dietary micronutrient deficiencies.

**JIGYASA PROGRAMME:**

- Jigyasa is a student- scientist connect programme.
- The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Ministry of Science & Technology, has joined hands with Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) to implement this programme.
- The Programme is expected to connect 1151 Kendriya Vidyalayas with 38 National Laboratories of CSIR targeting 100,000 students and nearly 1000 teachers annually.
- The focus of this scheme is on connecting school students and scientists so as to extend student's classroom learning with well-planned research laboratory based learning.

**GINI COEFFICIENT:**

- The Gini coefficient, a common measure of inequality, of cash holding in India is as high as 0.71, where 0 indicates perfect equality and 1 indicates perfect inequality.
- Other measurements of inequality such as the Atkinson Index and the Generalised Entropy Index also show a very high inequality of cash holding.
- It measures inequality of a distribution — be it of income or wealth — within nations or States.
- There are many ways to measure it. Two popular ways are those based on pre-tax (or market) income and disposable income.
- A general rise in Gini Coefficient indicates that government policies are not inclusive and may be benefiting the rich as much as (or even more than) the poor.
- Moreover, the 1971 Nobel Prize winner Simon Kuznets had an interesting viewpoint.
- The Kuznets Curve demonstrated that economic growth initially leads to greater inequality, but as economy develops, market forces first increase and then decrease inequality levels.
- An increasing trend indicates that income inequality is rising in India independent of absolute incomes.



**LORENZ CURVE:**

- The Lorenz curve is a graphical representation of income inequality or wealth inequality.
- The Lorenz curve is often accompanied by a straight diagonal line with a slope of 1, which represents perfect equality in income or wealth distribution; the Lorenz curve lies beneath it, showing the actual distribution.
- The area between the straight line and the curved line, expressed as a ratio of the area under the straight line, is the Gini coefficient, a measurement of inequality.

**URVE:**

- The J-curve effect is often cited in economics to describe, for instance, the way that a country's balance of trade initially worsens following a devaluation of its currency, then quickly recovers and finally surpasses its previous performance.

**LAFFER CURVE:**

- The Laffer Curve describes the relationship between tax rates and total tax revenue, with an optimal tax rate that maximizes total government tax revenue.
- If taxes are too high along the Laffer Curve, then they will discourage the taxed activities, such as work and investment, enough to actually reduce total tax revenue.
- In this case, cutting tax rates will both stimulate economic incentives and increase tax revenue.

**PHILLIPS CURVE:**

- The Phillips Curve states that inflation and unemployment have an inverse relationship. Higher inflation is associated with lower unemployment and vice versa.
- Stagflation occurs when an economy experiences stagnant economic growth, high unemployment and high price inflation.
- This scenario, of course, directly contradicts the theory behind the Philips curve.

**RAHN CURVE:**

- The Rahn Curve suggests that there is an optimal level of government spending which maximises the rate of economic growth.
- Initially, higher government spending helps to improve economic performance.
- But, after exceeding a certain amount of government spending, government taxes and intervention diminishes economic performance and growth rates.

**ROUND-TRIPPING:**

- Refers to money that leaves the country through various channels and makes its way back into the country often as foreign investment. This mostly involves black money and is allegedly often used for stock price manipulation.
- Often done through a series of transactions that don't have any substantial commercial purposes, which makes it fall within the trappings of GAAR.
- It could be invested in offshore funds that in turn invest in Indian assets.

- The Global Depository Receipts (GDR) and Participatory Notes (PNotes) are some of the other routes that have been used in the past.
- There are a number of observed factors that promotes round tripping. Mainly, Tax concessions allowed in the foreign country encourages individuals to park money there and then reroute it

#### **CYTOKINE STORM:**

- Of all the possible compounding effects of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, the cytokine storm is one of the most feared.
- Immune system of body gets activated by things that the body does not recognise as its own. These things are called antigens, and include bacteria, fungi and viruses.
- An effective immune system response involves inflammation, an important and indispensable part of the process.
- Inflammation has an important protective function. The release of inflammatory mediators increases the blood flow to the area, which allows larger numbers of immune system cells to be carried to the injured tissue, thereby aiding the repairing process.
- If this inflammatory response is not regulated, a 'cytokine storm' can be triggered.
- An overproduction of immune cells and their activating compounds (cytokines), which, in a flu infection, is often associated with a surge of activated immune cells into the lungs.
- The resulting lung inflammation and fluid buildup can lead to respiratory distress and can be contaminated by a secondary bacterial pneumonia — often enhancing the mortality in patients.

#### **CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN LAWS:**

- Section 188 IPC deals with those disobeying an order passed by a public servant, and provides for imprisonment ranging from one to six months.
- For those violating orders passed under the Epidemic Diseases Act, Section 188 IPC is the provision under which punishment is awarded.
- Section 51 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 provides for punishment for two kinds of offences: obstructing any officer or employee of the government or person authorised by any disaster management authority for discharge of a function; and refusing to comply with any direction given by the authorities under the Act.
- Punishment can extend to one year on conviction, or two years if the refusal leads to loss of lives or any imminent danger.
- Section 505 IPC provides for imprisonment of three years or fine, or both, for those who publish or circulate anything which is likely to cause fear or alarm.
- Section 54 of the Disaster Management Act provides for imprisonment, extending to one year, of those who make or circulate a false alarm or warning regarding a disaster or its severity or magnitude.
- Section 52, Disaster Management Act, whoever makes a false claim for obtaining “any relief, assistance, repair, reconstruction or other benefits” from any official authority can be sentenced to a maximum of two years imprisonment and a fine will be imposed on the person.

#### **THIRD MASS BLEACHING OF GREAT BARRIER REEF:**

- Australia's Great Barrier Reef has suffered its most widespread coral bleaching on record.

- Record sea temperatures had caused the third mass bleaching of the 2,300kilometre reef system in just five years.
- For the first time, severe bleaching has struck all three regions of the Great Barrier Reef -- the northern, central and now large parts of the southern sectors.
- Damage came as February brought the highest monthly sea temperatures on the Great Barrier Reef since Australia began keeping records in 1900.
- Bleaching occurs when healthy corals become stressed by changes in ocean temperatures, causing them to expel algae living in their tissues which drains them of their vibrant colours.
- Bleaching was first seen on the reef in 1998 -- at the time, the hottest year on record -- but as temperature records continue to tumble its frequency has increased, giving coral less time to recover.

#### **PRADHAN MANTRI BHARTIYA JANAUSHADHI PARIYOJANA (PMBJP):**

- Pharmacists, popularly known as “Swasth ke Sipahi”, of Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Kendra, are delivering essential services and medicines at doorstep of patients and elderly under PMBJP of the Government of India.
- Working as part of Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Kendras (PMJAK), they are extending essential services by making available quality generic medicines at affordable prices to the common People of the country and the elderly persons at their doorstep to fight Corona pandemic. This is supporting the government’s initiative of practicing social distancing.
- PMBJP is a campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. Of India, to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses through special kendra’s known as Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra.
- Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI) is the implementing agency of PMBJP has been established under the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. of India,
- Extend coverage of quality generic medicines so as to reduce the out of pocket expenditure on medicines and thereby redefine the unit cost of treatment per person.

#### **SAFE PLUS:**

- The Small Industries Development Bank of India - SIDBI announced that the SIDBI Assistance to Facilitate Emergency response against Corona virus (SAFE PLUS) will be offered collateral free and disbursed within 48 hours. Loans will be offered at an interest rate of five per cent. The limit of SAFE loans has been enhanced from 50 lakh rupees to two crore rupees.
- Scheme was launched to provide financial assistance to MSMEs engaged in manufacturing of hand sanitizers, masks, gloves, head gear, bodysuits, shoe-covers, ventilators and goggles used in dealing with COVID-19.
- SIDBI set up in 1990 under an Act of Indian Parliament, acts as the Principal Financial Institution for Financing and Development of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector.
- It is headquartered in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

#### **HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE:**

- The Government of India has decided to ease its ban on the export of hydroxychloroquine, a drug that has garnered global interest in the treatment and prevention of COVID-19.

- Hydroxychloroquine is an antimalarial drug option, considered less toxic than chloroquine, and prescribed in certain cases. Doctors also prescribe hydroxychloroquine for patients of rheumatoid arthritis and lupus.
- Several countries source the drug from India. By March 21, Trump had begun to call the drug a “game changer”
- At the end of last month, ICMR issued an advisory recommending the use of hydroxychloroquine in asymptomatic healthcare workers treating COVID-19 patients.
- India decided to ban exports of the drug on April 4. Subsequently, US President Donald Trump tweeted about “retaliation” if India did not heed his request for the drug.
- But now, government decided to ease the ban. India said it would supply to countries that needed it the most, and to neighbours who were “dependent on India’s capabilities.”

#### **URANIUM CONTAMINATION IN GROUND WATER:**

- A new study conducted by the University of Manchester, UK and Mahavir Cancer Institute and Research Centre, Phulwarisharif in Patna has found uranium contaminating the groundwater in 10 districts of Bihar.
- Supaul, Gopalganj, Siwan, Saran, Patna, Nalanda, Nawada, Aurangabad, Gaya and Jehanabad are the 10 districts.
- Uranium concentrations are elevated mostly in the North West-South East band along and to the east of Gandak River and running south of the Ganga River.
- The maximum uranium content was in Supaul, 80 microgram of uranium per litre of water.
- Indian Standard IS 10500: 2012 for Drinking Water specification has specified the maximum acceptable limits for radioactive residues as alpha and beta emitters, values in excess of which render the water not suitable.
- These requirements take into account all radioactive elements including uranium. No individual radioactive elements have been specifically identified.
- As per Bureau of Indian Standard (BIS), maximum permissible limit of Uranium is 0.03 mg/l (as per WHO provisional guidelines) in all drinking water standards after following due process.
- A report brought out by Duke University, USA in association with Central Ground Water Board and State Ground Water departments states that Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Jammu & Kashmir have localised occurrence of Uranium concentration.
- Main factors responsible for uranium contamination is uranium contained in an aquifer’s rocks.
- Water-rock interactions that cause the uranium to be extracted from those rocks.
- Oxidation conditions that enhance the extracted uranium’s solubility in water.
- The interaction of the extracted uranium with other chemicals in the groundwater, such as bicarbonate, which can further enhance its solubility.
- Human factors such as groundwater-table decline and nitrate pollution may be exacerbating the problem.

#### **AEROSOLS:**

- An aerosol is a mixture of fine solid particles or liquid droplets in air.
- Aerosols can be natural or anthropogenic.

- Examples of natural aerosols are fog, forest exudates and geyser steam.
- Examples of artificial aerosols are haze, dust, particulate air pollutants and smoke.

#### **FINANCIAL EMERGENCY:**

- Article 360 of the Indian Constitution empowers the President to proclaim a Financial Emergency if he is satisfied that a situation has arisen due to which the financial stability or credibility of India or any part of its territory is threatened.
- The 38th Amendment (not 42nd Amendment) Act of 1975 made the satisfaction of the President in declaring a Financial Emergency final and conclusive and not questionable in any court on any ground.
- But this provision was subsequently deleted by the 44th Amendment Act of 1978 implying that the satisfaction of the President is not beyond judicial review.
- A proclamation declaring Financial Emergency must be approved by both the Houses of Parliament within two months from the date of its issue.
- However, if the proclamation of Financial Emergency is issued at a time when Lok Sabha has been dissolved or the dissolution of the Lok Sabha takes place during the period of two months without approving the proclamation, then the proclamation survives until 30 days from the first sitting of the Lok Sabha after its reconstitution, provided the Rajya Sabha has in the meantime approved it.
- Once approved by both the Houses of Parliament, the Financial Emergency continues indefinitely till it is revoked.
- This implies two things: there is no maximum period prescribed for its operation; and repeated parliamentary approval is not required for its continuation.
- A resolution approving the proclamation of Financial Emergency can be passed by either House of Parliament only by a simple majority, that is, a majority of the members of that House present and voting.
- A proclamation of Financial Emergency may be revoked by the President at any time by a subsequent proclamation.
- The executive authority of the Centre extends: to directing any State to observe such canons of financial propriety as are specified by it; and to directions as the President may deem necessary and adequate for the purpose.
- Any such direction may include a provision requiring: the reduction of salaries and allowances of all or any class of persons serving in the State; and the reservation of all money bills or other financial bills for the consideration of the President after they are passed by the legislature of the State.
- The President may issue directions for the reduction of salaries and allowances of: o all or any class of persons serving the Union; and the judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts.
- Thus, during the operation of a Financial Emergency, the Centre acquires full control over the States in financial matters.

#### **FALL ARMYWORM:**

- Officials of the Directorate of Agriculture in Assam has reported Fall armyworm attack on the standing crops in various districts of Assam. Scientific name being *Spodoptera frugiperda* – is an insect native to tropical and subtropical regions of the Americas.

- Because of trade and moth's strong flying ability, it has spread across the world. India's tropical climate could allow the pest to thrive and spread further.
- In its larva stage it can cause significant damage to crops, if not well managed
- It primarily affects maize, but can feed on more than 80 additional species of plants (rice, millet, sugarcane, vegetable crops and cotton).
- Moth can fly up to 100 km per night and the female moth can lay up to a total of 1,000 eggs in her lifetime.
- It can be controlled with insecticides (like lambda-cyhalothrin), through natural predators (such as coccinellid beetles which feed on FAW) or by inter-cropping.

#### **NOVEL BLOOD PLASMA THERAPY FOR COVID-19:**

- India has taken a bold step to provide innovative treatment to patients suffering from COVID-19 disease- plasma therapy. Technically called "convalescent-plasma therapy", the treatment aims at using the immune power gained by a recovered person to treat a sick person.
- When a pathogen like novel coronavirus infects, our immune systems produce antibodies. Like the police dogs, the antibodies span out to identify and mark the invading virus. White blood cells attach the identified intruders, and the body gets rid of the infection.
- Immune system designs antibodies that are highly specific to each invading pathogen. A particular antibody and its partner virus are made for each other.
- Convalescent serum, that is the blood serum obtained from one who has recovered from an infectious disease and especially rich in antibodies for that pathogen, is then administered to a COVID-19 patient. The sick acquires passive immunisation.
- This therapy is akin to passive immunization. When a vaccine is administered, the immune system produces the antibodies.

#### **BANCASSURANCE:**

- Insurance regulator IRDAI has allowed the four banks, emerging from the recent mega bank merger exercise, to continue for a year with existing bancassurance agreements of the lenders that amalgamated with them.
- Bancassurance means selling insurance product through banks. Banks and insurance company come up in a partnership wherein the bank sells the tied insurance company's insurance products to its clients
- On the one hand, the bank earns fee amount (non interest income) from the insurance company apart from the interest income whereas on the other hand, the insurance firm increases its market reach and customers.
- Government of India notification (Banking Regulation Act) dated August 3rd 2000, laid out the Bancassurance clearance.
- As per bancassurance regulations, a bank can only market three life, general and health insurance companies' products

#### **SEISMIC NOISE:**

- The Royal Observatory in Belgium has observed a 30-50 per cent fall in levels of ambient seismic noise since schools and businesses were closed in mid-March.

- In geology, seismic noise refers to the relatively persistent vibration of the ground due to a multitude of causes. It is the unwanted component of signals recorded by a seismometer
- This noise includes vibrations caused due to human activity, such as transport and manufacturing, and makes it difficult for scientists to study seismic data that is more valuable.
- Apart from geology, seismic noise is also studied in other fields such as oil exploration, hydrology, and earthquake engineering
- As per the Belgian study, due to the enforcement of lockdown measures around the world to tackle the novel coronavirus pandemic, the Earth's crust has shown reduced levels of vibration.
- Due to lower noise levels, scientists are now hoping that they would be able to detect smaller earthquakes and tremors that had slipped past their instruments so far.

#### **JYOTIBA PHULE:**

- Vice President Venkaiah Naidu paid homage to Jyotiba Phule on the occasion of Phule's Jayanti. Mahatma Jyotirao Govindrao Phule (1827 – 1890), was an Indian social activist, thinker, anti-caste social reformer and writer from Maharashtra.
- He and his wife, Savitribai Phule, were pioneers of women education in India. Phule started his first school for girls in 1848 in Pune at Tatyasaheb Bhide's residence or Bhidewada.
- In 1873 he formed the Satyashodhak Samaj (Society of Seekers of Truth) to attain equal rights for people from lower castes. People from all religions and castes could become a part of this association which worked for the upliftment of the oppressed classes.
- He is credited with introducing the Marathi word dalit (broken, crushed) as a descriptor for those people who were outside the traditional varna system. The terminology was later popularised in the 1970s by the Dalit Panthers.
- Deenbandhu was a weekly Marathi-language newspaper first published in Pune, British India in 1877. First newspaper in India to cater explicitly to the labouring people articulated the grievances of the peasants and workers founded by Krishnarao Pandurang Bhalekar (1850-1910) and served as an outlet for Jotirao Phule's Satyashodhak Samaj.

#### **SOVEREIGN GOLD BOND SCHEME:**

- Government of India, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India, has decided to issue Sovereign Gold Bonds. About the Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme, introduced by the Government in 2015.
- Government introduced these bonds to help reduce India's over dependence on gold imports.
- Move was also aimed at changing the habits of Indians from saving in physical form of gold to a paper form with Sovereign backing.
- Bonds will be restricted for sale to resident Indian entities, including individuals, HUFs, trusts, universities and charitable institutions.
- Will be denominated in multiples of gram(s) of gold with a basic unit of 1 gram. The tenor will be for a period of 8 years with exit option from the 5th year to be exercised on the interest payment dates.
- Minimum permissible investment limit will be 1 gram of gold, while the maximum limit will be 4 kg for individual, 4 kg for HUF and 20 kg for trusts and similar entities per fiscal (April-March) notified by the government from time to time.
- In case of joint holding, the investment limit of 4 kg will be applied to the first applicant only.

- Bonds can be used as collateral for loans. The loan-to-value (LTV) ratio is to be set equal to ordinary gold loan mandated by the Reserve Bank from time to time.

#### HELICOPTER MONEY:

- Amid rising concerns over economic crisis that has been triggered by the COVID19 lockdown; Helicopter
- Money is one concept that is being considered by authorities' world over.
- In fact, Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao has suggested RBI to adopt the concept of Helicopter Money to help state governments tide over the current crisis and kickstart economic activity in India.
- An unconventional monetary policy tool aimed at bringing a flagging economy back on track. It involves printing large sums of money and distributing it to the public.
- American economist Milton Friedman coined this term.
- It basically denotes a helicopter dropping money from the sky. Friedman used the term to signify "unexpectedly dumping money onto a struggling economy with the intention to shock it out of a deep slump."
- Under such a policy, a central bank "directly increase the money supply and, via the government, distribute the new cash to the population with the aim of boosting demand and inflation

#### DIFFERENT FESTIVALS BEING CELEBRATED IN SEVERAL PARTS OF COUNTRY-APRIL 13 AND 14

- **Vaisakhi:** Spring harvest festival celebrated by Hindus and Sikhs. It is celebrated in Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh, spring harvest festival for the Sikhs.
- The day marks the formation of Khalsa Panth of warriors under Guru Gobind Singh. It is celebrated as the first day of the month of Vaisakha according to Hindu calendar.
- **Rongali Bihu:** Assam celebrates Bihu thrice in a year but Rongali Bihu is the biggest and most popular Rongali or the Bohag (spring) Bihu starts on the last day of the Assamese calendar month of Chot, which normally falls on April 13 or 14 annually.
- **Poila Boishakh:** also known as Pahela Baishakh or Bangla Nababarsha is the first day of Bengali Calendar
- **Mahabishuva Sankranti:** Odisha celebrates Mahabishuva Sankranti, better known as Pana Sankranti.
- **Puthandu:** Puthandu in Tamil Nadu marks the first day of the Tamil New Year.
- **Vishu:** Vishu in Kerala marks the completion of the spring equinox. But unlike Onam, the other harvest festival, Vishu is a quieter affair, with Lord Vishnu in his Krishna avatar, the presiding deity of the festivities.
- **Malayalis** observe the ritual of 'Vishukanni'.
- **Bikhoti:** Bikhoti Festival of Uttrakhand involves people taking a dip in holy rivers.
- **Jurshital:** In the Mithal region of Bihar and Nepal, the New Year is celebrated as Jurshital.

#### CIVIL DEFENCE VOLUNTEERS:

- More than 50,000 Civil Defence volunteers are working at the grassroots level in various roles and capacities to assist the local administration in implementing the measures to contain the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).



- Civil Defence personnel are supplementing the local administration in conducting surveillance of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases. They have been working as rapid response teams.
- They have been deployed in all the States and most Union Territories, barring Ladakh, Daman & Diu, and Puducherry.
- Volunteers have been deployed under the command of District Magistrates to assist the local administration in implementing the COVID-19 guidelines and policies effectively.
- Civil Defence operates under the Civil Defence Act and associated rules and regulations.
- The Act was amended in 2009 and a notification was issued in 2010 to include disaster management as an additional role. Civil Defence is primarily organised on voluntary basis except for a small nucleus of paid staff and establishment which is augmented during emergencies.
- Although it is a Central law, Section 4 of the Civil Defence Act empowers State governments to raise corps at the local administration level as per their requirement.
- The District Magistrate, District Collector or Deputy Commissioner is designated as Controller of the Civil Defence.
- A person who intends to apply for appointment to a Civil Defence Corps must fulfil the following conditions; s/he shall be a citizen of India, or a subject or Sikkim or of Bhutan or of Nepal.
- s/he shall have completed the age of 18 years provided that this age limit may be relaxed at the discretion of the competent authority up to a maximum of 3 years for any branch or category of the Corps.
- s/he shall have passed at least the primary standard, that is to say, the fourth class, and this condition may be relaxed by the Controller at this discretion.

#### **PATTACHITRA:**

- COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the livelihood of the Pattachitra artists, residing in Heritage crafts village of Raghurajpur in Odisha. Patta means cloth, and Chitra means picture. Hence, Pattachitra is a picture painted on a piece of cloth
- Based in West Bengal and Odisha
- Bengal tradition is centered around Kalighat (in Kolkata). Theme is Not much devotional.
- Odisha tradition is centered around Puri. Almost all of the Chitrakar community hails from a small village in Puri district called Raghurajpur.
- These paintings are based on Hindu mythology and specially inspired by Jagannath and Vaishnava sect. All colours used in the Paintings are natural and paintings.

#### **KALARIPAYATTU:**

- The Kerala Tourism has geared up for the post-COVID-19 era by coming up with six theme-based microsites (including one on Kalaripayattu) in the official website to promote destination and tourism products.
- Kalaripayattu also known as Kalari, is an Indian martial art and fighting style that originated in Kerala considered to be among the oldest martial arts still in existence, with its origin dating back to at least 3rd century BC.
- Kalaripayattu includes strikes, kicks, grappling, preset forms, weaponry and healing methods. Practitioners of Kalaripayattu also possess intricate knowledge of pressure points on the human body and healing techniques that incorporate the knowledge of Ayurveda and Yoga
- Warriors in Kerala belonged to all castes.

- Women in Keralite society also underwent training in Kalaripayattu, two major styles within traditional Kalaripayattu.
- Northern style (Vadakkan Kalari) from the Malabar region in northern Kerala: It is based on elegant and flexible movements, evasions, jumps and weapons training.
- Southern style (Thekkan Kalari) from southern Kerala: It specializes in hard, impact based techniques with priority on hand-to-hand combat and pressure point strikes.

#### **MERU JATRA/ DANDA NATA:**

- Odisha's Ganjam district administration has banned the Meru Jatra festival and congregations related to it at temples on the occasion of Mahavishub Sankranti, which is also start of the Odia New Year.
- Meru Jatra marks the end of 21-day-long festival of penance named 'Danda Nata'.
- Danda Nata or Danda Jatra is one of the most important traditional dance festivals organized in different parts of South Odisha and particularly in the Ganjam District, the heartland of ancient Kalinga Empire.
- Danda Nata festival is being held in the month of Chaitra of every year
- Only male persons take part in this festival. The Participants of Danda are called Danduas (also known as Bhoktas) and they pray Goddesses Kali and Shiva during this 13-, 18- or 21-day Danda period.

#### **YUKTI:**

- Union HRD Minister has launched a web-portal YUKTI (Young India Combating COVID with Knowledge, Technology and Innovation) in New Delhi. It's a unique portal and dashboard to monitor the initiatives of HRD Ministry – in academics, research and social initiatives – taken in the wake of COVID-19.
- This portal will help in critical issues related to student promotion policies, placements related challenges and physical and mental well-being of students in these challenging times.
- Portal will also allow various institutions to share their strategies for various challenges because of coronavirus.
- It will also establish a two-way communication channel between the Ministry of HRD and the institutions so that the Ministry can provide the necessary support system to the institutions.

#### **FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND BUDGET MANAGEMENT (FRBM) ACT:**

- In a meeting with PM Modi, majority of the Chief Ministers flagged the issue of a crippling shortage of funds and demanded increasing the State's access to revenue under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act.
- FRBM Act, enacted in 2003 to reduce India's fiscal deficit and improve macroeconomic management.
- Rules for implementing the Act were notified in July 2004 and since then every Budget of the Union government has included a Medium Term Fiscal Policy Statement that specifies the annual revenue and fiscal deficit goals over a three-year horizon.
- Under it, the present target is of reducing the fiscal deficit to 3.1% of GDP by March 2023.

- 12th Finance Commission's recommendations in 2004 linked debt relief to States with their enactment of similar laws.
- States have since enacted their own respective Financial Responsibility Legislation, which sets the same 3% of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) cap on their annual budget deficits.
- Relaxation under FRBM, law does contain what is commonly referred to as an 'escape clause'.
- Under Section 4(2) of the Act, the Centre can exceed the annual fiscal deficit target citing grounds that include national security, national calamity and decline in real output growth of a quarter by at least three percentage points below the average of the previous four quarters.
- Given that the ongoing pandemic could be considered as a national calamity the current circumstances would be apt for suspending both the Centre's and States' fiscal deficit targets
- This would allow both the Union government and States to undertake the much-needed increases in expenditure to meet the extraordinary circumstances.

#### **ARTICLE 164(4):**

- The Maharashtra cabinet recommended Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's nomination to one of the Governor nominee seats in the legislative council.
- Thackeray took charge as Chief Minister on November 28, 2019, and has to become a member of the State legislature before May 28 or resign and again take the oath. As of now, he is not a member of either State assembly or council
- Thackeray had planned to get elected to the upper House but all elections have been postponed by the Election Commission in the wake of Covid-19.
- Once the Governor accepts the Cabinet's recommendation, Thackeray will continue in the post.
- Article 164(4) of the Constitution of India states that a Minister who for any period of six consecutive months is not a member of the Legislature of the State shall at the expiration of that period cease to be a Minister.

#### **INDEX FUNDS:**

- Index funds - which track performances of widely traded indices, such as the Nifty and the Sensex — saw a fourfold jump in inflows in March.
- Last month, such funds received inflows to the tune of Rs 2,076 crore, as against Rs 511 crore the previous month.
- Index funds, as the name suggests, are funds that replicate a certain index.
- If there is a Sensex fund, it will have the same 30 stocks that are there in the Sensex and weightage of each stocks in the fund would also mirror their respective weightage in the actual index.
- Index funds are a form of passive funds since the fund manager does not have to actively do any kind of stock picking. The fund sees a churn in its portfolio only if the actual index sees any inclusion or exclusion
- Typically, the benchmark index of any exchange would comprise the largest and most liquid companies publicly listed on that bourse. The benchmarks are quite diversified in terms of sector representation as well.
- So, investing in an index fund allows the investor to have a well-diversified portfolio of the largest companies. An investor can own a basket of stocks at a much lower cost compared to owning each stock individually in a benchmark

**INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION:**

- The International Development Association is a group of 76 of the poorest World Bank Group members.
- The International Development Association (IDA) is the part of the World Bank that helps the world's poorest countries.
- Overseen by 173 shareholder nations, IDA aims to reduce poverty by providing loans (called "credits") and grants for programs that boost economic growth, reduce inequalities, and improve people's living conditions.
- IDA complements the World Bank's original lending arm—the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD).
- IBRD was established to function as a self-sustaining business and provides loans and advice to middle-income and credit-worthy poor countries.
- IBRD and IDA share the same staff and headquarters and evaluate projects with the same rigorous standards.
- IDA lends money on concessional terms. This means that IDA credits have a zero or very low interest charge and repayments are stretched over 30 to 38 years, including a 5- to 10-year grace period.
- IDA also provides grants to countries at risk of debt distress. In addition to concessional loans and grants, IDA provides significant levels of debt relief through the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI).
- The HIPC Initiative was launched in 1996 by the IMF and World Bank, with the aim of ensuring that no poor country faces a debt burden it cannot manage.
- In 2005, to help accelerate progress toward the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the HIPC Initiative was supplemented by the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI).
- The MDRI allows for 100 percent relief on eligible debts by three multilateral institutions—the IMF, the World Bank, and the **African Development Fund (AfDF)**—for countries completing the HIPC Initiative process. Low-income countries (LICs) have often struggled with large external debts.
- The IMF and the World Bank have developed a framework to help guide countries and donors in mobilizing the financing of LICs' development needs, while reducing the chances of an excessive buildup of debt in the future.
- The Debt Sustainability Framework (DSF) was introduced in April 2005 and is periodically reviewed.

**LIQUIDITY COVERAGE RATIO:**

- The RBI has provided relief to banks by lowering the liquidity coverage ratio requirement, to 80% from 100%.
- The requirement will be gradually restored in two phases — 90% by October 1, 2020 and 100% by April 1, 2021.
- In the backdrop of the global financial crisis that started in 2007, the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS) proposed certain reforms to strengthen global capital and liquidity regulations with the objective of promoting a more resilient banking sector.

- Two minimum standards viz. Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) and Net Stable Funding Ratio (NSFR) for funding liquidity were prescribed by the Basel Committee for achieving two separate but complementary objectives.
- The LCR promotes short-term resilience of banks to potential liquidity disruptions by ensuring that they have sufficient high-quality liquid assets (HQLAs) to survive an acute stress scenario lasting for 30 days.

#### **SEBI EASES NORMS ON IPO, RIGHTS ISSUES:**

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has relaxed certain regulatory requirements related to rights issues and initial public offers (IPOs) to make it easier for companies to raise funds at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has made the secondary markets increasingly volatile.
- The capital markets regulator has said that any listed entity with a market capitalisation of at least ₹100 crore can use the fast track route for rights issue.
- Earlier, the base limit was set at ₹250 crore for such offerings.
- Further, any company that has been listed for 18 months can raise funds through fast track rights issue. The earlier eligibility was set at three years.
- Also, the minimum subscription requirement to make the issue successful has been lowered from the earlier 90% of the offer size to 75% of the issuance.
- Meanwhile, issuers have been allowed to amend the issue size by up to 50% — up from the current 20% — without the requirement of filing a fresh draft offer document. Easing of Norms related to IPO
- SEBI has also extended the validity of its observations issued on draft documents by six months for issuers whose observations have expired or will expire between March 1 and September 30.
- SEBI issues final observations on IPO draft documents after which the company has one year to launch the public issue.

#### **What are the different kinds of issues of shares?**

- Primarily, issues can be classified as a Public, Rights or Preferential issues (also known as private placements). While public and rights issues involve a detailed procedure, private placements or preferential issues are relatively simpler.
- Initial Public Offering (IPO) is when an unlisted company makes either a fresh issue of securities or an offer for sale of its existing securities or both for the first time to the public.
- This paves the way for listing and trading of the issuer's securities.
- A follow on public offering (Further Issue) is when an already listed company makes either a fresh issue of securities to the public or an offer for sale to the public, through an offer document.
- Rights Issue is when a listed company proposes to issue fresh securities to its existing shareholders as on a record date.
- The rights are normally offered in a particular ratio to the number of securities held prior to the issue. This route is best suited for companies who would like to raise capital without diluting the stake of its existing shareholders.
- A Preferential Issue is an issue of shares or of convertible securities by listed companies to a select group of persons under Section 62 of the Companies Act, 2013 which is neither a rights issue nor a public issue. This is a faster way for a company to raise equity capital

**INDIAN OCEAN COMMISSION (IOC):**

- Following a request from India, the IOC granted observer status to India (5th) in March 2020.
- With the decision, India will join China, which was made an observer in 2016, as well as the “International Organisation of the Francophonie” or the 54-nation Frenchspeaking collective, the European Union (EU) and Malta, which were all admitted in 2017. Analysis
- Founded in 1982, the IOC is an intergovernmental organisation comprising five small-island states in the Western Indian Ocean: the Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion (a French department), and Seychelles.
- The IOC is headquartered at Ebène, Mauritius.

**REPORT OF NIP TASK FORCE:**

- Recently, the task force on National Infrastructure Pipeline has submitted its final report to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman.
- The Finance Minister in her Union Budget Speech 2019-20 had announced Rs 100 lakhs crore for the National Infrastructure Pipeline. It is the first of its kind. It aims to improve quality life of the citizens in the country. The project will aim to attract investments. It has set a target of making India a 5 trillion USD economy by 2025.
- The Task Force was constituted to identify financially economical and feasible infrastructure. It was tasked to estimate the annual infrastructure investment and capital costs. Also, the task force was employed to monitor projects in order to minimize costs.
- The Task Force had undertaken bottom to top approach to prepare the report. the report has provided a detailed split up for the capital expenditure of Rs 111 lakh crore. According to the report, projects of Rs 33 lakh crore are at conceptual stage.
- Also, the report suggests the funds to be allocated as 24% to energy sector, roads 18%, railways 12% and urban 17%.

**Recommendations:**

- The following recommendations were made by the task force
- A Committee to be set up to monitor NIP progress. This will help to eliminate delays.
- A Steering Committee be set up at ministerial level to follow the implementation
- A Steering Committee be set up to raise financial resources for NIP.

**COMMON SERVICE CENTRES:**

- The Common Service Centres are to take over the jobs of E-commerce Giants Flipkart and Amazon in the rural regions.
- The Government of India announced that the Common Service Centres will now take over village level online retail chain. The step is expected to reach more than 60 crores of people in rural region.
- The village-level online retail chains are being created to address the difficulties created by the restrictions imposed on mobility. GoI has plans to provide massive essential supplies through this initiative.
- The Common Service Centres are to supply essential commodities like milk, vegetables, fruits, pulses, etc.
- The consumers shall place their orders at these centres through special applications.

- The Common Service Centres were established in 2006 under National E-Governance Plan. They were to provide cost-effective, high quality voice and data services in the areas of education, telemedicine, e-governance and entertainment.
- The CSC were established to provide access to information by all rural citizens. It also helps in skill upgradation to the youth in the rural.

#### **GLOBAL REPORT ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT:**

- The Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID) 2020 released by Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)
- The report said that over 5 million people have displaced in India in 2019. According to the report, this is the highest in the world.
- According to the report, around 33.4 million people faced displacements in the world due to conflicts and disasters. They are spread in 145 countries.
- In 2019, around 75% of the disasters were triggered by disasters. Out of these, 95% were due to weather hazards such as floods and storms.
- The disasters were dominant in the regions such as East Asia, South Asia and Pacific.
- Of all, India, China, Bangladesh and Philippines each recorded more than 4 million displacements in 2019.
- According to the report, social and economic vulnerability, hazard intensity and high population were the major reasons for the displacement.
- The report says that 2.6 million people in India suffered displacement due to south west monsoon. Around 19,000 faced displacement in the country due to conflicts. They were mainly high in the regions of West Bengal and Tripura.

#### **MERGER OF BLACK HOLES:**

- The scientists of Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Laboratory (LIGO) have recently recorded the first merger of black holes that were of unequal masses.
- The LIGO-Virgo collaboration detected collision between two black holes that were 2.4 billion light years away.
- The scientists have now concluded from their researches and analysis that these black holes were of unequal masses.
- Black holes revolve around each other. When the black holes are of equal masses, they return to the same position after they complete their revolution in each of their respective orbits. Therefore, in these cases, the black holes generate gravitational wave frequency that is twice their orbital frequency.
- On the other hand, the black holes of uneven masses produce additional (second) weaker gravitational wave frequency.
- LIGO is the world's largest gravitational wave observatory and a marvel of precision engineering. It comprises two enormous laser interferometers located 3000 kilometers apart, LIGO exploits the physical properties of light and of space itself to detect and understand the origins of gravitational waves (GW).

**LIGO is Blind:**

- Unlike optical or radio telescopes, LIGO does not see electromagnetic radiation (e.g., visible light, radio waves, microwaves). It doesn't have to because gravitational waves are not part of the electromagnetic spectrum.

**LIGO isn't round and can't point to specific locations in space:**

- Since LIGO doesn't need to collect light from stars, it doesn't need to be round or dish-shaped like optical telescope mirrors or radio telescope dishes, both of which need such structures to focus EM radiation onto a detector.
- Each LIGO detector consists of two arms, each 4km (2.5 mi.) long, comprising 1.2m-wide steel vacuum tubes arranged in an "L" shape, and covered by a 10-foot wide, 12-foot tall concrete shelter that protects the tubes from the environment. LIGO can also detect gravitational waves coming from any direction (even below).

**E-GRAM SWARAJ APPLICATION:**

- Recently, PM Narendra Modi launched E-Gram Swaraj application and 2 portals to accelerate pace of development in villages.
- The application will help panchayats to complete development projects in villages. It will accelerate project in villages starting from planning to completion.
- The Swamitva Yojana will use drones to map properties in villages. This will help to reduce disputes over property. The portals will help the villagers to obtain their loans easily from banks.
- The portal will act as a single platform to implement Gram Panchayat Development Plan. Every information related to the rural areas will be found in E-Swaraj website and also on mobile application.

**Swamitva Scheme:**

- The scheme aims to provide an integrated property validation solution to rural India. In order to demarcate the lands, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj is to use drone technology.
- The ministry is to be joined by State Revenue Department, Panchayati Raj Department and Survey of India.
- The scheme is to be initially launched in six states namely Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh.

**DEARNESS ALLOWANCE:**

- Recently, the Government of India put on hold to the hike in dearness allowance.
- This is being done by the union government to save Rs 1 lakh crore. The Government had planned to increase the allowance by 4%.
- Dearness Allowance is received by pensioners and government employees.
- The concept of Dearness Allowance was introduced during World War II. In India the Dearness Allowance was introduced as Old Textile allowance in 1947.
- It was then reintroduced as Revised Textile Allowance in 1953.
- DA was first linked to wage revision of employees. It was later linked to the Consumer Price Index.
- In India, Dearness Allowance is revised twice every year in the month of July and January. The allowance is provided to the employees and pensioners to compensate inflation. Around 8.5% of the Union Budget is used as salaries to the central government employees.

**MARIJUANA CULTIVATION LEGALIZED:**



- Recently, Lebanese Parliament ordered to boost the export of marijuana by legalising its cultivation. Thus, Lebanon became the first Arab country to legalize marijuana cultivation.
- The cannabis plant has been farmed illegally in Lebanon in the fertile Bekaa Valley.
- Today the country has legalized marijuana cultivation for industrial and medical purposes to cope with the economic crisis that is being faced by the country.
- According to the United Nations, Lebanon is the third largest supplier of cannabis resin in the world after Morocco and Afghanistan.
- Apart from Lebanon here are two other regions in the world, where the cannabis plant is used in opium production. They are Golden Triangle and the Golden Crescent.
- The **Golden Crescent** includes three countries namely Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Together they form a crescent in the map and hence the name Crescent. Afghanistan was the largest opium producer in 1990s and in twenty years still stays as one of the largest producers of Opium
- The **Golden Triangle** includes Thailand, Myanmar and Laos where the regions meet at the confluence of Ruak and Mekong River and hence forming a golden triangle.

## Classic IAS Academy Quiz

**Q.1)** Which one of the following has recently launched the 'Global Education Coalition'?

- a) The World Economic Forum
- b) The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- c) The International Association of Universities
- d) The European Union

**Q.2)** The traditional dance festival called 'Danda Nata' is celebrated in

- a) Odisha
- b) Assam
- c) Gujarat
- d) Uttar Pradesh

**Q.3)** Consider the following statements:

1. Plasma therapy helps the immune system to produce antibodies.
2. Plasmapheresis is the process of separating the plasma and the blood cells.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.4)** At present, which of the following countries do not have a membership in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries?

1. Libya
2. Ecuador
3. Iraq
4. Qatar
5. Saudi Arabia

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1, 2 and 5 only
- b) 2, 3 and 4 only
- c) 1, 3 and 5 only
- d) 2, 3, 4 and 5 only

**Q.5)** Recently, India has invoked the peace clause of the World Trade Organization, it implies

- a) India can discriminate between imported and domestically produced goods.
- b) India can impose anti-dumping duties on goods that are deemed to be dumped.
- c) India can favor a particular nation openly in terms of trade and businesses.
- d) India can exceed the ceiling on the support it can offer to farmers for rice.

**Q.6)** Consider the following countries:

1. North Korea
2. South Sudan
3. Israel
4. Egypt

Which of the above country/countries has/have signed the Chemical Weapons Convention but not ratified?

- a) 3 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 4 only
- d) 1 and 2 only

**Q.7)** Regarding PM-CARES FUND, consider the following statements:

1. It was established entirely with public contributions and does not get any budgetary support.
2. All contributions towards PMNRF are exempt from Income Tax under section 80(G).
3. Unlike the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF), the PM-CARES FUND may accept donations and contributions from individuals and organizations based in foreign countries.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 2 only
- d) 1, 2 and 3

**Q.8)** Which one of the following releases the World Press Freedom Index periodically?

- a) World Association of Newspapers
- b) International Institute for Journalism
- c) Reporters Without Borders
- d) International Press Institute

**Q.9)** Which of the following statements is/are correct about 'Madhuban Gajar', recently in the news?

1. It is one of the traditional varieties of carrot cultivated in the state of Himalayan Pradesh.
2. Recently, it has received a Geographical Indication (GI) tag under the Government of India's Department for the promotion of industry and internal trade.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Q.10)** The 'Jigyasa programme' recently in the news aims at

- a) Connecting scientists with farmers to understand problems and find solutions.
- b) Exploring the environment of Ladakh to study the microbial life to the surroundings of Mars.
- c) Promoting Yoga and Meditation.
- d) Inculcating the culture of inquisitiveness and scientific temper amongst the school students and their teachers.

## Answer-Keys & Explanation

**Q.1)**

**Ans) B**

**Exp)** The **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)** has launched the Global Education Coalition.

**About Global Education Coalition (GEC):**

- Global Education Coalition is a multi-sector partnership involving the United Nations agencies, international organisations, private sector, civil society representatives, philanthropic and non-government organisations etc.
- It seeks to facilitate inclusive learning opportunities for children and youth during the period of educational disruption due to COVID 19 pandemic.

**Q.2)**

**Ans) A**

**Exp)**

- Danda Nata or Danda Jatra is one of the most important traditional dance festivals organized in different parts of South Odisha and particularly in the Ganjam District.
- Meru Jatra marks the end of 21-day-long festival of penance named 'Danda Nata'.
- Danda Nata festival is being held in the month of Chaitra of every year
- Only male persons take part in this festival. The Participants of Danda are called Danduas (also known as Bhoktas) and they pray Goddesses Kali and Shiva during this 13-, 18- or 21-day Danda period.

**Q.3)**

**Ans) B**

**Exp)**

**Statement 1 is incorrect.** Plasma therapy does not help the immune system to produce antibodies. It is a passive immunization practice. When a vaccine is administered, the immune system produces antibodies. Thus, in a later date, when the vaccinated person is infected by that pathogen, the immune system releases the antibodies and neutralise the infection.

Vaccination provides lifelong immunity. In the case of passive antibody therapy, the effect lasts only up to the time the antibodies injected remain the bloodstream. The protection given is temporary.

**Statement 2 is correct.** Plasmapheresis is a procedure in which whole blood is taken from a person and separated into plasma and blood cells. Plasmapheresis is used in the treatment of many different conditions, including autoimmune disorders.

**Q.4)**

**Ans) C**

**Exp)**

- Qatar terminated its membership on 1 January 2019.
- Ecuador withdraw its membership of OPEC effective 1 January 2020.
- Currently, The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has a total of 13 Member Countries. They are:
  1. Algeria
  2. Angola
  3. Congo
  4. Equatorial Guinea
  5. Gabon
  6. Iran
  7. Iraq
  8. Kuwait
  9. Libya
  10. Nigeria
  11. Saudi Arabia
  12. United Arab Emirates

## 13. Venezuela

Q.5)

Ans) D

Exp)

India has invoked the peace clause of WTO for exceeding the ceiling on the support it can offer to farmers for rice, marking the first time any country that has used this clause.

India informed WTO that the value of its rice production was \$43.67 billion in 2018-19 and it gave subsidies worth \$5 billion which is 11.46% of the value of production. However, the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) under WTO has a limit pegged at 10% for developing countries, which is a de-minimis level.

De minimis level is minimal amount of domestic support that is allowed even though they distort trade. India became the first country that has used this clause.

Q.6)

Ans) A

Exp)

- Israel has signed but not ratified the Convention.
- Non-signatory states are: Egypt, North Korea and South Sudan
- CWC was signed and ratified by 193 countries, including India.

The Chemical Weapons Convention aims to eliminate an entire category of weapons of mass destruction by prohibiting the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer or use of chemical weapons by States Parties. States Parties, in turn, must take the steps necessary to enforce that prohibition in respect of persons (natural or legal) within their jurisdiction.

Q.7)

Ans) C

Exp) **Statements 1 and 2 are correct.**

- The government has set up the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM-CARES Fund) to deal with any kind of emergency or distress situation like posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Like the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF), it was also established entirely with public contributions and without any budgetary support.
- The contributions towards PMNRF are notified for 100% deduction from taxable income under section 80(G) of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has clarified that contributions by companies towards the PM-CARES Fund will count towards mandatory Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) expenditure.
- **Statement 3 is incorrect.** PM CARES Fund has also got exemption under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 and a separate account for receiving foreign donations has

been opened. This enables PM CARES Fund to accept donations and contributions from individuals and organizations based in foreign countries. This is consistent with respect to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF). PMNRF has also received foreign contributions as a public trust since 2011.

**Q.8)**

**Ans) C**

**Exp)**

- World Press Freedom Index has been published every year since 2002 by Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF) or **Reporters Without Borders**.
- Reporters Sans Frontieres in Paris, RSF is an independent NGO with consultative status with the United Nations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF).
- OIF is a 54 french speaking nations collective.
- The Index ranks 180 countries and regions according to the level of freedom available to journalists.

**Q.9)**

**Ans) D**

**Exp) Both the statements are incorrect.**

- Madhuban Gajar is a biofortified carrot variety with high  $\beta$ -carotene and iron content developed by Shri Vallabhai Vasrambhai Marvaniya, a farmer scientist from Junagadh district, Gujarat is benefitting more than 150 local farmers in the area.
- The Madhuban Gajar is a highly nutritious carrot variety developed through the selection method with higher  $\beta$ -carotene content (277.75 mg/kg) and iron content (276.7 mg/kg) dry basis and is used for various value-added products like carrot chips, juices, and pickles. Among all the varieties tested, beta-carotene and iron content were found to be superior.
- The variety is being cultivated in more than 1000 hectares of land in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh during the last three years.

**Q.10)**

**Ans) D**

**Exp)**

- Jigyasa is a student-scientist connect programme launched by the government of India. The programme is being implemented by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in collaboration with Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS).

- "JIGYASA" is one of the major initiatives taken up by CSIR at the national level for further widening and deepening its Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR). This programme would explain the culture of curiousness and scientific nature on the other.
- 'JIGYASA' would inculcate the culture of inquisitiveness on one hand and scientific temper on the other, amongst the school students and their teachers.
- The program will also enable the students and teachers to practically live the theoretical concepts taught in science by visiting CSIR laboratories and by participating in projects.

**Highlights of the Jigyasa Programme:**

- The Programme is expected to connect 1151 Kendriya Vidyalayas with 38 National Laboratories of CSIR targeting 100,000 students and nearly 1000 teachers annually.
- The focus is on connecting school students and scientists to extend student's classroom learning with a well-planned research laboratory-based learning.
- It will also enable the students and teachers to practically live the theoretical concepts taught in science by visiting CSIR laboratories and by participating in mini-science projects.

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